



The

INDIAN



PANORAMA

18th YEAR

WWW.THEINDIANPANORAMA.NEWS

EVER TRUTHFUL

# 1 INDIAN AMERICAN WEEKLY : SINCE 2006

VOL 18 ISSUE 08 • NEW YORK / DALLAS • FEB 23 - 29, 2024

ENQUIRIES: 646-247-9458 • info@theindianpanorama.news

# Community leaders to felicitate The Indian Panorama at its 18th-year Gratitude Gala

**WE ARE GRATEFUL, DEAR PATRONS, FOR YOUR STEADFAST SUPPORT.**



**KEYNOTES BY AMBASSADOR RUCHIRA KAMBOJ, CONSUL GENERAL BINAYA S. PRADHAN AND CONGRESSMAN-ELECT TOM SUOZZI**

**THE INDIAN PANORAMA TO HONOR FOUR EMINENT INDIAN AMERICANS**

A Souvenir commemorating the 18th year of the publication of The Indian Panorama under Prof Indrajit S. Saluja will be released at the gala event. Be the first to read the content of the Souvenir on pages 3 to 26.



**FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

**HICKSVILLE, NY (TIP) :** The Indian Panorama is celebrating its 18th year of publication on February 25 in a unique way. Says its Founding Editor and Publisher Prof Indrajit Singh Saluja, "At the Gratitude Gala, I want to say thank you to our readers, friends, supporters, and advertisers for their love and support all these years."

In turn, a host of community leaders from various walks of life will felicitate The Indian Panorama and

**CONTD ON PAGE 62**



Dr V.K. Raju



Ranju Batra



Harry Singh Bolla



Purnima Desai

## US working to reduce visitor visa wait time for Indians: Rena Bitter



US Bureau of Consular Affairs Assistant Secretary Rena Bitter noted that today more Indians can travel to the US than in any other time in history

**FEBRUARY 22, 2024**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** The United States is working towards further reducing the wait time for visitor visas for Indians following a decrease of 75 per cent last year, according to US Bureau of Consular Affairs Assistant Secretary Rena Bitter.

In an interview with PTI, Bitter noted that today more Indians can travel to the United States than in any other time in history.

"Last year, the Embassy in India processed 1.4 million visas, explosion of an incredible number...in every category there is no wait time at all except in one area of travel where there is still some wait time and that is people travelling for the first time to the United States for tourism," she said.

"It has been reduced 75 per cent over the last year and we are working really hard on this. We recognize that it is an incredibly important bilateral relationship and the foundation of the relationship is

**CONTD ON PAGE 62**

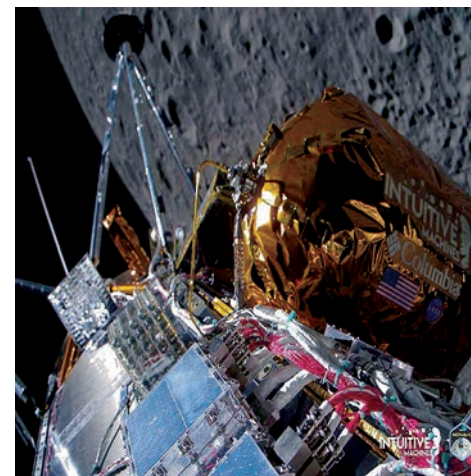
## A first: US company lands craft on moon

**FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** A private American company has scripted history by landing the first commercial spacecraft on the Moon as well as the first US vehicle on the Earth's only natural satellite in more than 50 years, joining earlier feats by India, Russia, the US and China.

Built by Intuitive Machines, the lander - named Odysseus - touched down on the moon at 6.23 pm ET on Thursday, February 22, making it the first American spacecraft on the Moon since the Apollo 17 mission in 1972. "Today, for the first time in half a century, America has returned to the Moon," Bill Nelson, NASA Administrator said.

The lander will have seven days before darkness descends on the landing site, preventing the spacecraft's



Odysseus before the touchdown.

solar panels from gathering energy from sunlight and bringing freezing temperatures, ABC News reported.

(Source: PTI)

## MR. AMIT VERMA APPOINTED AS COUNTRY HEAD OF STATE BANK OF INDIA, US OPERATIONS, NEW YORK



**FEBRUARY 20, 2024**

**NEW YORK (TIP):** Mr. Amit Verma has taken over as new Country Head of the US Operations of State Bank of India, which includes its offices in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Sao Paulo and Washington DC. Mr. Verma joined State Bank of India (SBI) as a Probationary Officer in 1995.

**CONTD ON PAGE 62**



Andy Singh

**516-441-7000**  
16 E. Old Country Road  
Hicksville, NY 11801

E-mail: herman@omnimortgage.com



**OMNI MORTGAGE CORP.**  
Residential | Commercial | SBA Loans



Herman Singh

**718-441-7000**  
118-18 101 Avenue  
Richmond Hill, NY 11419

Registered Mortgage Broker- NYS Dept of Financial Services  
Loans arranged thru 3rd party providers



The INDIAN PANORAMA  
EVER TRUTHFUL**PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER:**

Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja

**VICE PRESIDENT:**

Chitagam Saluja

**CHIEF EDITOR:**

Prof Indrajit S. Saluja

**CONSULTING EDITOR :**

Deepak Dwivedi Chairman,

Editor-In-Chief

Blitz India Media Group

**ASSISTANT EDITOR:**

Bidisha Roy

**SPL. REPORTER UNO:**

H.S. Panaser

**GRAPHICS DIRECTOR:**

Om Parkash Malik

**DIRECTOR****ADMINISTRATION:**

Gauri Beri

**CONTRIBUTING****PHOTOGRAPHERS:**

Baldev Singh / BJ Videos

Gunjesh Desai / Masala Junction

Jay Mandal,

Mohammad Jaffer,

SnapsIndia

Mohammad Shahzad,

Zia Khan,

Nisha Rani

Vaaho Photographers,

Vijay Shah - Photo Journalist.

**CORRESPONDENTS :****SACRAMENTO:**

Parminder S. Aujla

**NEW YORK :**

Chitagam

**FRESNO:**

Tarlochan Singh

**DALLAS:**

Harjit Dhesi, Amarjit Dhillon

**OVERSEAS CORRESPONDENTS****LONDON**

Nirpal Singh Shergill

**SPL CORRESPONDENT****DELHI BUREAU CHIEF:**

Chandan Singh

**CHANDIGARH:**

Manjit Sidhu

**LUDHIANA:**

A.S. Arora,

R.P.Sharma

**JAIPUR :**

Dr. Yashpaul Goyal

**DALLAS BUREAU CHIEF & VP**

Lovlien Kaurr

972-330-3139

editor@theindianpanorama.news

**The Indian Panorama**

P.O. Box No. 190067, South

Richmond Hill, NY 11419,

Tel: 646-247-9458

Email:

editor@theindianpanorama.news

**DISCLAIMER**

THE INDIAN PANORAMA ASSUMES NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CLAIMS MADE IN ADVERTISEMENTS. WE ONLY SELL SPACE. VIEWS PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSPAPER ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE NEWSPAPER. ALL RIGHTS ARE RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IN WRITING FROM THE INDIAN PANORAMA IS PROHIBITED.

**COMMENT**

# The Unyielding Spirit of Punjab Farmers

## DEATH OF AN INDIVIDUAL IS NOT THE END OF AN IDEA

BY  
INDRAJIT SALUJA

In the heartland of India, a battle is raging. The agrarian community of Punjab, resilient and united, is on a warpath, demanding fair prices for their produce and an end to oppressive government policies. The conflict has escalated as the government, seemingly serving the interests of capitalist cronies, remains adamant on enforcing controversial agricultural laws. This struggle, reminiscent of the past, echoes a powerful truth - the death of an individual does not extinguish the flame of an idea.

A year ago, the farmers took to the streets, demanding the repeal of certain agricultural laws imposed by the Modi government. The initial response from the government was repression, attempting to stifle the movement. However, the farmers, standing united and supported by their counterparts from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, refused to back down. Faced with the strength of this collective resolve, the government succumbed to pressure, promising to reevaluate and revise its agricultural policies.

Despite assurances, the government failed to initiate substantial changes in agricultural policies. Disillusioned, the farmers resumed their struggle, realizing that the promises made were nothing more than empty words. The government's lack of action fueled the flames of discontent, prompting the agricultural community to intensify their protests.

In a disturbing turn of events, the BJP-led government, both at the central and state levels, unleashed repressive



measures against the protesting farmers. Border points between Punjab and Haryana were barricaded to thwart the march to Delhi. The use of water cannons and, shockingly, reports of firing upon peaceful farmers became tools employed by the authorities to crush the dissent.

The conflict reached a critical juncture when, as claimed by agitating farmers' leaders, a 21-year-old award winning farmer Shubhkaran Singh was shot in the head by the Haryana police. Despite police denials of any firing, numerous farmers sustained injuries in the alleged incident. The agitating leaders also reported the disappearance of several farmers, accusing the government of using such tactics to instill fear among the protesting community.

The government's heavy-handed approach seems to be rooted in a short memory. A year ago, similar repressive measures failed to deter the farmers. The authorities forget that the death of an individual does not equate to the death of an idea. History is replete with examples of ideas that survived the demise of their proponents.

Reflecting on history, we find poignant examples of individuals whose ideas

endured despite their tragic deaths. Mahatma Gandhi, an apostle of non-violence, was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, who subscribed to the Hindutva ideology. Yet, Gandhism remains alive, shaping the moral fabric of societies worldwide. In the United States, Martin Luther King Jr., a champion of civil rights, was assassinated, but his vision persists, inspiring movements for civil liberties, justice and equality globally.

The Punjab farmers' struggle embodies the unbroken spirit of individuals united by a common cause. The government's attempts to suppress dissent through repressive measures might temporarily subdue the protests, but history has shown that the death of an individual does not extinguish the flame of an idea. The farmers' fight for fair prices and agricultural autonomy transcends individual tragedies, evolving into a movement that refuses to be silenced. As the echoes of protests reverberate, it serves as a stark reminder that ideas born from the collective consciousness of a determined community can withstand the harshest of challenges, ensuring that their voices are not easily silenced or forgotten.

**GUEST COMMENT**

# Victory for democracy: Supreme Court of India overturns Chandigarh mayoral poll result

Exercising its power under Article 142 of the Constitution to do 'complete justice', the Supreme Court on Tuesday, February 20, overturned the result of the January 30 Chandigarh mayoral poll - which had witnessed BJP nominee Manoj Sonkar being declared the winner under controversial circumstances - and named AAP-Congress candidate Kuldeep Kumar as the mayor. Ruling that the result declared by returning officer (RO) Anil Masih, a nominated councillor of the BJP, was contrary to law, the court ordered his prosecution for making the 'false' statement before the Bench that he had invalidated eight ballot papers because they had been 'defaced'. With

these eight AAP-Congress votes not being counted at that time, the poll outcome had gone the BJP's way, prompting the alliance to accuse the RO of ballot-tampering.

The Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud asserted that in such a case, the top court was duty-bound to ensure that the process of electoral democracy was not allowed to be thwarted by subterfuge. The court's commendable intervention has undone a grave wrong. The development is a major embarrassment for the BJP, whose attempt to engineer a victory has been scuttled. The INDIA bloc, beset by differences among its constituents, finally has something to cheer about.

The AAP-Congress candidate's victory has underscored the dire need for the Opposition to get its act together in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections.

The verdict is a stark reminder to all stakeholders - political parties, the electorate and the poll authorities at all levels - that the sanctity and fairness of the electoral exercise must always be ensured. Efforts to subvert the mandate are a blot on our democracy and should not be tolerated. Hopefully, the Chandigarh case will serve as a deterrent against the use of unfair means in elections.

(Tribune, India)



*The* **INDIAN**  **PANORAMA**  
EVER TRUTHFUL

# GRATITUDE GALA

IN CELEBRATION OF THE



*Year of publication*

**25 February 2024**

Pearl Banquet Hall  
276 W Old Country Road, Hicksville  
NY - 11801



# The INDIAN PANORAMA

EVER TRUTHFUL

## GRATITUDE GALA

in celebration of the

# 18<sup>th</sup>

year of publication



### Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj

Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations

#### Honorees



**V.K. Raju, MD, FRCS, FACS**  
President and Founder,  
Eye Foundation of America  
Life Achievement Honor



**Harry Singh Bolla**  
Founder and CEO,  
Bolla Oil Corporation  
Excellence in Entrepreneurship



**Ranju Batra**  
Chairperson,  
Diwali Foundation USA  
Excellence in Promotion  
of Diplomacy



**Purnima Desai**  
Founder and President,  
Shikshayatan Cultural Center,  
Sriniketan Foundation  
Excellence in Culture



**Prof. Deepak Dwivedi**  
Editor-in-Chief



US Launch of

+91 98991 08499 | [ceo@blitzindiamedia.com](mailto:ceo@blitzindiamedia.com)



**Sandeep Saxena**  
CEO, Blitz India



Sunday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 | 6:00 PM

Pearl Banquet Hall, 276 W Old Country Road, Hicksville, NY 11801

#### Media Partners



+1 646 247 9458, +1 646 431 4064 | [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news)



## Thank you, Patrons



As we gather to celebrate the remarkable 18-year journey of The Indian Panorama, I find myself overwhelmed with gratitude and emotion. This milestone is not just a testament to the endurance of a publication but a celebration of the collective efforts and unwavering support of each one of you. On this significant occasion, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the advertisers, readers, contributors, colleagues, family, and friends who have been the pillars of strength for The Indian Panorama.

**To our Advertisers**, who have been the financial backbone of our publication, I express my deepest gratitude. Your support has not only provided us with the means to sustain ourselves but has also empowered us to expand our reach and influence. Your belief in our mission and commitment to truth has been a driving force, and we are immensely grateful for the partnership that has defined The Indian Panorama's success.

**To our Readers**, your loyalty and engagement have been the driving force behind our journalistic endeavors. You are not just consumers of news; you are an active part of our community. Your feedback, critiques, and unwavering commitment to seeking truth have been the inspiration behind our continuous strive for excellence. Thank you for making The Indian Panorama a trusted source of information.

**To our Contributors**, who have enriched our pages with diverse perspectives, insightful analyses, and compelling narratives, I extend my sincere appreciation. Your dedication to providing our readers with thought-provoking content has been invaluable. Each piece contributed has added depth and breadth to our publication, making it a more enriching experience for our audience.

**To my Colleagues**, both here in the US, in India, and elsewhere, I want to acknowledge your hard work, dedication, and passion. The collaborative spirit within The Indian Panorama family has been the driving force behind our success. Your commitment to journalistic integrity, teamwork, and creativity has shaped the character of our publication. I am proud to be part of such a talented and dynamic team.

**To my Well-wishers**, who have supported The Indian Panorama from the sidelines, offering words of encouragement and positivity, I am truly grateful. Your belief in our mission has been a source of motivation during challenging times. Your goodwill has been a guiding light, pushing us to persist in our pursuit of truth and excellence.

**To my Family**, whose unwavering support has been my anchor throughout this journey, thank you. Your understanding, encouragement, and sacrifices have allowed me to dedicate myself to the vision of The Indian Panorama. Your belief in my passion has been the driving force behind every step forward.

**And finally**, to my Friends, whose camaraderie and encouragement have made this 18-year haul not just a professional achievement but a pleasant task. Your companionship has made the challenges more manageable and the victories more joyous. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey.

As we stand at this juncture, marking 18 years of The Indian Panorama, I earnestly desire your continued support in the onward propulsion of our publication. The road ahead is promising, and with your unwavering support, we will continue to uphold the values of truth, integrity, and journalistic excellence. Thank you, Patrons, for making this journey a pleasant and fulfilling one.

Here's CHEERS to the past 18 years and the many more to come!

**Prof. Indrajit S Saluja**

February 25, 2024



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

## Message

Dear Friends:

It gives me great pleasure to welcome everyone as *The Indian Panorama* hosts its gratitude gala in celebration of its 18th anniversary.

As residents of our nation's most vibrant melting pot, New Yorkers understand that our inimitable blend of diverse heritages and histories is the source of our singularity and strength. We are proud to be the home of a thriving population of Indian New Americans who have made enormous contributions to the cultural fabric of the five boroughs. My Administration is committed to ensuring that our city remains a welcoming and accessible place for people of all backgrounds, and *The Indian Panorama* is an ally in this mission, providing dependable English-language news to readers of Indian descent in New York and beyond. Since its founding in 2006, this weekly periodical has worked to unite and inform our dynamic and irreplaceable Indian community. I applaud everyone associated with this newspaper for their efforts to strengthen our vital journalism sector. Together, we will continue to take bold steps to forge a brighter, more inclusive, and prosperous future for our global city.

On behalf of the City of New York, I offer congratulations to tonight's honorees. Please accept my best wishes for a joyous gala and further success.

Sincerely,

*Eric Adams*

Eric Adams  
Mayor

भारत का प्रधान कौंसल  
न्यू यार्क



CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA  
NEW YORK

February 19, 2024

## Message



It is with great pleasure that I extend my sincere congratulations to Prof. Saluja, and the dedicated team of The Indian Panorama on the 18<sup>th</sup>-year celebration of the weekly publication.

The Indian Panorama has not only been a beacon of insightful journalism but also a celebration of the vibrant tapestry of the Indian-American community.

The 18<sup>th</sup> year milestone is an acknowledgement of the vision and leadership of Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja in shaping the Indian Panorama into a platform that delivers news stories that resonate and perspectives that inspire.

It is commendable to see how The Indian Panorama embraced the digital age under the leadership of Prof. Saluja, reflecting a commitment to ensure timely access to relevant information for its readers.

Once again, I express my appreciation for the valuable contribution of The Indian Panorama to journalism, community building, and cultural representation in the USA.

Wishing many more years of success!

*Pradhan*  
(Binaya S. Pradhan)

## Message

Dear Editors and Staff of Indian Panorama,

On behalf of the Embassy of India in Guatemala, I extend my warmest congratulations to The Indian Panorama newspaper on its remarkable achievement of entering its 18th year of publication.

Over the past two decades, Indian Panorama has played an invaluable role in promoting Indian culture, heritage, and diverse perspectives to readers across the United States. Your commitment to journalistic excellence, insightful reporting, and dedication to showcasing the rich tapestry of India's traditions, achievements, and contemporary issues has been truly commendable.

The Indian Panorama stands as a prominent beacon of Indian diaspora news and culture, revered within the bustling heart of New York. As a premier weekly newspaper, it serves as an essential link between the Indian community and its homeland, offering a comprehensive spectrum of news, insights, and stories that resonate with readers.

Indian Panorama has not only informed but also inspired countless readers, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of India's contributions to the global community. Your publication has served as a bridge between cultures, connecting people and ideas across borders.

Regrettably, owing to official commitment, I will not be able to attend the 'Gratitude Gala' to be hosted by the publication on 25 February 2024. Nevertheless, I extend my heartfelt wishes for the publication to continue producing many more engaging and enlightening editions and articles, contributing to the education and enrichment of its readers.

**Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra**  
Ambassador of India to Guatemala  
Deputy Consul General, Indian Consulate  
New York, 2014-2017



**Thomas R. Suozzi**  
Member-Elect  
US House of Representatives  
(NY Congressional District 3)



## Message

February 20, 2024



Dear Prof. Saluja,

I am immensely pleased to learn that The Indian Panorama is into the 18th year of publication. Congratulations!

As a loyal reader of The Indian Panorama, I can say you surely have held fast to your motto "Ever Truthful". That's the true strength of a newspaper: I wish you would continue to tread the path of truth.

You are doing a great job of projecting the Indian American community and bringing the various ethnic groups together which surely is a great contribution to our country.

Keep up the good job, and I wish you all success in your endeavors.

**Tom Suozzi**



THE BATRA BUILDING  
142 LEXINGTON AVE.  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016  
212-545-1993

RAVI@RAVIBATRALAW.COM  
FAX: 212-545-0967

February 19, 2024

## Message

**Professor Indrajit Saluja**  
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief  
The Indian Panorama



Re: Celebrating your 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday, 18<sup>th</sup> Year of the *Indian Panorama*, and your Gratitude Gala with Amb. Ruchira Kamboj as Chief Guest

Dear Professor Saluja,

While Life is fleeting, it is full of memories when one is as Blessed as you are. For as long as Ranju and I have known you, the twinkle in your eye - despite a tragic loss - has always resided well therein, with faith unshaken. So, first, let me wish you a most Blessed Birthday, and a long life with happiness, joy and love of family and friends.

As for the *Indian Panorama*, "18" years of publication - as our Jewish friends remind - is "Chai," not "Chia," and it means: "Life"! So, dear Professor you have given life not only to your cherished publication, but to the Community you bind together with the stories you cover! So, let me wish you "Chardi Kala" always, and as a life long New Yorker, La Chiam: to life!

Finally, only a sweet-hearted man would name his celebration a "Gratitude Gala," and I am very happy that our dear friend, H.E. Ruchira Kamboj, is your Chief Guest. That you are honoring good people - V.K. Raju, Harry S. Bolla, my dearest Ranju, and Purnima Desai - is duly recognized, as are your Guests of Honor: Amb. Binaya Srikanta and re-elected Rep. Tom Suozzi.

Warmest regards,

Affectionately,  
  
Ravi Batra

## Message

My heartiest congratulations to Prof Indrajit Singh Saluja celebrating the 18th year of publication of *The Indian Panorama!*



Apart from the laudable strides that the premier English weekly has made, what is highly praiseworthy is the decision to celebrate its 18th glorious milestone as 'Gratitude Gala'. It's a rare gesture, worth emulating. Kudos for that!

I would also like to congratulate all those eminent Indian Americans whose contributions are being recognized and honored on this special occasion.

I feel particularly privileged as the US edition of *Blitz India*, the weekly newspaper committed to a developed India, is being launched from this august platform provided by the 'Jewel of India', Prof Saluja.

My sincere gratitude and all good wishes for the onward journey of *The Indian Panorama!*

**Deepak Dwivedi**  
Chairman & Editor-in-Chief



## Message

Please accept my warmest congratulations on the successful Gratitude Gala and the remarkable milestone of 18 years of The Indian Panorama!



Recognizing accomplished Indian Americans in the Tristate area on this occasion with the Gala Awards is truly phenomenal. Your tireless efforts have created a platform that celebrates excellence and fosters community spirit.

I also extend my heartiest congratulations to Mr Deepak Dwivedi, Editor-in-Chief of Blitz India, and Mr. Sandeep Saxena, CEO, for the US launch of Blitz India under your guidance and the umbrella of Indian Panorama.

This expansion is a testament to your vision and dedication to promoting Indian culture and arts. Your contributions have enriched the cultural landscape, connecting people and inspiring dialogue.

I applaud your remarkable accomplishments and look forward to witnessing your continued success. Congratulations once again on these momentous occasions! May your endeavors continue to flourish and celebrate the beauty of Indian heritage.

**Rajeev Bhambri**  
Chief Executive Officer  
New India Abroad

## Message

My heartfelt congratulations to Prof Indrajit Saluja on reaching the 18th year landmark of The Indian Panorama. It's an extraordinary achievement to keep building a media institution to serve the Indian diaspora and the one that is founded on quality journalism against all odds. It's pure sweat and grit that can make it work. Of course, Prof Saluja has to cover innumerable miles to do justice to the community which has grown manifold. From print to epaper to online and yet keep going, I personally compliment him for his spirit and commitment.



Though I am a fellow media professional and probably seniormost publisher of a mainstream Indian news publication, I always look forward to the Independence Day special edition of The Indian Panorama, which is a treasure as he salutes the nation with a document that covers it all.

I pray for your health and continued growth and send my best wishes. God bless you with the best.

**Sunil Hali**  
Publisher, The Indian Eye  
Promoter, Radio Zindagi  
US Partner: NDTV 24x7  
AASTHA TV Network





*The Federation of Indian Associations  
FIA NY-NJ-CT-NE  
would like to extend their heartfelt  
Congratulations  
to  
The Indian Panorama  
on the commemoration of  
its 18<sup>th</sup> year. Your steadfast commitment to  
providing insightful coverage and fostering  
a sense of community within the Indian diaspora in  
New York is truly commendable.  
May your continued dedication to excellence and  
service inspire countless more years of  
success and impact*

info@fianynjct.org | www.fianynjct.org



## PROFILE

# Amb. Ruchira Kamboj

## Stellar Diplomatic Career with Many Firsts

Ruchira Kamboj is the Permanent Representative of India / Ambassador of India to the United Nations in New York. On presentation of her credentials to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on 2 August 2022, she became the first lady diplomat from India to assume this position.

In her over three-decade long diplomatic career, she has served in many key positions.

Ruchira Kamboj joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1987. She was the All India woman topper of the 1987 Civil Services batch as well as topper of the 1987 Foreign Service batch.

She began her diplomatic journey in Paris, France where she was posted as the Third Secretary (later Second Secretary) in the Indian Embassy to France from 1989-1991.

From Paris, she returned to Delhi where she worked as Under Secretary in the Europe West Division of India's Ministry of External Affairs from 1991-96. In this capacity, she also represented India at the 14th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1995 at Auckland, New Zealand.

From 1999-2002, she served as Deputy Secretary and later Director in charge of Foreign Service Personnel and Cadre in the Ministry of External Affairs in Delhi.

Ruchira Kamboj was posted as Counsellor at India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York from 2002-2005, where she dealt with a wide range of political issues, including UN

Peacekeeping, UNSC Reform, the Middle East crisis, etc. Upon release of Secretary-General Kofi Anan's Blue Ribbon Panel Report in December 2014, she was part of the G-4 team that worked on the reform and expansion of the UNSC.

From 2006-2009, she was India's Consul General in Cape Town, South Africa. The position involved close liaison with the Parliament of South Africa. In this period, she also steered the visits of the President of India to Cape Town in 2008.

Ruchira Kamboj was picked to be the Deputy Head of the Office of the Secretary-General at the Commonwealth Secretariat, London. She was among the two Staff Officers of the Commonwealth Secretary-General in a multilateral setting, overseeing a wide range of political and economic issues, attending as well in this period the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 2009 at Trinidad and Tobago.

### CHIEF OF PROTOCOL, INDIA

From 2011-2014, she was India's Chief of Protocol, the first and only woman in Government to have held this position. In this capacity, she directed all outgoing visits of the President of India, the Vice President of India, the Prime Minister of India, and the External Affairs Minister of India. She also dealt with all incoming Heads of Government and State in India.

As Chief of Protocol, she was involved in the organization of international Summits in India inclusive of the 4th BRICS Summit in New Delhi in 2012 and the 11th Council of Ministers Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association at Bangalore, India in 2011. She also successfully steered the ASEAN India Commemorative Summit in December 2012 marked by the presence of 10 Heads of State and Government in New Delhi. In 2013, she directed the 11th Asia Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting held at Gurgaon, Haryana which was attended by 52 Foreign Ministers from Asia and Europe with over 1500 participants.

### PM MODI'S SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

In her third tryst with multilateralism, she was posted as India's Ambassador to UNESCO Paris in April 2014. However, she was called back to direct the swearing-in of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which was marked by the presence of Heads of State and Government from the SAARC countries and Mauritius. She resumed her duties in Paris on completion of this special assignment.

Ruchira Kamboj had a stellar three-year stint at UNESCO. In 2016, history was made when three Indian sites were added to UNESCO's World Heritage list



Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj received the Guinness World Record for most nationalities in one yoga session organized at the UN Headquarters in New York in 2023. During her stint at Unesco, she steered India to victory when Yoga was declared the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016.

including Nalanda Mahavihara. The same year, she steered India to victory when Yoga was declared as the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In April 2016, she organized an International Conference on the Zero at UNESCO showcasing the great and glorious tradition of India in Mathematics and Science. A bust of ancient Indian mathematician Aryabhata was gifted to UNESCO.

In 2015, she was called back to assist in the organization of the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi, which was marked by the presence of Heads of State and Government of the 54-member African Union.

### HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SOUTH AFRICA

Ruchira Kamboj was the High Commissioner of India to South Africa, with concurrent accreditation to the Kingdom of Lesotho from 2017 to 2019. This stint was marked by the first-ever India-South Africa Business Summit held in Johannesburg in 2018. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj participated in a unique commemoration of the 125th anniversary of the Pietermaritzburg 'incident' (involving Mahatma Gandhi), celebrating people-to-people ties between India and South Africa. The visit of PM Modi to Johannesburg in July 2018 for BRICS10 was a reaffirmation of the salience of the India-South Africa relationship and BRICs.

Ruchira Kamboj was appointed as Ambassador to Bhutan in 2019.

During her tenure, many important

initiatives were successfully undertaken in both traditional and newly identified areas of cooperation. Seven new trade routes were opened with Bhutan, including Allhay, which facilitated the movement of essential and non-essential goods during the Covid pandemic. In the IT Sector, the India - Bhutan E-Library project was completed; the connection between the National Knowledge Network of India and its counterpart, Druk-Ren was facilitated and arrangements were firmed up for a Third International Internet Gateway for Bhutan. The India - Bhutan Satellite project was due for a launch in 2022. In appreciation of the positive and contributory role played by India during Covid pandemic to strengthen India - Bhutan relations, His Majesty The King of Bhutan conferred Bhutan's highest civilian honor, the Order of the Druk Gyalpo, upon PM Modi in 2021.

### PUBLICATIONS AND FAMILY

Ruchira Kamboj has written several OpEds in newspapers and magazines. She has also been called upon to speak at prestigious events in India and abroad on a wide range of issues.

Ruchira Kamboj, a native of Lucknow, is married to businessman Diwakar Kamboj and has one daughter. Her late father was an Officer in the Indian Army and her mother is a writer-professor (Retd.) of Sanskrit from the University of Delhi. She speaks three languages, Hindi, English and French.

She was recently featured in the "Top 100 Women Achievers of India" in India Today 'She' List of 1st January 2024.

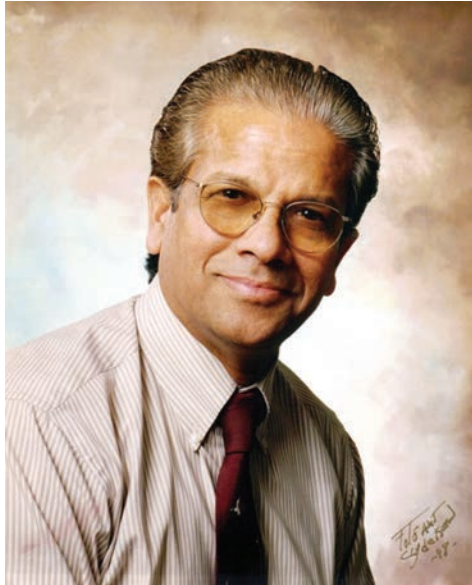


On presentation of her credentials to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in August 2022, Ruchira Kamboj became the first lady diplomat from India to assume the position of Permanent Representative of India / Ambassador of India to the United Nations.



PROFILE

# Dr V.K. Raju: On a mission to eliminate childhood blindness from the world



**Founded by eye surgeon and humanitarian Dr V.K. Raju, the Eye Foundation of America has spread its work to 30 developing countries, training medical personnel to serve the needy, and spreading education on preventive eye care**

and research. It is accomplished through eye camps and brick-and-mortar hospitals in developing countries, training of medical personnel to serve the needy.

EFA's reach extends to 30+ developing countries and the USA. The Foundation has served 4 million patients and performed 350,000+ vision-saving surgeries, with over 25,000 surgeries performed on children.

Since its inception in 1979, the EFA has facilitated 600+ physician exchanges and trained 200+ ophthalmologists, equipping these medical practitioners with the tools to join the global fight against blindness.

Dr Raju has helped to build two hospitals in rural India: the Srikan Eye Institute and the Goutami Eye Institute. Goutami has a wing dedicated exclusively to children.

The EFA has plans to build a service and research eye hospital in India where no child will be denied treatment and children from around the world can come to receive services.

But Dr Raju's impact goes beyond mere numbers. He understands that true empowerment lies in education. EFA's programs equip patients with knowledge about eye health and



Dr V.K. Raju doing eye screenings at a school in Delhi



Dr V.K. Raju delivered a lecture at Apollo Hospital in Delhi.

World-renowned eye surgeon with a specialization in corneal transplant surgery, and humanitarian Dr Vadrevu K. Raju is diligently and passionately pursuing his mission to rid the world of childhood blindness. His Eye Foundation of America (EFA) has set up eye camps in 30 developing countries, training medical personnel to serve the needy, and spreading education on preventive eye care and healthy lifestyle choices.

For the past four decades, Dr. Raju and his foundation have been working to eliminate avoidable blindness in areas plagued by poverty and poor access to medical care. This is done under the guiding principles of service, teaching,

hygiene, enabling them to make informed choices and prevent future complications. This ripple effect extends beyond the individual, as patients become agents of change, sharing their knowledge within their communities.

Dr Raju has also focused on preventing a lifetime of blindness in premature babies. When a baby is prematurely born, its body is not fully developed, the eyes included. ROP or retinopathy of prematurity happens when there is an abnormal development of retinal blood vessels on the retina. ROP has to be treated during the window of 3 weeks to 3 months.

Dr. Raju was born in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh in India. He earned his medical degree from Andhra University and completed an ophthalmology residency and fellowship at the Royal Eye Group of Hospitals in London. He is board-certified in ophthalmology and is a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) and the American College of Surgeons, and Fellow of the American College of Surgeons (FACS).

He has resided in Morgantown, West Virginia since 1976, where he is currently a Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at West Virginia University.

In West Virginia, Dr. Raju accepts patients who do not have medical insurance and performs surgical procedures that are not covered, often pro bono. This allows many of these patients to remain functional members of society.

Dr Raju has received many honors and awards, including 26 distinguished awards and 17 gold medals. In his adopted home state of West Virginia, he was awarded the Lions Club International (Morgantown) Jarrett Award. Morgantown Rotary honored him for community service in 2000. The award he is most proud of is the Martin Luther King Jr. Achievement Award



Dr Raju and Mrs Rani Raju with their daughter Dr Leela Naidu, son Ashok Raju and his family.



Former First Lady of the UK, Cherie Blair, honored Dr. V.K. Raju at the House of Lords commemorating the UN International Widows Day organized by the Loomba Foundation on June 23, 2023. (right) Dr Raju with Lord Swaraj Paul.



Dr Raju was presented Excellence in Medicine award by GOPIO (Global Organization of People of Indian Origin), Virginia chapter in 2021.

from West Virginia University.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) has awarded Dr. Raju four times for his teaching and research contributions, including the Outstanding Humanitarian Award in 2002 for \$1 million of his own money that went into building hospitals in India, teaching, and providing services to needy patients.

The American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) awarded Dr. Raju with their prestigious Distinguished Community Service Award in 2007. President Barack Obama conferred on him the 2016 President's Lifetime Achievement Award.

The University of Toledo in Ohio inducted him into the Global Medical Missions Hall of Fame in 2017.

Dr. Raju has authored hundreds of papers and publications and is the co-author of Musings on Medicine, Myth, and History: India's Legacy, along with his daughter, Leela V. Raju

Dr. Leela Raju, his daughter and fellow ophthalmologist, is the EFA's Secretary and Coordinator for Education and actively participates in its mission.





# Eye Foundation of America

## A World Without Childhood Blindness

### Vision problems of children

Refractive errors (focusing defects) such as near-sightedness, far-sightedness, crossed eyes, and lazy eye (amblyopia) are seen almost in 20% of children. The majority of them can be treated. We should reach them early.

Other problems include:

- Cataracts
- Glaucoma
- Corneal problems
- Retinal and Optic Nerve problems
- Retino blastoma—a rare cancer of the eye

Often we think that cataracts happen in older people. No. One can be born with cataracts (a genetic problem).

