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STORMY DANIELS SAYS SHE IS 'ABSOLUTELY READY' TO TESTIFY AT TRUMP'S HUSH MONEY TRIAL



MARCH 21, 2024 NEW YORK (TIP): Stormy Daniels is "absolutely ready" to testify at former President Donald Trump's New York hush money trial, the adult film actress -- whose hush money payment sits at the center of Trump's criminal case -- told ABC's "The View" on Thursday, March 21.

Stormy Daniels Photo / Wikipedia

"I'm absolutely ready. I've been ready. I'm hoping with all of my heart that they call me because ... I don't need someone to speak for me," Daniels said. "I relish the day that I get to face him and speak my truth." Daniels made the appearance on "The View" to promote a new documentary about her life before and after her now-infamous interaction with Trump.

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ED ARRESTS DELHI CHIEF MINISTER ARVIND KEJRIWAL

AAP says it has moved Supreme Court to quash the arrest; Plans nationwide protests



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal being taken to the Enforcement Directorate office in an excise policy-linked money laundering case, in New Delhi on March 21, 2024. Photo Credit: PTI

MARCH 22, 2024

NEW DELHI (TIP): Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 21, will be produced before a special court on March 22.

A high-paced drama that ensued for a couple of hours after the ED team arrived at Mr. Kejriwal's residence, culminated in his arrest. ED then took him to its headquarters in central Delhi.

The ED has arrested him on charges of corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22, which was later scrapped. Two AAP leaders, Manish Sisodia, former deputy chief minister and MP Sanjay

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U.S. urges 'immediate' ceasefire at UN as Gaza war grinds on



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken talks to Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, during their meeting at Tahrir palace in Cairo, Egypt, on March 21, 2024. -Photo credit / AP

MARCH 21, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The United States has circulated for the first time a draft UN resolution calling for an "immediate" ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, as warnings grow of famine in besieged Gaza.

Washington had blocked previous Security Council texts using the word "immediate" but U.S. top diplomat Antony Blinken confirmed the shift in position on Wednesday, March 20.

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INDIA bloc stands united behind Arvind Kejriwal

Opposition leaders question the timing of Mr. Kejriwal's arrest, with elections just days away and on a day when ECI made the comprehensive electoral bond data public.



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge along with Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and party leader Rahul Gandhi. Photo Credit: ANI

MARCH 21, 2024

NEW DELHI (TIP): Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the second Chief Minister from the INDIA bloc to be arrested in the recent months, has united the anti-BJP coalition which has been struggling to set aside their differences over seat sharing arrangements for the Lok Sabha polls. The opposition leaders questioned the timing, with the Model Code of Conduct in place and the coincidence of it coming on the same day as Election Commission publishing the entire data on electoral bonds.

(Also read Saving India from the Grip of Authoritarianism: Last Opportunity for the Opposition Parties : Page 2)

CONTD ON PAGE 46

POPE REPEATS CALL TO NEGOTIATE IN UKRAINE, GAZA

MARCH 21, 2024

VATICAN (TIP): Pope Francis on March 20 repeated his call for negotiations to end wars in Ukraine and Gaza, after remarks about "raising the white flag" sparked outrage in Kyiv.

At his weekly audience at the Vatican, the 87-year-old turned his thoughts to the populations of "the martyred Ukraine and of the Holy Land, Palestine, Israel, who suffer so much from the horror of war". contd on page 46



Pope Francis smiles as he waves faithful at the end of his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square, at the Vatican, on March 20, 2024. Photo Credit / AP



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## COMMENT

Saving India from the Grip of Authoritarianism:  
Last Opportunity for the Opposition PartiesBY  
INDRAJIT SALUJA

In the labyrinth of Indian politics, power has become the ultimate pursuit for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its leaders. Their ambition knows no bounds, their appetite for control is insatiable. The Modi government's relentless drive for absolute dominance over India's political landscape reeks of authoritarianism, leaving opposition parties teetering on the brink of extinction.

For the BJP, the vision of an India devoid of opposition is tantalizingly within reach. Their modus operandi is clear: by hook or by crook, they will obliterate any semblance of dissent, any challenge to their hegemony. The systematic dismantling of opposition parties is not merely a political strategy but a march towards dictatorship, where dissent is silenced, and democracy is reduced to a charade.

But amidst the looming shadow of totalitarianism, there remains a glimmer of hope for opposition parties. They must awaken from their slumber, cast aside petty rivalries and narrow ambitions, and

recognize the existential threat they face. The time for complacency is over; the time for action is now.

Opposition parties must shed their myopic focus on individual gains and unite in a formidable alliance against the BJP juggernaut. The concept is simple yet potent: one candidate against the BJP's candidate. By pooling their resources and consolidating their support base, opposition parties can mount a credible challenge to the BJP's hegemonic aspirations.

The urgency of this alliance cannot be overstated. The BJP's Machiavellian tactics have already sown seeds of discord within opposition ranks, enticing defections and weakening their resolve. Unless opposition parties stand united, they risk being devoured by the voracious appetite of the BJP, consigned to the annals of history as relics of a bygone era.

Leaders like Mayawati must cast aside their fears of reprisal and embrace the mantle of resistance. The specter of arrest should not deter them from standing up for the principles of democracy and freedom. Likewise, other opposition leaders must find the courage to defy the BJP's authoritarian grip and reclaim the spirit of India's freedom fighters.

As the nation commemorates Martyrs

Day on March 23, opposition leaders must heed the call of history and honor the sacrifices of those who laid down their lives for India's independence. They must remember Gandhi's dream of a free and equitable India, where every citizen's rights are respected, and every tear is wiped away.

Billions of eyes are filled with tears today, not just from the hardships wrought by the pandemic but also from the erosion of democratic values and freedoms. Opposition leaders must rise to the occasion, armed with common sense and wisdom, to safeguard the soul of India from the clutches of authoritarianism.

The task ahead is daunting, but the stakes could not be higher. It is not just the survival of opposition parties that hangs in the balance but the very essence of India's democratic fabric. Failure to act now could consign India to a future devoid of liberty, where the voices of dissent are silenced, and the ideals of justice and equality are trampled underfoot.

Let the opposition leaders heed the call of duty; let them rally behind the banner of democracy; and let them forge a united front against tyranny. The time to save India is now, for if they falter, there may be no India left to save.

## US criticism of CAA : Diplomatic calculations behind opposition

The US was quick to weigh in on the Indian Government's notification of the rules under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The Biden administration said it was worried about the development and would monitor the implementation of the Act. It unnecessarily interjected that respect for religious freedom and equal treatment of all communities were fundamental democratic principles. India was quick to react on both counts. The CAA, it reminded America, was the country's internal matter and the Indian Constitution guaranteed equal rights to all its citizens.

Clearly, there are political calculations in notifying the CAA's rules on the eve of the General Election after it was in limbo for four years. But the American homily is part of a recent pattern of diatribes against India over human rights. For the past three months, US religious freedom and human rights bodies have held hearings on transnational repression. Surprisingly, India figured in all of them, besides usual suspects Russia and China. There could be several triggers for this pressure, which emanates from the Western diplomatic toolkit. But even if there was no ulterior motive behind the US criticism, its concerns are off the mark.

The CAA does portray the BJP as a party keen on gaining from polarization. However, the law does not apply to Indian citizens. Its notification, though, could prompt the next government to implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) across the country. Notably, the majority of the 1.9 million people excluded from the NRC list in Assam in 2019 were Hindus. India and its Western allies need to repose faith in the Supreme Court, which will take up for hearing this week a bunch of petitions against the CAA.

(Tribune, India)

## Misleading ads: Strengthen law to deter Patanjali, others

The Supreme Court of India has directed yoga guru Ramdev and Patanjali Ayurved Managing Director Acharya Balkrishna to appear before it after they failed to respond to a show-cause notice regarding contempt proceedings in a case about advertisements of the firm's products and their purported medicinal efficacy. The court is hearing a petition filed by the Indian Medical Association (IMA), which has sought action against Patanjali for violation of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954. The Act prohibits advertisements of products for the treatment of specified diseases and disorders, including diabetes, heart ailments, high or low blood pressure and obesity. The IMA, which has over 3.5 million doctors as its members, has also pleaded that guidelines be framed for prohibiting the publication and broadcast of advertisements that disparage modern systems of medicine.