### 4 common vision problems in adults

- Cataracts
- Glaucoma
- Age-related Macular Degeneration
- Diabetic Retinopathy

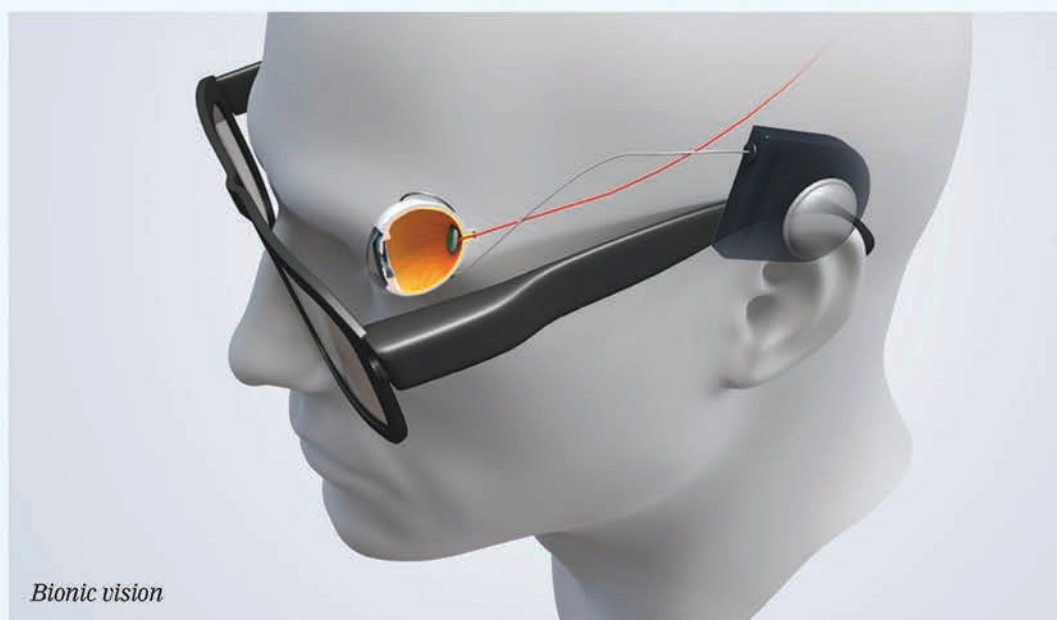
Most of the children's vision problems are **avoidable**. They are either preventable or treatable with today's technology and resources. **Accessibility** and **affordability** are the main issues. Neglected children's vision problems can lead to permanent vision loss.

A blind child is a problem for himself, to the family, and the society.

The World Bank states, "The most cost-effective health intervention is giving vision to children". A five cents vitamin A can prevent lifelong blindness.

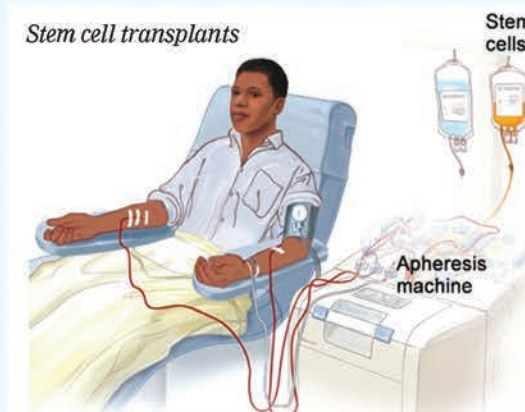
**We need political will, professional will, and people's will.** ●

### Great advances in the last 40 years

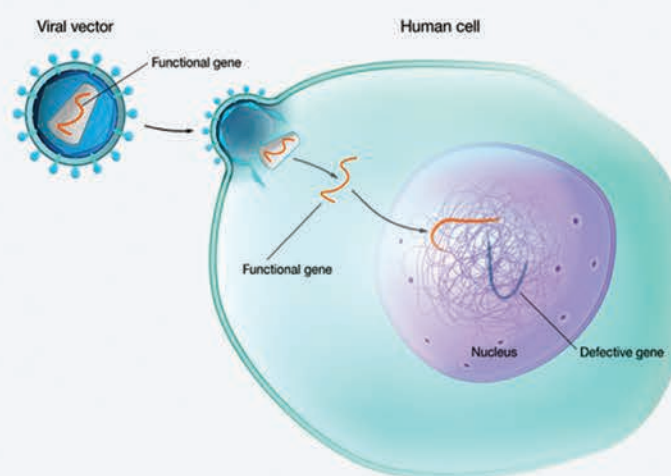


Bionic vision

**Most of the children's vision problems are avoidable. They are either preventable or treatable with today's technology and resources. Accessibility and affordability are the main issues**



Stem cell transplants



Gene therapy

Irrespective of these advances, vision problems do persist. One billion people are walking on the planet who need a pair of glasses. Either they cannot afford the exam, or they cannot afford the glasses.



INTERVIEW

# With Today's Technology, Eliminating Childhood Blindness is not too Ambitious: **Dr V.K. Raju**



By **Indrajit Singh Saluja**

**The Indian Panorama is conferring Life Achievement Honor on the world-renowned eye surgeon and humanitarian Dr V.K. Raju. In the run-up to the**

**Gratitude Gala of the weekly paper, he gave an exclusive interview to Prof Indrajit Singh Saluja, its Chief Editor and Publisher. Excerpts:**

**INDRAJIT SALUJA, CHIEF EDITOR, THE INDIAN PANORAMA: ROTARY INTERNATIONAL SECURED A WORLD WITHOUT POLIO. NOW YOU AND YOUR EYE FOUNDATION OF AMERICA ARE WORKING TO ELIMINATE NEEDLESS CHILDHOOD BLINDNESS IN THE WORLD. BUT ISN'T IT AN AMBITIOUS MISSION?**

**DR V.K. RAJU:** With today's technology and resources, it is not ambitious. Let me tell you why I have chosen to focus on childhood blindness. Let's say a 67-year-old becomes blind. He or she has only a few years to live. But if a child becomes blind, he lives for seven decades without vision. We can catch them early and treat them and make them productive members of society for



Each award and honor, Dr Raju says, means more opportunity to do even more work and serve people.



Guatemala is the 30th country to which Dr Raju has spread his work. His visits there were facilitated by India's Consul General to the country, Manoj Kumar Mohapatra (extreme right in group photo) and Prof Indrajit Saluja.

decades.

As per the World Bank, 80% of our learning is through vision. Nelson Mandela said education is the greatest equalizer. But for want of a pair of glasses, which costs Rs 200-300 in India, the kids' learning is affected and they become a burden to themselves, the family, and society as a whole.

**MALNUTRITION IS SAID TO BE ONE OF THE CAUSES OF CHILDHOOD BLINDNESS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.**

**DR RAJU:** On this front, India has done incredibly well in the last 30-40 years. But still, overall nutrition is not good among rural people of low socio-economic strata, especially children. So, if you want to see a world without childhood blindness, first you have to tell the governments in the world to provide proper nutrition to children.

**WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START THE EYE FOUNDATION OF AMERICA?**

**DR RAJU:** I was working in London and went to India for a holiday. A farmer came to show me his eyes. I did not have any equipment then. So, in 1977, I held my first eye camp in Vijayawada. After seeing so many children born with congenital cataracts, next year I took along a surgical instrument (Ocutome), but faced problems with the customs. On advice of friends, we started Eye Foundation of America for credibility.

India gave me a stellar medical education almost for free and paying back like this is no big deal. We are fortunate to do this work.

**BEING A ROTARIAN, DO YOU THINK YOU CAN BRING ROTARY INTERNATIONAL TO SUPPORT YOUR MISSION?**

**DR RAJU:** They already are great supporters of my foundation and our hospitals in Andhra Pradesh. More and more people and Rotary clubs would join in South India and in Vijayawada where I work year after year. Leadership and cooperation are the road to success, as

President Jimmy Carter said in his book 'Global Health' and whom I have fortunately met.

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR GOUTAMI EYE HOSPITAL**

**DR RAJU:** Goutami is in Rajahmundry district in Andhra Pradesh. It is the flagship of the Eye Foundation of America with about 14 peripheral centers. Outreach is very important in India, where 65% of people still live in villages. Goutami has a wing exclusively for children. At Goutami, we never turn down a patient. Our model is, we see 60% of the patients almost for free or subsidized and 40% are paying patients.

**BESIDES INDIA, WHICH OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE YOU GONE IN?**

**DR RAJU:** We have worked in 30 countries, most recently in Guatemala. In some places we supply educational material, in some, we do clinical work, in still others we support their programs as in Ghana. This year-end we are going to South Africa.

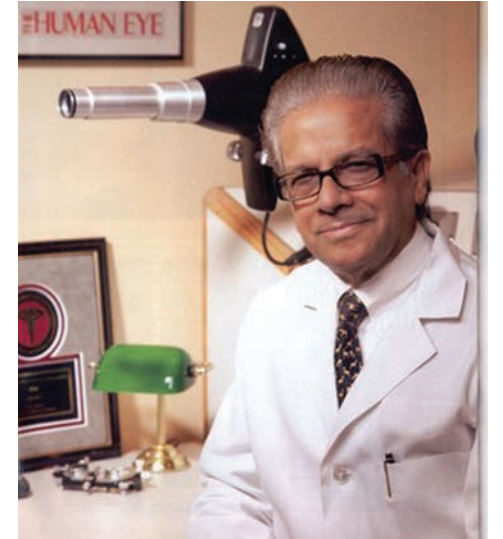
**WHAT LED YOU TO GUATEMALA?**

**DR RAJU:** Prof Saluja, you are the one who made that project happen through the Indian Consul General there, Amb. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra. You were there when we screened the patients in Guatemala City. We went back with another colleague of mine last November and performed eye surgeries. Amb. Mohapatra was very helpful.

**I SAW YOU EXAMINE 500 PEOPLE AT FIVE LOCATIONS IN GUATEMALA. HOW MANY SCREENINGS AND SURGERIES EFA HAS DONE SO FAR?**

**DR RAJU:** Almost 4 million people have been screened as outpatients in the peripheral hospitals and clinics and at least 350,000 operations have been done already.

**FOR THIS COLOSSAL WORK, HOW ARE YOU ABLE TO MANAGE FUNDS?**



**DR RAJU:** For the first 16 years, our Foundation did not have a fundraiser. Now we do. Last year we raised \$800,000. Here I must tell the story of Srinu Maddula. I brought him here from Vijayawada for a corneal transplant about 35 years ago when he was a toddler. He went on to finish his doctorate in pharmacy from Rutgers. Now he feels that what the eye foundation did for him, he should do more for it.

For community service projects, help comes unexpectedly. You introduced me to Blitz India editor Deepak Dwivedi and Sandeep Saxena and they introduced me to Lord Swaraj Paul and Lord Loomba in England. I was honored at the House of Lords, and we set up a chapter of our foundation there.

**WHAT ARE THE MAIN CAUSES OF BLINDNESS?**

**DR RAJU:** The most common visual problem is cataract, which is clouding of the lens of the eye. Cataract is not a disease. It can develop with age. Left untreated, cataract leads to blindness. Today very easy and successful surgeries are available to remove cataracts. You don't need to stay in the hospital, you go home the same day.

The other eye problem is glaucoma. It is caused by high eye pressure damaging the nerve connecting the eye to the brain. So, one should get checked for glaucoma every two years after the age of 40.

With diabetes, if you get regular eye exams, you won't lose sight.

**WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO MY READERS ABOUT KEEPING EYES IN GOOD CONDITION?**

**DR RAJU:** If your general health is good, your eye health will be good too. So, eat right, exercise, and do everything in moderation. Protect the eyes with sunglasses when you spend a lot of time outdoors. Cataract development, if at all, will be slow then.

**IS YOUR DAUGHTER DR. LEELA RAJU, YOUR NATURAL SUCCESSOR?**

**DR RAJU:** Absolutely. She is very much part of the foundation work and capable of running the show once I'm gone.

**YOU HAVE BEEN CONFERRED SO MANY AWARDS AND HONORS, NOW ANOTHER ONE BY THE INDIAN PANORAMA, HOW DO YOU FEEL?**

**DR RAJU:** Each honor means more opportunity to continue and do even more work and serve people. Yet, as we say in the Indian ethos, I am only nimitta matra (a medium) for whatever good I am able to do.



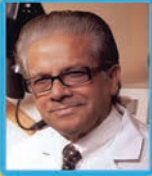




1200 JD Anderson Drive  
Morgantown, WV 26505  
304-598-1200  
monhealth.com

## Congratulations

To whom it may concern:



It is with great pleasure and immense pride that we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dr. V.K. Raju on being honored with a Life Achievement Award by The Indian Panorama at its 2024 Gratitude Gala. This prestigious recognition is a testament to his outstanding contributions to the field of ophthalmology and unwavering dedication to advancing eye care on a global scale.

As a member of the Mon Health Medical Center staff since 1984, Dr. Raju has provided excellent care to our patients, has selflessly dedicated his time to educating many, and has worked to increase access to better eye care around the world.

His commitment to excellence, paired with his unparalleled kindness and generosity, not only inspires his colleagues at Mon Health Medical Center but reflects the true spirit of a dedicated healthcare professional that we are proud to honor today.

Once again, congratulations, Dr. Raju! May this recognition be a reflection of the profound impact you have had on the lives of so many, and may it inspire others to follow in your footsteps.

Sincerely,

**David Goldberg**  
President & CEO, Mon Health System  
Executive Vice President, Vandalia Health



## Congratulations

16/02/2024

**Congratulations!**

Dear Dr V K Raju  
Ophthalmologist  
President and Founder, Eye Foundation of America  
President and Founder, Goutami Eye Institute  
EC Member, GAPIO

I am writing to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you on receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award by the "Indian Panorama", a weekly news magazine, in celebration of their 18th year of publication.

This prestigious recognition is a testament to your exceptional contributions, unwavering dedication, and outstanding service to the field. Your pioneering work in ophthalmology has positively impacted countless lives. Your commitment to excellence, innovation, and compassionate patient care truly sets you apart as a leader in the field.

Throughout your illustrious career, you have demonstrated remarkable expertise, professionalism, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. Your tireless efforts have not only garnered widespread acclaim but have also inspired and influenced generations of ophthalmologists and medical professionals.

As you receive this well-deserved honor, please know that your achievements are celebrated not only within our community but also by all those whose lives you have touched and transformed. Your legacy will continue to shine brightly, serving as a beacon of inspiration for future generations.

On behalf of GAPIO, I extend my warmest congratulations once again. May this Lifetime Achievement Award serve as a reminder of the profound impact you have made in the field of ophthalmology.

Thanks and Regards

**Dr. Nandakumar Jairam**  
Chairman Medica Synergie Hospitals  
President GAPIO

Registered Office: Hospital Complex, Apollo Hospitals, Sarita Vihar, Mathura Road, New Delhi - 110076  
Registered under 12A, Registration number AABAG2441BE20138 and 80G, Registration number AABAG2441BF20110  
Email: gapio.jm@gmail.com; Contact No. +91-7701910804, 011-71791747 Website: www.gapio.in

## RADIANT Radiant Digital Solutions, Inc

## Congratulations

Date: February 18, 2024

Dear Dr. Raju,



Let me please start off by saying that it is my honor and privilege to have known you for nearly forty (40) years in my personal capacity. When I include your dear friendship and association with my cousin, Dr. Jayanthi Subbarao, that honor extends to nearly six decades. Beyond all of that, what makes my association with you extra special is the fact that you are from my hometown, Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Today, I am writing to congratulate you for being honored by the Indian Panorama at the Gratitude Gala being held on Sunday, February 25, 2024. This honor is a clear recognition of your exceptional contributions and outstanding achievements that you have accomplished through your work at the Eye Foundation of America (EFA). Your dedication, hard work, and commitment to eliminating childhood blindness is central to the success of EFA and resulted in remarkable outcomes all over the world. Your ability to stay committed to this important cause for over five (5) decades while dealing with a very busy professional and personal schedule is simply remarkable. The unselfish efforts and hard work that you have put into building an organization with global reach sets a gold standard in charitable work for the good of humanity. Your positive attitude, collaborative approach, and most importantly, your sense of humor, have unquestionably created an environment that motivates people to contribute to this very important cause.

On behalf of our company and personally, I express my sincere appreciation, gratitude and commendation for your efforts that have had a positive impact on reducing or eliminating childhood blindness in several countries. Your dedication to charity with excellence reflects well on both yourself and EFA. Our company is very fortunate to be a part of your tireless efforts. We look forward to witnessing your continued success and contributions to EFA.

In closing, in a personal capacity, I would like to say that you are my HOMETOWN HERO and do look up to you as a role model.

Sincerest thanks and admiration,

**Shankar Rachakonda**  
Chief Executive Officer

Radiant Digital • 8229 Boone Blvd., Suite 325, Vienna, VA 22182 • 703-584-4118



## Congratulations

February 20, 2024

Dr. Vadrevu Raju  
President and Founder  
Eye Foundation of America

Dear VK,

Congratulations on this singular recognition of your life's work. From your dedication to the education and training of ophthalmologists to providing hospitals and state-of-the-art services around the world to prevent blindness in children and adults, your presence and the impact of your efforts are unparalleled. Thank you for your decades of service to the many medical communities with whom you have been associated and for your commitment to healthcare and to making a difference in the lives of so many. It is so very fitting that you are being honored for your extraordinary contributions to the field of ophthalmology.

Know of my admiration and continued best wishes.

Cordially,

**E. Gordon Gee**

PO Box 6201 | Stewart Hall  
Morgantown, WV 26506-6201  
304.293.5531 | 304.293.5883

WVU is an EEO/Affirmative Action Employer - Minority/Female/Disability/Veteran

## Congratulations

Please accept my congratulations on the prestigious award, Dr. V.K. Raju.

**Prof Nirmal Kumar Ganguly**  
Former Director General -  
Indian Council of Medical Research





BJANA TAKES GREAT PRIDE IN  
EXTENDING OUR HEARTFELT  
CONGRATULATIONS TO  
THE INDIAN PANORAMA  
ON ITS ILLUSTRIOUS  
18<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY.

YOUR STEADFAST COMMITMENT  
TO NURTURING THE INDIAN DIASPORA  
REFLECTS AN UNPARALLELED DEDICATION.

HERE'S TO COMMEMORATING  
MANY MORE YEARS OF IMPACTFUL  
JOURNALISM AND SHARED SUCCESSES.

[www.bjana.org](http://www.bjana.org)



## PROFILE

# Ranju Batra: Securing Diwali Stamp and launching Oscars of Diplomacy

**The ideals of Diwali are the ideals of the UN Charter. The Power of One awards, Ranju says, honor diplomats whose work away from the public eye can make a difference between war and peace.**



Ranju Batra addressing Diwali Stamp - Power of One Awards ceremony 2022

A historic number of 24 nations, led by Belarus and India as co-organizers, and United States Postal Service, came together in December 2016 at the United Nations to celebrate "Small Stamp for a Big Festival" and to honor Mrs. Ranju Batra for spearheading the seven-year-long campaign to secure the release of the Diwali Forever stamp by USPS.

Ranju felt the honor was for her journey for the Diwali Stamp seen as a metaphor for peace and harnessing its power to promote excellence in diplomacy. In fact, the ideals of Diwali are the ideals of UN Charter. Speaking to The Indian Panorama, she recalled that one diplomat dubbed her singular achievement the 'power of one'. That inspired her to launch the 'Diwali Stamp - Power of One' awards to honor exceptional diplomats.

Under the aegis of the Diwali Foundation USA that she chairs, these awards are presented every year since 2017 (barring the Covid years) to exceptional world class diplomats at the UN.

Says Ranju about honoring diplomats, "They work hard every day away from the public eye but the public needs to know that what they do is important as that could be the difference between war and peace."

The 'Diwali Stamp - Power of One' awards are supported multilaterally. For example, in 2023 the awards were co-organized and co-sponsored by over 70 member states and the European Union. The Permanent Mission of India at the UN has, of course, supports the ceremony every year.

Since 2017, 25 awards have been given to esteemed ambassadors. The honorees have included Lakshmi Puri, former Executive Director of the UN Women, former UK Ambassador to the UN Matthew Rycroft, former Permanent

Representative of Georgia to the UN Kaha Imnadze, and former Permanent Representative of Grenada to the UN Keisha McGuire.

The most high-profile diplomat to be honored to date has been the UN Secretary-General (2007-2016) Ban Ki-moon. He was honored last December along with former Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the UN Amb. Mirsada Colakovic, former Permanent Representative of South Korea to the UN Amb. Kim Sook and 72nd UN General Assembly President and EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue Miroslav Lajcak.

In his acceptance speech at the event attended by UN diplomats, envoys, civil society members and policy experts, Ban commended the work and "forward-thinking vision" of the Diwali Foundation USA "for advancing vital light in a world of increasing darkness". He said the world today "seems fractured



Ranju Batra with the honorees and others at the Diwali Stamp - Power of One Awards ceremony 2022.

like never before" as he cited the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis and regional crisis seen in the Middle East and Ukraine.

India's Ambassador to the UN Ruchira Kamboj said that Diwali is a celebration that holds a special place in the hearts of over a billion Indians across the globe. Diwali "is more than just a festival. It is a sentiment that embodies the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance and hope over despair", she said.

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the UN Mohan Pieris said "Deepavali has become truly a secular festival in the world, since its message is not exclusively restricted to any religious creed."

Ravi Batra, the eminent Indian-American attorney, and Chair of National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs, and moderator of the award ceremony, said the UN transcends borders and boundaries.

The Power of One award is given to a

former permanent representative or former high-level member of UN secretariat or member state, or soon-to-be former, who has worked selflessly to help form a more perfect, peaceful, and secure world for all. Assuming eminence, these awards have come to be called the 'Oscars of Diplomacy'.

The Diwali Foundation, USA's mission is to support the UN Charter of multilateralism and enhance peace and security around the world by promoting excellence in diplomacy.

## THE DIWALI STAMP TRIUMPH

Ranju's campaign for the Diwali Stamp was fervently followed and supported by Indians in America. It was backed by many Congress members and Indian diplomats in the US. She took it up as President of the Association of Indians in America (AIA)-New York during its Silver Anniversary year, 2011-12. The entire Indian community celebrated with her when on October 5, 2016, USPS officially dedicated the stamp at the Indian Consulate in New York. Ranju's personal sale of over 170,000 stamps for First Day made the "Diwali Stamp" the best seller in USPS' over 200 years history.

Looking back, Ranju says, "The Diwali stamp issued by the USPS is equivalent to the US government issuing a passport to Diwali itself and supporting light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance." Diwali is now part of Americana. Since the Diwali stamp was issued as a Forever stamp, USPS is required to issue it annually.

Since September 2021, Ranju is an Advisor for Legal and Humanitarian Affairs to the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the UN, having previously served as an Advisor to the Permanent Mission of Ukraine from 2015.

Since 1990, she has been the Administrator of The Law Firm of Ravi Batra, founded by her husband.



Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was presented the Power of One Award in 2023 by Ranju Batra, accompanied by Ravi Batra





### Message



It gives me immense pleasure to note that The Indian Panorama is celebrating its 18th anniversary on 25th February 2024. I am told that the newspaper has relentlessly served the Asian India community in the USA in general and Indian expatriates in particular, during its journey.

On this occasion, I take the opportunity to congratulate Sardar Indrajit S. Saluja and his dedicated team for the commendable work they have been doing. I wish the newspaper even more successful time ahead.

With best wishes,

**Amit Verma**  
Chief General Manager & Country Head,  
State Bank of India, US Operations, New York



The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine  
The Johns Hopkins Hospital

**Peter J. McDonnell, M.D.**  
Director and  
William Holland Wilmer Professor of Ophthalmology

727 Mawmaw Building  
600 North Wolfe Street  
Baltimore, MD 21287-9278  
Office: 443-287-1511 Fax: 443-287-1514  
Email: pmcdonn1@jhmi.edu

### Congratulations

February 16, 2024

The Wilmer Eye Institute offers its heartiest congratulations to Dr. V.K. Raju upon his receiving the Life Achievement Honor from Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj. His work to prevent blindness is an inspiration to the entire world.

With admiration,

*Peter J. McDonnell*

**Peter J. McDonnell, M.D.**  
William Holland Wilmer Professor and Director



## MEET OUR HONOREES



**Dr V.K. Raju**



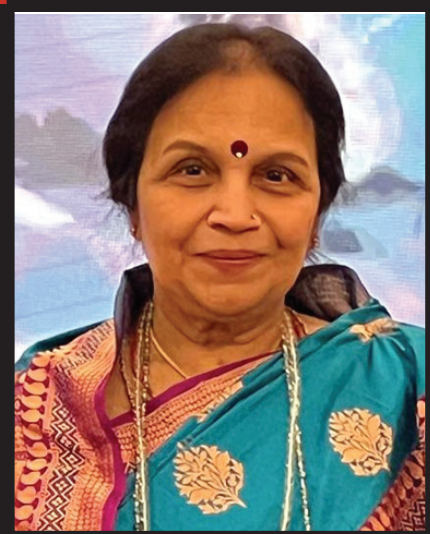
**Ranju Batra**



**Harry Singh Bolla**



**Purnima Desai**



### Message



I am pleased to learn that Indian Panorama has completed 18 years of its publication in New York and graduated to be a 'Major' in true sense. While by attaining 18 years the newspaper has literally become a 'Major' by age, it has in the meantime become a 'Major' newspaper in the state of New York. I take this opportunity to compliment the entire team of Indian Panorama led by Prof Indrajit S Saluja and wish them godspeed and a great future.

With best wishes,

**Prasanta Kumar Tripathy**  
CEO, State Bank of India,  
New York

### Message



The world is going through massive disinformation and misinformation times. Social media has blurred the lines between reality and fabrication. At this point in history, we need a press that can give us unbiased news and views on happenings around the world and around us.

The Indian Panorama is striving to achieve just that. I wish Prof Indrajit Saluja and his team to keep this tradition alive and set an example that "TRUTH STILL MATTERS".

**Harpreet Singh Toor**  
Sikh community leader and activist



## ESSAY

# Role of Diplomacy in International Affairs: From General Douglas MacArthur to Qin Gang

**DIPLOMACY IS THE "LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS" THAT SOVEREIGN NATIONS USE TO ENGAGE IN SOVEREIGN INTERCOURSE - ACROSS A WIDE ARRAY OF MENU ITEMS THAT ARISE - BE IT DURING PEACE OR WAR.**

BY RAVI BATRA, ESQ.

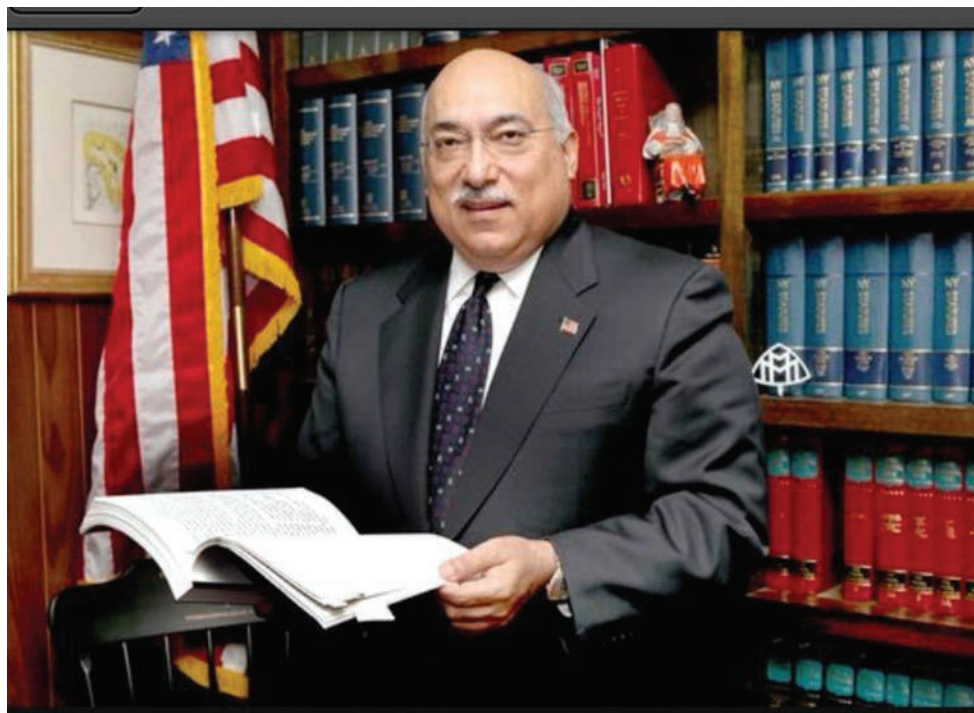
CHAIR, NATIONAL ADVISORY  
COUNCIL SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS

From time immemorial, Emperors and Kings have engaged in the comity of nations through their ambassadors passing official messages, and responses, back and forth. That practice has continued, even after 1776 and the birth of the great American Experiment.

Sovereign nations can either trade with each other, or wage war upon the other. Diplomacy, then, is a core governmental function that is necessary to assist in enhancing bilateral trade or to secure additional rights in lieu of war being engaged in futuro. Diplomacy is the "lines of communications" that sovereign nations use to engage in sovereign intercourse - across a wide array of menu items that arise - be it during peace or war.

Indeed, diplomats are issued special passports by their sending-nation state, and credentials for the welcoming-nation state. Every nation state welcoming an ambassador accepts the credentials of such ambassador, and by so doing, the two-way official lines of communication are set.

Recently, Qin Gang, the father of "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy was dishonorably retired - as he should have been - by President Xi Jinping, as he structurally violated the basic tenet of diplomacy: to make love or war, with equal sobriety, and passion for accurate reporting bilaterally. Indeed, while our President nominates ambassadors to 193 nations



around the world, it is our Senate Foreign Relations Committee that holds hearings, and if approved, the Senate confirms with its "advise and consent" power. Only after that, does our Secretary of State, much like a corporate secretary, issue credentials to the confirmed-ambassador, which will then be presented to the Head of State or Government of the receiving nation-state.

While anyone can be diplomatic, only persons representing their nation - be it a democracy, theocracy, autocracy or monarchy - is a diplomat, officially engaging in diplomacy. It is true that

private persons - such as Bill Richardson, former U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN and governor of New Mexico - can engage in "fringe diplomatic" efforts that, hopefully, assist in resolving a thorny issue between two or more nation-states. For example, Bill Richardson helped to secure the freedom of hostages from Iran, Libya, Myanmar and inter alia Russia. The list included basketball player Brittney Griner, journalist Danny Fenster, U.S. Marine veteran Trevor Reed, and inter alia Osman Khan. Khan was freed with the help of the State Department and the Richardson Center in October 2022 along with six others in exchange for two

relatives of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro jailed in the United States.

The Osman Khan episode is an example of hybrid- diplomacy, but the most famous example is in the movie - Bridge of Spies - wherein Tom Hanks portrays a private lawyer, James Donovan, who secured the release of hostages from then-East Germany, and years later, President John F. Kennedy, after the Bay of Pigs, again looked to James Donovan to seek the release of a few American hostages, and Donovan, well in excess of his mandate, secured the release of all Americans held by Cuba, then within USSR's core sphere of influence. A nation so close to Miami that we ought to create a process to resolve all issues, including: property claims, and the so-called "Havana Syndrome." Then, and only then, will the Monroe Doctrine be properly effectuated.

Diplomats are granted inviolability in the nation they are credentialed to, but are not above the rule of law in the nation they are sent by. That means no law enforcement can arrest them or stop them for any reason, and they have full "freedom of movement" in the nation they are accredited to.

In the tragic times of pre-World War II period of appeasement, which was driven by the strategic failure of the Great Powers to unite, Neville Chamberlain, then Prime Minister of the great British Empire, made a Peace Deal on behalf of Europe with Hitler's Third Reich - the First Reich being the medieval Holy Roman Empire, which lasted until 1806; and the Second Reich included the German Empire from 1871-1918 - by gifting Czechoslovakia to Hitler, without any right or any consent of said nation to be so subjugated! This was followed up by USSR's Stalin's Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov negotiating into the wee hours of August 23, 1939 with Hitler's Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop to create the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, with secret protocols that became public during the Nuremberg Trials, to ensure peace between Hitler and Stalin, with each of them agreeing to fight and create agreed-to future-spheres of influence. On September 1, 1939, a week later, Hitler attacked western Poland, on September 17th Stalin invaded eastern Poland, and on September 22nd the Soviet and Nazi militaries held a joint military parade in Brest-Litovsk. The USSR-Nazi joint-war effort was short-lived, and Stalin's USSR fought Nazi Germany and suffered the largest number of casualties at over 26 million dead to defeat fascist Nazis.



Diwali Stamp - Power of One Awards, called the Oscars of Diplomacy, were instituted by Ranju Batra in 2017 to honor diplomats who uphold the spirit of Diwali. At the last awards event at the UN in December 2023, former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was one of the honorees.





**The National Executive of the AIA**

*Congratulates*

*The* **INDIAN**  **PANORAMA**  
EVER TRUTHFUL

**ON THE  
18TH YEAR  
CELEBRATIONS  
OF THE PUBLICATION**

The Indian Panorama has played a pivotal role in projecting the Indian American community, espoused its concerns, and vigorously promoted the interests of India.

We salute **Prof. Indrajit S Saluja**, the publisher and chief editor, for the quality journalism that The Indian Panorama has come to be known for in this part of the world.

The Association of Indians in America is the oldest National Association of Asian Indians in America. It was founded on August 20, 1967.

AIA is fostered on the democratic principles of "one member one vote", with chapters and membership spread across the United States of America. AIA represents the hopes and aspirations of those immigrants who are united by their common bond of "Indian Heritage and American Commitment".



HONOREE

# Harry Singh Bolla: Striking Gold with Vision and Strong Work Ethic

**OIL BECAME GOLD FOR HARRY SINGH. BOLLA MARKET FOUNDED BY HIM HAS BECOME THE MOST RECOGNIZED FUEL AND CONVENIENCE STORE CHAIN IN THE NEW YORK REGION. HE IS ALSO GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE BOLLA CHARITY FOUNDATION.**

Harry Singh is the Founder and CEO of Bolla Oil Corp, a billion-dollar gas station and convenience store business. His is an exemplary immigrant success story.

He emigrated to the United States from India in 1983. Six years later, he founded Bolla Oil Corp with a single gas station in Brooklyn, NY. Harry's entrepreneurial vision, indefatigable work ethic, and passion for excellence fueled Bolla's impressive growth. Bolla Market is now one of the largest, and most recognized retail fuel and convenience store chains in the region.

Bolla is consistently recognized by the major gasoline brands for best-in-class facilities, marble restrooms,

unparalleled retail standards, and customer service.

Bolla Market operates under major fuel brands - Exxon, Mobil, Sunoco, Bolla, Gulf, Valero, Shell, and its proprietary, upscale Bolla Market convenience stores.

Bolla operates co-branded food offerings, including Burger King, Tim Hortons, Pizza Hut, Moe's Southwest Grill, and Red Mango.

**GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY**

From its inception, Bolla has had a philanthropic mission. Harry, his wife, Kamljit and children Jay and Tarnjit, care deeply about giving back to the communities Bolla serves. Witnessing

firsthand the tragic events of 9/11 and assisting first responders by converting a downtown gas station into a 24-hour aid station, Harry and Kamljit developed a steadfast commitment to help first responders and veterans.

In 2013, the couple founded the Bolla Charity Foundation. It provides funding to numerous charities and holds events to benefit non-profit groups.

The Foundation was an early contributor to a building on the 7-acre First Responders Memorial Recreational Field in Islandia, NY. It also supports



Toys for Tots and the Nassau County Police Department Memorial Run, raising funds for scholarships in honor of fallen officers. In 2022, the Foundation renovated a group home for 6 veterans in Levittown and renovated a 100-year-old Victorian home for 12 veterans in Freeport in 2023.

Besides, Bolla Charity runs permanent projects to help the needy in India.



Founded in 1989, Bolla Oil Corp is now a billion-dollar gas station business.



Harry Singh with President Joe Biden



Bolly charity gifted one-year free gas for Girl Scouts of Nassau County

## News 12 Profiles Harry Singh's Billion-Dollar Empire

News 12, the main TV channel on Long Island, ran a program in May 2021 on Harry Singh's business success. The documentary-style program including an interview with him was broadcast as part of the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

Singh came to the US in 1983 with nothing more than a dream of a better life, the narrator started. "Today he runs a billion-dollar gas station business headquartered in Garden City."

The program then proceeded to talk about his work ethic that helped him achieve his American Dream. Bolla Market has become a popular pit stop for many motorists, their customers testify. One woman said, "The food is very good here- they have everything from breakfast, and lunch to dinner."

Harry Singh says humbly in the documentary, "I am a worker, I love what I do. I have a passion for it." The narrator goes on to add that his passion is rooted in the cultural values of his native place in Punjab. And that at age 21, he traded his small village for the Big Apple. It was to make life better, says Harry Singh. His wife, Kamljit, a nurse, shared his vision.

Singh took the opportunities that came his way, and in 1989 opened his first gas station. He shares his simple philosophy thus, "You get up in the morning, you say thank God, it is another great day in our life. Let us go and make a difference and let us make today better than yesterday."

Singh did feel discriminated against at times for his looks, and for who he was. "But I never let it take me down," he tells the News 12 reporter resolutely.

Today Bolla Oil employs 1,800 people at over 250 sites, including gas stations, convenience stores, and fuel distribution centers.

"Work hard and you get rewarded," Singh says. The narrator adds that Singh and his wife are now reaping the reward of their 33 years of hard work - a magnificent mansion in Old Westbury and a collection of exquisite cars.

While the Singhs enjoy the fruits of their labor, they believe there is more to life than material things. That is why they found a way to give their wealth a richer meaning. Elaborates Singh, "I believe God gave me a blessing to give, not take."

The Singh family created the Bolla Charity Foundation to benefit people in need. It donated a \$600,000 house in 2018 to a disabled veteran named Lance Cpl. Billy Ventura, in Selden, NY. "We should share. We can all make this world a better place to live." Singh still works seven days a week with passion and gratitude, says the narrator. "It has been an amazing ride," Singh concludes.



The Singh family created the Bolla Charity Foundation to give back to the community. It donated a house to a disabled veteran on Long Island.



**Rajasthan Association of North America**

*Felicitates*

*The* **INDIAN**  **PANORAMA**  
EVER TRUTHFUL

On the  
**celebration of its**  
**18th year**  
of publication

*And wishes for its continued growth  
as a Truthful Publication under*

**Prof Indrajit S. Saluja,**  
*Editor-Publisher*



**Preserving the Rajasthani Culture and Heritage**

20 Glen Drive, Woodbury, NY, 11797  
prem.bhandari@ranausa.org

JAIPUR  
**FOOT**  
USA



## PROFILE

# Purnima Desai - The True Cultural Ambassador of India

**A multitasking personality, Purnima Desai is the founder of Shikshayatan Cultural Center and Sriniketan Foundation based in New York.**

BY BIDISHA ROY

**A** motivating and dedicated teacher in vocal and instrumental music, dance, languages, and Indian philosophy, Purnima A. Desai is the Founder and President of Shikshayatan Cultural Center and Sriniketan Foundation, based in New York.

The two philanthropic organizations, instrumental in encouraging and supporting Indian culture through music and art, promote the beauty, goodwill, and tranquility of Indian art and culture through educational workshops teaching children and women Hindi, violin, dance, poetry, and painting.

Purnima was born in a Gujarati Brahmin family in Calcutta in 1949. She studied at Shri Shikshayatan School and College there. Her father, D.P. Desai, was a lawyer who retired as a legal advisor to The Times of India group.

## CALCUTTA, HER LOVE

"Calcutta played a major role in my life. I started my cultural journey from there. At Shikshayatan, I learnt Bharatanatyam, Manipuri and Kathak. I wanted to sing also but could not afford a harmonium. Instead, my parents got me a Hawaiian guitar. I learned many Bengali songs."

After she graduated with honors in Education, her family moved to Delhi in 1968 because of the Naxalite movement. While doing her MBA there, she continued with her cultural activities, choreographed dance dramas, and became a popular face on the campus.

In 1972 she got married to Ashok C. Desai, a pharmacist by profession. For a while she worked with Sahu Jain's Jaipur Udyog Limited as a management trainee. After a year in Bombay, she moved with her family to New York in 1973.

## RAISING FAMILY IN NEW YORK

In New York, Purnima worked briefly for two top banks - CITI and Chase before taking a break to bring up her three

daughters: Kaveeta, Komal and Tejal. Then, she opted for the real estate business so she could work from home.

Returning to her passion for the arts, she joined the Gujarati Samaj of New York, where her kids would perform. Purnima also started performing there and choreographing as well. She also joined Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and became its executive committee member.

In 1988 Purnima founded her cultural organization - Shikshayatan, which means house of learning. She named it after her alma mater in Calcutta. Such an organization was needed to impart knowledge about Indian culture to the young generation here who are deprived of the rich Indian heritage.

Shikshayatan is open to all nationalities to come together for peace, harmony, and team spirit. It has been offering lessons in vocal and instrumental music, providing a stage for young and old performers alike. She started in the basement of her home in Flushing, Queens. Initially, she taught pro bono, but had to charge a nominal fee after she started hiring teachers.

## ROLE PLAYED BY SHIKSHAYATAN

By now Shikshayatan has trained several loyal and dedicated students who have supported her organization by giving performances in churches, temples, community events, at South Street Seaport Deepavali celebrations, public libraries and schools.

Shikshayatan has a faculty of highly educated, multitasking and professional artists. Pandit Kamal Mishra has been a great asset to the organization since 1989 and has proved his multiple talents through teaching and as a performing artist.

"I'm fortunate to have had the opportunity to acquire the best from both India and the United States," says Purnima. "My gratitude for both is infinite. Now I proudly guide our young generation to balance their life and remain peaceful and profoundly

connected to both cultures."

Each year Shikshayatan showcases the talent of internationally renowned artists and recognizes their talent, contributions, and dedication to preserving the heritage of Hindustani Classical Music. At its Sangeet Mahotsav 2023, over 47 artists performed for 12 hours nonstop with a mesmerizing experience of healing ragas and Indian classical dances.

## SERVICE THROUGH SRINIKETAN FOUNDATION

In 2015, Purnima started Sriniketan Foundation to fulfill the dream of her late father. "After the death of my mother, he was alone. So, he told me to do something for seniors so that they don't feel lonely."

Sriniketan Foundation's objective is 'Building Awareness on the Importance of Happy, Heavenly, Progressive, Peaceful and Blissful Living Style through Mind, Body and Soul Evolution.' The Foundation promotes spiritual growth by organizing lectures, discourses, seminars, workshops, concerts, fun fairs, competitions, comedy shows and creative outlets.

"My heartfelt purpose is keeping people healthy physically and spiritually and to help the less fortunate people," says Purnima.

She attributes many of her qualities to her close association with her grandfather, L.K. Desai, and grandmother, Mani Desai. "My grandfather was highly educated, and he worked with Sardar Patel."

Money, name, or fame - she wants nothing, just wants to work selflessly. She elaborates, "I don't want to ask for money for Sriniketan or Shikshayatan. They should earn on their merit. If I get some funds unasked from genuine people, then I am blessed. I have organized free musical programs for senior citizens."

Purnima has celebrated many festivals of India, and anniversaries of saints, sages, and patriotic leaders to disseminate knowledge about India. She has been blessed by spiritual masters like Mata Amritanandamayi, Morari Bapu; dignitaries and diplomats including Hillary Clinton and Dr Karan Singh; and renowned artists such as Sonal Mansingh, Padmini Ramachandran, Archana Joglekar, Pt Ramesh Narayan; astrologers and healers like Swami Chakradhari and Shakuntala Devi.

## ACCOMPLISHED ARTISTE AND IMPRESARIO

Purnima is an acknowledged vocalist who has many music albums to her credit. She has authored many books - a Children's book, a book of patriotic songs,



Purnima A. Desai has been promoting the beauty, goodwill, and tranquility of Indian art and culture in the USA for the last 35 years.



Purnima Desai introduced her work to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Purnima is an acknowledged vocalist who has many music albums to her credit.

and another that contains spiritual songs. She is a scriptwriter, producer and director of short plays - Apna Desh Apne Tyohaar and Bal Ramayan for Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, NY.

As a program director of cultural events, Purnima has produced and directed more than a thousand cultural programs. She is also a painter and publisher-editor of Abhyudaya magazine in Hindi and English.

She also completed her training in Reiki under Dr. N.K. Sharma and Dr. Savita Sharma of Reiki Healing Foundation, the world's largest Reiki organization based in New Delhi. She is now Kriya Acharya Reiki Grand Master.

Though Purnima Desai is an institution by herself, she has been bestowed several honors and awards. She is a recipient of Dharma Kalyaan Jyoti Madalsa Award by Maa Yog Shakti. All Brahmin Convention 2001 held by Brahmin Samaj of USA honored her.

World Business Forum presented her with two awards in 2006: "Person of the Year" and "Woman of the Era". In 2009 she received a citation from NYC Council and in 2011 "Ambassador for Peace" award from Universal Peace Foundation.

A true cultural ambassador of peace and harmony, Purnima has emerged as one of the most respected Indians in the USA.



Purnima Ji on stage with other artists at an event organized by her



TIP HISTORY

# The Indian Panorama at 18: A Chronicle of Perseverance and Triumph



BY  
INDRAJIT SALUJA

As The Indian Panorama marks its 18th year of publication, it is a moment of reflection and celebration. The journey of this periodical has been akin to that of a determined soldier, navigating through the initial hiccups with resilience and evolving into a formidable force in the media landscape. While acknowledging the achievements, it is crucial to recognize that this milestone is not the culmination but a checkpoint in the ongoing crusade for truth and journalistic excellence.

### THE GENESIS: INITIAL HICCUPS AND CHALLENGES

Eighteen years ago, The Indian Panorama embarked on its journalistic odyssey, fueled by the passion for truth and a commitment to providing a comprehensive view of Indian affairs. Like any nascent venture, the publication faced its share of initial hiccups. Limited resources, a competitive media environment, and the

challenge of establishing credibility were formidable hurdles.

The publication encountered skepticism and doubt, but it weathered the storm, recognizing that the path to success is often paved with challenges. The formative years were a testing ground for the resilience and determination that would come to define The Indian Panorama's character.

### THE DETERMINED SOLDIER: OVERCOMING ADVERSITIES

Much like a determined soldier pushing forward despite the odds, The Indian Panorama navigated through the intricacies of the media landscape. It adapted to changing technologies, evolving reader preferences, and the demands of a dynamic news cycle. The team behind the publication demonstrated a commitment to journalistic integrity, delving into stories with depth and presenting a nuanced perspective on the events shaping the nation.

The early struggles became stepping stones, shaping the identity of The Indian Panorama. The publication began to carve its niche, distinguishing itself through insightful reporting, balanced analysis, and a commitment to presenting the truth, even when it was uncomfortable.

### CAPTURING THE POST: MILESTONES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

As the years unfolded, The Indian Panorama captured significant milestones, much like a soldier conquering strategic posts. The publication gained recognition for its investigative journalism, incisive editorials, and coverage of issues often overlooked by mainstream media. It became a trusted source of information, earning the respect of readers and peers alike.

The expansion into digital platforms and the embrace of multimedia storytelling further fortified The Indian Panorama's presence. Social media became a battleground for disseminating accurate information, engaging with a wider audience, and challenging misinformation. The publication demonstrated an ability to adapt to the changing media landscape while staying true to its core values.

### THE ONGOING CRUSADE: MORE POSTS TO CONQUER

As The Indian Panorama stands at the threshold of its 18th year, it acknowledges the milestones achieved but remains cognizant that the journey is far from over. In the dynamic realm of journalism, there are always more posts to conquer, more stories to unearth, and more truths to bring to light.

The evolving landscape of media presents new challenges and opportunities. The rise of digital journalism, the need for responsible reporting in the age of fake news, and the continuous quest for relevance in



Prof. Indrajit Singh Saluja speaking at the annual gala of The Indian Panorama



Jewels of India Award for Prof Saluja

an ever-changing readership landscape are all frontiers that demand exploration.

The commitment to truth, accuracy, and ethical journalism remains unwavering. The Indian Panorama understands that each milestone reached is not an endpoint but a checkpoint in the ongoing crusade for journalistic excellence. The publication looks forward to the future with optimism, ready to face new challenges head-on and to continue providing a panoramic view of the diverse and dynamic landscape of India and the US, in particular, and the world, in general.

As I reflect on the journey that brought The Indian Panorama to its present standing, I am compelled to acknowledge the integral role played by the pillars that upheld its foundation - the unwavering support of patrons, the crucial backing of advertisers, the invaluable contributions of readers and contributors, and the steadfast encouragement from friends and family. These collective forces have been instrumental in shaping the narrative and fortifying the publication's commitment to its motto, "EVER TRUTHFUL."

### ADMIRABLE ADVERTISERS: FINANCIAL BACKBONE

The unyielding journey of The Indian Panorama would not have been possible without the vital support of our advertisers. They provided more than just financial backing; they became the backbone of our operations. Their belief in the publication's mission and the power of its reach fueled our ability to bring stories to light. The symbiotic relationship between The Indian Panorama and its advertisers has been crucial in sustaining the publication's growth and influence.

### DEVOTED READERS: STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The strength of any publication lies in its readership, and The Indian Panorama has been fortunate to have a



Prof Saluja greeting Manmohan Singh at the White House reception for the Indian Prime Minister



Prof. Saluja at the India Day Parade 2022 in New York



Vaisakhi at the Consulate organized by Prof. Saluja

CONTD ON PAGE 22



CONTD FROM PAGE 21

community of devoted readers. Their commitment to seeking truth, staying informed, and engaging with diverse perspectives has fueled the publication's relevance. The readership's unwavering support has been a driving force, inspiring the team to continually strive for excellence in journalism. The bond between The Indian Panorama and its readers is a testament to the publication's impact on its audience.

INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTORS: ENRICHING THE NARRATIVE

A publication is only as strong as the material it presents, and The Indian Panorama owes a debt of gratitude to its contributors. Their diverse perspectives, insightful analyses, and compelling narratives have enriched the reading experience for our audience. Whether seasoned journalists, emerging writers, or subject matter experts, each contributor has played a pivotal role in shaping the depth and breadth of The Indian Panorama's content.

STEADFAST SUPPORT: FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Behind every endeavor, there is a network of support that provides the emotional fortitude needed to weather challenges. In the case of The Indian Panorama, friends and family have been the bedrock of encouragement. Their unwavering belief in the never-say-die spirit, the courage to go forward, and the commitment to staying true to the motto "EVER TRUTHFUL" have been the driving force behind the publication's resilience.

SUSTAINING THE NEVER-SAY-DIE SPIRIT

The journey of The Indian Panorama has been a tapestry woven with the threads of collective support. As a leader and advocate for truth, I couldn't have sustained the never-say-die spirit without the robust backing of these pillars. Adversities were met with determination, fueled by the belief that the pursuit of



With Amb. Manoj K. Mohapatra, V Consul General of India in Guatemala



Prof. Saluja interacts with S.M. Krishna, the then External Affairs Minister of India



Prof. Saluja speaking at the Bal Divas at the Consulate General of India in New York on December 26, 2022



Prof. Saluja with Comptroller New York John Liu and the Sikh community

truth is a collective responsibility.

In each challenge faced, be it financial hurdles, content creation demands, or the need for emotional resilience, the patrons, advertisers, readers, contributors, friends, and family stood steadfast. Their support became the driving force propelling The Indian Panorama forward.

STAYING TRUE TO 'EVER TRUTHFUL'

Amid the storms and victories, The Indian Panorama has remained true to its motto, "EVER TRUTHFUL." This commitment is not just a slogan but a guiding principle, a promise to our readers, and a testament to the collective effort that sustains the publication.

PROFILE

# The Indian Panorama: Serving the Indian community for 18 years

The Gratitude Gala, says Prof Indrajit Singh Saluja, The Indian Panorama's Founding Editor and Publisher, is to say our heartfelt thanks to our readers, friends, patrons and advertisers for their love and support.

The Indian Panorama is a labor of love for its Founding Editor and Publisher, Prof Indrajit Singh Saluja. The weekly paper is also an expression of his love for India as well as a platform to project the rich South Asian culture and how our successful community has made a place in the melting pot of America.

Started 18 years ago from New York, The Indian Panorama is a premier English weekly newspaper. It serves mainly the Indian community in the New York tristate area and Dallas-Fort Worth, from where it has an edition. Its digital edition, of course, reaches the Indian diaspora in the US as well as Indian readers wherever they live. The Indian Panorama has been a leading Indian community paper in the USA. Its editorial content is a reader-friendly mix of community

news, as well as Indian and American current affairs news and commentary.

'Ever Truthful' is the paper's motto as displayed on its masthead. Which means, as long as The Indian Panorama is helmed by Prof Saluja, neither fear nor favor can interfere with its editorial policy and choice of news stories.

The Indian Panorama and Prof Indrajit Saluja have become synonymous in the eyes of the reading public. He is not only an eminent editor, but he has also emerged as a community leader. He has been able to work closely with the Indian Consulate in New York and the Permanent Mission of India to take their voice to his readers, and take his readers' concerns and issues to the Indian authorities.

Even as he is considered a leader by his own community,



Prof Saluja interviewed the new Consul General of India in New York, Binaya S. Pradhan, last month.

the Sikhs, he has built enduring relationships with organizations and people identifying with other religions and regions of India. To top it all, he is sought after by American lawmakers and leaders as well.

A multilingual, Prof. Saluja also writes in Hindi and Punjabi, and has launched newspapers in these languages from New York. A pleasing personality blessed with the gift of the gab, he has also hosted talk shows on major South Asian TV channels and gets invited as a keynote speaker at conferences and major events.

Indefatigable, energetic, and unputdownable, Prof Saluja's spirit and intensity of work are undimmed by his years. He tries to be ahead of the curve, as he displayed by making The Indian Panorama digital before Covid taught that lesson to other publishers.

Prof Saluja and The Indian Panorama have been appreciated, commended, and honored by many institutions, organizations and individuals. Last year, he was felicitated with the 'Jewel of India' award.

'Professor' that prefaces his name is not an appellation. He taught English Literature for 40 years in leading colleges in India. Having educated, lived, and worked in various states rounded out his personality. Even before coming to America, he founded and published for many years a prominent monthly magazine titled 'Punjab Beat'.

Age is just a number, says Prof Saluja, celebrating his 80th, and quotes Robert Frost's immortal words: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have miles to go before I sleep."



Front pages of The Indian Panorama over the years



*Heartiest Congratulations to*

*The* **INDIAN**  **PANORAMA**  
EVER TRUTHFUL

and Prof. Indrajit S Saluja  
on the 18th year celebrations of the  
celebrated newspaper.

**We are proud of your services  
and achievements.**



**Balbeer Singh  
Pahwa**  
516-849-9596



**Dyal Singh  
Vohra**  
516-232-1419



**Harcharan Singh  
Gulati**  
516-643-2266



**Kulraj Singh  
Longhani**  
516-469-5060



**Santokh Singh  
Bajaj**  
516-225-3420



PROFILE

# Blitz India: Pioneering development news

**BLITZ INDIA IS COMMITTED TO A DEVELOPED INDIA. ITS US EDITION GETS A LAUNCH AT THE INDIAN PANORAMA'S GRATITUDE GALA.**

Blitz India is the world's first chronicler of development news. Launched in 2022 by veteran media person Mr Deepak Dwivedi, the news weekly gives sustained coverage to the ideas, policies, programs and activities that deal with the improvement of people's lives. It provides a fair, accurate, and contextualized picture of today's India and the world, without hyping the negatives.

Under Mr Dwivedi, Chairman and Editor-in-Chief, Blitz India offers constructive suggestions on what best can be done to ensure that no one is left behind in the development process, as professed in the transformative motto of Agenda 2030 of the United Nations in the form of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all UN Member States. Blitz India provides an effective platform to channel all efforts in India towards SDGs' implementation through its social foundation.

The English edition of Blitz India was launched in February 2022 in New Delhi by Mr Amitabh Kant, the then-CEO of Niti Aayog. In September 2022, Blitz India saw the Mumbai launch. Its Hindi edition was started the same year.

The launch of the online UK edition of Blitz India in London in June 2023 attracted the who's who of Britain and India. The speakers included Gopichand Hinduja, Chairperson, Hinduja Group, and Tushar Mehta, Solicitor General of India. Lord Swaraj Paul sent a

## MR DEEPAK DWIVEDI

**BLITZ INDIA FOUNDER TRUSTEE, CHAIRMAN & CHIEF EDITOR**

- Over three decades of media experience in leadership positions.
- Formerly Chairman of the Board and Chief Editor of Dainik Bhaskar Group, Noida
- As Political Editor covered sensitive Indian Cabinet meetings and PM briefings
- Accompanied the PM, President and other dignitaries on their foreign visits
- Expert Editor of National Museum Institute, Indian Ministry of Culture
- Academic Council on the UN System ACUNS - Expert Member on Poverty and Human Rights, Central and South Asia.
- Founder President, Nagrik Foundation supporting SDGs
- Honored by UN Women
- Attended the UN General Assembly as part of UN Global Compact
- Authored 'Empowering the Marginalized', on inclusive development
- MMSM International Distinguished Leadership Award 2017 for Responsible Journalism and Sustainable Development
- Visiting Professor, Deptt of Journalism and Mass Communication, YMU
- Executive Member, Press Association and Press Club of India



congratulatory video message.

Blitz India has become a must-read for policymakers, thinkers, and the intelligentsia. Its development journalism has been welcomed by the readers, inspiring editions from all major cities in India and international editions.

The India of the 21st century has given rise to a new kind of politics and a new governance agenda, to shape a new nation. Blitz India acts as a catalyst in this transformational process and lends

momentum to it. The weekly directs its efforts towards 'building a new nation', as proclaimed in its tagline.

Mr Dwivedi started his three-decade-long journalism career with Blitz, a weekly tabloid with focus on investigative journalism, where he worked closely with the founder Mr R.K. Karanjia.

Mr Sandeep Saxena is Group CEO Blitz India Media. He has media industry experience of over two decades,



including a stint at the Indian Express Group, and part of the launch team of Financial Express, Chandigarh Edition.



Mr Sandeep Saxena is Group CEO Blitz India Media.

### SANDEEPP SAXENA IS ALSO

- President RCGP 23-24 | Rotary International Distt 3011 India
- Global Convenor SDG Choupal, a flagship initiative of the Nagrik Foundation (Philanthropy arm of Blitz India Media)
- Country Director, Eye Foundation of America
- Founder Blitz Edu Initiatives

PROFILE

# Lotus webmag to be felicitated at the Indian Panorama gala



ALotusInTheMud.com, the premier wellness and spirituality web magazine founded by seasoned journalist Parveen Chopra, is celebrating its first anniversary after it was launched at the Indian Consulate in New York in January 2023.

Prof Indrajit Saluja will felicitate Lotus and his longtime friend, Mr Chopra at the Gratitude Gala of 'The Indian Panorama' on February 25 in Hicksville, Long Island.

Mr Chopra, who has specialized in the

body-mind-spirit genre of journalism, says about the content mix of Lotus, "We tap diverse religious and spiritual traditions, particularly from India, for wisdom as well as draw from the latest scientific research to present helpful articles for people to be fully productive and yet be healthy, happy, and centered."

The variety of articles in his web magazine has ranged from 'I took Finland's Masterclass of Happiness, so you don't have to', and 'How to heal a broken heart - Valentine's Day special' to 'The new university for your child's education - Mother's womb!'

Among highlights of one year of Lotus, Mr Chopra cites launching a biweekly newsletter 'The Lotus Bloom' last June, covering Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in August, organizing a discourse in September on Kashmir

Shaivism by Virendra Qazi, a top expert on the subject.

Explaining the unusual name, Mr Chopra says that 'Lotus in the mud' is a key concept in Buddhism and Hinduism, signifying that we may get muddled by problems, but each one of us has the inherent capability to emerge as full bloom lotus in body, mind, and spirit. He claims that he conceived Lotus roused by the Covid desolation to do something helpful for society.

Lotus web magazine is published by the American Center for Wellness and Spirituality Inc (ACWS), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. ACWS is a social enterprise that also plans to do offline activities. Among its objectives is fostering interfaith and inter-cultural harmony as well as world peace.

Mr Chopra is an editor-entrepreneur



SOUVENIR EDITOR

The Indian Panorama's Gratitude Gala Souvenir has been edited by Parveen Chopra, Founder and Editor of ALotusInTheMud.com

focused on wellness, personal growth, and spirituality. A trained teacher of meditation, he started 'Life Positive', India's first body-mind-spirit print magazine, in 1996 from New Delhi. He has worked for 'India Today' and has contributed to magazines like 'Yoga Journal'. Moving to the US in 2007, he edited 'The South Asian Times' for over a decade and 'One World Under God' interfaith journal.

He is growing his team in the US and India, and plans to launch Lotus's India edition later this year from New Delhi.



Congratulations to Indian Panorama Publication  
& Professor Saluja  
On the 18th Anniversary of Publication

Congratulation to the Honorees  
Congratulation to Honorable Tom Suozzi

Welcoming of Consul General of India  
Honorable Binaya Srikanta Pradhan to New York

GB Network Enterprise



Bathija Builders, Group,



*Gobind & Sonia Bathija Family*



COMPLETING ONE YEAR,  
ALOTUSINTHEMUD.COM IS SET TO GROW  
AND CURATE MORE USEFUL CONTENT FOR YOU.



**THANK YOU,  
READERS, DONORS &  
SUPPORTERS**

ALotusInTheMud.com brings you  
insights and inspiration for a Happy,  
Healthy and Productive life.

**Regularly visit this not-for-profit online  
magazine, it is paywall free.**

Also subscribe for FREE to our fortnightly newsletter  
at <https://alotusinthemud.com/subscribe-now/>

To give a tax-deductible donation, go to the website,  
or contact - Parveen Chopra Ph: 516 710 0508,  
Email: [parveen.chopra@Gmail.Com](mailto:parveen.chopra@Gmail.Com).





*The* **INDIAN PANORAMA**  
EVER TRUTHFUL

WE CELEBRATE THE  
18TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

WE LOOK FORWARD TO MANY MORE

**THANK YOU, DEAR PATRONS**

BAISAKHI CELEBRAT

02 APRIL 2022

RACHI & SURYA

VINOD SHARMA

Rachi & Surya



Get  
to the  
Point



*The* **INDIAN**  **PANORAMA**

EVER TRUTHFUL

A DELIGHTFUL READING EVERY WEEK

Widest Coverage

Your Trusted Partner in Business

**The Indian Panorama**

P.O. Box No. 190067, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419, Tel: 646-247-9458  
Dallas Edition - P.O. Box 121695, Arlington, TX 76012

[www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news)



# MAYOR ADAMS, NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS ANNOUNCE FREE TAX PREP SERVICES FOR NEW YORKERS

**WITH TAX SEASON UNDERWAY, IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL TAX PREPARATION SERVICES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT CITY PUBLIC HOSPITALS IN VARIOUS LANGUAGES**



New York City Mayor Eric Adams and NYC Health + Hospitals, on February 23, announced free, in-person, and virtual tax preparation services for New Yorkers

**FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

**NEW YORK (TIP):** New York City Mayor Eric Adams and NYC Health + Hospitals, on February 23, announced free, in-person, and virtual tax preparation services for New Yorkers as part of the New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection's (DCWP) NYC Free Tax Prep initiative.

In partnership with BronxWorks, Grow Brooklyn, Urban Upbound, and Code for America's GetYourRefund initiative, free tax preparation is available for New Yorkers who earn \$85,000 or less annually and file as a family, or those who earn \$59,000 or less annually and file as an individual or couple without dependents. Select NYC Health + Hospitals sites offer support in Spanish, Chinese, and Bengali, and virtual tax preparation is available in Spanish as well.

"Every day, we work to make this city more livable for working-class New Yorkers, and by offering free tax preparation at NYC Health + Hospitals sites, we are again delivering for families across the five boroughs," said Mayor Adams. "Services are available online, in-person, and in multiple languages, making it easy for families to file their taxes and keep money in their pockets. We went to Albany to secure the first increase in the city's Earned Income Tax Credit in 20 years, and we are thrilled to offer New Yorkers NYC Free Tax Prep to help them receive their fair share this tax season."

For in-person services, individuals should schedule an appointment in advance and bring identification and proof of income. For virtual services, individuals can upload their documents and meet virtually with a tax preparer to review their tax return before submission. A full checklist of the documents needed to file taxes is available online.

"Tax season can induce anxiety about filling in the right boxes, finding the proper forms, and trying to access all the credits for which you and your family may qualify," said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom. "This year, take a moment to see if you qualify for support through this unique partnership with our public hospital system. In this case, your NYC Health + Hospitals provider might be able to also help you get the peace of mind you need with your taxes."

"An annual tax refund is often the largest lump-sum payment families receive all year and something that many working New Yorkers count on - even more so since last year's historic enhancement of the New York City Earned Income Tax Credit," said Deputy Mayor for Housing, Economic Development, and Workforce Maria Torres-Springer. "Partnerships like the one between DCWP, NYC Health + Hospitals, and the city's tax preparation partners help us meet New Yorkers where they are with free tax prep services that help them put a meaningful sum of money back into their pockets."

"For over 20 years, NYC Free Tax Prep has helped file hundreds of thousands of tax returns," said DCWP Commissioner Vilda Vera Mayuga. "This year, we're helping filers keep more of their hard-earned money with the enhanced New York City Earned Income Tax Credit and our expanded NYC Free Tax Prep services for self-employed New Yorkers. Thank you to all of our amazing tax prep partners, like NYC Health + Hospitals and MetroPlusHealth, for working to help New Yorkers get their fullest refund."

"We are proud to partner with NYC Tax Prep to support financial well-being by offering trusted services that save money on filing taxes and promote access to tax credits," said Nichola Davis, MD, MS, vice president and chief population health officer, NYC Health + Hospitals. "We know that tax refunds can be the biggest influx of income over the course of a year for many, so we aim to alleviate financial stress in order to foster a healthier future for our patients."

"We are proud to again offer New Yorkers help with filing their taxes this year," said Steve Mitchell, vice president

of sales, MetroPlusHealth. "Many families will benefit from this free service at select MetroPlusHealth community centers, as well as receive guidance on signing up for health insurance."

NYC Free Tax Prep provides free, professional tax preparation that can help New Yorkers keep their full refund, including valuable tax credits, like the recently enhanced New York City Earned Income Tax Credit. NYC Free Tax Prep Services include:

**In-Person Tax Preparation:** At in-person tax prep sites, knowledgeable Internal Revenue Service (IRS) certified Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) volunteer preparers help filers complete an accurate tax return. More than 130 sites across the city will be open throughout the season.

**DROP-OFF SERVICE:** With drop-off service, filers can drop off their tax documents and pick up the completed return later.

**VIRTUAL TAX PREPARATION:** Virtual Tax Preparation is an online service where an IRS-certified VITA or TCE volunteer preparer will video conference with filers to help prepare their tax return using a secure digital system. Filers can submit photos or scans of tax documents to the preparer, confirm their identity, and complete their return by video call with a preparer. Filers will need access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone; a stable internet connection; and the ability to download secure video conference software.

**ASSISTED SELF-PREPARATION:** Assisted Self-Preparation allows filers to complete their tax return online on their own, and an IRS-certified VITA/TCE volunteer preparer will be available by phone or email to answer questions. Filers will need access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone; a stable internet connection; an email address; and their 2022 adjusted gross income or self-select PIN.

NYC Free Tax Prep Services are available now at over 130 VITA and TCE sites around the city. The IRS will accept returns through April 15, 2024. New Yorkers can call 311 or visit the NYC Free Tax Prep website and use DCWP's interactive map to search for the most convenient free tax site near them.

Below are locations and hours for in-person free tax preparation at NYC Health + Hospitals and MetroPlusHealth sites this season:

In-Person Tax Preparation at NYC Health + Hospitals and MetroPlusHealth Sites

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

## ATLAS ROLL OFF CORP.

### DISPOSAL SITE

OPEN Monday - Friday 6.30 AM to 4.00 PM  
Saturday 6.30 AM to 1.30 PM

For  
construction  
Debris,  
Demolition  
& Cleanouts



Located at 895 Essex Street, Brooklyn, NY 11208  
Just 5 minutes from JFK



**Roll Off Container Service**  
10, 15, 20, 30 & 40 Yards

Serving all the five boroughs of New York Since 1983  
NYC BIC LIC #711

Reasonable low rates \*\* All major credit cards accepted

**Call @ 718-345-6451**



# Rimli Roy receives NJ State Council on the Arts Individual Artist Fellowship 2024 award



FEBRUARY 20, 2024

**TRENTON, NJ (TIP):** Surati Founder and Artistic Director Ms Rimli Roy receives the NJ State Council on the Arts 2024 Individual Artist Fellowship award. Ms Roy is a recipient in the Interdisciplinary category which uses two or more artistic forms from the categories listed for this award in alternate years. Ms Roy is also a past recipient of the Folk Arts Apprenticeship award from the NJSCA and the Sunshine Award in 2023.

The letter from the NJ State Council on the Arts says: "The New Jersey State Council on the Arts is pleased to share the exciting news that you are among 76 artists selected from 692 eligible applicants in six artistic disciplines to be awarded a 2024 Individual Artist Fellowship. Your work was reviewed by a panel of peers working in your field, and they evaluated it to be of very high artistic quality. A Fellowship in the amount of \$21,750.00 will be awarded to you in recognition of the outstanding work you are doing and in the hope that it will enable you to further your artistic goals."

**ABOUT RIMLI ROY**

Rimli Roy is an artiste, dancer,

choreographer, producer, director, actor, visionary and humanitarian from Kolkata, India who embarked on her artistic journey at the age of four, immersing herself first in classical Indian dance forms like Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Manipuri under renowned gurus of India, while also learning Western classical pianoforte under the tutelage of the Trinity College of Music, London as well as Indian Classical music (Hindustani vocals and harmonium). Her quest led her to explore beyond traditional practices. Significant milestones in her journey are the creation of productions like "Glimpses of India" and "Ramaavan - A Musical" that seamlessly blend genres from the East and the West. Ms. Roy's artistry has graced iconic venues such as the United Nations, The Kennedy Center and The Library of Congress in D.C, The Lincoln Center in NYC, The Indian Consulate in NYC, Times Square NYC, and The Alaska Performing Arts Center. Beyond her performances, she nurtures budding dancers and collaborates with tri-state organizations to democratize the arts. Her ensemble beautifully reflects her commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusivity.



Rimli Roy is among 76 artists selected from 692 eligible applicants in six artistic disciplines to be awarded a 2024 Individual Artist Fellowship.

new jersey performing arts center  
**njpac**



**ledisi**

**Mar 7 @ 8PM**  
GRAMMY® winner and powerhouse vocalist **Ledisi** is joined by special guest Raheem DeV Vaughn.



**kristin chenoweth**

**Sat, Mar 9 @ 8PM**  
The dazzling and delightful Tony-winning vocalist **Kristin Chenoweth** performs her favorite show-stopping songs.



**blippi**

**The Wonderful World Tour**  
**Sat, Mar 16 @ 3PM**  
**Blippi** returns to NJPAC for **The Wonderful World Tour!** Kids will have a blast dancing and singing along.



**trinity irish dance company**

**Sun, Mar 17 @ 7PM**  
Spend St. Patrick's Day with the high-energy Irish step dance performers of **Trinity Irish Dance Company**.



**academy of st martin in the fields with joshua bell**

**Sat, Mar 30 @ 3PM**  
See **Joshua Bell** in the dazzling dual role as soloist and conductor with the celebrated **Academy of St Martin in the Fields**.



**tisra**

**Zakir Hussain with Debopriya Chatterjee and Sabir Khan**  
**Sat, Apr 13 @ 3 & 7:30PM**  
Experience the richness, depth and joy of Indian classic music with **Zakir Hussain, Sabir Khan** and **Debopriya Chatterjee**.

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

Horizon music & comedy

M&T Bank dance series

Generous support for Classical performances provided by the Smart Family Foundation/David S. Stone, Esq., Stone & Magnanini

The American Song series at NJPAC is presented, in part, through the generous support of the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, the David S. Steiner and Sylvia Steiner Charitable Trust, the Joan and Allen Bildner Family Fund, and the Smart Family Foundation/David S. Stone, Esq., Stone & Magnanini.

For full 2023 – 24 schedule visit [njpac.org](http://njpac.org) or call 1.888.MY.NJPAC • One Center Street • Newark, NJ



# Indian American professor Anantha Chandrakasan named MIT's first chief innovation and strategy officer

FEBRUARY 19, 2024

**BOSTON (TIP)** : Indian American professor Anantha Chandrakasan, dean of the School of Engineering and the Vannevar Bush Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, has been named as MIT's first chief innovation and strategy officer. He will continue to serve as dean of engineering, a role he has held since 2017.

As chief innovation and strategy officer, Chandrakasan will work closely with MIT President Sally Kornbluth to advance the ambitious agenda that she has laid out in the first year of her presidency, according to a press release.

He will collaborate with key stakeholders across MIT, as well as external partners, to launch initiatives and new collaborations in support of these strategic priorities.