Patanjali had earlier assured the apex court that it would neither make statements claiming that its products could cure diseases nor run down any system of medicine. However, the company has allegedly violated this undertaking. No matter whether it is allopathy, ayurveda or homoeopathy, the claims of efficacy should be backed by verifiable and irrefutable evidence. Various stakeholders - doctors, patients, pharmacists and pharma companies - should rely on scientific data to dispel misinformation and hearsay fueled by social media.

It is also imperative to review the 70-year-old Act. Under the law, imprisonment may extend up to six months for the first conviction; in case of a subsequent conviction, the maximum prison term is one year. This penalty is not enough to deter unscrupulous elements who play with the health of unsuspecting people. The law must be made stringent both in terms of imprisonment and quantum of fine. In 2020, the Health Ministry had proposed amendments to the Act in order to expand its ambit. The process to firm up the legislation and align it with contemporary requirements should not be delayed further.

(Tribune, India)

## Evidence of enthusiastic support for Tom Suozzi as he thanks party and volunteers



Congressman Tom Suozzi addressing a 500 strong gathering of democrats at a thank you-cum-victory celebration on Monday, March 18 at Leonard's Palazzo of Great Neck

**MARCH 19, 2024**

**GREAT NECK, NY (TIP):** Rep. Tom Suozzi welcomed hundreds of supporters to a thank you party Monday night, held a little over a month after he won his special election to represent the 3rd Congressional District on Long Island and a sliver of Queens. The event at Leonard's Palazzo in Great Neck

attracted a number of other politicians too, including Rep. Grace Meng of the neighboring 6th Congressional District in Queens. "I cannot tell you, watching Tom's victory that night and the weeks after, how much this victory has encouraged and inspired my colleagues and fellow Democrats all over the country," Meng said while introducing Suozzi.

Fellow congressional candidate Laura Gillen, running in the 4th Congressional District against Republican Rep. Anthony D'Esposito, got a shoutout from Suozzi at the start of his speech. "Before I say anything else, I want everybody to pay attention to one person in this room who is running for the 4th Congressional District, let's hear it for Laura Gillen," Suozzi told the crowd to applause. Until recently, Gillen was competing in a primary against state Sen. Kevin Thomas - but Thomas dropped out and endorsed his one-time opponent. Nassau County and state Democratic Party Chair Jay Jacobs, who was also at the party, told City & State that he spoke with Thomas about suspending his campaign.

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

## Asia Society Museum Names Dr. Beth Citron Curator of Modern and Contemporary Asian and Asian Diaspora Art

**MARCH 21, 2024.**

**NEW YORK, NY (TIP):** Asia Society Museum is pleased to announce the appointment of New York-based curator and art historian Dr. Beth Citron as Curator of Modern and Contemporary Asian and Asian Diaspora Art. Citron, a specialist in modern and contemporary South Asian art, will advance the museum's initiatives in modern and contemporary visual art by Asian and Asian diaspora artists. She will work closely with Yasufumi Nakamori, Asia Society Museum Director and Vice President of Arts and Culture, to plan and implement Asia Society Museum's modern and contemporary art exhibitions, as well as build the Museum's contemporary art collection, initiated in 2003.

Announcing Citron's appointment, Nakamori said: "We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Beth Citron to Asia Society. In this role, she will help further develop Asia Society's longstanding scholarship on and engagement with Asian and Asian diaspora artists. Asia Society Museum has been a leader in the field of



Asia Society Museum has named New York-based curator and art historian Dr. Beth Citron as Museum Curator of Modern and Contemporary Asian and Asian Diaspora Art.

modern and contemporary Asian art going back to the early 1990s. Citron's curatorial and scholarly expertise and leadership with a focus on modern and contemporary South Asia will be invaluable to advancing this work."

A 2019 recipient of an Asian Cultural Council Fellowship for research on a curatorial history of modernist art from India, Citron was the founding Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York until October 2019. Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news)

new jersey performing arts center  
**njpac**



**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**.



**caetano veloso**

**Sat, Apr 6 @ 8PM**  
"One of the greatest songwriters of the century" (NYT), Brazilian legend **Caetano Veloso** returns to NJPAC with *Meu Coco*.



**musiq soulchild & eric benét**

**Fri, Apr 12 @ 8PM**  
Neo-soul star **Musiq Soulchild** and R&B crooner **Eric Benét** bring powerhouse vocals and deep emotions to every song.



**alvin ailey american dance theater**

**Fri, May 10 @ 8PM**  
**Sat, May 11 @ 8PM**  
**Sun, May 12 @ 3PM**  
**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** returns to NJPAC with three performances on Mother's Day weekend.



**Sat, Jun 1 @ 8PM**  
It's an all-star 70's Soul Jam with **The Stylistics, The Delfonics, The Manhattans** and **Peaches & Herb**.



**zarna garg**

**Fri, Jun 28 @ 7PM**  
Don't miss **Zarna Garg**, the Indian auntie turned stand-up comedian who is taking the comedy world by storm.

*Part of the North to Shore Festival presented by Prudential*

**M&T Bank**  
dance series

Generous support for Classical performances provided by 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

# Two Indian-origin members among three new additions to National University of Singapore board of trustees

**JUSTICE JUDITH PRAKASH HAS SERVED ON THE SUPREME COURT BENCH FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS AND RAVI MENON WAS THE LONGEST-SERVING MANAGING DIRECTOR OF MONETARY AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE**

MARCH 21, 2024

**SINGAPORE (TIP):** Two prominent Indian-origin professionals, Justice Judith Prakash and Ravi Menon, were among three new members to be appointed to board of trustees of National University of Singapore (NUS), according to a statement from the institution.

NUS said Justice Judith Prakash, Tan Chong Meng and Ravi Menon have been made part of its board of trustees of the prestigious varsity.

The three new members of the board, who are all NUS alumni, will begin their terms on April 1, the university said.

Menon was the longest-serving managing director of Monetary Authority of Singapore, holding the position from 2011 until his retirement on January 1 this year.

He was also the deputy chairman of Central Provident Fund Board and sat on the boards of Housing and Development Board and DBS.

He is currently the chairman of Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ) Asia-Pacific Network advisory



Two Indian-origin members among three new additions to National University of Singapore board of trustees. Justice Judith Prakash, Tan Chong Meng and Ravi Menon. Photo: X / @NUSingapore

board and a member of GFANZ Principals Group. He is also a trustee of Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA).

Justice Prakash, who is a senior judge, has served on the Supreme Court Bench for more than 30 years.

She was the first woman to be appointed a permanent judge of Court of Appeal and was previously the lead judge

for arbitration matters. She currently sits on the boards of trustees of SINDA and Eurasian Association.

Tan was the group CEO of port operator PSA International until his retirement this month. He is currently the chairman of Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) and the deputy chairman of the board of National University Health System.

He was also the governor chair of the World Economic Forum's Supply Chain & Transport Industry Community and co-chairman of Singapore's Emerging Stronger Taskforce, a committee set up by the government to guide the country's economic recovery from Covid.

The chairman of the NUS board of trustees, Hsieh Fu Hua, extended a warm welcome to Justice Prakash, Tan and Menon.

"Their breadth and depth of experience will enrich board discussions and bring useful perspectives to guide the growth of the university amid a fast-changing and challenging environment," he said in a statement.

The NUS board of trustees, which currently has 20 members, works closely with the university's management and stakeholders to shape its vision, chart its major directions and guide its initiatives, NUS said. Its members are appointed by the Minister for Education, according to a Channel News Asia report.

(Source: PTI)

## Indian-origin PM of Ireland Leo Varadkar resigns for 'personal, political reasons'



Ireland's Indian-origin PM Leo Varadkar resigns for 'personal, political reasons'

MARCH 21, 2024

**LONDON (TIP):** Ireland's Indian-origin Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, on Wednesday, March 20, sent shockwaves across the country by announcing his sudden resignation citing "personal and political reasons", triggering a leadership contest.

The 45-year-old Taoiseach, as the Irish Prime Minister is known, made the announcement in an emotional statement delivered from the steps of the government buildings in Dublin. Varadkar said he believed a new leader "will be better placed than me" to gain seats for his party Fine Gael in the next general election, scheduled for next year.

My reasons for stepping down now are personal and political, but mainly political... After seven years in office, I don't feel I'm the best person for this job anymore," said Varadkar.

"There are loyal colleagues and good

friends contesting local European elections, and I want to give them the best chance possible. On a personal level, I've enjoyed being Taoiseach... However, politicians are human beings and we have our limitations. We give it everything until we can't anymore. And then we have to move on," he said.

"That's it. I have nothing else lined up or in mind. No definite personal or political plans, but I am looking forward to having the time to think about them," he added.

Varadkar was born in Ireland to a Mumbai-born father and Irish mother and has led the Fine Gael party since 2017. When aged 38 he became the country's youngest and first openly gay Prime Minister and has served as Taoiseach twice since.

In his speech, Varadkar added that he was proud that the country is "more equal and more modern place when it comes to the rights of children, the LGBT community, equality for women and their bodily autonomy".

Last month, he joined Britain's Indian-origin Prime Minister to unveil a historic power-sharing pact when Varadkar and Sunak agreed that a "stable, effective and successful" Northern Ireland - part of the United Kingdom and sharing a border with Ireland - benefitted the UK-Irish relationship immensely.

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

## Indian-origin couple, daughter killed in 'suspicious' fire in Canada's Brampton

MARCH 16, 2024

**BRAMPTON (TIP):** An Indian-origin couple and their teenage daughter were killed in a "suspicious" fire which tore through their home last week in Canada's Ontario province, police said on Friday, March 15.

A fire engulfed a home at the Big Sky Way and Van Kirk Drive area of Brampton on March 7, a press release by the Peel Police said.

After the blaze was put out, investigators located what was believed to be human remains within the gutted house, but the number of people killed couldn't be ascertained at the time.

The charred remains were on Friday identified as those of three family members: 51-year-old Rajiv Warikoo; his wife, 47-year-old Shilpa Kotha; and their 16-year-old daughter, Mahek Warikoo.

Police said that they resided at the address before the fire.

Peel police Constable Taryn Young on Friday said the fire had been deemed suspicious, the local news channel reported.

"At this time, we are investigating this with our homicide bureau, and we are deeming this as suspicious as the Ontario Fire Marshal has deemed that this fire was not accidental," the report quoted Young as saying.

"There's not much left to it," Young said when asked about the possible



51-year-old Rajiv Warikoo; his wife, 47-year-old Shilpa Kotha; and their 16-year-old daughter, Mahek Warikoo were killed in a "suspicious" fire which tore through their home in Brampton, Ontario.

cause of the fire.

"Looking into something like that as a fire marshal, I'm sure it's very tough when there is not much left to look at. But we are exhausting all avenues," she said.

The deceased family's neighbor, Kenneth Yousaf, said that the family had lived on the street for about 15 years, and he never noticed any problems with them.

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

# Indian American urban planner Nithya Raman wins LA City Council seat

MARCH 19, 2024

**LOS ANGELES (TIP):** Indian American urban planner Nithya Raman has won re-election to her seat on the Los Angeles City Council, surpassing 50% in the March 5 election and avoiding the need for a November runoff, according to the latest vote tally.

Raman, who came to the US as a 6-year-old, when her family relocated from India, became the first challenger to unseat an incumbent on the City Council in 17 years, in the Nov 2020 election.

The only immigrant on the City Council was facing a challenge for her seat from two opponents who questioned her ability to tackle the city's challenges on homelessness and crime, according to local KABC.

Her leading opponent, deputy city attorney Ethan Weaver, issued a concession statement on Mar 14 congratulating Raman on her win. Weaver was seen as a strong contender who was backed by funding from the LAPD union and real-estate groups.

The latest results from the county registrar indicate Raman received more than 32,000 votes, coming in at about 50.6%, just above the threshold to avoid a November runoff election. Weaver in second had more than 24,000 votes, for 38.6% and Levon Baronian had almost 7,000 votes, for 10.7%.

Raman told Eyewitness News the



Nithya Raman has won re-election to her seat on the Los Angeles City Council

results make her "proud to be an Angeleno" because voters rejected the heavy spending by Weaver and the unions backing him.

She said she understands how voters feel about homelessness. "There is a lot of frustration and anger out there and to be honest, I feel that same frustration," Raman said.

"But to me, what this vote, what this outcome represents is that Angelenos want to respond to homelessness in the right way. By offering housing, by offering services, by doing work that can really move people indoors and off the streets - not just shuffle them from sidewalk to sidewalk as the city has been

doing for so long."

For example, under Mayor Karen Bass the city launched the Inside Safe program to clear encampments and connect the homeless with services.

The first site cleared, at the 101 Freeway and Cahuenga Boulevard in Hollywood, was in Raman's district. It has had to be cleared three times, including last week when 15 people were found housing. A fence now surrounds the site, according to KABC.

"This encampment has repopulated, and we go back and we offer people housing and services and we get them indoors again," Raman said.

A resident of Silver Lake, Raman got her political start as a community volunteer focused on homelessness, helping to find a nonprofit that delivered food, hygiene kits and other supplies to unhoused residents in her part of Los Angeles.

She continued her focus on that issue after taking office, eventually ascending to chair of the council's homelessness committee, which oversees the city's response to the crisis, according to the Los Angeles Times, which endorsed her candidacy.

Raman campaigned heavily on her work on homelessness, and on her advocacy for new bus and bicycle lanes, government reforms and the delivery of aid to tenants on the brink of eviction.

## Indian American attorney Vaishali Bhatia named ATI VP and General Counsel



ATI Inc, Dallas-based aerospace and defense company has named Vaishali Bhatia Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer. She will assume charge on April 1, 2024

MARCH 20, 2024

**DALLAS (TIP):** ATI Inc, Dallas-based aerospace and defense company has named Vaishali Bhatia Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer, effective March 20.

The Indian American executive will lead all aspects of the legal function for the company-including corporate governance, compliance, corporate social responsibility strategies and reporting, and risk management-and collaborate closely with business teams to provide risk-based legal partnership.

Bhatia reports to ATI Board Chair and CEO Robert S. Wetherbee and serves on the company's Executive Council, according to an ATI press release. She succeeds ATI Chief Legal and Compliance Officer Elliot Davis, who announced his intention to retire effective October 1, 2024. Until that time, Davis will serve as Special Advisor, Legal and Compliance, to ensure a smooth transition.

"Vaishali is a solutions-focused, strategic business partner with experience across a diverse range of complex legal and compliance matters," said Wetherbee. "Her proven track record in incredibly demanding markets with long-standing and deep customer relationships will help her to guide ATI as we further develop our aerospace and defense leadership."

Bhatia joins ATI from HF Sinclair Corporation (HF Sinclair), where she's served as Executive Vice President since 2023, and General Counsel and Corporate Secretary since 2019.

She's been a part of the diversified energy company for over 12 years, starting as Counsel at HollyFrontier Corporation (HollyFrontier) and Holly Energy Partners, LP (HEP).

She played a key role in HollyFrontier's and HEP's acquisition of Sinclair Oil and Sinclair Transportation Company, and the formation of HF Sinclair as the new publicly traded parent of HollyFrontier and HEP, in 2022, and in HF Sinclair's buy-in of HEP in 2023.

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

## Indian American senator Niraj Antani loses bid for US Congress from Ohio



Niraj Antani has lost his bid for the US House of Representatives from Ohio second Congressional District in the Republican party primary

MARCH 20, 2024

**OHIO (TIP):** Ohio's Indian American Republican State Senator Niraj Antani has lost his bid for the US House of Representatives from the second Congressional District in the party primary.

Antani, who became the first Indian American State Senator in Buckeye state history in 2021, ran in a crowded field of 11 candidates in Tuesday's party primary to replace retiring Rep. Brad Wenstrup.

Antani was in 10th place with 1,497 or 1.8% of the votes, according to The New York Times. He plans to continue serving in the Senate until his term expires on Dec 21.

"I just called David Taylor to concede and wish him congrats on winning the Republican nomination for Congress. I wish him all the best in Congress. I want to once again thank all my supporters for their support in this race. I am so deeply grateful for your support" he posted on X.

Antani, who was born and raised in the Miami Township, was first elected to represent his Dayton-area Senate district in 2020 after serving six years in the Ohio House. He is currently Ohio's youngest senator and the first Indian American to serve in the Senate.

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

## Indian-origin student found dead in Boston forest

MARCH 18, 2024

**BOSTON (TIP):** Paruchuri Abhijit, a 23-year-old engineering student at Boston University, was found dead in his car in a nearby forest apparently killed by thugs to rob him of his money and laptop.

Abhijit, who hails from Burripalem in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, joined Boston University last year. He was found dead on March 11, according to Indian media reports.