In his new role, Chandrakasan will help develop and implement plans to advance research, education, and innovation in areas that Kornbluth has identified as her top priorities - such as climate change and sustainability, artificial intelligence, and the life sciences. He will also play a leading role in efforts to secure the resources needed for MIT researchers to pursue bold work in these key areas.

"I am thrilled and honored to help advance President Kornbluth's vision for MIT in this new role," Chandrakasan says. "Working closely with faculty, staff, and students across the Institute, I am excited to help shape and launch initiatives that will accelerate research and innovation on some of the world's most urgent needs. My hope is to enable our researchers with the support, resources, and infrastructure they need to maximize the impact of their work."

"I was immediately impressed by Anantha's can-do attitude and his clear interest in working with us to develop and advance our priorities for the Institute," Kornbluth says.

"With his signature energy, creativity, and enthusiasm, he has a gift for organizing complex initiatives and ideas and making sure they move forward with alacrity. Combined with his strategic



Anantha Chandrakasan, dean of the School of Engineering and the Vannevar Bush Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, has been named as MIT's first chief innovation and strategy officer

insight, deep knowledge across many subject areas, and terrific record in raising funds for important ideas, Anantha is uniquely suited to serve MIT in this new role, and I'm delighted he has agreed to take it on."

Working closely with MIT's existing programs in entrepreneurship, Chandrakasan will develop strategies to accelerate innovation across the Institute, the release stated. These efforts will aim to grow and support these programs while identifying new opportunities to support student and faculty entrepreneurs and maximize their impact.

In addition to examining ways to advance research, entrepreneurship, and collaborations, Chandrakasan will work with Provost Cynthia Barnhart and Chancellor Melissa Nobles to advance new educational initiatives. This will include developing new programs and tracks to optimize students' preparation for a variety of career paths.

"In many ways, this role is a natural extension of the significant work Anantha has already been doing to help shape strategic priorities on an Institute level," Barnhart says. "All of MIT stands to benefit from his extensive experience launching and building new programs and initiatives."

As dean of engineering since 2017, Chandrakasan has implemented a variety of interdisciplinary programs, creating new models for how academia and industry

can work together to accelerate the pace of research.

This has resulted in the launch of initiatives including the MIT Climate and Sustainability Consortium, the MIT-IBM Watson AI Lab, the MIT-Takeda Program, the MIT and Accenture Convergence Initiative, the MIT Mobility Initiative, the MIT Quest for Intelligence, the MIT AI Hardware Program, the MIT-Northpond Program, the MIT Faculty Founder Initiative, and the MIT-Novo Nordisk Artificial Intelligence Postdoctoral Fellows Program, the release stated.

Chandrakasan has also played a role as dean in establishing a variety of initiatives beyond the School of Engineering. He was instrumental in the 2018 founding of the Schwarzman College of Computing, the most significant structural change to MIT in nearly 70 years.

He also has served in leadership roles on MIT Fast Forward, an Institute-wide plan for addressing climate change; as the inaugural chair of the Abdul Latif Jameel Clinic for Machine Learning in Health; and as the co-chair of the academic workstream for MIT's Task Force 2021.

Before becoming dean, Chandrakasan led an Institute-wide working group to guide the development of policies and procedures related to MIT's 2016 launch of The Engine, and also served on The Engine's inaugural board.

Prior to becoming dean in 2017, Chandrakasan served for six years as head of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS), MIT's largest academic department. As department head, he led the development of initiatives that continue to have an impact across MIT.

He created Rising Stars in EECS, an academic career workshop that rotates amongst various universities and has become a model for similar efforts in other disciplines.

Under his leadership, EECS also launched the SuperUROP program as well as Start6, which has since become StartMIT, a program supporting students interested in entrepreneurship, the release stated.

## Indian American economist Daleep Singh set to return to White House



Daleep Singh is a key architect of the Biden administration's economic sanctions on Russia

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)**: Indian American Economist Daleep Singh, a key architect of the Biden administration's economic sanctions on Russia, is coming back to the White House, according to a media report.

Singh, who served in the Treasury Department in the Obama administration, will return to his previous role as deputy national security adviser for international economics taking over from Mike Pyle who leaves at the end of the month.

Daleep Singh's return as the deputy national security adviser for international economics "will allow him to pick up where he left off in April of 2022 - looking for innovative ways to punish Russia and help support Ukraine," the report suggested.

The position, which reports to both the NSC and the National Economic Council, is one of the most important in the White House.

As part of the portfolio, Singh will help coordinate the US position at both the G7 and G20 summits.

This year the G7 leaders will meet in June in Italy. The G20 summit is scheduled to occur in Brazil in November after the presidential election.

With a \$95 billion foreign aid package stuck in Congress, Biden officials are exploring how they can help Ukraine without Congressional authorization, the report stated.

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

## Indian American Farhan Gandhi named Distinguished Professor at NC State University

FEBRUARY 19, 2024

CHARLOTTE, NC

**(TIP)**: Indian American professor Farhan Gandhi, renowned for his research contributions to eVTOL (electric vertical take-off and landing) aircraft technologies, has been named a Distinguished Professor at NC State University.

The newly established Hassan A. Hassan distinguished professorship in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering has been named after the late titan of the MAE department and legend in the field of aerospace engineering.

Hassan helped to establish the professorship shortly before his passing in 2019 alongside his son Basil Hassan and MAE Department Head Srinath Ekkad, according to a press release.



Farhan Gandhi, renowned for his research contributions to eVTOL (electric vertical take-off and landing) aircraft technologies, has been named a Distinguished Professor at NC State University.

In 1962, Hassan joined North Carolina State University as a full professor and spent 53 years at NC State before beginning his phased retirement in 2015. While at NC State, he was the major adviser to 34 doctoral students, he authored more than 200 publications, and has been recognized with numerous research awards.

Hassan died at the age of 87 in 2019, but through his massive contributions to the field of Aerospace Engineering, and through his establishment of both the Dr. Hassan A. Hassan Distinguished Professorship, the Hassan A. Hassan Distinguished Lecture Series, and many more lasting contributions to the department, his legacy lives on.

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



# Dr Samir Shah is the first Indian origin Chairman of BBC

**THE 72-YEAR-OLD HAS NOW BEEN CONFIRMED IN THE 1,60,000 POUNDS PER YEAR AND FOUR-YEAR TERM ROLE TO TAKE CHARGE FROM MARCH 4.**

**FEBRUARY 22, 2024**

**LONDON (TIP):** India-born media executive Dr Samir Shah was on Thursday confirmed as the new BBC chairman after his selection cleared the stages of scrutiny to be approved by King Charles III this week.

Shah, who has worked in UK broadcasting for over 40 years, was picked as the government's preferred candidate in December last year and went on to be quizzed by cross-party MPs of the House of Commons Media Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee for his pre-appointment scrutiny.

The 72-year-old has now been confirmed in the 1,60,000 pounds per year and four-year term role to take charge as the public broadcaster's first Indian-origin Chair from March 4 and running until March 2028.

"With a career spanning more than 40 years in TV production and journalism, Dr Shah has a wealth of experience to bring to the position of BBC Chair," said UK Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer as she announced his selection.

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



Dr Samir Shah

Photo/gov.uk

future," she said.

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

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

"BBC is, without doubt, one of the greatest contributions we have made to global culture and one of our strongest calling cards on soft power. If I am able to

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

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

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

Before taking up the role as BBC Chair, he was the CEO of Juniper - an independent television and radio production company, since 1998.

He was elected a fellow of Royal Television Society in 2002 and appointed visiting professor of creative media at Oxford University in 2019 and the University of Nottingham appointed him to a special professorship in Department of Post-Conflict Studies.

Besides, the Oxford University alumnus is a race relations expert who co-authored the government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report in 2021.

(Source: PT)

## INDIAN AMERICAN LEADER MANJUSHA KULKARNI WINS 2024 JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP AWARD



Manjusha Kulkarni, Executive Director of AAPI Equity Alliance, has won the James Irvine Foundation award for confronting hate and discrimination against AAPI communities

**FEBRUARY 19, 2024**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** Manjusha Kulkarni, Executive Director of AAPI Equity Alliance, has won the James Irvine Foundation award for confronting hate and discrimination against AAPI communities with data, partnerships, and policy solutions.

Kulkarni is one of nine leaders from six organizations who received the 2024 Leadership Awards for their dedicated efforts in addressing critical issues impacting Californians.

"This year's Award recipients are an impressive group of innovators working on a wide range of challenges including teacher preparation, youth justice, college access and completion, and ensuring the health and safety of Asian American and Pacific Islander, LGBTQ+, refugee, and immigrant populations," according to a press release.

As a teen, Kulkarni observed her mother file a successful class action lawsuit against the state over discriminatory policies against non-European doctors, according to her official profile.

This experience, along with incidents that made her feel "othered" as one of the only AAPI students in school, seeded Kulkarni's activism and compelled her to pursue a law degree and a career in civil rights.

After engaging in critical work in civil rights and health law and policy, she was entrusted to lead the AAPI Equity Alliance (formerly A3PCON) in 2017. Kulkarni led the forty-year-old organization into a new era, growing it from a behind-the-scenes organization to one that leads groundbreaking work in healthcare access, interpersonal violence, and mental health.

AAPI Equity Alliance is now a coalition of over 40 organizations that serves the 1.6 million Asian American and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles and beyond, confronting discrimination, fighting mental health disparities, and pushing for legal and policy changes. (Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

## Three Indian Americans appointed to key jobs by California Governor



California Governor Gavin Newsom has appointed Naginder Dhillon, Hemant Dhingra and Nisha Devi Rodrigo to key positions

**FEBRUARY 21, 2024**

**PARMINDER AUJLA**

**SACRAMENTO (TIP) :** California Governor Gavin Newsom has appointed three Indian Americans to key posts in his administration

Naginder Dhillon, of Sacramento, has been appointed Deputy Director of Program Support in the Division of Rehabilitative Programs at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Hemant Dhingra, of Clovis, has been appointed to the Medical Board

of California, while Nisha Devi Rodrigo, of San Francisco, has been appointed to the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

Dhillon has been Associate Director at the Corrections department since 2019 and served in several positions in the Budget Management Branch from 2008 to 2010, including Staff Services Manager I and Associate Budget Analyst.

Dhillon was a Branch Chief at the California Department of Housing and Community Development from 2017 to 2019. She was a Branch Chief at the California Department of Public Health from 2012 to 2016 and a Health Program Specialist I there from 2010 to 2012.

Dhillon was a Research Analyst I at the Employment Development Department from 2006 to 2007.

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

## Indian American man arrested in connection with father's murder in New Jersey

**FEBRUARY 17, 2024**

**TRENTON, NJ (TIP):** A 32-year-old Indian American man, Melvin Thomas, has been arrested in connection with the death of his 61-year-old father, Manuel V. Thomas, in their Paramus, New Jersey home.

The Bergen County Prosecutor's Office has charged Melvin Thomas with first-degree murder, alongside several related offenses.

According to local news reports, Melvin Thomas, who is unemployed, was the one to call the police regarding the incident.

The Thomases are immigrants from the Indian state of Kerala. A social media handle used by Thomas stated that he was an alumnus of St. Stephen's College Uzhavoor in the Kottayam district, in south-central Kerala.

The tragic incident unfolded on Friday, February 16, 2024, when the Paramus Police Department responded to a call about a potential homicide at 693 Bruce Drive. Upon arrival, officers discovered the lifeless body of Manuel V. Thomas in the basement of the residence. Manuel Thomas had sustained multiple stab wounds and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Melvin Thomas was swiftly identified as a suspect and taken into custody by Paramus police officers.

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



Melvin Thomas, has been arrested in connection with the death of his 61-year-old father, Manuel V. Thomas, in their Paramus, New Jersey home.



# The message from two SC verdicts

**THE RULING PARTY'S CONFIDENCE SHOULD NOT PROMPT ITS SUPPORTERS TO SHAKE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY**



BY RAJESH  
RAMACHANDRAN

**"The Election Commission of India (ECI) was a fiercely independent institution when it was helmed by TN Seshan. Herein lies the sad story of Indian institutions. The character of most of these institutions changes with the person at the top. The court's order on electoral bonds is a wake-up call for the ECI. Indian elections are free and fair. But the first-past-the-post system seeks its credibility entirely from the institution that conducts the polls. And if the conductor falters, the process gets easily accused of manipulation."**

The Supreme Court's judgments on the electoral bonds and the Chandigarh mayoral election are epoch-making. There cannot be a graver offence to democracy than anonymous election funding. Anonymity is synonymous with deception and corruption. While nameless funders possibly conceal their business and personal objectives, only transparency can help make the voter do a cost-benefit analysis between a funder and the funded political entity. So, it is imperative for the voter to know who is funding his or her chosen candidate.

A local poll to elect a mayor became a test case, and the court has majestically ensured that the Indian system passes it to prove that it still works.

By delivering a verdict annulling the electoral bond scheme, the apex court Bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has saved the constitutional foundations of the Republic. This ruling, while enhancing the SC's stature as the final institutional bulwark of constitutional morality, also points fingers at other constitutional bodies that have begun to behave like government appendages.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) was a fiercely independent institution when it was helmed by TN Seshan. Herein lies the sad story of Indian institutions. The character of most of these institutions changes with the person at the top. The court's order on electoral bonds is a wake-up call for the ECI. Indian elections are free and fair. But the first-past-the-post system seeks its credibility entirely from the



Epoch-making: The Supreme Court's judgment in the electoral bond case has enhanced its stature as the final institutional bulwark of constitutional morality. Credit / ANI

institution that conducts the polls. And if the conductor falters, the process gets easily accused of manipulation.

That is something the Indian democracy can ill afford, particularly in the context of all the barbs of it being an elected autocracy hurled by the Western academia and its media.

Equally important is the SC verdict reversing the Chandigarh mayoral poll result. Presiding officer Anil Masih was caught on camera blatantly defacing ballot papers to make valid votes for the AAP-Congress candidate invalid. This was nothing short of 'murder of democracy', no doubt.

A local poll to elect a mayor became a test case, and the court has majestically ensured that the Indian system passes it to prove that it still works. But how many such tests and shocks can the system withstand before it capitulates is a question that the votaries of the strong government need to ask themselves. A strong government derives its strength from the people's conviction, not from arm-twisting tactics of its storm-troopers.

Despite the two setbacks from the top court, the BJP is on an unassailable electoral upswing. The consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya has created such a groundswell of religious goodwill for PM Modi among temple-going ordinary Hindus that it is now a mundane exercise for him to convert it into political capital for the polls. Then, of course, there is the added advantage of the Opposition remaining a house divided. Going by the last election's schedule, there are less than 50 days left for the first phase of polling. Yet, the Opposition has not firmed up poll tie-ups.

All those who may call the Indian democracy names after the elections should seriously look at the sorry state of the Opposition right now. As of today, it is not clear whether AAP and the Congress will have an alliance in Punjab. Even in Delhi, where a 4-3 formula of seat-sharing is being talked about, there is no official announcement so far. The Samajwadi-Congress alliance in Uttar Pradesh is the only one that has been sealed. Meanwhile, Rahul Gandhi has taken a break from his yatra to lecture at Cambridge, as if Oxbridge scholars' votes count in Amethi or Wayanad.

The urgency of a group preparing to take on a juggernaut is glaringly missing in the terribly slow pace at which Opposition parties move. Incidentally, the Left, which is the fulcrum on which the Opposition in Delhi turns, has announced its candidates, including the one who would take on Rahul, if he contests from Wayanad. But a political understanding with Mamata Banerjee that could have altered the scene in West Bengal is still eluding the Congress as the BJP tries to project itself as her biggest challenger in the state.

Unless there is an unseen anti-incumbency storm gathering amongst the masses, there is no chance of a serious challenge to PM Modi's electoral pole position in these circumstances. The possibility of a third term for Modi looks strong. However, that confidence should not prompt his followers to shake the foundations of Indian democracy - which is the message from the SC verdicts.

A recent issue of The Economist magazine has a brilliant leader on the perils of national conservatism. In the context of the American elections, the magazine talks about Trump's aides

readying a programme "to capture the federal bureaucracy". To eulogize Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as torchbearers of virtuous conservatism while condemning all newbie national conservatives as liberals opposed to multilateralism abroad and pluralism at home is obviously polemical. Reagan's initiation into politics was as an FBI informer ratting out communists in Hollywood; but for the Falklands War, Thatcher would never have found her feet. Both appealed to fiercely nationalist sentiments.

Nationalism is undeniably the core of conservatism. It suddenly cannot become dirty when bandied about by populists and anti-elites. But the difference now is the new attempt to subsume the entire system within the underbelly of the political executive. Indian bureaucracy has for some time now been caged parrots and pet falcons who sing and hunt for their political master. This situation cannot be blamed on any one party. A former bureaucrat, who had hunted down Subrata Roy for the UPA, was given cabinet rank long after retirement by a Left government this week.

Well, the capture of the bureaucracy by the Indian political class predated the global trend of national conservatism. Nevertheless, the two SC verdicts point towards the slippery slope we have reached. All that is left between the pinnacle of proud national achievements and the abyss of complete systemic breakdown are a few constitutional bodies. Remember, there can be no Ram Rajya without strong democratic institutions!

(The author is editor-in-chief of Tribune Group of Newspapers)



# What farmers want is the freedom to sell their produce



BY SANJEEV CHOPRA

**POLICY-MAKING IS EASY. WHAT'S DIFFICULT IS THE CREATION OF PHYSICAL AND IT INFRASTRUCTURE**

**"Policy-making is the easy part. What's difficult is the creation of physical and IT infrastructure. The hardest part is the task of making it work on the ground. The SFAC identifies and supports an IT expert (mandi analyst) for initial handholding for a period of one year for each mandi integrated with eNAM. They report to the state coordinator(s), each of whom handles the day-to-day coordination for 50 mandis each. They are also responsible for providing pro bono training to all stakeholders in the eNAM system: farmers, traders, commission agents and mandi officials."**

The recent bestowal of the Bharat Ratna on former Prime Ministers Charan Singh and PV Narasimha Rao and scientist-administrator Dr MS Swaminathan was a tribute to the entrepreneurial spirit of the Indian farmer.

All three were deeply invested in and committed to agriculture as well as farmers' welfare. Swaminathan's contribution is well-known and acknowledged, but it is equally important to understand the political economy in which the Green Revolution was successful. It was Charan Singh who explained to Nehru the pitfalls of the Soviet and Chinese types of 'collective farming'. He was clear that farmers were fiercely independent cultivators and were vehemently opposed to any centralized plan of 'land pooling and cooperative farming', which the Planning Commission was enamored of.

It was during Rao's tenure that India joined the World Trade Organization and signed the Agreement on Agriculture. Till then, India's policy regime had restricted imports. Under Rao, India looked to agri-exports as an important foreign exchange earner. With budgetary and institutional support to APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority), he helped Indian agriculture become globally competitive, though domestic trade



Detrimental: Restrictive trade practices are not good for farmers. eNAM is aimed at course correction.

File photo

continued to be operated through restrictive trade practices that were good for the procurement agencies and registered traders of the Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs), but not for the farmers.

Perhaps the most meaningful policy intervention made by him was the establishment of the Small Farmers' Agri-business Consortium (SFAC) in 1994. The organization has now been tasked with the establishment of the national electronic market for agriculture. A transformative initiative was launched by PM Narendra Modi on April 14, 2016: the SFAC-backed Electronic National Agriculture Market (eNAM), a 'phygital' (physical plus digital) market. This is a single-window portal with a physical back end that provides actionable information, physical infrastructure, trade options and electronic settlement of payments.

Today, thanks to this initiative of the SFAC, 10.7 million farmers have the freedom, flexibility and facilities to transact across 1,389 regulated wholesale markets in 23 states and four union territories (UTs) in their own language on their mobile phones. Another 1.7 lakh integrated licenses have been issued by the participating states and UTs, but of even greater significance is the active participation of around 3,500 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), for their transactions reflect granular support for this platform. As of January 2024, business of over Rs 3 lakh crore has been

transacted on this platform.

It is imperative to share the backstory of this successful intervention. When the APMCs were introduced in the 1950s, the farmer needed protection against distress sale. The APMCs were designed to ensure 'price discovery' and provide a platform for procurement by state agencies under the MSP regime. However, in this process, they also created a special class of intermediaries: the trader who had a license to operate in the particular mandi with its notified command area.

However, as India became an IT superpower and agriculture moved from a peasant to a market mode of production, there was a need to change the restrictive rules of trade. Institutions like the SFAC were established to leverage technologies and financial instruments to improve the terms of trade for marginal and small farmers. From providing venture capital funds to agri-business entrepreneurs to the creation of infrastructure, the SFAC broke new ground in the establishment of FPOs, market intelligence, warehousing and procurement support. No wonder the mandate for the establishment of the eNAM was also given to the SFAC.

To set the ball rolling, the Agriculture Ministry gave a grant of Rs 30 lakh per mandi for equipment or infrastructure, such as computer hardware, Internet facilities and assaying equipment, among others, in those regulated mandis for the installation of the e-market platform.

This was enhanced to Rs 75 lakh in 2017 for the creation of additional infrastructure like cleaning, grading and packaging facilities and a bio-composting

unit. While in the first three years, about 200 mandis were brought under its purview, the pace picked up with 415 mandis by May 2020, another 260 by July 2022, yet another 101 by March 2023, and 28 by the end of the last calendar year. The number has been growing every quarter.

Policy-making is the easy part. What's difficult is the creation of physical and IT infrastructure. The hardest part is the task of making it work on the ground. The SFAC identifies and supports an IT expert (mandi analyst) for initial handholding for a period of one year for each mandi integrated with eNAM. They report to the state coordinator(s), each of whom handles the day-to-day coordination for 50 mandis each. They are also responsible for providing pro bono training to all stakeholders in the eNAM system: farmers, traders, commission agents and mandi officials.

What next? Rather than rest on its laurels, the eNAM is setting newer and higher standards. Its revised mandate includes the expansion and consolidation of the eNAM by opening a platform beyond the APMC/Regulated Market Committee mandis to ensure competitive price realization for farmers. There is increased emphasis on warehouse-based sale and through eNAM. In the final analysis, it is price discovery and the freedom to sell that will usher in greater prosperity for the farmer.

(The author is Ex-Director, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration)



# The season of defections is here

**Structural weakness in Indian democracy needs to be addressed urgently**



BY JULIO RIBEIRO

**"Poaching legislators is not new to our democracy. The terms 'Aaya Ram' and 'Gaya Ram' were coined decades ago when political leaders of Haryana adopted the method of enticing elected members of rival parties to cross over to bring down governments. Some sense of shame must have seeped in because there was a lull in such shenanigans for some time till Congress lawmakers shifted en masse to the BJP in Goa in 2019, tempted by the lure of office."**

Very soon, the BJP ranks will be stacked with Congress leaders seeking a lucrative future. After former Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan left the Congress and joined the BJP, former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath seems ready to jump the 'sinking ship'.

The inability of INDIA parties to look beyond their noses has virtually sealed their fate.

Nath had handed over Madhya Pradesh to the BJP on a platter due to his misreading of the voters' preferences and mishandling of other anti-BJP parties.

Chavan's standing in Maharashtra politics was visibly on the decline. He had even lost his Nanded seat to the BJP's Prataprao Govindrao Chikhalikar in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. His father, Shankarrao Chavan, was a highly respected politician who had served as the CM and Union Home Minister. Shankarrao had scruples about corruption which his son did not share.

Chavan has been nominated to the Rajya Sabha by his new-found friends. He will have to compete for a ministership with other turncoats from Maharashtra like Narayan Rane, who was another 'candidate' for probes by investigation agencies had he not crossed over a few years ago.

The migration of the inglorious from the Opposition to the ruling party has picked up steam before the Lok Sabha polls. Is the BJP's goal a Congress-mukt polity or an Opposition-mukt one? Starting with those with skeletons in their cupboards, others who hanker for the spoils of office or just want to feel important will gravitate to the winning side. Greed is the guide. The BJP capitalizes on this.

Recently, the AAP-Congress combine was assured of victory in the



Switchover: Former Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan (left) joined the BJP recently.

Credit / ANI

Chandigarh mayoral poll with 20 votes out of 36. The returning officer invalidated eight votes to ensure the BJP's win. The Supreme Court had to intervene and order the prosecution of the returning officer. It declared the AAP-Congress candidate as the winner. Before the SC verdict, the BJP, the party that had once proclaimed that it was 'different', carried out 'Operation Lotus' to make three AAP councilors switch camps.

Poaching legislators is not new to our democracy. The terms 'Aaya Ram' and 'Gaya Ram' were coined decades ago when political leaders of Haryana adopted the method of enticing elected members of rival parties to cross over to bring down governments. Some sense of shame must have seeped in because there was a lull in such shenanigans for some time till Congress lawmakers shifted en masse to the BJP in Goa in 2019, tempted by the lure of office.

The BJP has sharpened this unethical method to a fine art after tasting blood. In Karnataka, it displaced the Congress government by successfully luring a good number of its legislators to change sides. In Maharashtra, this game is being played out even today. The voters who voted against the BJP have been short-changed. They vote for a particular party on ideological grounds but cannot be sure that those whom the party has chosen to represent them will continue to reflect their aspirations, once elected.

This is a structural weakness of Indian democracy. It needs to be urgently addressed. No legislator or corporator should be allowed to cross over mid-

term. If he has concerns about the policies of the party on whose ticket he was elected, he should resign from the Assembly and re-contest on the ticket of his new party. If he is popular in his constituency, he may well win again, but at least those who voted for him or her on ideological grounds will not be let down.

Since the BJP's new tactic of remaining in power at any cost, fair or foul, has obviously kicked in, it is urgent to restore our good name in the democratic world by devising a mechanism to combat this menace of 'Aaya Rams' coming and 'Gaya Rams' going for reasons far removed from dissatisfaction with the policies followed by the party which they have decided to discard.

The inability of INDIA parties to look beyond their noses has virtually sealed their fate. After the votes are counted and Modi is back in North Block for another term of five years, expect Opposition leaders to face the music in a much more defined degree. The ED, the CBI and other Central agencies will make their lives uncomfortable. Only those who cross over can expect to be absolved of their sins.

If the BJP gets a two-thirds majority in Parliament, the Constitution will be subject to revision. Women, in particular, will have to conform to a rigid standard of morality. Live-in relationships, which are now common among the urban liberated youth, will be frowned upon, like we have seen in Uttarakhand, whose holier-than-thou Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has introduced the Uniform Civil Code

(UCC), which restricts choices in love and marriage.

I have no objection to the UCC as long as the objective is to ensure that women are treated on a par with men. The rights of the woman in inheritance of her father's property and her right to choose her life partner should be upheld. There are myriad related issues like divorce and adoption, but the right to inheritance and the right to choose one's spouse are paramount.

It is not wise to advise the BJP to desist from accepting tainted members of Opposition parties in its fold. The BJP is on a roll. Modi consecrated the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, secured the release of eight former Navy personnel sentenced to death by a court in Qatar for alleged spying, and inaugurated a Hindu temple in a Muslim-majority country (UAE).

Unfortunately, there are counterbalancing issues. The farmers' agitation for legal guarantee for procurement at the MSP is one such issue. If the demand is conceded, it will compromise fiscal responsibility. The unabated violence in Manipur is another. The BJP knows the people responsible for the raging fire, but its hands are tied. If the incompetent CM Biren Singh is replaced, the Meitei vote will be in doubt. Reservation for Marathas is yet another issue that defies accepted solutions. It is not going to be an easy ride!

There are many other such problems that Modi will have to solve, but he is postponing action till the Lok Sabha polls are over.

(The author is a former governor, and a highly decorated Indian Police Service officer)



**DJ**  
KUCHA

Event  Master

  
THE METROPOLITAN

# UPCOMING EVENTS 2024

**FEBRUARY**

**VALENTINE'S** Party



**HOLI**

RAANG  
DAY

**MARCH**

**APRIL**

**WOMEN** EMPOWERMENT



**Baisakhi** Mela

**MAY**

**JUNE**

**BOAT** Party



**Teeyan** ਦਾ ਮੇਲਾ

**JULY**

**AUGUST**

**BOLLYWOOD** Nights



New York  
**KABADDI CUP**

**SEPTEMBER**

**OCTOBER** **GARBA - RAAS** Concert



**DIWALI** Club Night

**NOVEMBER**

**DECEMBER**

**NYE 2025**





# CONSTRUCTION OF METRO LINE IN SAN SALVADOR

GOVERNMENT OF REPUBLIC OF EL SALVADOR AND LAKSHMI CAPITAL SIGN THE MOU



Amb Dr Manoj Kumar Mohapatra facilitating the signing of the MoU for the construction of Metro Line project in San Salvador



Amb Dr Mohapatra sharing some joyous moment with Mr. Romeo Rodríguez, Min Public Works and Mr. Russell Alexander Luther Rodas of Laxmi Capital after signing the MoU

**FEBRUARY 28, 2024**

**GUATEMALA CITY (TIP):** Over the past decade, India's remarkable achievements in successful infrastructural development have garnered global attention and inspired Indian companies to venture beyond their conventional roles of manufacturing and exporting finished goods. India's rapid infrastructural progress serves as a beacon for other nations, with Central American governments eagerly embracing Indian companies to invest in and bolster their own infrastructural projects. Recognizing the strategic significance of the Central American region, companies like SRAM & MRAM have shifted their focus towards engaging in transformative infrastructure endeavors in Guatemala and El Salvador. This shift has led to the investment in ten impactful projects across these nations through their subsidiary, Lakshmi Capital, signaling a new era of collaboration and development.

In a significant stride toward strengthening infrastructure and economic development in El Salvador, Lakshmi Capital, and the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation of the Republic of El Salvador signed a Memorandum of Understanding in San Salvador on 16 February 2023 for construction of 22 km metro line project in San Salvador. The MoU was signed between Minister Romeo



Mr. Romeo Rodríguez, Min Public Works and Mr. Russell Alexander Luther Rodas of Laxmi Capital showing the copy of the signed MoU

Rodríguez of Ministry of Public Works, Government of Republic of El Salvador and Transportation and Mr. Russell Alexander Luther Rodas of Laxmi Capital in the presence of Ambassador of India in Guatemala, Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra. The metro line project aims to invigorate the economy and modernize transportation infrastructure in the country. Following a comprehensive pre-feasibility study, the decision was made to embark on the creation of a subway system in San Salvador, leveraging international investment for optimal outcomes.

It is imperative to underscore that the initial proposal, initially spanning 11 kilometers, was subsequently augmented to an impressive 22 kilometers by the El Salvadoran Government. This remarkable expansion stands as a testament to India's growing reputation globally and steadfast support, alongside the unwavering commitment and enthusiastic dedication showcased by Lakshmi Capital in propelling infrastructure development and fostering sustainable progress in El Salvador.

The metro line project based on BOT

Modal, outlines the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation's role in providing pre-feasibility analyses, designs, and legal frameworks, while Lakshmi Capital will offer technical expertise and investment mechanisms. The signing ceremony followed a series of meetings convened by the Embassy of India in Guatemala between the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation and Lakshmi Capital, underscoring their shared dedication to the project's successful execution. Both parties will begin exchanging crucial information, marking the start of the analysis, study, and proposal stages of the initiative.

The metro line project stands at the forefront of reshaping transportation infrastructure in El Salvador, presenting Indian companies with a unique opportunity to make a lasting impression in the Central American region. This collaboration resonates with a mutual dedication to fostering economic advancement and sustainable growth. Moreover, this pivotal project serves as a precursor to a multitude of forthcoming endeavors, such as supplying buses, constructing the dry corridor, and implementing a solar power project. Discussions for these ventures are currently at an advanced stage, indicating the potential for additional Memoranda of Understanding to be signed in the near future.

For advertising in The Indian Panorama  
visit [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news) or Call 646-247-9458



# 92-MEMBER BUSINESS DELEGATION FROM PHARMEXCIL VISITS GUATEMALA

**THE PRESENCE OF THE LARGEST-EVER BUSINESS DELEGATION FROM INDIA HAS SIGNIFICANTLY BOLSTERED TRUST AMONG GUATEMALA BUYERS**



Dignitaries lauded the India's initiative to launch such a massive delegation in Guatemala, opening more avenues for India-Guatemala trade relations

**FEBRUARY 21, 2024**

**GUATEMALA CITY (TIP):** India's proactive outreach has sparked significant interest among Indian companies, leading to a notable uptick in bilateral trade and a surge in the exchange of trade delegations. Following successful visits by a 15-member delegation from The Plastic Export Promotion Council (Plexconcil) in November 2023 and a 20-member delegation from the Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO), Guatemala witnessed the arrival of a massive 92-member delegation, comprising 74 companies from The Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil), on 19-20 February 2024. This delegation conducted a series of highly productive Business-to-Business meetings with local companies at the Westin Camino Real Hotel in Guatemala City. Notably, this delegation marks the largest-ever visit to the Latin American region by Pharmexcil, unlocking vast opportunities for collaboration and economic growth.



The Business Meet witnessed a remarkable turnout of buyers

The Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) plays a pivotal role in promoting and facilitating India's pharmaceutical exports on the global stage. As the apex body representing the Indian pharmaceutical industry, Pharmexcil functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. Its primary objective is to enhance the competitiveness of Indian pharmaceutical products in international markets while ensuring compliance with global regulatory standards. Pharmexcil provides a range of services to its members, including market intelligence, trade facilitation, regulatory guidance, and promotional activities. Through its concerted efforts, Pharmexcil serves as a catalyst for driving the growth of India's pharmaceutical exports, contributing

significantly to the country's economy and strengthening its position as the 'Pharmacy of the World'.



The presence of the largest-ever business delegation from India has significantly bolstered trust among local buyers

Guatemala has emerged as India's largest trading partner in the Central American region, with bilateral trade reaching US\$573.21 million in the 2021-22 period. This trend has continued to strengthen, with bilateral trade increasing to US\$693 million in the 2022-23 period, indicating a notable upward trajectory. India's pharmaceutical exports to Guatemala have been witnessing significant growth in recent years. With India being one of the world's leading producers of high-quality generic medicines at competitive prices, its pharmaceutical products have gained traction in the Guatemalan market. These exports encompass a wide range of pharmaceutical formulations, including generic drugs, active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), formulations, and medical devices. Such exchange of trade delegations and participation in business-to-business meetings have been instrumental in enhancing collaboration and exploring new avenues for pharmaceutical trade between the two countries.

Pharmexcil launched its campaign in Guatemala in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce of Guatemala, with approximately 175 Guatemalan companies participating in the Business-to-Business meetings on both days. The event was also attended by some Honduran companies. The inaugural ceremony was graced by Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, Mr. Julio Eduardo Orozco, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, Francis Garnica, Executive Director of MINECO's National Competitiveness Program Ministry of Economy, and Ms. Lakshmi Prasanna, Director-Regulatory Affairs, Pharmexcil. The inaugural event featured presentations by Ms. Karem Sagastume from the Department of Regulation and Control of Pharmaceuticals and Related Products of the Ministry of Health, Sr. Eduardo Cheves, Investment Attraction Specialist for Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices, and Ms. Jennifer Lobos from the National Competitiveness Program (PRONACOM). Mr. Udaya Bhaskar, Director-General of the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India, delivered his recorded remarks virtually. Ms. Lakshmi Prasanna, Director-Regulatory Affairs, Pharmexcil, delivered a presentation outlining the organization's approach and future prospects. The delegation received an overwhelming response from local companies, demonstrating their keen interest in partnering with visiting countries. Delegation members also had the opportunity to interact with Guatemala's apex health authorities such as UNOPS

and IGGS to gain insights into trade regulations for pharmaceuticals and medical devices and discussed ways to enhance bilateral trade relations.



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra underscored the significant presence of Indian pharmaceutical companies in Guatemala and India's steadfast commitment to supporting healthcare facilities

In his welcoming address, Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra underscored the significant presence of Indian pharmaceutical companies in Guatemala and India's steadfast commitment to supporting healthcare facilities in the Central American region. He highlighted Guatemala's strategic geographical location in Central America, which presents an opportunity for India to enhance its economic engagement with other nations in the region. Dr. Mohapatra expressed hope for future cooperation between India and Guatemala to leverage their unique ecosystems, including a plethora of endemic species, for traditional and generic medicines. He extended congratulations to Pharmexcil for spearheading the largest-ever delegation to the region and conveyed his best wishes to Indian companies in their efforts to foster greater business opportunities in Guatemala.