Abhijit lived in a rented house with some classmates. When Abhijit did not return from college, worried friends informed police and lodged a missing complaint.

The police found his body in a car in the nearby forest based on his cell phone signals. However, the police are yet to identify his assailants.

Suspicions have also arisen regarding the circumstances of the murder, hinting at potential altercations with fellow students at the university, according to reports.

Abhijit was the only son of Paruchuri Chakradhar and Srilakshmi. Although Abhijit's mother initially refused her son's wish to go abroad for higher studies, she agreed keeping his future in mind, Times of India reported citing his family members.

After completing all the formalities in the US, the body arrived in Burripalem in Guntur district on Friday.



Paruchuri Abhijit, a 23-year-old engineering student at Boston University, was found dead in his car in a nearby forest on March 11.

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

## Indian American businessman Narender Reddy announces run for State House District 50



Narender Reddy has qualified to run for the Georgia House of Representatives in District 50

**MARCH 14, 2024**

**ATLANTA, GA (TIP) :** Johns Creek businessman Narender Reddy has qualified to run for the Georgia House of Representatives in District 50, which covers most of Johns Creek and a portion of Alpharetta. Since no other Republican qualified for this seat, Reddy will not be having any Primary opponent. The seat is currently occupied by Democrat Michelle Au. "It is important that we hold our elected officials accountable, which is why I have chosen to challenge Representative Au," Reddy remarked. "Her record shows that she does not reflect the views of the voters of this district, and I intend to give voters an alternative who better understands the pressing issues facing our district, our state, and our country."

Citing out-of-control inflation as a major concern to voters, Reddy promised to endorse fiscally responsible measures that would give relief to taxpayers.

"Prices have skyrocketed on basic necessities and our working families are struggling," Reddy said. "We need to help people to keep more of their money to combat this crisis. That means cutting our state income tax, tamping down rising property taxes, and reducing wasteful government spending."

Reddy also noted rising illegal immigration as an issue that voters have demanded answers on.

"As an immigrant myself, I applaud people for legally immigrating to this country in search of better opportunity," Reddy said. "However, the current situation with people entering illegally at the southern border is unsustainable. It's highly unsafe to allow thousands of unvetted, untracked migrants to enter our country. My pledge is to work in the State House to find ways to insulate Georgia from the federal government's inaction and to continually call for more to be done to alleviate this problem."

On that note, Reddy emphasized the need for robust public safety in District 50.

"We need to do what is necessary to ensure that this area remains a safe place for our families," Reddy said. "As your State Representative, I will be a reliable friend to law enforcement and will fight for them to have the resources and support they need to keep our communities safe."

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

## Atlanta Council Honors Indian American Leader Dr Nazeera Dawood for Women's History Month



Atlanta Council Honors Indian American Leader Dr Nazeera Dawood for Women's History Month

**MARCH 21 2024**

**ATLANTA, GA (TIP):** The Atlanta City Council has bestowed a prestigious honor upon Dr Nazeera Dawood, the esteemed founder and CEO of Vendorship, Inc., recognizing her exceptional contributions and service to the Greater Atlanta community. This recognition comes as a significant highlight during Women's History Month, celebrating the achievements and resilience of women across the globe. A special ceremony, held on March 7th, saw the Atlanta City Council officially declare March 7th as Dr. Nazeera Dawood Day, followed by a reception at Atlanta City Hall to commemorate Dr Dawood's remarkable accomplishments.

Andrea L. Boone, Member of the

Atlanta City Council, expressed, "Dr Nazeera Dawood encapsulates the spirit of Women's History Month with her unwavering commitment to public health and economic empowerment. Her path from earning a medical degree to establishing Vendorship showcases her vision and resilience. Dr Nazeera's leadership not only uplifts women and minority-owned businesses but also cultivates a spirit of community and collaboration across Atlanta."

Viren Mayani, recognized as a global thought leader, extended his greetings during the ceremony. Darryl Ricardo Matthews Sr., Director of Business Development at Vendorship, introduced the honoree.

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

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## Indian Consulate, New York says: Working with authorities to find missing Hyderabad student



Mohammad Abdul Arfath, hailing from Nacharam, Hyderabad, arrived in the US in May last year to pursue a Masters in IT from Cleveland University

**MARCH 21, 2024**

**NEW YORK CITY (TIP):** The Consulate General of India in New York is working with local law enforcement authorities to find a 25-year-old Indian student in Cleveland who has been missing since the beginning of this month.

Mohammad Abdul Arfath, hailing from Nacharam, Hyderabad, arrived in the US in May last year to pursue a Masters in IT from Cleveland University.

His father Mohammed Saleem said that Arfath last spoke to him on March 7. Since then, he has not been in touch with his family and his mobile phone is switched off.

The Indian Consulate said in a post on X that it is in touch with Arfath's family and authorities in the US. "We are working with

local law enforcement agencies to find him at the earliest." Arfath's roommates in the US informed his father that they have lodged a missing persons complaint with Cleveland Police.

On March 19, Arfath's family received a call from an unidentified person who claimed that Arfath had been kidnapped allegedly by a gang selling drugs and demanded USD 1,200 to release him.

The caller also threatened to sell Arfath's kidneys if the ransom wasn't paid, his father said.

"Yesterday, I got a call from an unknown number, and the caller informed me that my son has been kidnapped and demanded money. The caller did not mention the mode of payment but just asked to pay the amount. When I asked the caller to allow us to talk to my son but he refused," Saleem told PTI in Hyderabad.

Arfath's parents have requested the central government to take necessary measures to bring back their son safely. Saleem has also written to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in this regard.

The incident is the latest in a string of troubling cases pertaining to the safety and security of Indian students in the US. Since the beginning of this year, several cases of deaths of Indian and Indian-origin students have caused alarm and concern among the community.

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

## GURPATWANT PANNUN 'MURDER' PLOT

### US federal prosecutors say Nikhil Gupta had agreed to 'pay an assassin US\$1,00,000'

Working with India to hold those behind assassination plot accountable, says US

**MARCH 21, 2024**

**NEW YORK (TIP):** The United States is working with the Indian government to hold accountable those behind a plot to kill Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on American soil, according to the Biden administration.

An Indian national, Nikhil Gupta, was charged by federal prosecutors in November last year in connection with his involvement in a foiled plot to assassinate Pannun, who holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada.

US federal prosecutors have charged that Gupta was working with an Indian government employee and had agreed to pay an assassin US\$ 1,00,000 to kill Pannun, who lives in New York City.

India has already constituted a probe committee to investigate the allegations.

During a Congressional hearing on Wednesday, March 20, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu told members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, "This is a serious issue. A serious issue



Gurpatwant Singh Pannun

between the United States and India. The Department of Justice has alleged that an Indian citizen at the behest of someone working in the Indian government has attempted to kill an American citizen on American soil. We take this in the administration incredibly seriously and have raised it at the highest levels with India."

"We are at the moment working with India to encourage India to hold accountable, those responsible for this terrible crime. What we can see is that India itself has announced that they have created a committee of inquiry to look into this matter and we ask them to work quickly and transparently to make sure justice is done," Lu said.

Lu was responding to a question from Congressman Dean Phillips from Minnesota, who asked if sanctions similar to those placed on more than 500 individuals relating to the killing of Lexie Navalny in Russia are being considered for those believed to be behind the plot to kill Pannun.



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# Global supply chains make atmanirbharta take a back seat



BY SUBIR ROY

**TARIFF IS NOT THE ONLY ELEMENT THAT HAS GONE INTO THE TRADE AND INVESTMENT DEAL WITH THE EFTA**

**"Today, you cannot be self-reliant in the sense of growing and producing most of what you consume and still aspire to become a global manufacturing powerhouse. For example, India is the global leader in the production of off-patent pharmaceuticals, but it is a major importer from China of active pharmaceutical ingredients that go into the manufacture of the formulations. The sooner the country gives up old simplistic notions of being atmanirbhar, the better it will be for its economy and the income and welfare of its people."**

India signing free trade agreements with four countries that make up the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) - Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein - is being seen around the world as an initial signal that it is willing to open up more on trade. As a quid pro quo, these four nations, which are not members of the European Union (EU), have made a commitment to invest \$100 billion in India over the next 15 years.

India had earlier signed an interim deal with Australia and key negotiations are going on with the EU and economically important countries like the UK and Israel. A deal with Oman is ready for signing. The perception is that the government is seeking to capitalize on increasing global interest in what is now the fastest-growing major economy in the world. There is also a perception that India may ease a little in negotiations with the UK, with which it has historical trade linkages. The new government that will come to power may give the deal a final push so as to see it through.

The new interest in multilateral trade is a climbdown for the present government, which began by seeking to



Four European nations - Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein - have made a commitment to invest \$100 billion in India over the next 15 years. -Credit / ANI

make the country atmanirbhar or self-reliant. Unless import tariffs come down, which has to go hand in hand with greater embracing of trade, the government's attempt to raise manufacturing activity through the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme will be negated. For example, high import tariffs on components for cellphones are hindering their local manufacturing, which is a key component of the PLI scheme.

What the government needs to prioritize is becoming a major beneficiary of the 'China plus one' policy, which global companies are adopting in order to reduce their huge dependence on manufacturing in China. Right now, Vietnam and, to an extent, Malaysia are often winning at the expense of India as global firms find that these geographies deliver lower costs and score on the ease of doing business.

Additionally, India cannot expect to be a global manufacturing hub unless it becomes a key link in global supply chains. No country manufactures all that goes into today's complex electronic and engineering products. Raw material and components which make up the assemblies and sub-assemblies have to go in and out of the country across minimal tariff barriers so that the final products that cross the shores are competitive across the world.

Today, you cannot be self-reliant in the sense of growing and producing most of what you consume and still aspire to become a global manufacturing powerhouse. For example, India is the global leader in the production of off-patent pharmaceuticals, but it is a major importer from China of active pharmaceutical ingredients that go into the manufacture of the formulations. The sooner the country gives up old

simplistic notions of being atmanirbhar, the better it will be for its economy and the income and welfare of its people.

The rapid economic growth that the country was able to enjoy from the 1990s resulted from the liberalization policies that did away with licensing and lowered import tariffs. The latest trends in official thinking will hopefully take that liberalization forward.

Tariff is not the only element that has gone into the trade and investment deal with the EFTA. It also indicates that India is willing to live by the new norms that are seeking to drive developed countries in areas like labor, environment, sustainability and gender. To take the last element first, India must turn itself into a nation where women do not hit a glass ceiling in seeking to rise up to the level that their talents will take them.

India will also have to live with the commitments it has made to cut down on emissions and participate in the efforts to reduce global warming. A key element in this is to stop setting up coal-fired power plants. India is not just a big miner of coal but also a heavy importer of crude oil. There needs to be in place an aggressive programme to tap solar and wind energy, as also the production of green hydrogen. The move to raise the domestic manufacturing of electrolysis, which produce hydrogen, is the right kind of policy to follow.

There is also the key issue of adopting globally accepted labor standards. Workers need to be able to follow reasonable working hours - not having to work 12 hours a day, as do security guards in housing societies and gig workers. They also need to enjoy social security benefits that today only a job in the organized sector of the economy comes with.

**THE RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH THAT THE COUNTRY WAS ABLE TO ENJOY FROM THE 1990S RESULTED FROM THE LIBERALIZATION POLICIES THAT DID AWAY WITH LICENSING AND LOWERED IMPORT TARIFFS. THE LATEST TRENDS IN OFFICIAL THINKING WILL HOPEFULLY TAKE THAT LIBERALIZATION FORWARD.**

If new labor codes end up creating a higher proportion of temporary workers, the matter needs to be seriously looked into. Workers also need to be able to enjoy the benefits of medical insurance. The PM Jan Arogya Yojana seeks to deliver this to the poor, but it still has a long way to go in order to become fully operative for all those who need to be a part of it. India's trade partners will not take kindly to competitively priced exports by Indian firms which engage workers without adhering to labor standards.

A breakthrough in trade negotiations will be beneficial for a range of industries. The foremost is the textile sector, which employs 45 million people. Also waiting to catch strong tailwinds are sectors like marine products, auto and engineering components, chemicals, leather, and gems and jewelry.

According to the government's projections, 80 million new jobs can be created by 2030 by actively seeking to link India with global supply chains. Should even some of this were to happen, the wages that the new workers will earn will give a boost to private consumption expenditure, which will create demand for corporate sector FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) biggies that continue to experience sluggish volume growth in rural areas.

Rising consumption expenditure will lead to greater capacity utilization in factories and prompt businesses to create fresh capacity. This will lead to greater investment in plant and machinery, thus enabling the private sector to take over the mantle of capital investment from the government, as signaled in the Interim Budget.

(The author is a Senior Economic Analyst)



# Guaranteed MSP is an ethical imperative

Farmers hardly get 30% of the price paid by the consumers. This will increase if MSP is guaranteed



BY T.N. PRAKASH  
KAMMARDI

**"A minor amendment to respective State APMC Acts or the Centre's Essential Commodities Act would suffice to introduce a law ensuring that no transactions of farmers' produce occur at prices below the MSP. The budget outlay will not be as large as projected if legal recourse to MSP is accompanied by essential backward and forward linkages. Crop planning, market intelligence (including price forecasts), and other pre-sowing measures, along with the establishment of post-harvest infrastructure for efficient storage, transportation, and processing of farm commodities, greatly assist in managing the post-harvest glut in the market. Therefore, a legal route to MSP, complemented by the development of such linkages, would provide protection against "market failures" in addressing the surplus, rather than leading to "market distortion," as claimed by some mainstream economists."**

As the general elections draw closer, agrarian concerns have once again taken center stage. Farmers from the heartland of the Green Revolution have travelled to the border of the capital to not only voice their distress, but also to shape the electoral discourse. The ruling dispensation, sensing adverse electoral implications, attempted to reach out to the farmers. It said it was ready to procure pulses,



The perennial issue of fair pricing of farm produce reigns supreme, now coupled with calls for legal assurances of Minimum Support Price.

File Photo / PTI

maize, and cotton at MSP, but this was contingent upon farmers guaranteeing crop diversification. However, these efforts were rejected as the core issues were not addressed, say farm leaders.

The perennial issue of fair pricing of farm produce reigns supreme, now coupled with calls for legal assurances of Minimum Support Price (MSP). However, beyond mere legal mandates lies the pressing concern of maintaining self-sufficiency in food production and addressing the ongoing challenge of distribution. This underscores the ethical imperative of anchoring a legal guarantee for MSP.

The MSP regime was a vital instrument for ensuring food security in India. Given the unique nature of agriculture, farmers lack the ability to exert significant influence, let alone determine the price of their produce. This constitutes a 'market failure.' Thus, MSP ensures that agricultural commodity prices remain above a predetermined benchmark to facilitate remunerative price discovery.

#### PRODUCE AND PERISH TRAP

The MSP is announced annually for 23 crops covering both the kharif and rabi seasons, well in advance of sowing, with 21 of them being food crops. However, despite the announcements, the implementation of MSP remains poor. Only 6% of farmers, primarily those cultivating paddy and wheat in States such as Punjab, benefit from MSP. Most transactions involving these essential food commodities occur below the MSP, rendering farming economically unviable for the majority of producers in India. As a result, farmers are trapped in a dangerous cycle of produce and perish, leading to crippling debt and deaths by suicide. All these emphasize the pressing need to ensure MSP, including the one recommended by the eminent agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan

(with a 50% profit margin).

Several articles under the Constitution, as well as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, support the legal recourse to guaranteeing MSP. According to a recent opinion survey by an English TV channel, 83% of landowners and 77% of farm laborers expressed solidarity with the agitating farmers. Notably, 64% of the public also endorsed the farmers' demand for a legal right to MSP.

Sugarcane growers already benefit from a 'statutory' MSP, which sugar factories strictly adhere to when purchasing cane from farmers. A few years ago, Maharashtra attempted to amend its Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act to prevent the purchase of agricultural produce below MSP, but the effort failed due to a lack of political will and a comprehensive strategy. The Karnataka Agricultural Price Commission has laid out a clear roadmap, including potential financial commitments, to ensure a legally binding MSP for crops cultivated in the State. A private member bill on The Farmers' Right to Guaranteed Remunerative MSP for Agricultural Commodities was tabled in Parliament in 2018. The Andhra Pradesh government unveiled a draft bill last year aimed at guaranteeing MSP for crops grown in the State. These efforts show that the objective of establishing a legal recourse to MSP has not emerged suddenly, nor is it impossible to attain.