During his virtual interaction, Shri Uday Bhaskar, Director General of Pharmexcil, underscored the pivotal role of Indian Pharma globally, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. He emphasized the significant presence of Indian pharmaceutical companies in Latin America, highlighting Guatemala's emergence as a crucial market for these companies. This recognition underscores the importance of Guatemala in the broader context of Indian pharmaceutical exports to the region, reflecting the growing significance of the country as a strategic market for Indian pharmaceutical products.

The B2B Meetings facilitated exploration of potential trade opportunities, allowing businesses from both countries to identify areas of mutual interest and collaboration. The delegation gained insights of Guatemalan markets, helping them understand regulatory environments, consumer behavior, and market trends, which is crucial for successful market entry. These meetings can not only serve as a forum to promote investment opportunities, encouraging businesses to invest in each other's countries and contribute to economic growth but also provide a platform for networking, enabling companies to connect with potential partners, suppliers, and distributors, thereby expanding their business networks. Embassy of India in Guatemala looks forward to many more such visits in future to enhance the trade relations between Indian and these Central American Countries.



# 33 non-profit bodies to participate in second India Giving Day in US



"The number (results) we're going to announce at the end of India Giving Day is going to be significantly larger than last year", said Alex Counts, executive director of the India Philanthropy Alliance and India Giving Day

**FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** As many as 33 top Indian American nonprofit organizations are participating in the India Giving Day on March 1, during which organizers expect to raise money for important social welfare programs in India.

"The number (results) we're going to announce at the end of India Giving Day

is going to be significantly larger than last year. That's because we have a track record as we've been working all year long and people are excited," Alex Counts, executive director of the India Philanthropy Alliance and India Giving Day told PTI in an interview.

India Philanthropy Alliance is a network of non-profit organizations that mobilize people and funding in the US for high-impact development programs in India.

The second edition of the annual India Giving Day organized by India Philanthropy Alliance has launched a nationwide campaign to generate awareness among Indian Americans and "friends of India" in the US to donate generously on this important day dedicated to raise funds for a host of critical social and economic issues in India.

The inaugural edition last year raised USD 1.3 million in one day. All funds raised through India Giving Day will be used to support programs based in India or to build a more robust fundraising operation in the US to benefit India, Counts said.

"The three (issues) that were most common, perhaps almost exclusive

issues last year were education for the poor, healthcare for the poor, wellbeing and third was we put a broad category of livelihoods, the ability of people to generate economic sustainability for themselves through good jobs and entrepreneurship," he said.

"Those remain central to what we're doing. This year we're adding a few more. We're adding a few organizations that work in environmental preservation and climate change. We have a couple of groups that work in animal rights and animal welfare. We are expanding with more cultural organizations. Most of our money will be going towards these three -- health education and livelihood," Counts said.

Urging Indian Americans and "friends of India" to donate generously, Counts said: "Give when you have surplus. If someone is just living paycheck to paycheck and is struggling economically, they can give in other ways. They can give their time. I wouldn't want them to be giving financially. But for those who have been fortunate enough who've worked hard to develop some surplus financial resources, giving can be something that's done in a communal and collective way."

He said that for many who are part of India Giving Day, it is where they were born or where their parents were born. Giving is an opportunity to really change that society for the better, to give new opportunities for healthcare, education, environment preservation, livelihoods.

"It's an opportunity to do it joyfully, to do it communally and to do it when you choose organizations that are really well designed," the executive director of the alliance said. India, he asserted, has some of the best NGOs in the world and they do all or most of their work in India.

"So you're not talking about organizations that are kind of poorly organized. The 33 groups we have here are some of the best non-profits in the entire world. So when you work with them, you really have confidence that it'll bring change," Counts said.

"I just ask people to also just do it, give what you can, give it joyfully, where you let others see what you're giving and inspire them to give and know that if you choose groups that are well trained and well and they can execute, you're going to change India as a result," Counts said in response to a question," he added.

(Source: PTI)

## Delegation from 17 US universities to visit India next week



We will have the opportunity to meet with 26 Indian institutions to talk about collaboration, mobility of students and scholars between our two countries and securing and fostering enduring partnerships between institutions, A. Sarah Ilchman, co-president of Institute of International Education (IIE) said.

**FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** A high-powered delegation of 31 provosts, vice provosts, deans, and other leaders from 17 top American universities are travelling to India next week as part of their goal to strengthen India-US collaboration and student and scholar mobility between the two countries.

The delegation from the American universities will visit 26 institutions in New Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

This visit gains significance in the wake of the recent spate in incidents of attacks on Indian students and those of Indian origin in various parts of the country.

The delegation builds on recent years of US and Indian government-led efforts to partner in pursuit of mutually beneficial strategies.

Last year, the president and prime minister from each country embarked on state visits to the other, affirming the US-India Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership, a media release said.

We will have the opportunity to meet with 26 Indian institutions to talk about collaboration, mobility of students and scholars between our two countries and securing and fostering enduring partnerships between institutions, A. Sarah Ilchman, co-president of Institute of International Education (IIE), told PTI in an interview before leaving for India.

Indian students and scholars in the US now are at record numbers and it's very exciting to watch close to 270,000 Indian students on US campuses and about 17,000 Indian scholars in the US right now. So, it's an exciting time to be engaging with India and Indian institutions to try to further increase this engagement and collaboration, she said.

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

## Infosys CEO Salil Parekh joins USISPF Board

**FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP) :** Salil Parekh, CEO and managing director at Infosys, has joined the US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum as a member of its board of directors.

An industry veteran with nearly three decades in the IT services industry, executing business turnarounds and managing successful acquisitions, Parekh, in his capacity as Infosys CEO, sets the strategic direction of one of India's most notable IT giants while nurturing a strong leadership team to drive its execution.

Salil's recent addition to the USISPF Board accentuates the success story of Indian IT giants in the US. For years, Infosys has been a household name in India, and IT services are one of India's biggest exports to the United States, said USISPF president and CEO Mukesh Aghi.

In an era of digital economy and digital trade, Infosys' success in the US is a testimony to the growing synergy in tech ties and how India's robust tech talent plays an integral part in strengthening and growing the tech sector in the United States, Aghi said.

USISPF chairman John Chambers said Salil and Infosys' participation on the USISPF Board will help forge a critical reliance for the two economies by consolidating digital trade, ultimately



Salil Parekh, CEO and managing director at Infosys, has joined the US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum as a member of its board of directors.

further establishing India as an innovation partner to the world, which is the organization's core mission.

I'm thrilled to have Salil, a leader with a great track record in the IT industry, join the USISPF Board. Infosys' impact in the American tech industry has been extremely important, and the company played a vital part in India's nearly USD 200 billion software exports for 2023, Chambers said.



# Inspired by the Sikh notion of oneness, says Indian American running for Congress

FEBRUARY 23, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Krystle Kaul, a noted Indian American defense and national security expert, says her running for the US Congress is inspired by the Sikh tradition of oneness and a strong sense of giving back to the community.

"I am half Kashmiri Pandit and half Punjabi Sikh. I am very proud of both of my cultural backgrounds. Growing up in America, being bicultural is something unique and something that I have embraced. My grandparents and my parents have embedded that in me. I am proud to stand today as the first ever Kashmiri Pandit to stand for Congress and also as the only Sikh woman to currently run for Congress in the country," Krystle told PTI in a recent interview.

Kaul, who speaks nine languages - English, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Dari and Kashmiri -- is running from the 10th Congressional District of Virginia. The incumbent Jennifer Wexton, a Democrat, is not seeking re-election, therefore making it an open seat.

"My Nani (grandmother) Vimal Chaddha Malik used to take me to Glen Cove Gurdwara in Long Island, New York. There I would serve langar. I learned a lot about Sikh traditions and the notion of oneness. I'm proud of that. That's something that has given me a very strong sense of community and giving back and is one of the core values that I embrace in my bid for Congress," she said.

"At the core of the tenets of Sikhism is this idea of feeding your community, of service, of making sure that everyone has what they need and that is reflective. If you go to Amritsar, for example, to the Golden Temple, you see that everyone gets fed at the Golden Temple. The halwa

there is also the best in the world, I think," she said.

"It's just a really beautiful concept to see in the community there on a micro level and one that can be scaled internationally and that can be embraced here in Virginia District 10. So again, I'm very proud of both sides of my heritage being Hindu and Sikh, and very proud of the fact that I stand again as the only Sikh woman running for Congress in the country today because we need representation and that's important," Kaul said.

Notably, Dalip Singh Saund was the first Indian American, a Sikh, to be elected to the US House of Representatives from the 29th Congressional District of California for three terms beginning in 1957.

In the current Congress, there are five Indian Americans in the House of Representatives: Dr Ami Bera, Ro Khanna, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Pramila Jayapal and Shri Thanedar. Jayapal is the first ever and only Indian American woman to be elected to the House of Representatives.

Dalip Singh Saund is often a name that gets forgotten, Krystle said.

"Today we focus heavily on the five Indian American members who were in Congress, but preceding all of them was this one Sikh man who came in as an outlier and was able to get the mass community support in his district at a time when we were such a new immigrant community in this country. That's something that I'm proud of and one that I think is very notable," she said.

Despite doing well in various fields in the US, the Sikh community is not seen much in politics, she noted. "The Sikh community has done very well as the Indian American community, but as a subgroup. In terms of education, in terms of business and engineering, and

IT and medicine across the board," she said.

"This group definitely needs representation. Of course, there have been a lot of cases of discrimination against Sikhs, which is very unfortunate," Kaul said.

Responding to a question, Krystle said there have been a lot of cases of discrimination against Sikhs, which is very unfortunate. "I've seen it in my district, I've seen it in Virginia, and I've seen it at a national level. I say repeatedly, it doesn't matter (how much is) your bank balance, it doesn't matter how prominent you are, if you're a Sikh man, you wear a turban. It's a visible thing that you wear and something that can be used against you in terms of a hate crime," she pointed out.

There is a need to create more awareness and understanding that this is something that is part of a religion and one that should be respected, she said.

"That is through education, through awareness, and that comes from representation. When you have people in Congress who say, hey, I stand up proudly to be a Sikh and this is not okay, you cannot do this. That's when people start to listen. I think that's something that I want to advocate," she added.

Kaul said her campaign is doing good and she is running a genuine, authentic and grassroots campaign. "I have the most cash on hand today. I came out very strong in Q4 with USD 567,000 in cash on hand surpassing all candidates by a lot. They told me I couldn't do it. They often underestimate you as a woman, as a woman of color and particularly as they see women. I worked really hard," she said.

"Along with cash on hand, I also have a very strong and growing team. I have a team that's right now 85 plus and growing. A lot of great top firms, and



Krystle Kaul says her running for the US Congress is inspired by the Sikh tradition of oneness and a strong sense of giving back to the community

amazing staff that I have on hand, but also a volunteer team that exceeds 50 in several districts, in several states and also nationally who are really inspired. A lot of them are young Indian American girls in particular, which I'm really proud of, a lot of young Sikh girls for example," Kaul said.

"I also have a very multicultural growing volunteer base of Latinos, people from different communities," she said, asserting that it "showcases a strong base".

She said she spoke at the Sikh International Film Festival in New York where she got to interact with filmmakers, the heads of Sikhs for America, the Punjabi Chamber of Commerce, and the Sikh Chamber of Commerce.

"I've got a lot of support from very many prominent Sikhs, again locally and nationally. And that has also felt great just from a community standpoint and one that is tied to my cultural roots," she said. (Source: PTI)

# Nikki Haley makes a compelling pitch to South Carolina voters ahead of key primary in home state

FEBRUARY 24, 2024

CHARLESTON, SC (TIP): Indian-American presidential candidate Nikki Haley on Friday, February 23, made a compelling argument to fellow Republicans in South Carolina, on the eve of the crucial primary elections, with many of her supporters saying that she is the best bet for the US right now.

Several Indian Americans who attended her political rally in her home state of South Carolina on the eve of the Republican presidential primary said that Haley would be the best person to lead the United States.

With fingers crossed, given that former president Donald Trump is leading by over 22 percentage points, these Indian Americans were confident that Haley, 52,

would continue her presidential campaign after Saturday and go up to the GOP convention.

Even as Haley, a two-time former governor of South Carolina, has bridged the gap -- once was more than 30 per cent -- with Trump in South Carolina, the national media has virtually written her off and believes that the former president and her ex-boss would be the eventual nominee of the Republican Party.

Haley and her team do not believe so. "In a general election, you're given a choice. In a primary election, you make your choice," she said.

"This is the time for us to make our choice," Haley, a former US ambassador to the UN, told her supporters

numbering a couple of hundred at the Patriots Point site in Charleston, South Carolina ahead of Saturday's Republican primary.

"We can either do more of the same, and more of the same is not just Joe Biden, more of the same is Donald Trump, or we can elect a new generational leader that will lead us forward with solutions for the future," she said, asserting that she is not leaving the race.

"Some people in the media thought I would drop out of the race. Well, I'm not. Far from it," she said. Haley said it is time to bring back normalcy to the US.



"Some people in the media thought I would drop out of the race. Well, I'm not. Far from it," Haley said.

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





## India, US deliberate on student mobility, legal migration

India and the US discussed the mobility of students and professionals and safe and legal migration at the 11 Consular Dialogue in New Delhi on Feb 23.

They also discussed ways of enhancing cooperation on a wide range of issues such as extradition, protection of vulnerable women and children and enabling smooth travel of their respective nationals, said an MEA statement.

For the US side, the issue of massive illegal migration from India via chartered flights to Nicaragua has become an issue. Last year, US border authorities reported that nearly one lakh Indians were arrested while trying to enter the US illegally.

The Indian delegation was led by MEA's Joint Secretary KJ Srinivasa and the US delegation by Rena Bitter, Assistant Secretary in the Department of State. "The dialogue reinforced the strong people-to-people ties and cooperation that both nations share across consular issues of mutual interest. They welcomed the launch of a pilot in the US to adjudicate domestic renewals of certain categories of visas as proactive steps toward strengthening connections between people of the two nations," said the statement.

# Trinamool snubs Congress alliance efforts, to contest all Lok Sabha seats in Bengal

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Trinamool Congress leader Derek O' Brien on Friday, Feb 23, reiterated his party's stand to go solo in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal. The TMC leader said that there has been 'no change' in the party's stand of contesting all 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal, a few in Assam and one seat in Meghalaya. The remark came amid reports that the Congress party had revived talks with the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC for an alliance in the state.

"A few weeks ago...West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee stated that TMC is fighting all the 42 seats in Bengal. We are also in the fray in a few seats in Assam and the Tura Lok Sabha seat in Meghalaya. There is no change in this position," Derek O' Brien stated.

Earlier on Feb 23, the Congress said that the seat-sharing talks between the party and TMC were back on track after the latter had initially claimed that it would go solo in the LS elections in April-May.

The Congress has recently sealed an alliance in Uttar Pradesh with the Samajwadi Party. In the 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress will contest 17 seats and the Samajwadi Party will contest 63 seats.

Raebareli, Amethi, Fatehpur Sikri, Saharanpur, Prayagraj, Maharajganj, Varanasi, Amroha, Jhansi, Bulandshahr, Ghaziabad, Mathura, Sitapur, Barabanki, Kanpur, Bangaon and Deoria will be contested by the Congress party. The rest are with SP.

In Maharashtra, the party is in alliance with Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray's Sena and Sharad Pawar's NCP. Talks on finalising LS seats are currently underway between Congress and its INDIA bloc allies in the state.

Out of the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, AAP will reportedly contest four and Congress will contest three.

Mamata Banerjee had last month said the talks with the Congress failed after the latter refused an offer she made.



Trinamool Congress leader Derek O' Brien.

She also pointed to delays in finalising a seat-sharing agreement. She had also vowed to not ally with the Congress till it is an alliance with her bitter rival CPI(M).

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury had claimed the TMC offered only two seats to his party. Later, Derek O'Brien claimed the politician was one of the main reasons for the party's decision to contest the Lok Sabha polls alone.

Reacting to Trinamool Congress MP Derek O'Brien's remark that his party will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections alone, Jairam Ramesh said on Saturday that the Congress's discussions with the TMC for an alliance in West Bengal are underway. Downplaying the leader's remark, the politician said heated discussions keep taking place between the two parties but "we respect Mamata Banerjee".

Jairam Ramesh made the remark on the sidelines of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad.

"Discussions are underway. Our doors are always open for TMC. Mamata Banerjee and TMC have said that they want to strengthen the INDIA Alliance and the biggest motive is to defeat the BJP," he told ANI.

# INDIA dividing on caste lines, its leaders will struggle to save deposits, says PM Modi

NEW DELHI (TIP)

In his sharpest attack on the INDIA bloc, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the bloc leaders "will struggle to save their deposits in the upcoming General Election" even as he accused them of dividing people on caste lines.

In a no-holds-barred criticism of the Opposition, the PM singled out the Congress and said, "The members of Congress royal family are calling the youth of Banaras 'nashedi' (drunken/intoxicated). Those who are themselves not in 'hosh' (senses) are calling our youngsters 'nashedi'. What kind of language is this?" the PM said, addressing constituents of his Lok Sabha segment Varanasi. The PM said INDIA leaders were busy dividing the society on caste lines and predicted their defeat in the 18th General Election.

"These days, there is one more reason behind the anxiety and anger of INDI leaders. They are unable to stomach the new look of Kashi and Ayodhya. Look at how they attack Ram Mandir in their speeches, the kind of utterances they use to undermine the Ram Mandir. I did not know that the Congress hated Lord Ram so much," PM Modi said. He slammed dynastic parties and said such parties "cannot look beyond their families and vote banks". "That is why they ally before every election and



PM Narendra Modi at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi. PTI

when the result is 'neel battey sannata' (zero divided by zero equals nothing), then they abuse one another and part ways. But they do not know this is Banaras. Everyone is a guru here. Here the machinations of the INDI alliance

will not work," PM Modi said. He said the entire Uttar Pradesh should know that the INDI alliance was the "same old stuff in a new package".

"This time they will have to struggle hard to even save their deposits," the PM said.

Earlier in his speech, he termed the recent remarks made by Rahul Gandhi as "shocking".

"You will be shocked to learn what did the royal family of the Congress say? They are saying UP youth are 'nashedi'. What kind of language is this? They have spent two decades abusing Modi but now they have started venting frustration on people of UP," the PM said, adding family-based parties of the Opposition should know that the youth of UP were working hard to build a developed state and golden futures.

Rahul, during his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Varanasi, had said, "The youth here are inebriated, lying on the streets, dancing at night. The future of the youth of UP is intoxicated."

On a visit to his parliamentary seat, the PM addressed an event to commemorate the 647th birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas and also unveiled his statue, engaged the winners of the 'Sansad Sanskrit Pratiyogita' at BHU, and inaugurated projects worth over Rs 13,000 crore.

Source: TNS



## AAP, Cong finalise 4:3 seat-sharing formula for Lok Sabha seats in Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is likely to contest four of the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi and leave the remaining three to its alliance partner, the Congress, as part of a seat-sharing agreement being finalised by leaders of the two parties, people aware of the matter said.

Citing the discussions between the two sides, a Congress leader said an agreement had been arrived between the two sides on the formula and the talks on the seats to be contested by the two parties were in the final stages. According to one arrangement being discussed, the Congress may contest East, Chandani Chowk and North East Lok Sabha seats; while AAP may contest New Delhi, West Delhi, South Delhi and North West Lok Sabha seats.

AAP minister Atishi declined to comment on the details of the negotiations. "The talks are on and we are hopeful of closing the deal," she said.

A senior Delhi Congress leader said the 4-3 formula was final but there could be some changes to the seats contested by the two sides.

All of the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi are currently held by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has been winning all the seats since 2014.

In 2019 when the AAP and the Congress contested the Lok Sabha elections separately, the Congress was second on five seats and the AAP was second on two.

The AAP had come to the negotiating table with an offer of just one seat for the Congress, citing its alliance partner's track record in previous assembly and municipal elections.

"Congress has zero Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, it has zero seats in Delhi assembly. Out of 250 wards, the Congress won only 9 seats in the (2022) MCD election," AAP national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak said on February 13.

Source: HT

# Farmer's death: Unions reject Rs 1-cr relief, want FIR first

PATIALA (TIP)

Farmer leaders participating in the "Delhi Chalo" agitation under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) on Friday, Feb 23, said the cremation of Shubh Karan Singh, who died amid clashes between Haryana Police and Punjab farmers, will not take place till the Punjab government registers a case against those responsible for it.

The development came hours after Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann announced a compensation of Rs 1 crore and a government job for Shubh Karan's sister.

Subh Karan Singh, 21, a native of Bathinda, died on Wednesday at Khanauri border point on the Punjab-Haryana border amid clashes between Haryana Police and Punjab farmers.

The incident took place when the farmers rushed to the barricades, several layers of which had been erected by Haryana authorities to prevent farmers from proceeding with their march and clashed with police.

According to the medical superintendent of Rajindra Hospital, Patiala, Subh Karan had an injury to his head. The post-mortem was delayed as the farmers pressed for acceptance of their demands.

Addressing a press conference at Government Rajindra Hospital, Patiala, Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher said that the post-mortem of the 21-year-old farm protester will not be conducted till the Punjab Police register an FIR against Haryana Police. Punjab chief minister had asserted that stringent action would be taken against those responsible for Shubh Karan's death. But now the officials are saying that it was not possible, he said.

"We have told the (Shubh Karan)



family that it may take two days or 10 days. For us money is not important. We are demanding that an FIR be lodged and then cremation will take place," he said and accused Punjab government officials of "pressuring" Shubh Karan's family into agreeing to the cremation. Toeing the line, Charanjit Singh, father of Shubh Karan, said: "Till Punjab Police register a case against Haryana Police officials, we won't allow the administration to conduct the post-mortem. Money doesn't matter to us, justice does."

Replying to a question, Jagjit Singh Dallewal, leader of SKM (Non-Political) that is spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march along with the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, claimed the Bathinda senior superintendent of police has said that police could not register a case against Haryana security personnel.

"If you cannot register a case, then how can you call yourself 'Punjab de rakhe' (Punjab's protector)," Dallewal said, adding the police officer told them that if they registered a case, then Haryana security personnel would also do so.

Replying to another question, Dallewal said, "A youth died during our

agitation. Our priority is to ensure justice for him. We are concentrating on it. It is up to the Punjab government how soon it will give justice to us."

Punjab CM Mann on Friday announced compensation and a job for Shubh Karan's sister.

"The family of Shubh Karan Singh, who got martyred during the farmer's movement at Khanauri border, will be given financial assistance of ?1 crore by the Punjab government and a government job to his younger sister. Due legal action will be taken against culprits," he said in a post on 'X' in Punjabi.

Farmers leaders were also demanding "martyr" status for Shubh Karan Singh.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab are protesting at two interstate borders with Haryana to press their demands to the Centre.

Among the major demands of the farmers are a legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price (MSP) on all crops and a complete loan waiver for all farmers. For this, the farmers are marching towards the national capital but are currently facing stiff barricading at the Haryana borders.

Source: HT

## Probe agencies being misused to 'extort' donations for BJP: Cong

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Congress on Friday, Feb 23, alleged that probe agencies were being misused to "extort" donations for the BJP from private companies and demanded a Supreme Court-monitored probe into what it called "hafta-vasooli" by the government.

Addressing a press conference, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh alleged that at least 30 companies, which donated a total of nearly Rs 335 crore to the BJP between financial years 2018-19 and 2022-23, faced investigation by central agencies during that period.

Ramesh said Congress general secretary in-charge organisation K C Venugopal on Friday wrote to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman over the issue and asked why the government should not be open to a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the donations received by the BJP.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a post on X said, "Do you know about the Prime Minister's 'Donate, take bail



Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh addresses a press conference at the AICC headquarters in New Delhi on Feb 23. Tribune photo

and business' scheme? In the country, the Prime Minister is doing business like 'vasooli bhai' by misusing ED, IT and CBI."

He said reports have revealed that 30 companies that faced investigation by various agencies, which have become "recovery agents" now, donated Rs 335 crore to the BJP during the investigation.

"The donation business is going on so shamelessly that the owners of a distillery in MP donated to the BJP as soon as they got the bail. Benefitting the company of a friend by dishonesty and adopting different rules for others? 'Illegal donations' and 'Electoral Bonds' given to BJP under Modi rule are the guarantee of 'Ease of Doing Business'," Gandhi said in his post in Hindi, using the hashtag "#HaftaVasooliSarkar".

Ramesh asked if the government would come up with a "white paper" on the BJP's finances, not just the sources but how corporate firms were "coerced" to donate by misusing investigative agencies against them.

"If you have nothing to hide, then are you willing to present a point-by-point rebuttal on the 'chronology' of events which led to the filling of BJP's treasury?" he asked.

Source: PTI



# India in history this Week

## FEBRUARY 23 TO FEBRUARY 29

### 23 FEBRUARY

2006 In 1952, the Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act was passed.

2010 India's famous painter MF Hussain was granted citizenship of Qatar in 2010.



### 24 FEBRUARY

1882 The infectious disease TB was identified on this day.

2001 Pakistan agrees to negotiate nuclear deterrence with India.

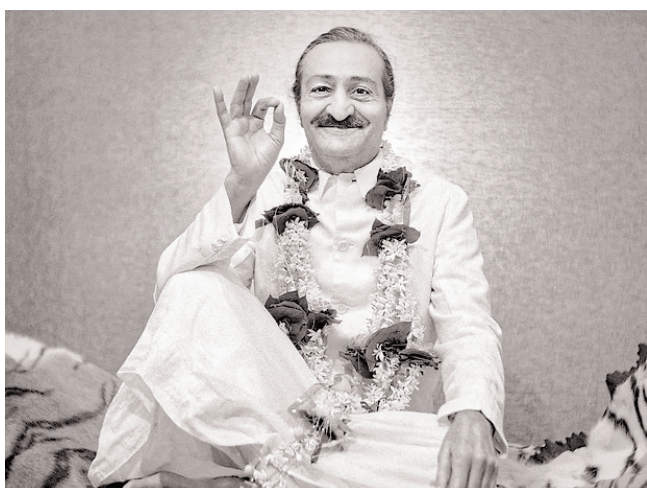
2009 Central government announced reduction in service tax and excise duty.

1822 The world's first Swami Narayan Temple was inaugurated in Ahmedabad in 1822.



1924 Mahatma Gandhi released from jail in 1924.

### 25 FEBRUARY



1894: Meher Baba, Indian mystic, was born. Known for his mystical teachings throughout his life through a spiritual transformation at a very young age, Meher Baba or Merwan Sheriar Irani was an Indian spiritual master. In a remarkable development, he declared

himself to be an incarnation ('avataar') of God whose aim was to propagate spirituality. He assumed complete silence for much of his later life, communicating only through gestures and small written words.

1586 Akbar's court Navratan Birbal was killed in a battle with the rebel Yousafzai.



1988 India's first surface-to-surface missile Prithvi was successfully launched.

1995 There was a bomb attack on a train in Assam, India in which 27 soldiers were killed.

### 26 FEBRUARY



1972 President V.V. Giri dedicated the Vikram Earth satellite station located in Arvi near Wardha to the country.

1975 The country's first kite museum 'shankar Kendra' was established in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

2008 India successfully test-fired a ballistic missile capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

### 27 FEBRUARY



2002 59 people died due to fire in train Sabarmati Express in Godhra. Due to these deaths communal violence spread in Gujarat.

1931 Revolutionary and freedom fighter Chandrashekhar Azad shot himself in 1931 to avoid



arrest in an encounter with the British police at Alfred Park, Allahabad.

2009 Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee handed over the succession of his Lok Sabha seat to senior party leader Lal G. Tandon.

1990 There were voting in Pondicherry and eight other states.

1996 The Vote on Account Rail Budget was introduced by Suresh Kalmadi.

### 28 FEBRUARY

1712 Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah I died.

1928 CV Raman invented the Raman effect for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize.

1936 Jawaharlal Nehru's wife Kamala Nehru died in Switzerland.



1943 Kolkata's Howrah bridge (Ravindra Setu) started.

1863 The first President of India, Rajendra Prasad passed away.

### 29 FEBRUARY

1896 The Sixth Prime Minister of India, Morarji Desai was born on 29th February 1896 in Gujarat.





# HOMAGE TO LEGACY OF USTAD VILAYAT KHAN

BY MABEL PAIS

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the legendary Ustad Vilayat Khan, an evening of musical remembrance and cultural celebration takes place paying homage to the enduring legacy of Ustad Vilayat Khan.

(Photo W 1 here)

Sunny Thakkar of Sneh Arts is proud to curate a special memorial concert at (Zankel Hall) Carnegie Hall (carnegiehall.org - located at 57th Street and Seventh Avenue in Manhattan, New York City) on March 2nd, 2024. This significant event promises an evening of emotional resonance and musical excellence.

## PROGRAM

WHEN: March 2nd, 2024, 7 PM

WHERE: Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall, New York City

The opening tribute will immerse the audience in a combination of music, audio-visuals, and poetic narration, skillfully performed by the Mausiqui Ensemble. Featuring Hidayat Khan, Jay Gandhi, Abhik Mukherjee, Ehren Hanson, and Enayet Hossain, the ensemble will pay homage to the maestro in a soulful manner. The poetic narration by Sunayana Kachroo will add a literary touch, enriching the emotional tapestry of the tribute.

The program will reach its pinnacle with a spellbinding sitar recital by the internationally acclaimed Nishat Khan, accompanied by the rhythmic tabla



Performers at Vilayat Khan Memorial Concert

Credit / Sneh Arts NY

beats of Nitin Mitta.

This musical collaboration promises to be a poignant and fitting conclusion to an evening dedicated to celebrating the life and legacy of Ustad Vilayat

Khan.

This unique program is collaboration of Sneh Arts and the Ustad Vilayat Khan Foundation, a testament to their shared commitment to preserving and

promoting the rich heritage of Indian classical music. Together, they ensure a comprehensive and authentic tribute to the maestro, emphasizing his enduring impact on the world of music.

## TICKETS

Purchase tickets at Carnegie Hall's box office or at the website:

carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2024/03/02/Ustad-Vilayat-Khan-20th-Anniversary-Memorial-Concert-0700PM

## USTAD VILAYAT KHAN

Learn more at vilayatkhan.com

## CARNEGIE HALL

Carnegie Hall's mission is to present extraordinary music and musicians on the three stages of this legendary hall, to bring the transformative power of music to the widest possible audience, to provide visionary education programs, and to foster the future of new works, artists, and audiences. Carnegie Hall first opened its doors in 1891. Additionally, Carnegie Hall also supports educational activities throughout the city and beyond through its Weill Music Institute.

## SNEH ARTS NY

Founded by Sunny Thakkar, The Sneh Arts platform presents South Asian culture including music, dance, film and theater on a global stage.

Follow Sneh Arts @ facebook.com/SnehArtsNY

# FLAMENCO LIVING LEGEND PERFORMS IN NYC

BY MABEL PAIS

Living legend, José Fernández Torres - aka TOMATITO - one of Spain's great modern masters of the flamenco guitar opens the Flamenco Festival in New York City on March 1, 2024.

The World Music Institute (WMI) welcomes back Tomatito to New York City with his first show at The Town Hall since 2018. This Festival is part of the ORIGINS series featuring artists who delve into the folklore and roots of their respective culture's music to tell the story of their origins, preserving and affirming cultural identities and legacies.

Listen to his music - [youtu.be/7r0MgQ0pZeA](https://youtu.be/7r0MgQ0pZeA)

## JOSÉ FERNÁNDEZ TORRES (TOMATITO)

For those who know about flamenco guitar or gipsy guitar, the nickname "Tomatito" has a lot of resonance. It belongs to José Fernández Torres. With an artistic career that covers five decades, Tomatito has achieved a high level of recognition and appreciation from the public. This is not only well deserved, but also justifies his influence on the musical genre of flamenco guitar.

As a solo artist, Tomatito has released a dozen albums since his 1987 debut - winning multiple GRAMMY and Latin GRAMMY awards.

"The New York Times" hails Tomatito as "the most eminent guitarist in flamenco."

A brilliant innovator and improviser, Tomatito first made his name as a teenage prodigy in 1973, famously discovered by Paco de Lucía and invited to accompany legendary singer Camarón de la Isla at the age of 15. The precocious Roma teen from Almería would go on to have one of the most storied careers in flamenco music, recording four groundbreaking albums in the 1980s



Tomatito

Credit / tomatito.org

alongside de Lucía and El Camarón, and accompanying such flamenco luminaries as Enrique Morente, José Mercé, and Carmen Linares.

Being the son of another famous flamenco guitarist, El Tomate - and having Miguel Tomate as his grandfather - young José Fernández was exposed to the beauty, metric scope, harmony and melody that comprise flamenco music throughout his childhood and infancy.

In a way, you could say that being a flamenco guitarist runs through your veins - it's in your genes. His uncle, Miguel Vega de la Cruz, better known to the public as El Niño Miguel, provided the young José with an example of the levels of success that could be achieved within flamenco music.

Today, this talent can also be seen in Tomatito's son, José del Tomate, who most recently accompanied his

father on his international tours.

Learn more about Tomatito at [tomatito.org](https://tomatito.org).

## PROGRAM

WHEN: Friday, March 1, 2024 at 8 PM, Doors open at 7 PM

WHERE: The Town Hall, 123 W 43d St (Manhattan)

## TICKETS

Tickets are available on a tiered pricing; membership benefits apply. For tickets, visit [ticketmaster.com/event/03005ED75AD80BD0](https://ticketmaster.com/event/03005ED75AD80BD0)

## WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE (WMI)

Founded in 1985, World Music Institute (WMI) has served as one of the leading presenters of world music and dance within the United States. WMI is committed to presenting the best in traditional and contemporary music and dance from around the world with the goal of inspiring wonder for the world's rich cultural traditions, promoting awareness and appreciation and encouraging cross-cultural dialog and exchange.

## FOR ALL QUERIES, CONTACT WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE AT

[info@worldmusicinstitute.org](mailto:info@worldmusicinstitute.org) / (212) 545-7536

## FOLLOW WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE ONLINE!

Facebook: @worldmusicinstituteNYC

Twitter: @WMI NYC

Instagram: @worldmusicinstitute

Youtube: [bit.ly/WorldMusicInstitute-YouTube](https://bit.ly/WorldMusicInstitute-YouTube) or [youtube.com/c/worldmusicinstitute](https://youtube.com/c/worldmusicinstitute)

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



# WOMEN@NJPAC IGNITE THEIR POWER ON WOMEN'S DAY

BY MABEL PAIS

On March 8, International Women's Day, the remarkable, diverse community of Women@NJPAC members and partners come together for 'A Gathering of Givers: Igniting Our Power!'

Come for inspiration! Create new connections! Exchange ideas!

This intergenerational event will celebrate the women who guide our institutions, lead our state and shape our communities today - and introduce us to ambitious school and college-aged women who are preparing to take on leadership roles in Greater Newark, across New Jersey and beyond.

This event will engage the attendees in a well-paced, interactive program of story-telling, skill-building and inspiration designed to strengthen and energize women in all phases of their careers and journeys. They will share wisdom, create meaningful connections and exchange new ideas for building their collective power.

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER, JANAI S. NELSON**

President and Director-Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense Fund

Janai S. Nelson is President and



Janai S. Nelson, Keynote Speaker

Credit/ [www.naacpldf.org](http://www.naacpldf.org)

Director-Counsel of the Legal Defense Fund (LDF), the nation's premier civil rights law organization fighting for racial justice. Nelson formerly served as LDF's Associate Director-Counsel and was one of the lead counsels in *Veasey v. Abbott* (2018), a successful federal challenge to Texas's voter ID law, and the lead architect of *NUL (National Urban League) v. Trump* (2020), which sought to declare President Trump's executive order banning diversity, equity and inclusion training in the workplace unconstitutional before it was later rescinded.

*Janai S. Nelson speaks - [youtu.be/7SIDCYqSu18](https://youtu.be/7SIDCYqSu18)*

**CONFIRMED SPEAKERS**

Debbie Dyson, CEO, OneTen

Amanda Ebokosia, Founder and CEO, The Gem Project

Antoinette Ellis-Williams, Ph.D., Professor, Poet, Visual Artist, Playwright, Minister

Tené Adero Howard, Executive Director, Sadie Nash Leadership Project

Tamara Linde, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, PSEG; Board Member and Past Chair, Community Foundation of New Jersey

A'Dorian Murray-Thomas, Founder & CEO, SHE Wins! Inc.

**FOUNDING PARTNERS:**

In partnership with:  
Impact100Essex: Connecting Women, Strengthening Communities  
[women@njpac](mailto:women@njpac)

CFNJ: Community Foundation of New Jersey

Association of Black Women Attorneys (ABWL - NJ)

Braven  
Clinton Hill Community Action

Essex County (NJ) Chapter of The Links, Inc.

Executive Women of New Jersey  
The Gem Project

Jewish Women's Foundation of New Jersey

Latina Surge

The Latinista  
Lupe Fund, Inc.

Project Ready & Be Ready  
Rutgers University-Newark BOLD

Women's Leadership Network  
Sadie Nash Leadership Project

SHE Wins! Inc.  
Statewide Hispanic Chamber of

Commerce of NJ  
YWCA Northern New Jersey

**THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)**

One Center Street  
Newark, New Jersey 07102  
[njpac.org](http://njpac.org) or 888.GO.NJPAC  
(888.466.5722)

**FOLLOW NJPAC ONLINE:**

Website: [njpac.org](http://njpac.org)  
Twitter: @NJPAC  
Instagram: @NJPAC  
Hashtag: #NJPAC  
Facebook: [facebook.com/NJPAC](https://facebook.com/NJPAC)  
YouTube: NJPACTv

**FOLLOW NJPAC'S STANDING IN SOLIDARITY SERIES ONLINE:**

Website: [njpac.org/takeastand](http://njpac.org/takeastand)  
Hashtag: #NJPACTakeAStand  
Youtube: Standing in Solidarity playlist

## WHARTON ARTS CELEBRATES ANNUAL GALA

BY MABEL PAIS

Wharton Arts celebrates its Annual Gala on Thursday, March 7, 2024.

**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**



Rufus Reid, Gala honoree

Credit / Wharton arts

At the event, award-winning jazz bassist, educator, and composer Rufus Reid will be honored with its Lifetime Achievement Award. An active presence in the jazz world since the 1970s, Reid has

recorded over 500 albums and can be heard on recordings with Dexter Gordon, Andrew Hill, The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Quartet, Kenny Barron, Stan Getz, J.J. Johnson, Lee Konitz, and Jack DeJohnette, among others.

His reputation as an educator is equal to that of his musical achievements. Reid's book, *The Evolving Bassist* (Myriad Limited, 1974), remains the industry standard for double bass methodology. Reid and Dr. Martin Krivin created the Jazz Studies and Performance Bachelor of Music Program at William Paterson University, a program offering the first professional academically accredited Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies in the tri-state area.

Reid received the prestigious John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship and the MacDowell Colony Grant. His 2014 release, *Quiet Pride - The Elizabeth Catlett Project*, received two Grammy Nominations for Best Large Jazz Ensemble and Best Instrumental Composition.

The prestigious Wharton Arts Lifetime Achievement Award distinguishes individuals who, during their lifetime, have made creative contributions of outstanding artistic significance to the performing arts and represent a beacon of inspiration to Wharton Arts' students.

Previous Wharton Arts Lifetime Achievement honorees were Jamie Bernstein, John Debney, Paul Shaffer, and Angel Blue.

**EDUCATION AWARD**



George Marriner Maull, Gala honoree

Credit / Wharton Arts

In addition to the Lifetime Achievement Award, Wharton Arts will honor George Marriner Maull with its Education Award at the Gala. Maestro Maull's musical affiliations in New Jersey began with his joint appointment in 1979 as Assistant Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and founding Music Director and Conductor of the New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS). He led NJYS, now a program of Wharton Arts, for eighteen seasons until 1997, including three performances at Carnegie Hall and on four European tours: Belgium and The Netherlands (1983), Belgium and England (1985), Romania and Hungary (1987), and Poland (1989).

Under his leadership, NJYS received First Prize at both the 1983 and the 1985 European Music Festival for Youth in

Belgium, and was the subject of a 1987 WNET New York Channel 13 documentary entitled 'Art Effects: Young & Noteworthy.'

Today, Maull is the Artistic Director of The Discovery Orchestra and three-time Emmy-nominated public television personality, touching the lives of millions of individuals nationwide and abroad by helping them to heighten their classical music listening pleasure through his Discovery Concerts distributed by American Public Television (APT) and APT Worldwide. These programs, including his signature listening course, 'Fall in Love with Music,' are available to stream on Amazon Prime and PBS Passport. His public radio show, 'Inside Music,' is broadcast on second and fourth Saturdays each month at 7:30 p.m. on WWFM, 89.1 The Classical Network in Princeton. Maull believes that everyone has the innate ability to become a virtuoso music listener.

Wharton Arts' Annual Gala will feature student performances and a live auction at the Westmount Country Club, 728 Rifle Camp Road in Woodland Park, NJ. For more information, attend the gala and support Wharton Arts, including its silent auction, visit [WhartonArtsGala.org](http://WhartonArtsGala.org).

**WHARTON ARTS**

Learn more at [WhartonArts.org](http://WhartonArts.org).

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



# NJS BRINGS US ORFF'S CHORAL MASTERPIECE

MABEL PAIS



NJ Symphony Music Director, Xian Zhang

Credit / njsymphony.org

"What the New Jersey Symphony has established, bringing music to the Garden State in schools and in six different cities, is a sincere accomplishment. And it's never been better." - [nj.com](http://nj.com)

The New Jersey Symphony (NJS) presents two performances of Carl Orff's spectacular choral masterpiece, 'Carmina Burana': Friday, March 1, 2024, at 8 pm and Sunday, March 3 at 3 pm, both at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark.

## CARMINA BURANA

Orff's 'Carmina Burana' pulses with springtime life, the text of this cantata taken from the bawdy writings of medieval monks who had more on their minds than scripture. Meanwhile, Kodály's Dances of Galánta overflows with Hungarian flavor and memorable tunes, inspired by the folk music of the composer's childhood. Between these, a work of exquisite musical reflection by Bach, his concerto for oboe d'amore, the duskier cousin of the modern oboe.

'Carmina Burana' uses texts, written in Latin, German and old French, from a manuscript found in a Bavarian monastery in 1847 that date back as far as the 11th century.

## PROGRAM

Music Director Xian Zhang conducts the program, which features the Symphony alongside renowned vocal soloists: Jana McIntyre, soprano; Barry Banks, tenor; and Hugh Russell, baritone. Frequent collaborators with the New Jersey Symphony, the Montclair State University Chorale, under the direction of Heather J. Buchanan, will sing the choral parts of 'Carmina Burana,' including the world-famous opening movement 'O Fortuna,' with text drawn from the medieval poem of the same name.

Also on the program, New Jersey Symphony English Horn/Oboe player Andrew Adelson will perform J.S. Bach's Concerto for Oboe d'amore. Adelson has been a member of the New Jersey Symphony for more than 20 years, is on faculty at Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts and holds bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School.

Opening the performances is Kodály's 'Dances of Galánta,' based on Hungarian folk music.



Music Director Xian Zhang conducts Carmina Burana  
Credit / njsymphony.org

Xian Zhang Conducts 'Carmina Burana'

New Jersey Symphony Classical

Xian Zhang conductor

Andrew Adelson oboe d'amore

Jana McIntyre soprano

Barry Banks tenor

Hugh Russell baritone

Montclair State University Chorale | Heather J. Buchanan, director

## NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

Newark ? Friday, March 1, 2024, 8 pm New Jersey Performing Arts Center

Newark ? Sunday, March 3, 2024, 3 pm New Jersey Performing Arts Center

## CONCERT PRELUDE #1

Friday, March 1, at 7 pm at New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark

Hear an inspiring performance by the New Jersey Symphony Youth Orchestra's Curtland E. Fields Ensemble.

## CONCERT PRELUDE #2

Sunday, March 3, at 2 pm at New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark

Hear the students of the El Sistema New Jersey Alliance perform in a special pre-concert performance.

## KODÁLY DANCES OF GALÁNTA

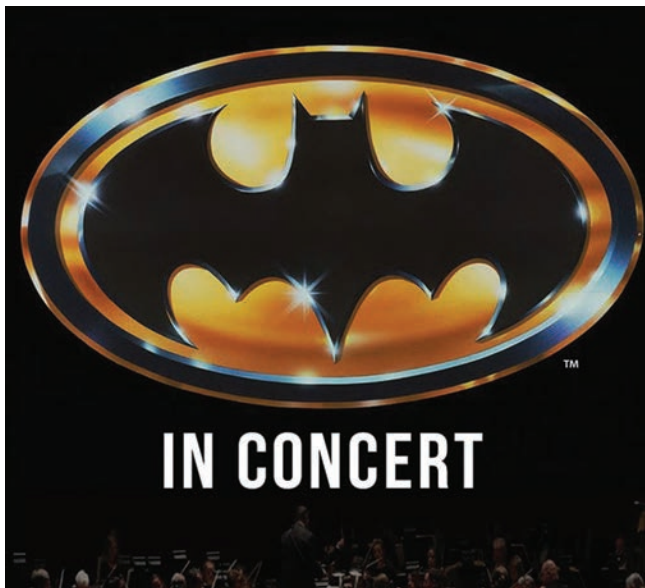
J.S. Bach Oboe d'Amore Concerto

Orff Carmina Burana

For more information on concerts and tickets: [njsymphony.org/events](http://njsymphony.org/events)

# TIM BURTON'S 'BATMAN' SCREENS AT NJS FILM CONCERT

MABEL PAIS



Batman logo

Credit / njsymphony.org

The New Jersey Symphony (NJS) brings us Tim Burton's 1989 film (PG-13) on the big screen performing Dan Elfman's score, live. This happens on March 2 at 8 PM at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC).

## PROGRAM

Saturday, March 2 at 8 pm | New Jersey Performing

Arts Center in Newark

James Olmstead conductor

New Jersey Symphony

## SUGGESTION

Dress up in your favorite Batman or DC cosplay for this event-but no swooping through the air!

## TRIVIA

The Oscar-winning movie... stars Michael Keaton, Kim Basinger, Billy Dee Williams and Jack Nicholson as the scene-stealing Joker. Danny Elfman came up with Batman's theme while on a long flight-ducking into the airplane bathroom multiple times to record himself singing the melody so he wouldn't forget. The flight attendants were suspicious, but it became one of the most iconic superhero themes of all time.

## CREDIT

Batman and all related characters and elements © & ™ DC and Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. WB SHIELD: © & ™ WBEI. TM & © DC Comics. Batman in Concert is presented in collaboration with the New Jersey Performing Arts Center

## TICKETS

For Tickets to Carmina Burana or Batman in Concert, visit [www.njsymphony.org](http://www.njsymphony.org) or call 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476)

To subscribe to New Jersey Symphony, visit [njsymphony.org/subscribe](http://njsymphony.org/subscribe)

## THE NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

The Emmy and Grammy Award-winning New Jersey Symphony is redefining what it means to be a nationally leading, relevant orchestra in the 21st century. The Symphony is renewing its deeply rooted commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by championing new, and often local, artists; engaging audiences for whom the inspiring depth and breadth of classical music will be a new experience; and incorporating the broadest possible representation in all aspects of its organization - all to better reflect and serve our vibrant communities.

Since 2021, Music Director Xian Zhang has worked together with composer, violinist, educator and social-justice advocate Daniel Bernard Roumain, the orchestra's Resident Artistic Catalyst, to offer programming that connects with diverse communities in Newark and throughout New Jersey.

For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit [njsymphony.org](http://njsymphony.org) or email [information@njsymphony.org](mailto:information@njsymphony.org).

## CONNECT WITH NJS:

[njsymphony.org](http://njsymphony.org)  
@NJSymphony on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X, (formerly known as Twitter) @NewJerseySymphony on YouTube

Email: [information@njsymphony.org](mailto:information@njsymphony.org)

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





## Alia Bhatt wraps up Jigra, posts pictures with Vedang Raina

Actor Alia Bhatt has wrapped up the shoot of her first action film, *Jigra*. Announcing the wrap, Alia posted pictures from the sets of the movie. The photos also featured her *Jigra* co-star Vedang Raina.

Alia wrote in the caption of the images, “jigra oh... abki teri baari ho. @vedangraina & that’s a film wrap on #JIGRA @vasanbala @swapsagram. See you soon... 27th September 2024 at a cinema near you.”

Vedang Raina also posted pictures on his Instagram account. He wrote in the caption, “And that’s a wrap on *Jigra* @aliaabhatt. A film and a character that has given me as much as taken away from me. A journey that’s meant everything. See you at the movies on 27th September.”

Directed by Vasan Bala, *Jigra* is co-produced by Alia Bhatt and Karan Johar.

## Shahid reveals what made him quit smoking

Actor Shahid Kapoor has opened up about his decision to quit smoking, and it is his eight-year-old daughter Misha.

Shahid appeared on ‘No Filter Neha’ season 6, a podcast hosted by actress Neha Dhupia, who chats with her industry friends and makes interesting conversations.

During the audio chat show, Shahid revealed about his decision to quit smoking: “When I used to smoke, I would hide from my daughter and smoke. That is actually the reason I gave it up. One day, while I was hiding and having my smoke, I told myself that I am not going to do this forever. And that is actually the day I decided to quit smoking.”

Shahid married Mira Rajput in July 2015. The couple have two kids—daughter Misha, and son Zain.

On the work front, Shahid was last seen in ‘Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya’, a science fiction romantic comedy co-starring Kriti Sanon.

# Rakul Preet Singh and Jackky Bhagnani tie the knot in Goa

After years of being in a relationship, Bollywood actor Rakul Preet Singh and actor-filmmaker Jackky Bhagnani finally tied the knot in a beautiful wedding in Goa on Wednesday. The couple got married as per Sikh tradition in the morning. Later in the evening, they got married as per Sindhi tradition.

True to their word, Rakul and Jackky met the paparazzi after concluding their wedding ceremony. As the paparazzi congratulated them, they smiled and posed for pictures.

Their wedding was a star-studded affair with celebrities like Varun Dhawan, Arjun Kapoor, Bhumi Pednekar, Esha Deol, David Dhawan, Ayushmann Khurrana, and others in attendance.

On Tuesday, Feb 20, Rakul’s parents, Rajendra Singh and Kulwinder Singh, were seen thanking the paparazzi for traveling all the way from Mumbai to Goa to be part of their joyous occasion. They had also announced that the couple would step out to meet the photographers and the media after the wedding ceremony.

Rakul Preet and Jackky Bhagnani were neighbors and shared several mutual friends. However, their relationship blossomed during the Covid lockdown. The two made their relationship Instagram official in 2021 when Jackky wished Rakul on her birthday with a heartfelt message, expressing his love and admiration for



her. Rakul reciprocated with an equally affectionate birthday wish for Jackky later that year. Since then, the couple has shared numerous moments together, attending birthdays, dinners, parties, and various social gatherings.

In her interview with *Cosmopolitan*, Rakul revealed their perspective on maintaining a healthy relationship. She

emphasised that while there’s no specific ‘mantra’ for success, it’s essential to be complete within oneself before entering a relationship. She said, “Being complete in yourself first to be able to complete someone else. And that’s something that both Jackky [Bhagnani] and I have spoken about.”

Source: *The Indian Express*

## Varun, Janhvi reunite for romance drama film ‘Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari’

Bollywood stars Varun Dhawan and Janhvi Kapoor are reuniting for romance drama film “Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari”, the makers announced on Thursday, Feb 22,

Backed by Karan Johar’s Dharma Production, the movie will be written and directed by filmmaker Shashank Khaitan. It will be released in theatres on April 25, 2025.

“Your Sanskari is on his way to get his Kumari! This love story wrapped with entertainment is coming to the big screens! #SunnySanskariKiTulsiKumari in cinemas, 18th April 2025,” the studio posted on Instagram.

“Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari” will reunite Dhawan and Kapoor, who most recently worked together for Nitesh Tiwari’s relationship drama “Bawaal”.

The project reteams Dhawan with Khaitan, who directed the actor in “Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania” (2014) and “Badrinath Ki Dulhania” (2017). Khaitan had also directed 2018’s “Dhadak”, which marked the acting debut of Kapoor.

“Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari” will be produced by Hiroo Yash Johar, Karan Johar, Apoorva Mehta and Khaitan.

Source: *PTI*







## Emma Stone's Los Angeles home sells for \$4.3 Million

Emma Stone has parted ways with her L.A. home just a few weeks after putting it up for sale.

The actress, 35, first listed her charming home in Comstock Hills, a private, gated community located in L.A.'s Westwood neighborhood, for \$3.995 million at the end of January, PEOPLE reported at the time.

PEOPLE confirmed she'd sold it for \$4.3 million — just over \$300,000 above the original asking price.

The sale marks another win for the star, who just took home a Golden Globe and Critics' Choice Award for her movie *Poor Things*.

Fittingly, the star — who just depicted an aspiring HGTV host in *The Curse!* — recently renovated the Westwood residence, according to the listing, held by agent Eric Lavey of Sotheby's International Realty's Beverly Hills brokerage.

Originally built in 1926, the newly rejuvenated 3,276 sq. ft. home boasts four bedrooms and four full bathrooms across two stories.

# Dakota Johnson and Chris Martin enjoyed a happy and relaxing vacation in Mexico

Dakota Johnson and Chris Martin appeared to be in great spirits as they vacationed together in Mexico. The couple, known for keeping their relationship private, were photographed enjoying each other's company during their getaway, offering a rare glimpse into their personal lives.

According to a source speaking to *People*, Dakota Johnson and Chris Martin enjoyed a peaceful vacation in Punta Mita for a few days. The couple appeared content and relaxed, spending quality time together. They were seen lounging on the beach, with Dakota engrossed in a book, and they also partook in yoga and meditation sessions.

An insider revealed that Johnson and Martin's trip seemed to be spontaneous, and the couple returned to Los Angeles on Tuesday. Their Punta Mita vacation came shortly after the Mexico City premiere of Dakota Johnson's film *Madame Web* at Cinemex Antara Polanco on Feb. 13.

In *Madame Web*, Dakota Johnson portrays the character Cassandra Webb, a New York City paramedic who acquires clairvoyant abilities enabling her to foresee the future. The film is based on the Marvel Comics character introduced in 1980, known for her appearances in *Spider-Man* stories.

Last year, Martin's ex-wife, Gwyneth Paltrow, posted a photo of herself with Johnson on social media, mentioning their close bond. During an Instagram Q&A in October 2023, the Oscar winner, 51, stated, "We're actually very good friends." The next month, Paltrow shared another picture of herself and Johnson, smiling as they held hands. Martin and Paltrow tied the knot in 2003 before "consciously uncoupling" in 2014 and finalizing their divorce in 2016. The singer began his relationship with Johnson in 2017.

In a March 2023 appearance on the Conan O'Brien *Needs a Friend* podcast, Martin offered a rare insight into his relationship with Johnson. He shared how she contributed to enhancing his band's performances for the hearing impaired by introducing them to SubPacs, a device that enables individuals with hearing impairments to experience the vibrations of a concert.



## Hilary Swank opens up about challenge, rewards of raising twins

Hilary Swank discussed about the challenges and rewards of being a mother of twins. Swank and her husband Philip Schneider gave birth to twins, Aya and Ohm, in April 2023. The 49-year-old Oscar-winning actor spoke at the premiere of her new film *Ordinary Angels* recently at the SVA Theatre in New York.

"I think that being a mother of twins, I never have had a singleton, so I don't know what that's like," she explained.

"But I know that the sleepless nights are hard and when you have one that might sleep through the night, the other one's not, so it's kind of this trade-off every night. But I know this is also a season, and it too will pass, and I try and remind myself that there's going to be a day when I'm like, 'Oh, I'd love to wake up right now and just hold you.' So just trying and hold on to that." She's already looking forward to the next challenge — when the twins are more mobile.

"Well, they're only crawling, so it's not like we're out of control or anything," she said. Swank stars in the Lionsgate film as Sharon Stevens, a "fierce but struggling hairdresser in small-town Kentucky who



discovers a renewed sense of purpose when she meets Ed (Alan Ritchson), a widower working hard to make ends meet for his two daughters," according to an official synopsis.

## TOM CRUISE SECURES LEAD ROLE IN ALEJANDRO G. IÑÁRRITU'S SECRET COLLAB WITH WARNER BROS

Hollywood icon Tom Cruise is set to headline the upcoming cinematic extravaganza helmed by acclaimed filmmaker Alejandro G. Iñárritu, marking a major collaboration between two powerhouse talents in the industry. The eagerly anticipated project, which is



reportedly in development under the banners of Warner Bros. and Legendary Pictures, has already generated considerable buzz among movie enthusiasts and industry insiders alike. This will mark Alejandro's first English 2015 smash *The Revenant*. While specific plot details for the upcoming film remain undisclosed, rumors of Warner Bros. and Legendary negotiating to acquire the project are circulating online as per *Deadline*. This marks Iñárritu's return to English-language cinema since the 2015 hit *The Revenant*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, nearly a decade ago.

Tom Cruise, who recently inked a deal with Warner Bros. Discovery to develop both original and franchise films in 2024, appears to be in a favorable position.



## 'ISIS BRIDE' LOSES APPEAL TO REGAIN UK CITIZENSHIP

**LONDON (TIP):** Shamima Begum, the London-born Bangladeshi-origin woman, who fled the UK as a 15-year-old schoolgirl to join the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist network, on February 23 lost yet another legal bid to regain her British citizenship and return to the UK from Syria. Previously in 2022, the UK Supreme Court upheld the decision to bar the now 24-year-old from returning to the UK.

After a series of legal battles, Begum, known as 'ISIS bride', lost a challenge at the Special Immigration Appeals Commission in February last year and then took her case to the Court of Appeal. (PTI)

## BRITISH SHIP STRUCK BY MISSILE OFF YEMEN COAST

**DUBAI (TIP):** A cargo ship was set on fire off the southern coast of Yemen after being struck by a missile on February 22, which has prompted US-led naval forces to respond, British maritime agencies reported. The UK-owned, Palau-flagged ship was en route to Egypt from Thailand, according to maritime security firm Ambrey and ship tracking data.

Islander is the name of the vessel, two shipping sources said. US-led coalition forces are responding to the incident, which involved two missiles being fired at the ship 70 nautical miles southeast of Aden, Yemen. Iran-aligned Houthi militants in Yemen have launched repeated drone and missile strikes in the Red Sea since November. — Reuters

# New Israeli settlements in West Bank are illegal and inconsistent with international law: Antony Blinken

**CHARLESTON (US) (TIP):** The new Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal and inconsistent with international law, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said, reversing a Trump-era policy.

Blinken, at a joint press conference with the Argentine Foreign Minister Diana Mondino in Buenos Aires, said he was disappointed with Israel's latest plans for settlement expansion.

"We have seen the reports, and I have to say we're disappointed in the announcement. It's been long-standing US policy under Republican and Democratic administrations alike that new settlements are counterproductive to reaching an enduring peace," Blinken said in response to a question.

"They're also inconsistent with international law. Our administration maintains a firm opposition to settlement expansion. And in our judgement, this only weakens — it doesn't strengthen — Israel's security," said the top American diplomat, a day after Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich indicated that more than 3,000 new residences would be added to settlements.

The statement comes as the Biden administration's latest shift away from the pro-Israel policies pursued by former president Donald Trump.

The Trump administration reversed the US policy to declare that settlements did not violate international law. In 2019, under Trump, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed that "the establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not, per se, inconsistent with international law".

Blinken's statement was defended by



the White House in Washington DC.

"(We have) seen those reports and, frankly, disappointed in the announcement. It's been long-standing US policy under both Republican and Democratic administrations that new settlements are counterproductive to the cause of peace. Frankly, they're also inconsistent with international law. And this administration maintains our firm opposition to settlement expansion," John Kirby, a White House spokesman, told reporters.

The New York Times reported that in November 2019, the then Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, under then-president Donald Trump reversed four decades of US policy by saying that settlements did not violate international law.

"State Department lawyers never issued a new legal determination that buttressed that policy change and Blinken's shift back to the old policy is consistent with a long-standing legal finding of the department," the daily reported.

"We are simply reaffirming the

fundamental conclusion that these settlements are inconsistent with international law. This is a position that has been consistent over a range of Republican and Democratic administrations. If there's an administration that is being inconsistent, it was the previous one," Kirby told reporters.

In Buenos Aires, Blinken said he had seen reports about the post-war Gaza plan.

"I haven't seen the plan, so I want to reserve judgment until we see the details. Having said that, you know that there are certain basic principles that we set out many months ago that we feel are very important when it comes to Gaza's future, including that it cannot be a platform for terrorism," he said.

"There should be no Israeli reoccupation of Gaza. The size of Gaza's territory should not be reduced. So, we want to make sure that any plan that emerges is consistent with those principles. There are other principles, but those are three of the most important ones," Blinken said.

"At the same time, we have many countries in the region that are working together on a plan for post-conflict Gaza. I think that's very important, and I've spent some time with some of our Arab partners, including recently on the margins of the G20, talking about just as we did when we were at the Munich Security Conference together. So, it's important that we have, again, a necessary plan, but one also that's consistent with basic principles that I think many countries share about what has to be Gaza's future," said the Secretary of State. (PTI)

# UK government revamps logo with King Charles III's chosen domed crown

**LONDON (TIP):** In a move that symbolises a new royal era for the country, the UK government has updated the logo on its official GOV.UK digital services used across all departments for official day-to-day business with the chosen crown of King Charles III.

When the 75-year-old acceded to the throne in September 2022, he chose to use the Tudor Crown in his Royal Cypher, marking a shift away from the St Edward's Crown used by his late mother Queen Elizabeth II.

The design of the Tudor Crown can be distinguished by its slightly more domed appearance, which will now become the iconic image across British government notices.

"Following the accession of His Majesty The King, we are updating the symbols of state to reflect the new design of the Tudor Crown," Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden said as he announced the change on February 18.

"The digital realm is now an integral part of our lives, and as His Majesty's Government we take pride in this change to GOV.UK today, honouring the chosen crown of our King," he said.

The GOV.UK logo begins its transition this week to recognise the chosen crown of the King on its homepage and sitewide menu bar. The transition is covered within the usual operating costs of the GOV.UK website, the UK Cabinet Office said.

It added that it is important people are aware of this change given that GOV.UK digital services are used by millions of people every single week — from passport and tax services to other official government information.

"GOV.UK is an essential part of living, studying and working in the UK. It is used by millions of people weekly for both routine and sometimes life-changing reasons such as getting access to benefits or finding a job," said Alex Burghart, parliamentary secretary for the cabinet office.

"Whilst we are importantly updating the GOV.UK logo to reflect the new monarch's choice of crown, this site remains the same trusted and official

digital home of the UK government," he said.

While the new domed shape can be easily identified, the public are encouraged to report any misleading and fraudulent GOV.UK styled websites via its dedicated reporting page during the course of the transition.

The new logo has been created collaboratively between the Government Digital Service (GDS), the Government Communication Service (GCS) and the Royal Household and the majority of changes to replace the St Edward's Crown with the Tudor Crown logo on GOV.UK are expected to have taken place by March 1. (PTI)



# Angry French farmers with tractors are back to Paris for another protest

**PARIS (TIP):** Angry farmers were back to Paris on their tractors February 23 in a new protest demanding more government support and simpler regulations, on the eve of a major agricultural fair in the French capital.

Dozens of tractors drove peacefully into a neighbourhood on the capital's west side carrying flags from Rural Coordination, the farmers' union that staged the protest.

The protesters then posed with their tractors on a bridge over the Seine River with the Eiffel Tower in the background.

The latest protest comes three weeks after farmers lifted roadblocks around Paris and elsewhere in the country after the government offered over 400 million euros (USD 433 million) to address their grievances over low earnings, heavy regulation and what they describe as unfair competition from abroad.

"Save our agriculture," the Rural Coordination said on X. One tractor was carrying a poster reading: "Death is in the field."

The convoy temporarily slowed traffic on the A4 highway, east of the capital, and on the Paris ring-road earlier on Friday morning.

French farmers' actions are part of a broader protest movement in Europe against EU agriculture policies, bureaucracy and overall business conditions.

Farmers complain that the 27-nation



bloc's environmental policies, such as the Green Deal, which calls for limits on the use of chemicals and on greenhouse gas emissions, limit their business and make their products more expensive than non-EU imports.

Other protests are being staged across France as farmers seek to put pressure on the government to implement its promises.

Government officials have held a series of meetings with farmers unions in recent weeks to discuss a new bill meant to defend France's "agricultural sovereignty".

The government's plan also includes hundreds of millions of euros in aid, tax breaks and a promise not to ban pesticides in France that are allowed elsewhere in Europe, which French farmers say puts them at an unfair disadvantage.

French President Emmanuel Macron is to visit Paris Agricultural Fair on Saturday, where he is planning to have a "big debate" with farmers, supermarket CEOs and members of environmental groups, his office said.

Paris Agricultural Fair is one of the world's largest farm fairs, drawing crowds every year. (AP)

## India in touch with Moscow for early 'discharge' of nationals working for Russian Army

**MOSCOE (TIP):** India on February 23 said it was in touch with Moscow for early "discharge" of Indians working as support staff to Russian Army and urged its nationals to stay away from the conflict zone in Ukraine.

The comments by External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal came following a report that some Indians are working as support staff to the Russian Army in the conflict zone.

"We are aware that a few Indian nationals have signed up for support jobs with the Russian army," Jaiswal said.

**He said the Indian embassy in Moscow has regularly taken up this matter with the relevant Russian authorities for their "early discharge".**

"We urge all Indian nationals to exercise due caution and stay away from this conflict," he said.

According to media reports, several



Indians have been working as security helpers in the Russian military, and they were forced to fight with Russian soldiers in certain areas along Russia's border with Ukraine.

All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin

Owaisi had urged the external affairs ministry to rescue the Indians.

"Sir @DrSJaishankar kindly use your good offices to bring these men back home. Their lives are at risk & their families are justifiably worried," Owaisi said on X on Wednesday.

## CHINA BUILDING VILLAGES ON DISPUTED BHUTAN BORDER

**BEIJING (TIP):** China is reportedly pressing ahead with the construction of border villages in the disputed territory with Bhutan, despite the ongoing border talks between the two countries. At least three villages have been built in the mountainous region separating the two countries, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on February 19.

The rapid expansion began as a poverty alleviation scheme but serves a dual national security role, the report quoted the ruling Chinese Communist Party officials as saying.

In a disputed remote village inside a border zone that has long been disputed by China and Bhutan, 18 new residents were waiting to enter their newly built houses. (PTI)

## AT LEAST 26 MEN MASSACRED IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA TRIBAL VIOLENCE, POLICE TELL AUSTRALIAN MEDIA

**MELBOURNE (TIP):** At least 26 men were massacred in tribal violence in Papua New Guinea, Australian media reported on February 18.

A tribe, their allies and mercenaries were on their way to attack a neighbouring tribe when they were ambushed on Sunday in the remote highlands of South Pacific's Enga, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Acting Superintendent George Kakas told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Kakas initially said 53 had died. But security forces later revised the death toll down to 26, ABC reported. It was not immediately clear whether any of the ambushers might be among the dead.

Bodies were collected from the battlefield, roads and the riverside, then loaded onto police trucks and taken to the hospital. Kakas said they were still counting "those who were shot, injured and ran off into the bushes."

Papua New Guinea is a diverse, developing nation of 10 million mostly subsistence farmers with 800 languages in a strategically important part of the South Pacific.

Internal security has become an increasing challenge for its government as China, the United States and Australia seek closer security ties.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his government was ready to assist Papua New Guinea, which is Australia's nearest neighbour and the largest single recipient of Australian foreign aid. "That is very disturbing the news that has come out of Papua New Guinea," Albanese said before the death toll was revised down. (AP)



## TALIBAN EXECUTE 2 CONVICTS IN PUBLIC

**KABUL (TIP):** The Taliban carried out a double public execution at a stadium in south-eastern Afghanistan on February 22. Thousands watched the killing of two convicted men, as their victims' relatives fired the gunshot. The Taliban's Supreme Court had ruled that the pair were responsible for the stabbing deaths of two victims in separate attacks.

It identified the two as Syed Jamal from central Wardak province and Gul Khan from Ghazni. Meanwhile, the United Nations criticised the Taliban and called on the country's rulers to halt such practices. — AP

## LANDSLIDE IN EASTERN AFGHANISTAN LEAVES AT LEAST 5 PEOPLE DEAD, 25 MISSING

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** A landslide triggered by heavy rain and snowfall buried more than two dozen houses in a remote village in eastern Afghanistan, killing at least five people and leaving more than 20 others missing, a provincial official said February 18.

The landslide, which occurred Sunday night, destroyed or damaged more than two dozen houses in Noorgram district, according to Samiulhaq Haqbayan, the Taliban-appointed director of information and culture in Nuristan province.

Rescuers have so far recovered five bodies and a search is underway for at least 25 others, including women and children, who are trapped under the destroyed houses, Haqbayan said.

The landslide occurred after heavy rains and snowfall that are still ongoing, he added.

Nuristan province, which borders Pakistan, is mostly covered by mountainous forests. (AP)

## THAILAND EX-PM THAKSIN SHINAWATRA GETS PAROLE

**BANGKOK (TIP):** Thailand's billionaire ex-PM Thaksin Shinawatra was released on parole on February 18 after six months in detention, his first day of freedom in his homeland 15 years after fleeing in the wake of his overthrow in a military coup.

The 74-year-old tycoon, whose family's party is back in power, was granted parole despite having not spent a single night in prison for a sentence that had in August been commuted from eight years to one year by the country's king. — Reuters

# Shehbaz set to be PM, Zardari Prez candidate

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Peoples Party have struck a power-sharing deal to form a coalition government led by ex-prime minister Shehbaz Sharif, a move that could effectively keep their arch-rival Imran Khan out of power after the controversial elections.

Both the PML-N and the PPP won fewer seats in Parliament than candidates backed by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan in an election mired in controversies, including vote rigging. Khan, who could not contest the February 8 elections due to his convictions in some cases, including that of corruption, has been barred from holding any public office for 10 years.

At a joint news conference here late February 19 night after marathon negotiations, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari announced that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif, 72, will assume the role



Shehbaz Sharif



Asif Ali Zardari

of the prime minister once again. Similarly, PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, 68, will be the joint candidate for the president's office.

Last week, the PML-N, in a surprise move, announced that the party supremo and three-time former premier Nawaz Sharif has nominated his younger brother Shehbaz as a candidate for the slot of prime minister. Nawaz, 74, was earlier confident of securing a record

fourth term. — PTI

### MANDATE THIEVES MUST RESIGN: IMRAN

Jailed former Pakistan PM Imran Khan's party on Wednesday rejected the attempts by two of its arch-rivals to form a coalition government. Khan warned that robbing its public endorsement by the "mandate thieves" will result in the worst political instability and told them to resign.

## Pakistan to probe trolling of officials over 'rigging' in February 8 polls

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Pakistan's caretaker government has constituted a joint investigation team, including from the ISI, following a massive social media campaign against officials and functionaries of the top poll body alleging their involvement in the reported rigging of elections, according to media reports on February 22.

The report is to be submitted in 15 days. The joint investigation team (JIT) will look into the relevant people who have trolled government officials and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) functionaries and "identify and prosecute the culprits" under the relevant laws.

The JIT formation comes in the wake of the consistent allegations by the jailed former prime minister Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party that the government officials and also those from the ECP were involved in what Khan described as "Mother of All Rigging," which he claimed enabled his arch rivals to steal his party's mandate.

Two weeks after the voting day, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) struck a power-sharing deal to form a coalition government led by ex-prime minister Shehbaz Sharif, a move that could effectively keep Khan out of power.

Both the PML-N and the PPP won fewer seats in Parliament than candidates backed by Khan's PTI in an election mired in controversies, including vote rigging, PTI has alleged and unleashed a substantial campaign on social media claiming that the powerful establishment was hand in gloves with the perpetrators of rigging.

"As per a notification issued by the interior ministry, the JIT was formed under Section 30 of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 and an additional director general of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) will be its convener," Dawn.com reported.

Other members will be from the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Intelligence Bureau (IB), the National Database & Registration Authority (Nadra), and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA). It could also hire IT experts if required to probe the "malicious" social media campaign.

According to the terms of reference of the JIT, it will identify and prosecute individuals involved in social media campaigns against government officials for their alleged role in irregularities on the day of polling.

It will also propose measures to counter such campaigns in the future. The JIT has 15 days to submit its report to the relevant office. (PTI)

## Indian diplomat for better connectivity with Sri Lanka

**COLOMBO (TIP):** Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha has made his first official visit to Sri Lanka's Northern Province and stressed the need for improved connectivity between the two countries.