#### THE SOLUTION

A minor amendment to respective State APMC Acts or the Centre's Essential Commodities Act would suffice to introduce a law ensuring that no transactions of farmers' produce occur at prices below the MSP. The budget outlay will not be as large as projected if legal recourse to MSP is accompanied by essential backward and forward

linkages. Crop planning, market intelligence (including price forecasts), and other pre-sowing measures, along with the establishment of post-harvest infrastructure for efficient storage, transportation, and processing of farm commodities, greatly assist in managing the post-harvest glut in the market. Therefore, a legal route to MSP, complemented by the development of such linkages, would provide protection against "market failures" in addressing the surplus, rather than leading to "market distortion," as claimed by some mainstream economists.

Even enhancing MSP to provide a 50% profit margin over total cost is not challenging, considering that current margins already stand at around 22%. Finally, effective procurement and distribution, as envisaged under the National Food Security Act, 2013, is the most appropriate means to not only ensure MSP but also address hunger and malnutrition.

The PM-AASHA comprises schemes for price support and price deficiency payment, along with incentives to private traders to ensure MSP. While it possessed all the necessary elements as precursors to guarantee the MSP, its sidelining in policy circles highlights how political expediency rules the roost.

At present, farmers hardly get 30% of the price paid by the consumers; this will increase if MSP is guaranteed. Establishing a legally binding MSP will anger intermediaries as their share will get reduced. Often, government intervention, and particularly a legally binding MSP, is deemed a problem. It is this adherence to free market dogma that is preventing a just solution to the ongoing crisis in farmer incomes.

(T.N. Prakash Kammardi is an agricultural economist and former chairman, Karnataka Agricultural Prices Commission, Government of Karnataka)

# Don't let mobs give India a bad name

## GUJARAT UNIVERSITY INCIDENT TURNS THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE SAFETY OF FOREIGN STUDENTS



BY VIVEK KATJU

**"Academic institutions with foreign students have to be especially vigilant that the inevitable tensions between them, if they are in sizeable numbers, and local students are kept in check. The ICCR too must act with greater concern on this issue too. The organization's task is to project Indian culture abroad and showcase the richness of its tolerant traditions. The ruling dispensation has been eager to portray India as the mother of democracy. It is essential to show that there is no discrimination on the grounds of faith or race against anyone in India. It is only then that the message of India's democratic traditions and its oft-quoted motto - Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - would carry credibility with foreign students."**

The five foreign students who were injured in a mob attack on their hostel on March 16 were, according to media reports, Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship holders. They were Muslims, including some from neighboring countries, and were offering namaz. The assailants objected to their doing it on the hostel premises and asked them to go to a mosque. Hot words were exchanged and the mob not only attacked the students but also ransacked their rooms and damaged some of their vehicles. Two of the injured students had to be hospitalized.

Such incidents can prompt nations and groups inimical to this country to intensify their anti-India campaign.

On March 17, a spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) took to social media platform X (formerly Twitter). He said: "An incident of violence took place at Gujarat University in Ahmedabad yesterday. The state



The mob attack on foreign students offering namaz in Gujarat University was not in keeping with the soft power which India seeks to project

Photo / PTI

government is taking strict action against the perpetrators. Two foreign students were injured. One of them has been discharged from the hospital after receiving medical attention. The MEA is in touch with the Gujarat Government."

Clearly, the MEA was unwilling to refer to the 'perpetrators' even though visuals of the incident and comments of foreign students in the hostel concerned were being circulated on social media. This unnecessary caution would hardly fulfil the ICCR's objective that the scholarships are "an important vehicle of outreach and create goodwill about India..." and that "each ICCR scholar is India's goodwill ambassador abroad". It is doubtful if many of the 300 ICCR scholarship holders studying at Gujarat University would subscribe to these aims of the ICCR after this incident. It is noteworthy that there are around 7,000 ICCR scholars in India. According to the media, of these, 1,100 are in Gujarat, including those at Gujarat University.

The Vice-Chancellor of the university, Neerja Gupta, visited the hostel almost 12 hours after the attack. Perhaps she was advised by the police and the university administration not to be there immediately after the night-time incident. It is not known if any senior faculty or administration members arrived to give an assurance of safety to the foreign students. Gupta has now formed a Foreign Student Advisory Committee. She has stated that namaz was not the main issue and that there was a need for foreign students to become culturally oriented. She needs to clarify if it was wrong on the part of the foreign students to offer namaz in their hostel. She would no doubt be aware that Muslims all over the world become more conscious of their religious obligations during the month of Ramzan, which began in India last week. It is also

pertinent to ask whether foreign Muslim students offered namaz in their hostels in previous years or was this the first time that they did so.

The Gujarat Police have apprehended five perpetrators and formed teams to nab others. There is an urgent need to investigate the case thoroughly and take action against the guilty so that nations and groups inimical to this country do not spread the message that India is no longer safe for foreign Muslim students. Anti-India forces are busy spreading the word that India is in the grip of Islamophobia. Such incidents and the ambivalent comments such as those of the V-C and the MEA can be used by these parties to intensify their anti-India campaign.

In the context of this incident, it is necessary to mention that India once again abstained from supporting a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Islamophobia, moved by Pakistan and other Islamic countries. This resolution was adopted on the UNGA-designated day against Islamophobia last year. India had abstained because it felt that no religion should be singled out and the UNGA should adopt a resolution against phobias pertaining to any religion. The current resolution built on the one adopted last year and asked the UN Secretary General to appoint a special envoy to combat Islamophobia. India explained its abstention on the same lines as last year.

There can be no quarrel with the Indian argument that the world should not be divided into religious camps, but the fact is that India's abstention may be co-related with the Gujarat University incident; hence, there is a need for greater efforts in this matter by all concerned - MEA, ICCR, the Gujarat University authorities and the law

enforcement agencies of Gujarat. India has interests in the Islamic world and it should not allow the feeling to spread that it is difficult for Muslims in India or those from abroad to observe their religious obligations in the country.

Academic institutions with foreign students have to be especially vigilant that the inevitable tensions between them, if they are in sizeable numbers, and local students are kept in check. The ICCR too must act with greater concern on this issue too. The organization's task is to project Indian culture abroad and showcase the richness of its tolerant traditions. The ruling dispensation has been eager to portray India as the mother of democracy. It is essential to show that there is no discrimination on the grounds of faith or race against anyone in India. It is only then that the message of India's democratic traditions and its oft-quoted motto - Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - would carry credibility with foreign students.

The Indian government puts great emphasis on the country's soft power. India especially stresses that if the world were to follow the principles of harmony and peace which evolved in India in ancient times, it would become a better place. Certainly, the mob attack on foreign students offering namaz in a university was not in keeping with the soft power which India seeks to project.

What is noteworthy is that political leaders have generally avoided commenting on the matter, even as Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan said such incidents indicated that people of the country were still not fully aware of its traditions and cultural heritage. What does that say about our polity and society?

(The author is a former Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India)



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# India donates Medicines to Guatemala

MARCH 18, 2024

**GUATEMALA CITY (TIP):** In a ceremony held at the premises of the Ministry of Health of Guatemala on March 14, 2024, the Embassy of India donated 1 million tablets of Valproic Acid 500 mg (250,000 tablets), Pyridoxine 50 mg (270,000 tablets), and Metformin Hydrochloride 850 mg (500,000 tablets) to the Government of Guatemala. This generous initiative is part of the Government of India's ongoing efforts to assist Guatemala in treating Epilepsy, tuberculosis, and type-II Diabetes, as discussed during a Ministerial level meeting held during the visit of Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture, Ms. Meenakshi Lekhi to Guatemala in January 2023. In its continued assistance to Guatemala, India has previously been active in supplying medicines to the Government of Guatemala, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the Indian Government in collaboration with Eye Foundation of America conducted eye camps in Guatemala to provide free eye-check-ups and much-needed cataract eye surgeries to patients. Once again India has fulfilled its promise by donating specific life-saving medicines to the Government of Guatemala as part of its humanitarian aid efforts.

Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra handed over the medicines to H.E. Oscar Cordon, the Hon'ble Health Minister of Guatemala. Ambassador reiterated India's steadfast commitment to supporting healthcare facilities in Guatemala and highlighted India's role as the "Pharmacy of the World" by supplying affordable, high-quality generic medicines. India's pharmaceutical market was valued at \$49 billion in 2022, projected to reach \$450 billion by 2047, with a growth rate of nine percent. Ambassador also informed the Hon'ble Minister that Guatemala has become India's largest trading partner in Central America, with significant growth in recent years. India's high-quality generic medicines at competitive prices have gained traction in



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra handing over the medicines to H.E. Oscar Cordon, the Hon'ble Health Minister of Guatemala

the Guatemalan market, and the Ambassador expressed India's willingness to reduce healthcare costs by supplying affordable medicines. Ambassador also recalled India's proactive approach in donating 200,000 doses of Covishield to the Government of Guatemala in March 2021, reaffirming India's commitment to providing aid in the future. Additionally, Ambassador briefed the Hon'ble Health Minister on upcoming infrastructure projects in Central American countries, including Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, which will significantly contribute to the region's socio-economic advancement.

Hon'ble Health Minister Oscar Cordon expressed profound gratitude for this generous gesture from the Government of India. He emphasized the significance of India's support in providing life-saving medicines to Guatemala, which will undoubtedly alleviate the healthcare challenges faced by the nation. Hon'ble Minister highlighted the invaluable role that India plays as the "Pharmacy of the World," supplying affordable, high-quality medicines to countries around the globe. He reiterated Guatemala's commitment to

strengthening bilateral ties with India and expressed hope for continued collaboration in the field of healthcare. Hon'ble Minister praised India's proactive approach in donating medicines, including Covishield doses, during the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing India's unwavering commitment to global health cooperation. He conveyed his heartfelt appreciation for India's continued support and partnership in advancing Guatemala's healthcare infrastructure and improving the well-being of its citizens.

This significant contribution will not only strengthen the bond between the two nations but will also provide timely access to life-saving medicines for the people of Guatemala, further affirming India's role as the "pharmacy of the world". India's pharmaceutical industry is renowned for its robustness, producing a wide range of high-quality generic medicines, vaccines, and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) at competitive prices. The success of the recently concluded largest-ever 92-member delegation in February 2024 to Guatemala has opened several avenues for unlocking vast opportunities for collaboration and economic growth in the pharmaceutical sector. Similarly, Guatemalan companies are well aware of the availability of high-quality generic medicines at competitive prices from India.

In an upcoming initiative, India has unveiled plans to donate 650 prosthetic limbs to Guatemala, a significant endeavor aimed at enhancing the lives of individuals in need. By providing these prosthetic limbs, India seeks to empower those facing mobility challenges, granting them the opportunity for greater independence and fulfillment. This commitment to healthcare assistance not only reinforces the deep bonds of friendship between the two nations but also serves as a testament to India's steadfast dedication to aiding communities in need across the globe.

## Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Team Visits El Salvador to Survey Proposed Metro Line Project



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra led a meeting with Govt of El Salvador, DMRC and Lakshmi Capital to discuss the intricacies of the project.

MARCH 21, 2024

**GUATEMALA CITY (TIP):** A delegation from Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) comprising of Mr Sandeep Gemawat, Sr. General Manager/Business Development and Mr. Shiv Om Dwivedi, General Manager/Business Development visited El Salvador to conduct a comprehensive survey of the proposed 22 km metro line project from 19-21 March 2024.

Established in 1995, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is a fully government-owned company with the primary objective of planning, designing, and implementing the metro system in Delhi, the National Capital Territory of India. Equally owned by the Government of India and the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, DMRC operates with significant autonomy to navigate the technical complexities of constructing a vast metro network

within a challenging urban landscape and tight timelines. Today, DMRC manages and maintains 392.448 km of metro network with 288 stations in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), conducting 5262 train trips daily. Furthermore, with 85 km of metro network under construction in Phase-IV, DMRC's network is set to expand to 478 km upon completion. In addition to its operational network, DMRC operates a successful consultancy wing, offering expertise in metro railway projects both domestically and internationally. With a dedicated team of professionals, DMRC serves as a comprehensive solution provider, and is renowned for its exceptional technical capabilities in the field of metro rail infrastructure development. With a team of highly skilled engineers, architects, and technicians, the DMRC continues to push the boundaries of excellence in urban transportation, setting benchmarks for metro systems worldwide. DMRC is catering to an impressive volume of passengers, with an estimated daily ridership of around 6.5 million individuals.

The visit was convened after signing of an MoU between Lakshmi Capital, and the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation of the Republic of El Salvador on 16 February 2023 for construction of 22 km metro line project (extending from initial proposal of 11 kms) in San Salvador. The MoU was signed by Hon'ble Minister Romeo Rodríguez of Ministry of Public Works, Government of Republic of El Salvador and Transportation and Mr. Russell Alexander Luther Rodas of Lakshmi Capital in the presence of Ambassador of India in Guatemala, Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra.



The DMRC team overseeing the technical aspects of the Metro line project in the region with Ambassador Dr Manoj Kumar Mohapatra and members of Ministry of Public Works.

During their visit, while engaging with key stakeholders, government officials and local authorities, the delegation had meeting with Mr. Ibrahim Bukele, the Hon'ble Advisor to the President of El Salvador. In this meeting, they had the opportunity to share their insights and expertise regarding the metro line project. They conducted site visits and technical assessments to gather essential data and insights necessary for the successful planning and execution of the metro line project.

CONTD ON PAGE 46

# Joe Biden's campaign freezes donation from Indian-American businessman

MARCH 20, 2024

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** The re-election campaign of US President Joe Biden and a Democratic Party committee have frozen donations from an Indian-American businessman amid allegations that he falsely claimed to be associated with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

A Biden campaign official stated that a \$50,000 donation to the Biden Victory Fund made by Gaurav Srivastava, who claimed to be associated with the CIA, last April was put in escrow due to concerns about its source and legality, according to Politico.

Similarly, a spokesperson from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which received nearly \$290,000 last year from Srivastava, stated that the committee has set aside the funds for the "foreseeable future" as a precautionary measure.

The decision to freeze the funds follows media reports questioning Srivastava's business practices and philanthropy.

President Joe Biden's re-election campaign said it has raised \$10 million in the 24 hours following a fiery State of the Union address, where he accused Donald Trump of threatening democracy and



Joe Biden and Gaurav Srivastava



Photo: Gaurav and Sharon Srivastava Family Foundation

torpedoing a bill to tackle US immigration woes.

While Srivastava, based in Los Angeles, has been active in various charitable causes, a profile by Project Brazen raised doubts about his integrity, including claims of false CIA ties.

The Atlantic Council, a think tank dealing with international affairs, cut ties with Srivastava after struggling to verify his background, reported Politico.

Srivastava, with his wife Sharon,

donated over \$1 million to the think tank for its Global Food Security Forum in Bali in November 2022.

The businessman manages a charitable organization named after himself and his wife, the 'Gaurav and Sharon Srivastava Family Foundation'.

The foundation, started in 2015, serves communities worldwide that lack the fundamental resources available in the United States.

Reports have also questioned

Srivastava's identity and employment details.

Despite claiming to work for Architecture, Engineering, Construction, Operations, and Management (AECOM) in campaign filings, the global infrastructure firm has denied employing him in the US. Srivastava later listed himself as the chairman of Unity Resource Group, a security operations company, reported Politico.

Connections between Srivastava and President Biden extend beyond donations.

Unity Resources Group briefly employed a lobbying firm led by former Biden aide Ankit Desai, and Srivastava reportedly met Biden personally last year.

Gaurav Srivastava, listing AECOM as his employer, donated \$6,600 to Representative Mikie Sherrill's campaign. He also gave \$3,300 to Senator Maria Cantwell, this time listing Unity Resources Group as his employer.

Democratic politicians, including Senator Mark Warner and Robert Menendez, received donations of \$6,600 each from Srivastava, prompting them to redirect the funds to charities amid the controversy.

## Indian American owner of luxury yacht threatens to kill dock worker over parking



Ajay Thakore threatened to kill a young dock worker who would not let him park his multimillion-dollar luxury yacht at San Diego Marina, according to media reports

MARCH 15, 2024

**SAN JOSE (TIP):** California-based Indian American entrepreneur Ajay Thakore threatened to kill a young dock worker who would not let him park his multimillion-dollar luxury yacht at San Diego Marina, according to media reports.

He also dropped his pants and made several threatening gestures to the employee during the altercation in the late afternoon of Sunday, March 10, SanDiegoVille reported.

Thakore, who goes by his social media name, Ace Rogers, attempted to dock his \$4.5 million 'Tecnomar for Lamborghini 63' yacht at the private Marriott Marquis Marina to pick up someone, when 21-year-old Joseph Holt who works at Seaforth Boat Rentals, told him he couldn't park there.