The newly-appointed Indian envoy completed his three-day maiden visit to the island nation's north on February 18, the Indian High Commission said in a statement on Sunday. He participated in diverse engagements during the visit, attesting to the "deep-rooted nature of the bilateral partnership as also India's firm commitment to deepening socio-economic and cultural ties with Northern Province," it said.

Jha emphasised connectivity while visiting the Kankesanthurai (KKS) Port and the Talaimannar Pier and spoke of the need for expeditious resumption of ferry services between the two countries.

During his visit to the Palaly Airport, he explored means to strengthen air connectivity through infrastructure development at the airport, the statement said.

In 2023, Sri Lanka sought Indian financial assistance to extend the runway at the Palaly airport after India's Alliance Air began Chennai-Palaly flights.

"The High Commissioner offered prayers at the historic Ram Sethu (Adam's Bridge). He also visited the ancient Thiruketheeswaram temple, which was renovated with grant assistance from the Government of India," the statement said. In India's endeavour to contribute towards addressing the energy needs of islands off Jaffna, Jha assessed the readiness for early rollout of the Hybrid Renewable Energy Systems Project in Nainativu Island. (PTI)



# LEADING INDIAN DRONE MANUFACTURER ENTERS US MARKET

FEBRUARY 23, 2024

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** India's drone industry has "leapfrogged" in the last 10 years, gaining pace after the COVID-19 pandemic, the CEO of a leading Indian drone manufacturer has said as his company has showcased its products in the highly competitive US market.

Indian drone manufacturing company IdeaForge, ranked fifth globally in the dual-use category of civil and defense, is entering the American drone market at a time when there is a reluctance to buy or acquire those made in China.

Ankit Mehta, the CEO of IdeaForge, told PTI Videos in an interview that the Indian drone industry has "leapfrogged" in the last 10 years with an enabling environment from the Indian government." He said the sector gained pace after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I think before the pandemic, the rules and regulations around drones were fairly stringent, and they did not allow a lot of flexibility in terms of use and deployment," Mehta said.

"But since the pandemic, the floodgates, in a way, have opened the adoption of technology, which has become wholehearted. Now people want to deploy drones for as many use cases as possible," he said.

Drones had very restrictive regulations earlier, he said. "Now those regulations have become a little bit more relaxed in terms of allowing the use of drones under a regulated environment, which is conducive for operations."

"Therefore, we are seeing a lot of intent in terms of adopting the technology, and we are seeing a lot of regulatory support for doing that," Mehta said.

"We also have in India a production-linked incentive scheme for drones. We have the fact that there is a ban on import of technology from outside so that Indian companies can develop the technology and be overall in an environment where we can demonstrate the capability of what Indian companies can do in this space," he said.

Asserting the distinctiveness of Indian drones, he said, "I think Indian drones are very unique in the sense that they've been built in some of the harshest environments and the highest altitude requirements in the world."

"With the operations being conducted in India at 6,000 meters plus altitude due to the various regions we have in our country in the Himalayas, to operate in extremely low temperatures like minus 30 degrees Celsius and also looking at drones that can operate in deserts in Rajasthan," he said.

"So, we are essentially a country that has a very large number of terrain conditions and weather conditions we have to cater to when we are looking at drones. We also have a lot of use cases and applications that exist simultaneously in one place," he said.

Giving examples of applications around traffic management, crowd management, counterinsurgency, counter-terrorism, and border management Mehta said, "All of these challenges are quite acute, and there are a lot of challenges around not having proper land records, and many such applications are being developed in India, and they're being used and deployed at scale."

Mehta is travelling to various cities in the US for product demonstrations to

export different kinds of drones to the country. One of which was held in the Washington DC National Capital region here on Thursday.

"We are seeing a lot of excitement about what we have on offer. The autonomy we offer again is very, very interesting and exciting for people, and we are currently engaging in getting as many demonstrations as we can and getting more real-world experience in the hands of the users over here. So that can localize our products better as well as give a flavor of our technology to everybody here," Mehta told PTI.

"For example, one of our products, Netra V 4 Pro, is a one-of-a-kind product that, in less than six kilograms, offers more than 90 minutes of flying time in the real world along with payloads. That is something that is not very common," he said.

"It is almost three times more than what is usually available in the market. In that sense, there is a lot of delight in when they actually see a product perform in that kind of condition, in that kind of real-world performance," he added.

Following one of the product demonstrations here, along with his team, Mehta said the idea is to showcase their technology over here and to look at what kind of uses the technology can put over here.

IdeaForge, set up in 2007 by a group of Mumbai IITians, can bring the experience they are gaining in India, he said.

"We have had our customers use our drones in over 420,000 missions within IdeaForge drones, flying almost every five minutes in India," he said.

"It's really a rich experience that we



Ankit Mehta, the CEO of IdeaForge, told PTI Videos in an interview that the Indian drone industry has "leapfrogged" in the last 10 years with an enabling environment from the Indian government."

can bring to the table here, and we see a lot of commonalities with respect to very low temperatures, very high temperatures, and some high-altitude areas over here as well," Mehta said.

"What we are building here to deploy at scale in India could be very, very useful in these environments as well," he added.

When asked about India purchasing armed drones from General Atomics for its armed forces at the cost of nearly USD 4 billion, Mehta said it would need sustained long-term investment from relevant sectors, including the Indian Government, to reach that level of manufacturing such drones.

"Manpower is definitely not a debate because India does have some of the best talent. In fact, a lot of our best talent is here building a lot of these technologies," Mehta said. (PTI)

## US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Verma meets Indian officials to advance global strategic partnership

FEBRUARY 23, 2024

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** The US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Verma has met with senior Indian ministers and officials in New Delhi to advance the US-India global strategic partnership and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region, according to his spokesperson.



The US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Verma has met with senior Indian ministers and officials in New Delhi to advance the US-India global strategic partnership

Verma, the Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, is the highest-ranking Indian American in the State Department. The former US Ambassador to India was on an official visit to India from February 19 to 21. He met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar; Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Defense Secretary Giridhar Aramane, and Deputy National Security Advisor Vikram Misri in New Delhi, State Department Spokesperson

Matthew Miller said here on Thursday.

Verma's meetings explored opportunities to strengthen US-India cooperation and people-to-people ties to ensure a free, open, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, Miller said. He also met with Minister of

Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal to discuss further expanding trade and economic ties between the US and India. "The Deputy Secretary and Indian officials further emphasized the benefits of close partnership on addressing global issues," Miller said.

Verma is on a six-day official visit to India, Sri Lanka and Maldives till Friday to strengthen bilateral ties with the nations, reaffirming America's enduring commitment to a free, open, secure, and prosperous region.

## Indian Embassy and consulate officials interact with Indian students from across US

FEBRUARY 22, 2024

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** Officials of the Indian Embassy here and its consulates held a virtual interaction with Indian students from across the US, discussing various aspects of student well-being and ways to stay connected with the larger diaspora.

About 150 Indian Student Association office bearers and students from 90 US universities participated in the interaction led by Charge d'Affaires, Ambassador Sripriya Ranganathan.

It was also attended by the Consul Generals of India in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, New York, San Francisco and Seattle.

The meeting gains significance in the backdrop of some deaths of Indian and



About 150 Indian Student Association office bearers and students from 90 US universities participated in the interaction led by Charge d'Affaires, Ambassador Sripriya Ranganathan.

Indian-origin students at universities across the US.

During the meeting, Ranganathan highlighted ways to stay connected with the Embassy/Consulates and the larger Indian diaspora.

Students were urged to spread the word amongst fellow Indian students in the US about the guidelines issued by the Embassy and the consulates for students studying in the US,

including registration on its websites, general aspects related to student safety and well-being, and emergency contact details of the Indian diplomatic missions.

The students presented useful suggestions on synergizing the efforts of the Embassy/consulates, university authorities, diaspora organizations and other stakeholders. (Source: PTI)



# Protect your skin from sun without sunscreen

From increasing your vitamin D levels to boosting your mood, sunlight can improve your health in numerous ways. But unprotected exposure to the sun can be unhealthy. The sun produces harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation that can cause problems like sunburn or sun poisoning. It can also have other adverse effects, such as premature skin aging, skin cancer, and eye damage. And it's not just the sun. Artificial sources of UV radiation, like tanning beds, are also harmful.

Daily sunscreen goes a long way toward shielding you from UV rays. But there are several other ways you can protect yourself. Keep reading for helpful skin-saving strategies. They'll come in handy on your next beach vacation and for other outdoor activities.

## Cover yourself with clothing and a hat

Covering your skin with protective clothing and a hat can help safeguard you from UVA and UVB rays. But certain clothes provide more protection than others. You can look for garments with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF), which shows how much the fabric protects your skin from UV rays. For example, a shirt with a UPF 50 rating blocks roughly 98% of the sun's UV rays. The Skin Cancer Foundation (SCF) requires a minimum UPF of 30 to grant its seal of recommendation for effective sun protection.

## Wear sunglasses

UV radiation can also damage your eyes, eyelids, and the sensitive skin around your eyes. Luckily, wearing sunglasses can shield these areas and reduce the risk of



conditions such as cataracts.

But like your clothing, not all eyewear is created equal when it comes to blocking sunlight. For example, studies suggest that goggles and large sunglasses may be more effective at protecting your eyes from UV rays than smaller sunglasses. One way to check the effectiveness of your sunglasses is with the eye-sun protection factor (ESPF®). The ESPF measures how well lenses block the transmission of light and UV reflection. If your sunglasses don't have an ESPF rating, you can check for other factors. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends looking for sunglasses that block 99% to 100% of all types of UV light.

## Use an umbrella

Umbrellas are not just for the

rain. Using an umbrella or parasol can stop direct UV rays from hitting your skin. But research shows that they don't block scattered or diffused UV rays, which may be common at the beach. So this shade-producing tool is most effective when you use it in combination with other sun-protecting strategies, like wearing sunscreen and protective clothing.

## Eat foods that provide sun protection

There are plenty of good reasons to adopt a healthy diet, including keeping your skin healthy. A healthy diet rich in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids can promote healthy skin.

Many foods contain antioxidants. These nutrients can help prevent cellular damage.



## Raw milk face packs for brighter skin

### Turmeric and Raw Milk Face Pack

**INGREDIENTS:** 2 tablespoons of raw milk, 1 teaspoon of turmeric powder

**WHY THIS PACK:** Turmeric is known for its anti-inflammatory and brightening properties. When combined with the moisturizing effect of raw milk, this face pack becomes a potent solution for reducing blemishes and dark spots. Use it twice a week.

### Honey and Raw Milk Face Pack

**INGREDIENTS:** 2 tablespoons of raw milk, 1 tablespoon of honey

**WHY THIS PACK:** Honey is a natural humectant that helps retain moisture, making it an excellent complement to raw milk. This pack is perfect for those with dry skin, providing hydration and a radiant glow. Apply it weekly, leave it on for 15-20 minutes, and rinse thoroughly. Ensure the honey used is pure and free from additives for optimal benefits.

### Oatmeal and Raw Milk Face Pack

**INGREDIENTS:** 2 tablespoons of raw milk, 1 tablespoon of finely ground oatmeal

**WHY THIS PACK:** Oatmeal acts as a gentle exfoliant, making this face pack ideal for sloughing off dead skin cells and promoting cell turnover. Raw milk complements the exfoliation with its moisturizing properties. Use this pack bi-weekly for smoother and brighter skin.

### Cucumber and Raw Milk Face Pack

**INGREDIENTS:** 2 tablespoons of raw milk, 2 tablespoons of cucumber juice

**WHY THIS PACK:** Cucumber is renowned for its soothing and cooling properties, making it a perfect match for raw milk. This pack is excellent for calming irritated skin and reducing puffiness.

## FOOD CORNER

# Chicken Manchurian

## Ingredients

250 gm chicken, 1 tablespoon all purpose flour, 1/4 cup refined oil, 1/4 teaspoon, crushed green peppercorns, 1/4 teaspoon, chopped green chilli, 120 ml chicken stock, 1/4, teaspoon ground black pepper, 30 ml water, 1 tablespoon corn flour, 1 beaten egg, 1/4 teaspoon crushed ginger, 1/4 teaspoon crushed garlic, 1 handful chopped into cubes cilantro, 10 ml light soya sauce, 1/4 teaspoon sugar, 1 finely chopped spring onions

## Method

To prepare this delicious Chicken Manchurian recipe, take a bowl and add corn flour, flour, salt and pepper along with the beaten egg in it. Mix all these ingredients properly and prepare a batter. Next, dip the chicken pieces in the batter one by one. Make

sure it is properly coated.

- Meanwhile, heat oil in a pan over medium flame. Once the oil is sufficiently hot, place the coated chicken pieces in the oil and deep fry till they turn golden brown in colour. Once done, drain the excess oil and keep aside till further use. Now, to prepare the manchurian sauce, heat oil in another pan over medium flame. Once the oil is hot enough, add the garlic and ginger in it. Fry till it becomes slightly brown in colour. Now add in green chillies and cilantro leaves. Saute these for about a minute or so.
- Then, bring the flame to low and add in the chicken stock, soya sauce, salt, sugar and pepper. Allow this mixture to simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Once done, add in corn flour along with water in it and bring the mixture to a boil.
- The last step is to place the fried chicken pieces into the manchurian sauce. Bring the flame to medium low and allow the dish to cook for close to 5 minutes. Once done, turn off the flame and transfer the Chicken Manchurian into a serving bowl.





# Worrying signs and symptoms of high blood pressure during sleep

High blood pressure is a silent killer and can over the time damage arteries increasing risk of heart attack or stroke. Hypertension if not controlled can also affect kidney function, cause vision loss and memory loss. High blood pressure can catch you off guard as there are no symptoms even in cases when BP readings reach dangerously high levels. However, if you stay vigilant and follow your body cues, there are certain signs that can warn you about abnormalities in your blood pressure. From your snoring patterns to frequent urination at night, there are certain signs of high blood pressure in night that can warn you about the silent threat. As per a new study published in the journal npj Digital Medicine, people who spend more time snoring at night are more likely to have uncontrolled hypertension. There are other signs and symptoms too that one must consider.

## SNORING

One common indicator of high blood pressure is snoring, especially if it's accompanied by pauses in breathing, known as sleep apnoea. Snoring occurs when the airway becomes partially blocked, causing vibrations in the throat tissues. However, in individuals with hypertension, snoring can signal more than just sleep apnoea; it may also indicate restricted blood flow due to narrowed blood vessels, a hallmark of high blood pressure.

## INSOMNIA

While many factors can contribute to insomnia, such as stress, anxiety or poor sleep hygiene, hypertension can disrupt the body's natural sleep-wake cycle, making it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep throughout the night.

## RESTLESS SLEEP

Additionally, frequent awakenings or restless sleep may be indicative of hypertension-related issues, as elevated blood pressure levels can trigger the body's 'fight or flight' response, causing arousal from sleep.



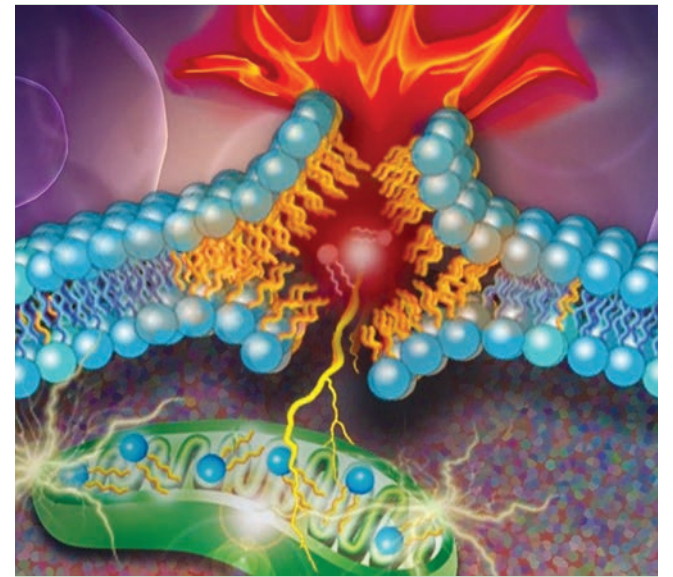
## EXCESSIVE URINATION

Furthermore, nocturia, or excessive urination during the night, can be a symptom of hypertension. Elevated blood pressure levels can put strain on the kidneys, leading to increased urine production and the need to wake up multiple times to urinate.

## HEADACHE

Moreover, experiencing headaches upon waking or during the night can also be a sign of nocturnal hypertension. Headaches caused by high blood pressure tend to be most intense in the morning, as blood pressure naturally rises during sleep and peaks in the early morning hours.

Monitoring these signs and symptoms, especially when occurring together, can help individuals identify potential issues with nocturnal hypertension and seek appropriate medical attention to manage their blood pressure levels and mitigate associated risks. *Source: HT*



## Rare fat molecule helps drive cell death: Study

Researchers revealed that a rare sort of lipid plays a vital role in ferroptosis, a type of cell death described by Columbia professor Brent Stockwell.

The findings shed new light on how cells die during ferroptosis, potentially improving understanding of how to prevent ferroptosis in contexts where it is harmful, such as neurodegenerative diseases, or induce it in contexts where it could be beneficial, such as using it to kill dangerous cancer cells.

The study discovered that a diPUFA phospholipid, an uncommon type of lipid with two polyunsaturated fatty acyl tails, was present in a variety of situations where ferroptosis occurred, including aged brains and Huntington disease-affected brain tissue. The finding indicated that the lipid is efficient at promoting ferroptosis.

The research was conducted by professors in Columbia's Department of Biological Sciences, Department of Chemistry, and the Columbia University Irving Medical Centre.

Stockwell first discovered ferroptosis in 2012, when he found that certain cells were dying because their lipid layers were collapsing- an unusual form of cell death that differs from the most common kind, which begins with the cell forming blisters on its outer surface. Since that discovery, researchers in Stockwell's lab and elsewhere have continued to investigate ferroptosis, discovering that it can occur naturally in ageing cells, in pathological contexts, and can be induced to treat disease.

Another paper out this month with several co-authors found that a gene named PHLDA2 can sometimes promote ferroptosis by attacking a different lipid and that this gene can block some tumours from forming.

Together, these papers show that specific lipids promote ferroptosis, so defining the driver lipids in specific cancers is important. *Source: ANI*

# Risk-reducing mastectomy may lower breast cancer mortality in some women

Risk-reducing mastectomies (RRM) in women with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 genetic variant may significantly reduce the risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer and also lower the probability of death.

The study, published in the British Journal of Cancer, examined how RRM affects the rate of death of women with a pathogenic variant but no cancer diagnosis.

Women who have an inherited BRCA1 or BRCA2 variant, have an 80 per cent risk of developing breast cancer over the course of their lifetime.

Research has shown that an RRM reduces the risk of breast cancer by



90 percent. "The decision to have a risk reducing mastectomy is often difficult for a woman to make, and the more evidence we are able to provide them with when they are making that decision, the more informed their care plan will be,"

said Prof Kelly Metcalfe of the Lawrence Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, from University of Toronto, Canada.

Metcalfe said that in Canada, 30 per cent of women with a pathogenic variant opt for this surgery. It is, Metcalfe said, one of the most effective ways of preventing breast cancer in women with this risk profile.

Through a pseudo-randomised trial, Metcalfe, and her team, followed over 1,600 participants from a registry of women with a pathogenic BRCA 1/2 variant from nine different countries over the course of six years, with half of the women having a risk-reducing mastectomy. *Source: IANS*

PAGE SPONSORED BY

## DR. SATISH AND GITANJLI ANAND



**DR. SATISH ANAND**  
Former Chairman, Board of Trustees, AAPI National  
E-Mail: sanandmd@gmail.com

**GITANJLI ANAND**  
Former President, India Association of Long Island (IALI)  
E-mail: gitanjlianand@gmail.com





## Cryogenic engine for Gaganyaan missions now human-rated: ISRO

ISRO has accomplished a major milestone in the human rating of its CE20 cryogenic engine that powers the cryogenic stage of the human-rated LVM3 launch vehicle for Gaganyaan human spaceflight missions, with the completion of the final round of ground qualification tests.

'ISRO's CE20 cryogenic engine is now human-rated for Gaganyaan missions,' the space agency said on X.

Rigorous testing demonstrates the engine's mettle, it said, adding the CE20 engine identified for the first uncrewed flight LVM3 G1 also went through acceptance tests.

The February 13 final test was the seventh of a series of vacuum ignition tests carried out at the High Altitude Test Facility at ISRO Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri to simulate flight conditions, it said. The ground qualification tests for the human rating of the CE20 engine involved life demonstration and endurance tests, and performance assessment under nominal operating conditions as well as off-nominal conditions with respect to thrust, mixture ratio and propellant tank pressure, it said.

# Fastest-growing black hole and brightest object in universe discovered

Astronomers have discovered the fastest-growing black hole ever recorded — the most luminous known object in the universe that is devouring the equivalent of one Sun every day.

The researchers at The Australian National University (ANU) noted that the black hole with a mass roughly 17 billion times that of the Sun, has set a record that may not ever be beaten.

"The incredible rate of growth also means a huge release of light and heat," said study lead author Christian Wolf, Associate Professor at ANU.

"So, this is also the most luminous known object in the universe. It is 500 trillion times brighter than our sun," Wolf said in a statement.

A black hole is a region of spacetime where gravity is so strong that nothing, including light, can escape it.

Christopher Onken, co-author of the study published in the journal *Nature Astronomy*, noted that it was a surprise that the blackhole remained undetected until now, given what we know about many other, less impressive ones.

The blackhole was first detected using a 2.3 metre telescope at the ANU Siding Spring Observatory near Coonabarabran in New South Wales (NSW).

The research team then turned to one of the largest telescopes in the world — the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile — to confirm the full nature of the black hole and measure its mass.

"The light from this black hole has travelled over 12 billion years to reach us," said Professor Rachel Webster from the University of Melbourne said.

"In the adolescent universe, matter was moving chaotically and feeding hungry black holes. Today, stars are moving orderly at safe distances and only rarely plunge into black holes," Webster said.

The intense radiation comes from the accretion disc — made of rapidly rotating gas — around the black hole, which is the



holding pattern for all the material waiting to be devoured, the researchers said.

"It looks like a gigantic and magnetic storm cell with temperatures of 10,000 degrees Celsius, lightning everywhere and winds blowing so fast they would go around Earth in a second," Wolf said.

"This storm cell is seven light years across, which is 50 per cent more than the distance from our solar system to the next star in the Galaxy, alpha Centauri," he added. *Source: PTI*

## No more stalking, WhatsApp might soon stop you from taking screenshots of other profile photos

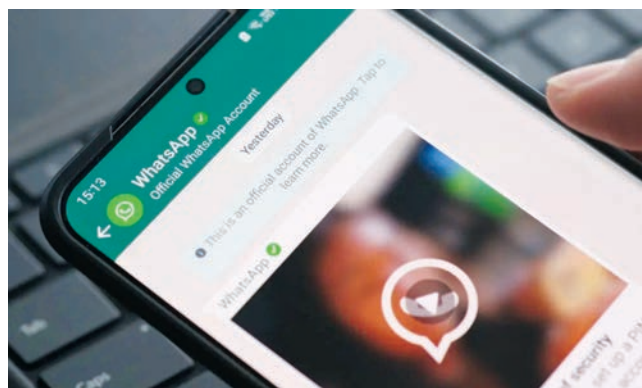
In the last few months, Meta-owned WhatsApp has been taking steps to improve its overall experience. Be it working on a chat lock for the web version of WhatsApp or to let users connect with others without sharing their phone numbers, the messaging platform is taking steps to ensure enhanced privacy for users. And now, a report by WABetaInfo says that WhatsApp will soon ban users from taking screenshots of profile photos of other users.

Until now, WhatsApp had the option of hiding profile pictures from strangers, but there was no option to stop other users from taking a screenshot of your profile photo. But if reports are to go by, this will be changed soon.

### WhatsApp working on new privacy feature

As per the WABetaInfo report, WhatsApp is currently experimenting with a novel feature designed to stop users from capturing screenshots of others' profile pictures, commonly referred to as display pictures. This latest addition to the instant messaging platform aims to enhance user privacy by curbing the unauthorized downloading and sharing of personal photos.

The report further says that the recent WhatsApp



beta for Android, accessible on the Google Play Store, introduces a notification when users attempt to screenshot someone else's profile picture. The notification reads 'Can't take a screenshot due to app restrictions,' as in an image shared by the publication.

However, it's important to note that users may still capture a photo of another person's profile picture using a secondary device, such as a phone or camera. Hence, users must still be cautious about their display photos, even after the update rolls out.

With that being said, the intention behind limiting

screenshot capabilities for profile pictures is clear — WhatsApp aims to mitigate the risks of impersonation and harassment. Although the screenshot block feature is currently available to a select group of beta testers, it is expected that this feature will be rolled out to all users in the upcoming weeks.

This move aligns with WhatsApp's earlier decision in 2019 to prevent users from downloading profile pictures of others. Additionally, the Meta-owned messaging app is actively developing a specialised fact-checking chatbot to address the challenges posed by deepfakes and AI-generated misinformation.

### Chat lock feature by WhatsApp

Earlier, WABetaInfo had reported that WhatsApp was working on a new feature for web users that will enable them to lock certain chats. Until now, WhatsApp web users had no option to lock certain chats and all the chats of the messaging platform would be open whenever a user logged in from a desktop or laptop.

However, users will soon be able to lock away certain chats that can only be accessed by a specific pin. This means that users will have a secure place for storing all their WhatsApp conversations. *Source: India Today*



## CAs from UK, Canada may be allowed to practise in India

Chartered accountants (CAs) from the UK and Canada might be allowed to practise in India on a reciprocal basis, with the apex body ICAI making the proposal to the government.

ICAI President Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal said the proposal would be implemented strictly on the reciprocal basis that CAs from India will also be allowed to practise in the United Kingdom and Canada. It will be the first time that an overseas CA will be allowed to practise in India.

The proposal is part of India's ongoing negotiations for Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the UK and Canada.

Agarwal also said a similar arrangement is being looked at with Australia. Once the reciprocal system is implemented, the CAs from the foreign countries will have to be registered with the ICAI, which will be regulating them.

"It will be on a reciprocal basis and not on standalone basis. If they agree, it will be a win-win for both countries... we are very much hopeful...in the UK, there is an ageing population and most of the work has shifted from the UK to India..." Agarwal, who took over as the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) on February 12, said.

To a query about what could be the impact of CAs from foreign countries practising in India, he said, India is a developing country and they are developed countries, referring to the UK, Canada and Australia.

# UAE removed, Kenya and Namibia added to global money laundering list

Global anti-money laundering watchdog the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) said Friday that it had removed the United Arab Emirates from its "grey list" of countries subject to increased monitoring, while Kenya and Namibia were added.

Countries on the list have "strategic deficiencies" in their efforts to counter money laundering and terrorist financing, but are cooperating with the FATF to correct the problems and are subject to increased monitoring.

FATF head Raja Kumar said that Kenya and Namibia suffered deficiencies in their anti-money laundering systems and that action plans had been developed to remedy them.

A total of 21 nations are on the grey list.

In addition to the UAE, Barbados, Gibraltar and Uganda were removed from the grey list.

"They've all taken substantial steps to improve the AML-CFT safety systems and address all items on their actions plans," said Kumar, referring to anti-money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism.

UAE foreign minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, welcomed the FATF decision and said the changes will "strengthen the country's leading status and competitiveness, and advance its position globally as an economic, trading and investment hub," according to the country's official news agency, WAM.



In recent decades the UAE has sought to use its location in the Gulf to become a financial, trade and travel hub linking Asia and Europe. It was put on the FATF's grey list in 2022 over concerns about murky financial transactions and a flood of Russian money into the country.

More than 200 countries and jurisdictions have pledged to implement the recommendations of the FATF.

The FATF also has a "black list" of nations which are considered high-risk jurisdictions.

Countries are urged to apply countermeasures against Iran and North Korea to protect against money laundering and the financing of

terrorism and weapons proliferation.

Meanwhile, countries are requested to apply enhanced due diligence concerning Myanmar.

The FATF also repeated its condemnation of Russia for its invasion of Ukraine two years ago.

Listen to the latest songs, only on JioSaavn.com

It suspended Russia's participation in the body last year and said its members are taking proactive measures to protect the global financial system given Moscow's growing financial links to countries subject to FATF countermeasures.

Source: AFP

## Byju's shareholders remove CEO, company calls vote 'invalid'

More than 60 percent of shareholders of edutech Byju's on Feb 23 voted for removal of founder CEO Byju Raveendran and his family over alleged "mismanagement and failures" at what was once India's hottest tech startup, but the company dug in its heels, calling the voting done in the absence of founders as "invalid".

Prosus - one of the six investors who had called the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) - in a statement said "shareholders unanimously passed all resolutions put forward for vote.

"These included a request for the resolution of the outstanding governance, financial mismanagement and compliance issues at Byju's; the reconstitution of the board of directors, so that it is no longer controlled by the founder of T&L; and a change of leadership of the company."

Raveendran and his family stayed away from the EGM, calling it "procedurally invalid." However, the outcome of the vote



Raveendran

at the EGM will not be applicable until March 13, when the Karnataka High Court will next hear Raveendran's plea challenging the move by certain investors to call the EGM. The High Court on Feb 22 had refused to stay the EGM, called by shareholders collectively holding more than 32 per cent stake in Think & Learn (T&L) - the firm that operates Byju's, but any resolution passed shall not be given effect till the next date of hearing.

Raveendran and family own 26.3 per cent in the company.

## Nvidia tops \$2 trillion valuation in first for chipmakers

Nvidia added \$277 billion in stock market value on Thursday, Feb 24, Wall Street's largest one-day gain in history after the heavyweight chipmaker's quarterly report beat expectations and reignited a rally fueled by optimism about artificial intelligence.

The company's stock soared 16.4% to close at \$785.38, a record-high close, lifting its market capitalization to \$1.96 trillion after its January-quarter report late on Wednesday showed demand for its specialized chips used in AI computing continued to outpace analysts' already-high expectations.

The Santa Clara, California-based company's results fed new fuel to a global rally in technology stocks linked to AI, propelling the S&P 500, Europe's STOXX 600 and Japan's Nikkei share average to record highs.

Traders exchanged \$65 billion worth of Nvidia's shares on Thursday, accounting for almost a fifth all trading in S&P 500



stocks. Nvidia's one-day increase in stock market value was the largest in Wall Street's history, easily beating a record \$196 billion gain by Meta Platforms on Feb. 2 after the Facebook parent declared its first dividend and posted robust results.

The rise in Nvidia's market value on Thursday eclipsed the entire value of Coca-Cola, at \$265 billion.

Its gain made Nvidia the U.S. stock market's third-most valuable company, pulling ahead of Amazon.com and Alphabet after jockeying with the two tech powerhouses in recent weeks.





BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - FEB 26 TO MAR 3 MARCH 2024

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

may increase in jobs. Expenses will be high, but you will not feel any problem in maintaining your sources of income. You may receive an invitation to meet a relative. Your hard work in business is going to get favorable results. You will get benefits in work related to the government sector. Being good at communication will enable you to build good relationships with others.

will be a presence in the family, hence it is important to change your habits. There will be an atmosphere of happiness after receiving some good news regarding the house.



ARIES

Ganesha says that there is a possibility of getting good news from India and abroad this week. Attraction towards new things will increase. You may get a proposal related to the partnership. Accepting this will be beneficial for you. Employed people need to do their work very carefully. Be cautious about your health. Your spouse's contribution will be very good in making all your work successful. Married life is going to be blissful.



LEO

Ganesha says that this week you may have to face financial loss. You will be successful in defeating your rivals at the workplace. Your faith in God will increase. Your proper working system will maintain good order in the business. The financial situation will be better. The office environment will also be peaceful for employed people. You will also enthusiastically participate in any auspicious work. This week you will get positive results in the workplace.



SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says that You will get good support from your loved ones this week. You will get good profits in your work area by being clever. Keep doing your work in a planned manner, you will be successful. Do not interfere in the affairs of others in the job. You are a happy person. Your intellectual power will be good. Students will study diligently. You are one to think deeply about any field.



TAURUS

Ganesha says that this week a situation of profit is being created in the field of business. Great news will come for you, and you will be blessed with good fortune. Employed people are likely to get information related to a change of location. Circumstances are in your favor. Be careful in collecting your pending payments. There will be an atmosphere of happiness in married life, you will have a good time with your spouse.



VIRGO

Ganesha says that this week your inclination will be towards religious activities. Family members will be ready to help as much as they can. The advice given by you will be useful to others, which will give you respect and prestige. And organize your daily routine carefully. There will be momentum in import-export-related business. Important contacts will be established with remote areas. You are a person who has faith in God and is introspective.



CAPRICORN

Ganesha says that whatever work you do with family members this week, you will be successful in it. Plans related to the buying and selling of property will be made. You will also get success. The situation in business will be somewhat better. You may need cash, so think about taking a loan. Disagreements may be seen in married life. This week you will receive good news from your children.



GEMINI

Ganesha says that there will be business trips this week, in which positive results will be seen. You will get respect as well as wealth and happiness in the workplace. You will make a special contribution to maintaining family happiness and peace. It is necessary to change the business system and system according to time. Activities like politics can take place in the office environment. Be a little careful. You will complete any task easily. The happiness of married life will remain better. You will get pleasant support from your wife and children.



LIBRA

Ganesha says that this week there will be normal conditions in the workplace. You will get great support and cooperation from colleagues and people in higher positions. Being intelligent, you will experience success in the workplace. Will spend most of the time in social and political activities. There is a need to advertise related to your work in the workplace. You will get respect in the society. Being devout and charitable, you will have faith in God and help others.



AQUARIUS

Ganesha says that this week you will have a good time with your family. And you will suddenly feel inner peace. Reconsider your plans to change your working system. Plans are likely to get spoiled due to campaigns and stress. There will also be a light feeling in the body. You will get many chances to earn money. You will get increased love, respect, and support from family members.



CANCER

Ganesha says that this week there will be sweetness in married life. Profit opportunities will come. The business will be profitable. Rights



SCORPIO

Ganesha says that you will not be successful in business this week. Good relations will be established with people holding high posts. Good results of the hard work done at this time will be seen in the coming days. Therefore, be completely dedicated to your work. Some auspicious situations are also being created for employed people. There



PISCES

Ganesha says that this week will be very auspicious for you, and you will receive good news from all sides. Friends and relatives will also appreciate your intelligence. Due to busyness in family activities, business will not get much attention. Relations will be established with highly placed people. You will get the happiness of profit in business and profession; the mind will be happy due to auspicious events in the family.

MAKE YOUR  
BRAND ROAR  
IN THIS  
FEROCIOUS  
MARKET



Advertise for as little as  
\$10.00.  
Call 646-247-9458



The Indian Panorama  
FOR FREE AT  
www.theindianpanorama.news



## BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : FEBRUARY 26 TO MARCH 3 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

### FEBRUARY 26

Ganesha says several of the unexpected happenings would be to your advantage. Your financial situation would be comfortable thanks to past investment gains. You should solely focus on achieving your career objectives and not worry about rumors and gossip. Both business and leisure travelers would make long distance trips. Despite the extra hours you could work in the first several months, your health should be good. There are benefits to yoga and meditation.

### FEBRUARY 27

Ganesha says you would devote a lot of things to seeking out new employment. Being extremely motivated and imaginative, you could quickly seize upcoming opportunities. Businessmen should expect a lot of high returns after signing significant agreements. Your emotional ties to your close pals would get in the way of any plans you could have with your spouse. You must arrange your social activities such that no one is harmed. Gains from the sale of real estate may not be completely excluded.

### FEBRUARY 28

Ganesha says the task you undertake this time will provide you a tremendous deal of satisfaction. Your coworkers and colleagues would be supportive, and some of them would end up being your closest friends. Although you would make good money from your job, it would be difficult for you to keep your profits. It would be enjoyable to get romantically involved, and there would be a good potential that you may get married. Be prepared to receive gifts and delights in both cash and kind.

### FEBRUARY 29

Ganesha says some significant choices would be made this time. You would feel highly energized and prepared to put forth extra effort to accomplish your professional goals. You would have incredible financial success thanks to your enormous energy and fierce drive. By the middle of the day, any legal or property conflicts plaguing you will have been resolved amicably. The spouse would continue to be supportive and show your love and affection. A huge source of happiness would be having kids.

### MARCH 1

Ganesha says today will provide you

with a few exceptional possibilities, but you must seize them quickly before others do. Investments and even speculative activities would result in monetary advantages. While partnerships should be avoided, they would create new streams of income. Later, it appears likely that you'll take a trip to somewhere foreign. While the wellbeing of a family member may raise worries and anxiety for you, your own health would continue to be fine.

### MARCH 2

Ganesha says you would be at the height of your self-assurance and resolve. You would likely be promoted or transferred, and the organization where you work would experience significant administrative changes. At least two different sources would provide you with revenue. Midway through the month your financial situation would start to improve, bringing home prosperity and happiness. Significant help would come from your emotional companion. Adequate care may be required for a sibling's health.

### MARCH 3

Ganesha says despite your best efforts and numerous odd jobs



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR  
BEJAN DARUWALLA

completed, your boss would be under a lot of pressure and may not completely appreciate your work. Your salary would increase, but you would also spend more on luxuries, making it very challenging for you to plan any savings. Due to your busy job schedule, your romantic connection will suffer. Property conflicts will be resolved amicably. You will enjoy your day with your family and have a great time.

**Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations.**

**He can be reached at  
[www.bejandaruwalla.com](http://www.bejandaruwalla.com)  
[info@bejandaruwalla.com](mailto:info@bejandaruwalla.com)  
**+91 9825470377****

|| SHREE GANESHAY NAMAH ||



# Know/Buy your Lucky Gemstones

From the House of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

To buy any Gemstone, visit [www.BejanDaruwalla.com](http://www.BejanDaruwalla.com)

Contact us for all kind of Astrology Services

Call/ Whatsapp **+91 8141234275**

Email: [info@bejandaruwalla.com](mailto:info@bejandaruwalla.com)



World Famous Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



Nastur Bejan Daruwalla



# R & R Dental Lab

86-24 Whitney Ave. Elmhurst, NY 11373

Tel. (718) 533-1611; (347) 808-7258

Email: rbarua1953@gmail.com



- We make all kinds of Acrylic, Metal and Flexite Dentures, applying high quality technology by experienced technicians.
- We repair, reline night guards etc.
- We do delivery and pick up. Quick delivery on the same day.
- EMERGENCY new dentures SAME DAY service

**We are in Dentures Work for the last 40 years.**  
We **GUARANTEE** full satisfaction



# SONU INSURANCE AGENCY, INC.

Specializing in :

- ✓ PASSPORTS NEW AND RENEWAL
- ✓ OCI CARD
- ✓ ITIN
- ✓ TAX PREPARATION

**CALL US NOW:**

**Phone: 718-847-1878**

**Fax: 718-847-1879**

**135-15, 122nd Street,  
S. Ozone Park, NY 11420**



Licensed Real Estate Salesperson  
Licensed Mortgage Loan Originator  
Call **Master Mohinder Singh**  
at **646-523-5092**



77 North Broadway Hicksville, NY 11801  
127-24 101 Ave. Richmond Hill, NY 11419  
(516) 932-3400  
www.hprealty1.com

- **Residential & Commercial Real Estate**
  - Single Family, Multi-family, Investment properties
  - Hotels/Motels, Gas Stations, Restaurants
  - Relocation Assistance - brokers licensed in
  - New York and Indiana
- **Insurance Services**
  - Home Life and Health
- **Mortgages** *(provided by affiliate lenders)*
  - New Purchase Refinance
  - Hard Money Loans Business/SBA Loan

**ARE YOU BEHIND ON YOUR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS?  
IS THE BANK GIVING YOU A HARD TIME FOR MORTGAGE DEFERRAL OR FORBEARANCE?  
STOP FORECLOSURE!**

**CALL THE EXPERTS AT HP REALTY FOR MORTGAGE RELIEF ASSISTANCE**



**Pal Singh Dhillon**  
Licensed Real Estate Broker  
QA Software Engineer, E-Pro Certified  
Notary Public  
**(516) 304-2630**

**Jeet Dhillon**  
Licensed Real Estate Broker  
New York and Indiana

**(516) 830-0352**

hprealty1@gmail.com





# Magha Purnima

The full moon day that falls in the month of Maghi (that is the month of January or February in the English calendar) is known as Maghi Purnima according to the Hindu Panchang. Maghi Purnima has special significance from a religious and spiritual point of view according to Hindu scriptures. Bathing, charity and chanting on this auspicious day of Purnima, are said to be very virtuous and fruitful. Magh bath is also very important on this day.

The special bath, which takes place in the month of Magha, normally starts from the full moon of the Posh month and continues till Maghi Purnima. For the Triveni Sangam bath, Maghi Purnima is the last day that follows after performing Kalpavas in the pilgrimage place of Teerthraj Prayag. According to the beliefs of Sanatan Dharma, the grace of Lord Madhav that is Shri Krishna showers on the people who take baths during the month of Magha. Also, they will be blessed with happiness, prosperity, children and salvation.

Bathing, charity and chanting on this date are said to be very virtuous and fruitful. Magh bath also has special significance on this day.

## Significance of Maghi Purnima

According to the Hindu texts and scriptures, it is said that bathing in the holy river on the eve of Maghi Purnima is considered really auspicious. After taking the bath and then giving alms is considered to wash away all your sins of the present life and past sins.

Additionally, on the day of Purnima, Lord Vishnu and Lord Hanuman are worshipped to receive their blessings. Also, it is believed that on this day all the wishes of the devotees who worship Lord Vishnu and Lord Hanuman are fulfilled.

According to mythology, Magh Purnima is considered a holy day to perform various spiritual and religious rituals and ceremonies. It is also believed that during this month the deities descend from heaven to spend some time on earth and stay on the banks of the river Ganges. The popular 'Magh Mela' and 'Kumbh Mela' are also organised during this month, where hundreds of devotees from all over the country come to take the auspicious plunge in the holy river of the Ganges in the beaming rays of Maghi Purnima.

## Astrological Significance Of Magha Purnima

The day of Maghi Purnima is also significant in astrology. On this day, the Sun enters Capricorn and the Moon moves into the Cancer constellation, according to legend. Hence, it is believed that taking a holy dip on Maghi Purnima will solve all difficulties associated with the Sun and Moon. From a scientific standpoint, the month of Magha is also helpful. This month is thought to aid the human body in adjusting to the changing seasons. As a result, bathing on Maghi Purnima will provide the body with strength and power.

Moreover, if Pushya Nakshatra falls on the same day as the Magh Purnima Ganga Bath Purnima, then the day becomes more auspicious. Interestingly, in the regions of Tamil Nadu, on the day of Magha Purnima, a known float festival is organised.

## Maghi Purnima Vrat Katha

According to the legend, a Brahmin known as Dhaneshwar used to reside in Kantika Nagar. He used to beg for dakshina and donations for his livelihood. In spite of sheer poverty, both husband and wife were happy in their own little world. The only thing that made both Brahmin and his wife unhappy was that they didn't have any kids. One day his wife went to the city to beg for alms, but everyone refused to give alms to her as she did not have any children, which broke her heart and made her very sad and gloomy. Seeing her grief and distress, someone told her to worship Maa Kali for 16 days. The Brahmin couple worshipped Maa Kali for continuous 16 days. Seeing their penance and severe devotion, goddess Kali blessed them and gave a boon to Brahmin's wife that she will conceive and she became pregnant. But, told the Brahmin's wife that according to her capacity, she should light a lamp on every full moon



## Important information

**Magha Purnima 2024**

**Saturday, 24 February 2024**

**Purnima Tithi Begins: 23 February 2024 at 03:33 PM**

**Purnima Tithi Ends : 24 February 2024 at 05:59 PM**

day and she should go on adding one lamp on every full moon day. In this way, she should keep on increasing the number of lamps on every full moon day till there are at least 32 lamps. The Brahmin brought raw mango fruit from the tree for his wife to worship. His wife performed the puja as a result of which she became pregnant. On every full moon, she kept lighting the lamp as per the instructions of Mother Kali. By the grace of Mother Kali, a son was born to her, who was named Devdas. When Devdas grew up, he was sent to Kashi to study at his maternal uncle's house. An accident happened with mother and nephew in Kashi, due to which Devdas got married by fraud.

Devdas did not want to marry so requested to stop this marriage as he was young but still he was forced to get married. After some time Yamraj came to take his life in the form of Kaal, but on that day the Brahmin couple had kept a fast of Purnima, so Kaal could not harm Devdas. Since then it is said that fasting on the day of Maghi Purnima leads to freedom from all troubles and fulfils all wishes.

## Maghi Purnima Vrat Puja Vidhi & Rituals

Bathing, charity, homa (havan), fasting and chanting

**“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**

are performed on Magha Purnima. On this day Lord Vishnu should be worshipped, Shradh-tarpan and donated to poor people.

The worship method of Maghi Purnima Vrat is as follows:

- On the day of Maghi Purnima, one should take a bath in a holy river, reservoir, well or stepwell before sunrise in the morning. After bathing, offer arghya to the Sun God while reciting the Surya Mantra.
- After taking a bath, one should worship Lord Madhusudan/Lord Krishna by taking a vow of fasting. During the mid-day period, poor people and Brahmins should be given food and donations and dakshina.
- Sesame and black sesame should be specially donated to charity. In the month of Magha, havan should be done with black sesame seeds and ancestors should be offered with black sesame seeds.
- Gayatri Mantra or 'Om Namo Narayan' mantra should be chanted 108 times continuously.

## PAGE SPONSORED BY



**ARISH K. SAHANI**

Serving Since 1972

Please Call or Write for Your Insurance Needs

**Arish K Sahani (Father)**

**Shiv Sahani (Son)**

**Priya Sahani Sood (Daughter)**

**718 - 271 - 1906**

[arish.sahani@gmail.com](mailto:arish.sahani@gmail.com)

“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.”



# Sikh History This Week

## FEBRUARY 23 TO FEBRUARY 29

### 23rd February

1881 Sardar Ajit Singh was born at Khatkadh kala, Jalandar.



1921 Gurudwara Luliani Sahib was forcibly taken over and brought under the control of SGPC.

### 24th February

1922: A diwan held at Ghurial on the concluding day of 101 Akhand Paths.



1929: An All Party Conference was organized at Sri Akal Takhat, Amritsar for released of Sardar Sewa Singh Thikriwala. Political activities in PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union) centered around economic and social but certainly not on religious considerations. The problem of antagonistic relations between the landlords and tenants was so enormous that it almost defied a solution. The biggest issue, absentee land-lordism in PEPSU, made the struggle between "Haves" and "Have nots" more bitter and even violent. All important posts were exclusively reserved for a few families that were near and dear to the Maharaja.

### 25th February



1710 Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was victorious over Sirhind. Born on KatakSudhi 13 sunmat 1727 to Rajput father Ramdev who was a resident of the Rajori

village in Jammu. He was named Lashman Dev by his parents. Since childhood, he exhibited extremely fondness for sanskrit literature and hunting. However, he plunged into deep remorse after killing a pregnant deer. As a result he discarded all his hunting tools and became a disciple of Vaesnav JankiPrasad. He shed all his material wealth, started onto the seekers path for enlightenment, and adopted the new name, Madho Dass.



1921 Gurudwara Hehr Sahib was forcibly taken over and brought under the control of SGPC.

### 26th February



1630 Seventh Patshash, Guru Har Rai Ji 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.



1822: General Hari Singh Nalwa reached Hajara with his forces. He was born to father, Sardar Gurdayal Singh Uppal and mother, Mata Dharam Kaur at Gujrawala in 1781. Besides being a valiant soldier, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa also served as Governor of Kashmir, Hjara, and

Peshawar. He joined Maharaja Ranjit Singh's forces in his early youth and established himself to be one of the most popular Khalsa generals. Among the Sirhadhi Pathans, his name brought immediate fear and respect. He is part of their folklore to this day. He won numerous wars for the Khalsa Panth and died, on Vaisakh 19 sunmat 1894, in the battle near Sirhadhi Jamraud. A place is established within Jamraud fort in remembrance of PanthRattan Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa.

1923 Kishan Singh Gargaj was arrested from Pindori Mahal. He was the chief architect of the Babbar Akali Movement, who had steered the Babbar Akalis clear of the murderous assaults. But after his arrest, the Babbars resorted to indiscriminate murders. Their objective was to expel the British rulers by violent means.

### 27th February

1926: Six Babbar Akalis were hanged to death in Lahore Central Jail, under the First Babbar Akali Conspiracy case, by the orders of Lord Reading and Malcolm Hailey.

1966: Master Akali Dal demanded the formation of Sikh Homeland.

### 28th February



1712: Bahadur Shah died. A war broke out among his sons. Baba Gurbakhash Singh, alias Banda Bahadur, took advantage of the situation and appeared once again in the plains. His first victory was against Islam Khan, the Governor of Lahore. The next to fall was the zone of Sirhind. But this victory was again, short lived.

1921: Gurudwara Rori Sahib was forcibly taken over and brought under the control of SGPC.



1924: All India Congress passed resolution, condemning the killings of Sikhs devotees at Gangsar, Jaito.



Kerala beguiles with the sobriquet of 'God's own country'. The articulate mosaic of sun-kissed beaches, serene backwaters, lush foliage, exciting houseboats, etc. acts as a crowd-pulling magnet. But, the list doesn't end here! There are some enthralling offbeat places in Kerala that await to be explored right now. Read on to know more about these lesser-known destinations that should be on your bucket list while planning your next vacation.

### Nelliampathy

One of the must-visit offbeat destinations in Kerala, Nelliampathy is a small, scenic yet lesser known place in Kerala. Nestled amidst the floating clouds at the Palakkad, the beautiful hill station can be reached after crossing the hairpin turns. Once here, you will be treated with salubrious weather, a pleasing aroma of coffee, tea and cardamom, a chain of mighty mountains and much more. From fascinating trekking peaks for adventure enthusiasts to romantic destinations for honeymooners, Nelliampathy has it all.

### Ponmudi

Ponmudi bejewels the Thiruvananthapuram district and ranks amongst the best offbeat destinations in Kerala. Surprising narrow roads with sharp twists and turns make the journey to this amazing destination even more thrilling. The scenic hill resort is dotted with small rivulets, colorful butterflies, striking waterfalls and attractive mountain flowers. Alternatively known as the 'Golden Peak', the quaint little town is a paradise for trekkers. Ponmudi is undoubtedly the best destination to plan a family vacation in Kerala.

### Silent Valley National Park

Spread across the span of 236.7 square km, Silent Valley National Park ranks amongst the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Western Ghats. The second-largest park in Kerala is home to rare species of fauna and flora. Cradled in the Nilgiri Hills, the national park is rich in biodiversity. Kerala's best-kept secret; it features evergreen sholas, exuberant waterfalls and wilderness that leaves you spellbound. Wild and unbeatably dense jungles proffer a lifetime experience to wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers.

### Wayanad

Historical caves, enchanting waterfalls, eco-friendly resorts – Wayanad has it all! The hidden gem of Kerala offers a plethora of attractions to visitors. Imbued with the emerald green hue of the plush foliage, the area exhibits breathtaking beauty. Utterly tranquil and far from the hustle-bustle of the city life, the 'Land of Paddy Fields' is one of the less explored tourist destinations in Kerala. Positioned on the southern tip of the Deccan plateau, nature's abode pleases with sights to behold.

### Thenmala

The search for the Offbeat places in Kerala ends at the Thenmala. Situated in the Kollam district, the eco-tourism destination enchants with its natural resources. Enjoy strolling along the river banks, partaking in adventure activities,

# Offbeat places in Kerala for a relaxing vacation



getting clicked with the waterfalls in the backdrop and much more. The town steals the limelight for providing honey of high quality. Appearing in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites under the Western Ghats, the 'Honey Hill', is home to some of the unusual spots.

### Valiyaparamba backwaters

One of the liveliest and bewitching backwaters in Kerala, Valiyaparamba backwater is formed by the confluence of four rivers. An ultimate place for tranquility seekers and nature lovers alike, the fascinating backwater is located in the Kasaragod district. Housing small archipelagos, Valiyaparamba is remarkable for fishing. Cruising along the small island in houseboats is one of the best things to do in Kerala. Besides exhibiting the rustic charm, the exotic backwater appeals in numerous other ways as well.

### Vembanad Lake

The quest to the less-traveled roads of Kerala takes you to Vembanad Lake. Blessed with rich scenic beauty, the lake hosts ancient snake boat races on Onam. All the rivers and canals of Kottayam merge into the Vembanad Lake making it the second-largest lagoon in India. Considered as the heart of Kerala Backwater tourism, the lake features numerous kettuvallams offering houseboats rides to be cherished forever. A photography session in the lap of Mother Nature is a must.

### Marari Beach

Cradled in the Alappuzha district, Marari Beach is a dream come true for



anyone who wants to spend some time in seclusion. Fringed with coconut palm trees and featuring golden sand, the beach is one of the lesser-known places in Kerala. The tranquil beach derives its name from 'Mararikulam', a local fishing village. Titled as one of the best 'hammock beaches', Marari Beach is the place to be when you want a much-needed break from the crowd infested locales.

### Napier Museum

Dating back to the 19th century, the Napier Museum is located in Thiruvananthapuram. The art and natural history museum preserve a unique collection of historic and archaeological artifacts, ancient ornaments, bronze idols and ivory carvings etc. The architectural style and unique ornamentation of the museum

make it the iconic landmark of the city. A natural air-conditioning system is the center of attraction. Kerala's rich cultural heritage and significance are best depicted in this Museum.

### Gavi

A striking village named Gavi is located in the Pathanamthitta district. Far from the limelight, Gavi is a utopia for wildlife and nature admirers. The matchless natural beauty leaves the visitors beguiled. Being a part of the Periyar Tiger Reserve and Ranni Reserve Forest, the lesser-known destination of Kerala gives you a chance to spot bears, Nilgiri Martens, elephants and sambars. The salubrious weather even during the summer makes the place one of the best destinations to visit in Kerala.



**CONTD FROM PAGE 1****Community leaders to felicitate...**

Prof Saluja at the gala in the chandeliered Pearl Banquet Hall in Hicksville, NY.

India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, Consul General of India in New York Binaya S. Pradhan, and US Congressman-elect Tom Suozzi will grace the event to commend the service of Prof Saluja and his paper to the community and its contribution to advancing US-India ties.

Even as Prof Saluja expresses his gratitude to the community, he will also honor four eminent Indian Americans at the event: Dr V.K. Raju (Life Achievement Honor) - with a mission to eliminate childhood blindness through his Eye Foundation of America. Ranju Batra (Excellence in Promotion of Diplomacy Award) - honors diplomats at Diwali Stamp - Power of One awards. Harry Singh Bolla (Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award) -- runs a billion-dollar chain of gas stations and a charity to give back to the community. Purnima Desai (Excellence in Culture Award) - her Shikshayatan Cultural Center and Sriniketan Foundation encourage and support Indian music and arts through training and events.

Another highlight of the gala will be the announcement of a collaboration between The Indian Panorama and Blitz India, the country's first chronicler of development news. To launch its US Edition, Blitz India Chairman and Editor-in-chief, Deepak Dwivedi, and CEO Sandeep Saxena will join Prof Saluja.

Prof Saluja will also felicitate ALotusInTheMud.com, wellness and spirituality webmag started by his friend, Parveen Chopra, on its first anniversary.

The attendees at the gala will be welcomed and entertained with both traditional Indian and contemporary touches.

Started 18 years ago in New York, The Indian Panorama has a Dallas edition also. It reaches the Indian diaspora all over the world. Its editorial content is the right mix of community news as well as Indian and American current affairs.

For Prof Saluja, The Indian Panorama is an expression of his love for India as well as a platform to project the rich South Asian culture and how our successful community has made a place in the melting pot of America.

Prof Saluja feels proud that throughout its eventful journey, The Indian Panorama has remained true to its motto, EVER TRUTHFUL. "This commitment is not just a slogan but a guiding principle, a promise to our readers, and a testament to the collective effort that sustains the publication," he insists.

**US working to reduce visitor visa...**

the people-to-people ties, the business travel and the family ties.

All these things are important to us and in Washington we are doing a lot of work to support this post (Indian) so they can meet the exploding demand," she added.

Asked about the plans for H1B visa, Bitter said the pilot programme which is underway to permit Indians living in the US to renew their H1B visa without travelling abroad will conclude in February.

"There is special place for Indian skilled workers in United States, they contribute so much to our economy. Indian embassy issued 34 per cent more H1B visas last year which is also the maximum in the history of the post. We take this issue seriously and this was a huge topic of conversation between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden during their meeting last year.

"We introduced a pilot programme in January for revalidation of 20,000 Indian skilled workers in the United States. The pilot programme will conclude at the end of this month. It is going really well and once we complete the pilot period we will reevaluate and see what comes next to make it as easy as possible for Indians working in the US," she said.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries such as India and China.

The pilot programme was started months after the

White House announced the plan during the state visit of Prime Minister Modi in June last year.

Talking about student visas, Bitter said, "one in four international students studying in United States is from India. It is incredible because it is not only they are getting top notch education which we are really proud of but they are also enriching our classrooms with their unique perspective and the key points that they bring to our classrooms.

"They make our students smarter too...So we are really excited about that. This is really important programme for us to make sure that Indian students have access to education in the United States and we have all pieces in place going forward to ensure that we meet the demand," she added.

The number of Indians who travelled to the United States for higher education increased by 35 per cent and resulted in an all-time high of 2,68,923 students in the academic year 2022-23.

Last year, the US consular team in India issued over 1,40,000 student visas - more than in any other country in the world setting a record for the third year in a row.

**Mr. Amit Verma appointed as...**

In his banking career spanning over 28 years, he has handled diversified assignments in the Bank, particularly in the areas of Large Value Corporate Credit, Human Resources and Retail Banking, besides working in different geographies in the International Banking Group of the Bank.

He is a Certified Associate of the Indian Institute of Banking & Finance.

He has held key roles in important branches under SBI's Corporate Credit set up, in Mumbai. In his subsequent assignment, he was handling the responsibilities of General Manager, in the Retail & Developmental Banking vertical of SBI, with a diverse client base, including SME, Agriculture, Retail and Corporate Banking.

Prior to his present assignment, he was the appointed as Regional Head - East Asia. Stationed at Hong Kong, he was responsible for supervision and oversight of SBI's operations in China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Bank's Representative Office in the Philippines.



**Eye Foundation  
of America**  
**695 West View  
Avenue,  
Morgantown,  
WV 26505**

**HELP****MAKE  
A****DIFFERENCE**

**Dedicated to the elimination of avoidable  
blindness in children worldwide**

**DONATE NOW**

**[www.eyefoundationofamerica.org](http://www.eyefoundationofamerica.org)**

**Call (304) 599-0705****Tax Exempt #: 55-0621735**





Shiv Sahani

Call for All your Life Insurance Needs!  
"Making Friends Through Service"

**SAHANIS: Shiv, Arish & Priya**  
Office: (718) 271-0453  
Cell: (646) 644-0174  
Email: [sksahani@ft.nyl.com](mailto:sksahani@ft.nyl.com)  
Agent, New York Life Insurance Company



# Indian Visa Center

**VISA / OCI PIO / PASSPORT  
APPLICATION ASSISTANCE CENTER**

**349 S. Broadway, Hicksville, NY 11801**

**DEEPAK BANSAL**  
Email: [deepakbansalny@gmail.com](mailto:deepakbansalny@gmail.com)  
**Cell: 516.304.8808 Fax: 516.218.8009**



Rohan Handa  
Executive Partner  
New York Life

Do you want to succeed in a very rewarding career?

NEW YORK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY  
**IS HIRING**

Do you want to capitalize on your ability to produce?  
**COME CHECK IT OUT!**

CALL MR. ROHAN HANDA **718-286-1132 | 516-435-6120**

Conveniently located at:  
95-25 Queens Blvd., 4th Floor  
Rego Park, N.Y. 11374





**INDO US EXPRESS, INC.**

**Worldwide Couriers / Freight Forwarders  
Domestic Rush Delivery / Import / Export  
Custom Clearance / Trading Consultant**

Gurinder Singh  
CEO


**SALES OFFICE**  
224 West 30th St., #604, New York, NY 10001  
Mail: P.O. Box 7304, Hicksville, NY 11802

Office: 212.447.5720 Fax: 516.932.3750  
Delhi: 98.1849.0552  
Mumbai: 92.2453.1807  
New York: 347.538.7041

Visit US Online: [www.indousexpress.com](http://www.indousexpress.com)  
Email: [indousexpress@gmail.com](mailto:indousexpress@gmail.com)

## TURNING 65? HAVE QUESTIONS?

Medicare can be overwhelming,  
but it doesn't have to be.



**SUNAINA OCHANI**, Licensed Insurance Agent  
**(631) 827-1796 TTY:711**

This is an advertisement. By calling the number provided you agree to speak with a licensed insurance agent about Medicare Advantage, Prescription Drug Plans, or Medicare Supplements. We do not offer every plan available in your area. Currently, we represent 5 organizations that offer 122 products in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov, 1-800-MEDICARE, or your local State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) to get information on all of your options. Not affiliated with any government agency including Medicare.

## Get to the Point



*The* **INDIAN PANORAMA**  
EVER TRUTHFUL  
**A DELIGHTFUL READING EVERY WEEK**

### Widest Coverage

**Your Trusted Partner in Business  
The Indian Panorama**

P.O. Box No. 190067, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419, Tel: 646-247-9458  
Phone: 646-247-9458 Fax: 347-632-0001 email: [editor@theindianpanorama.com](mailto:editor@theindianpanorama.com)  
[www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news)

For advertising in [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news)  
Call 646-247-9458



# History This Week

FEBRUARY 23 - FEBRUARY 29

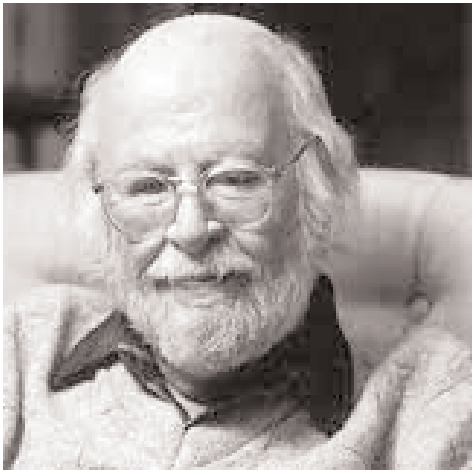
**FEBRUARY 23**

February 23, 1942 - During World War II, the first attack on the U.S. mainland occurred as a Japanese submarine shelled an oil refinery near Santa Barbara, California, causing minor damage.

February 23, 1991 - In Desert Storm, the Allied ground offensive began after a devastating month-long air campaign targeting Iraqi troops in both Iraq and Kuwait.



Birthdays - African American educator and leader W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts.



Birthdays - Historian William L. Shirer (1904-1993) was born in Chicago, Illinois. As a news reporter stationed in Europe, he witnessed the rise of Adolf Hitler and reported on the surrender of France. Following the war he wrote the first major history of Nazi Germany, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*.

**FEBRUARY 24**



February 24, 1582 - Pope Gregory XIII corrected mistakes on the Julian calendar by dropping 10 days and directing that the day after October 4, 1582 would be October 15th. The Gregorian, or New Style calendar, was then adopted by Catholic countries, followed gradually by Protestant and other nations.

February 24, 1867 - The House of Representatives voted to impeach President Andrew Johnson. The vote followed bitter opposition by the Radical Republicans in Congress toward Johnson's reconstruction policies in the South. However, the effort to remove him failed in the Senate by just one vote.



Birthdays - Admiral Chester Nimitz (1885-1966) was born in Fredericksburg, Texas. He commanded Allied naval, land and air forces in the South Pacific during World War II, and signed the Japanese surrender document on September 2,

1945.

**FEBRUARY 25**



Birthdays - Millicent Fenwick (1910-1992) was born in New York City. She championed liberal causes, serving as a member of the U.N. General Assembly and as a U.S. Congresswoman.

**FEBRUARY 26**

February 26, 1848 - The Communist Manifesto pamphlet was published by two young socialists, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It advocated the abolition of all private property and a system in which workers own all means of production, land, factories and machinery.



February 26, 1994 - Political foes of Russian President Boris Yeltsin were freed by a general amnesty granted by the new Russian Parliament.

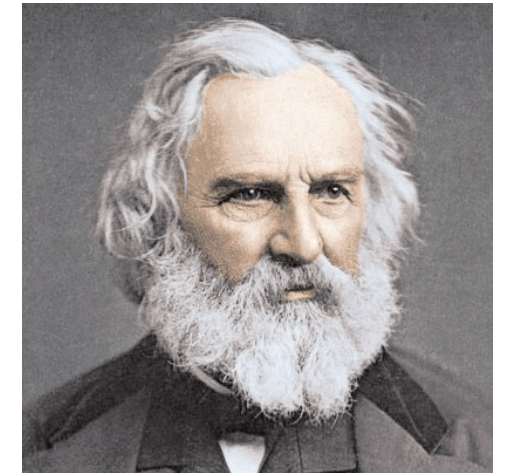
Birthdays - American frontiersman "Buffalo Bill" Cody (1846-1917) was born

in Scott County, Indiana. He claimed to have killed over 4,000 buffalo within 17 months. He became world famous through his Wild West show which traveled throughout the U.S. and Europe for 30 years.

**FEBRUARY 27**

February 27, 1950 - The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, limiting the president to two terms or a maximum of ten years in office.

February 27, 1991 - In Desert Storm, the 100-hour ground war ended as Allied troops entered Kuwait just four days after launching their offensive against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces.



Birthdays - American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) was born in Portland, Maine. Best known for *Paul Revere's Ride*, *The Song of Hiawatha*, and *The Wreck of the Hesperus*.

**FEBRUARY 28**



February 28, 1986 - Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme (1927-1986) was assassinated in Stockholm while exiting a movie theater with his wife.

February 28, 1994 - NATO conducted its first combat action in its 45 year history as four Bosnian Serb jets were shot down by American fighters in a no-fly zone.

**MAKE YOUR BRAND ROAR IN THIS FEROCIOUS MARKET**



Advertise for as little as \$10.00.  
Call 646-247-9458



**The Indian Panorama FOR FREE AT**  
[www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news)





Harmanpreet Kaur and Yastika Bhatia scored half-centuries to lead Mumbai Indians to victory against Delhi Capitals. PTI

## MI win final-ball thriller over DC in WPL

**S**kipper Harmanpreet Kaur's half-century anchored the chase while Sajeevan Sajana hit a last-ball six to power Mumbai Indians to a four-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in their Women's Premier League opening match here on Feb 23. Chasing 172, Mumbai Indians fought till the end and with five runs to win off the last ball, Sajana hit a six off Alice Capsey to power the defending champions to victory.

For Mumbai Indians, skipper Harmanpreet scored 55, while wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia cracked eight fours and two sixes to make 57 from 45 balls. Amelia Kerr (24) put on 44 vital runs for the fourth wicket with Harmanpreet.

Earlier, Delhi Capitals scored 171/5 with England batter Capsey top-scoring with a fine 75. Capsey smacked eight fours and three sixes to make 75 from 53 balls, while opening batter and skipper Meg Lanning made 31. Jemimah Rodrigues hit a quickfire 42 off 24 balls with five fours and two sixes.

### Brief scores

Delhi Capitals: 171/5 in 20 overs (Capsey 75, Rodrigues 42, Lanning 31; Sciver-Brunt 2/33);

Mumbai Indians: 173/6 in 20 overs (Bhatia 57, Harmanpreet 55, Kerr 24; Reddy 2/27)

# Root remains unbeaten as India bowl out England for 353

RANCHI (TIP)

Joe Root remained unbeaten on 122 as India bowled out England for 353 in their first innings on the second day of the fourth Test here on Saturday, Feb 24.

Former England skipper Root scored 10 boundaries during his unconquered 274-ball innings.

Resuming at the overnight score of 302 for seven, Root and Ollie Robinson completed their century stand for the eighth wicket to take England forward.

In the process, Robinson (58 off 96) hit his maiden Test half-century.

Ravindra Jadeja (4/67) picked up all the three remaining wickets in the morning session of the second day. Debutant Akash Deep (3/83) impressed on the first day, while Mohammed Siraj (2/78) picked up two wickets.

India are leading the five-Test series 2-1.

On Feb 23, Joe Root rescued England with a century on the opening day of the fourth Test against India here today, steering the tourists to a respectable 302/7 after Akash Deep took early wickets.

The right-hander responded to the backlash against England's Bazball approach after their drubbing by 434 runs in the third Test with an unbeaten 106 not out which brought England back into the game from a precarious 112/5 at lunch.

Root's own dismissal in Rajkot —



Joe Root's unbeaten 106 off 226 balls was compiled at a strike-rate of 46.90. ANI

playing a reverse scoop against Jasprit Bumrah — was seen as symptomatic of what is wrong with England's ultra-aggressive batting.

Ollie Robinson was also unbeaten after a useful cameo of 31, relieving the pressure on Ben Stokes, who was earlier left to rue his decision to bat as England lost the top half of their batting order in the frenetic first session.

The hosts' 2-1 cushion in the five-match series allowed them to rest pace spearhead Bumrah, and Akash Deep became the fourth Indian to make his debut in the series.

The right-arm seamer impressed immediately, sending opener Zak Crawley's off-stump cartwheeling in his second over but his celebrations

were cut short when the no-ball siren went off. The 27-year-old seamer soon got over that disappointment by striking twice in three balls.

Akash dismissed Ben Duckett caught behind for 11 with an angled delivery that prompted a tentative prod from the opener.

Akash waited for confirmation that he had not overstepped and beat his chest in celebration. Two balls later, Ollie Pope fell lbw for a duck.

Crawley went after Mohammed Siraj, hitting the bowler for three fours in a row and following that up with a huge six. Enter Akash, who ended Crawley's run-a-ball 42 by hitting the top of his off-stump.

# India pacer Mohammed Shami ruled out of IPL, to undergo ankle surgery in UK

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Senior pacer Mohammed Shami has been ruled out of next month's Indian Premier League owing to a left ankle injury, for which he will undergo a surgery in the UK, a BCCI source told PTI on Thursday, Feb 23

The 33-year-old, who is not part of the ongoing Test series against England, last played for India in the ODI World Cup final against Australia in November.

"Shami was in London in last week of January to take special ankle injections and he was told that after three weeks, he can start light running and take it from thereon.

"But the injection hasn't worked and now the only option left is surgery. He will shortly leave for UK for surgery. IPL seems out of question," a senior BCCI source said on the condition of anonymity.

Shami, who was one of the architects of India's stupendous World Cup campaign with 24 wickets, played through pain as he had problems with his landing but



didn't let it affect his performance. Shami, who was recently conferred with the Arjuna Award, has 229 Test, 195 ODI and 24 T20 wickets in his decade-long career.

The development raises a question mark about the injury rehabilitation management programme planned by the National Cricket Academy (NCA) for Shami.

Now it is highly unlikely that the pace bowling artist would be able to make a comeback before India's Test matches at home against Bangladesh and New Zealand (October November).

His target could be the marquee away series against Australia. People in the know of things believe that the NCA's conservative line of thinking has not worked in Shami's case.

"Shami should have gone directly for surgery and that should have been NCA's call. Just two months of rest and injections wouldn't have worked well and that's what has happened. He is an asset and the Indian team would need him in Australia," the source said.





## An Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh combatting avoidable blindness in children.

"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MD. I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautifully facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses, and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"

**Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins**



**New Goutami Institute building to be constructed 2024**

**3.5 + million served**  
**325,000 + vision restoring surgeries**  
**30,000 + surgeries on children**

Services Include:

- Treating disease and vision problems
- performing free cataract surgeries
- distributing glasses and visual aids
- conducting community research
- providing education to physicians and the public

**Join our Vision.**  
**Give the gift of sight today.**

**Visit [eyefoundationofamerica.org](http://eyefoundationofamerica.org)**

695 WESTVIEW AVENUE, MORGANTOWN, WV 26505  
TAX ID # 55-062-1735



In 2018 Prasanth, Sushanth and Nisanth were diagnosed and treated for Prematurity Retinopathy. An illness in premature babies which can cause blindness.

Luckily through GEMROP an initiative funded by EFA to screen premature babies throughout hospitals in India, the triplets were able to receive an expensive surgery free of charge. The boys are now the age of 4 with perfect vision.