A video is circulating showing what appears to be the owner of San Diego's

famous Lamborghini yacht threatening a dock worker in downtown San Diego, according to the newspaper.

The boat owner is also in the process of civil litigation with a second San Diego restaurant. He recently made news after former UFC champion Chuck Liddell fell off his yacht in San Diego Bay.

"I'll kill you! I will kill you! You know I'll kill you! I will kill you! I will kill you!", the man on the Lamborghini boat is heard shouting, as the dock worker responds inaudibly. "Yea I doubt it! Ace Rogers, call me! Time and place!"

The interaction quickly became heated, resulting in the boat owner berating the employee, then verbally threatening him, as well as reportedly throwing money in the water as he allegedly insulted the employee's social status.

In a second video, it appears the man on the boat pulls his pants down and makes lewd gestures toward the people on the dock.

Thakore's bright blue boat is the only Lamborghini yacht sited on the United States' West Coast and only the second seen in the United States.

Thakore made news in late 2021 after he was publicly accused of harassing a La Jolla pizza eatery, according to SanDiegoVille.

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

## FREE FILE PROVIDES QUICK, EASY WAY TO FILE AN EXTENSION

MARCH 20, 2024

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**(TIP):** As the end of tax season draws near, the Internal Revenue Service reminds taxpayers there's

an easy way to get a tax filing extension through the Free File program.

A tax filing extension guarantees the taxpayer six additional months to file - with an extended deadline of Oct. 15, 2024. The IRS Free File program is one of the easiest ways to get an extension.

Although an extension grants extra time to file, it does not extend the obligation to pay taxes due on April 15, 2024. To avoid penalties and late fees, taxpayers who owe should pay either their full tax bill or at least what they can afford to pay by the April 15 deadline. Taxpayers in Maine and Massachusetts have until April 17 to file and pay taxes due this year. This is because these states observe the Patriots' Day holiday on April 15 this year and April 16 is the Emancipation Day holiday in the District of Columbia.

**FREE FILE MAKES FILING AN EXTENSION EASIER**

An easy way to file an extension is through IRS Free File on IRS.gov. All individual filers can use the program software to request an extension on Form 4868, Application for Automatic



Extension of Time to File U.S. Individual Income Tax Return, regardless of income. Taxpayers must estimate their tax liability and file by the deadline to

receive the extension.

Free File also is one of the options available to help taxpayers file their taxes. Now in its 22nd filing season, taxpayers across the nation can access free software products provided by IRS Free File trusted partners by visiting IRS.gov. Through this public-private partnership, tax preparation and filing software providers make their online products available to eligible taxpayers. Eight private-sector Free File partners provide online guided tax software products this year to any taxpayer with an Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of \$79,000 or less in 2023. Free access to online products is only available by starting from IRS Free File.

**MAKE A PAYMENT, GET AN EXTENSION**

Other quick and efficient ways to get an extension are through the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS), paying with a credit, debit card or digital wallet, and IRS Direct Pay. The IRS will automatically grant an extension when a taxpayer makes an electronic payment and indicates it's for an extension.

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

## RAW operative shunted out over Pannun plot

An intelligence operative has been removed from his position and several others were reshuffled following an investigation into US claims of an alleged plot to kill Khalistani leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, people familiar with the matter have said.

The investigation concluded “rogue operatives not authorised by the government had been involved in the plot”, Bloomberg reported, citing unnamed senior officials. The developments in the probe by a high-level committee set up by India last year to examine inputs provided by the US were first reported by Bloomberg.

The operative removed from his position in the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is a mid-level official seconded to the agency from a paramilitary force, the people cited above said on condition of anonymity. Several other operatives were part of a reshuffle carried out in recent weeks by the agency amid the probe by the committee, they said.

The Indian side has revealed nothing officially about the work done by the high-level committee, or its composition or findings since an indictment filed by US prosecutors in a Manhattan court last November alleged that Indian national Nikhil Gupta, acting on the instructions of an unnamed Indian official, was involved in a plot to kill Pannun on American soil.

It is understood the operative removed from his position is the Indian government official referred to only as “CC-1” in the US indictment against Gupta. The indictment described CC-1 as a “senior field officer” responsible for “security management” and “intelligence” who directed the plot from India.

Bloomberg reported that “one person directly involved in the alleged attempted assassination is no longer working” for RAW. This person is “still employed by the government and India hasn’t started any criminal action against him”, the report said. India has also informed US authorities about the findings of the high-level committee, the report added.

The “murder for hire” plot, as US officials have referred to the incident, has emerged as an irritant in an otherwise robust India-US relationship that now encompasses collaboration on critical emerging technologies, joint development of military hardware and close cooperation on defence and security issues.

The US has pressed India to prosecute those involved in the plot, and this was a message conveyed to Indian officials by Donald Lu, the assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs, when he visited New Delhi in January.

Participating in a US House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing in Washington on Wednesday, Lu described the plot as a “serious issue between the US and India”. He added: “We take this in the administration incredibly seriously and have raised it at the highest levels with India. We are, at the moment, working with India to encourage India to hold accountable those responsible for this terrible crime.”

Source: HT

# SBI complies with SC order, gives EC data on electoral bonds

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday, March 21, released State Bank of India (SBI) data listing the unique serial number linked with each electoral bond (EB) and other details about beneficiaries and donors, allowing the matching purchasers of bonds with the political parties that received the funds.

The latest tranche of data – the third such trove to be released over the past two weeks on the orders of the Supreme Court – appeared to be the final key to the political funding puzzle locked away behind a veil of anonymity that was finally dispelled by the Supreme Court when it held the scheme unconstitutional last month.

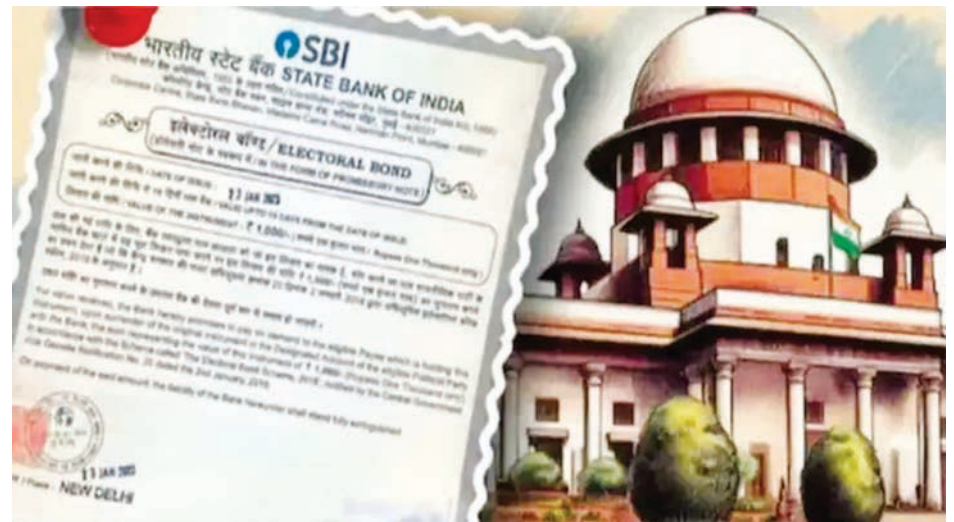
“In compliance with the Supreme Court’s directions, SBI has provided data pertaining to electoral bonds to ECI today i.e. March 21, 2024. The ECI has uploaded it on its website as received from SBI on an ‘as is where is basis,’” the poll body said in a statement.

The two sets of data – 552 pages of details of redemption by political parties and 386 pages of details of donors – cover electoral bonds purchased and redeemed from April 12, 2019 until January 11, 2024. In the end, SBI took three days to disclose the data that it had asked the Supreme Court three months time for.

The data revealed that Tamil Nadu-based Future Gaming and Hotel Services, the top donor that accounted for Rs 1,365 crore worth bonds, donated across party lines. Out of this, 39.7% (Rs 542 crore) went to the All India Trinamool Congress, 36.8% (Rs 503 crore) to the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), 11.3% (Rs 154 crore) to the YSR Congress, 7.3% (Rs 100 crore) to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and 3.7% (Rs 50 crore) to the Congress.

The second highest donor – Hyderabad-based Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited (MEIL) – donated 60.5% of its Rs 966 crore to the BJP and 20.2% (Rs 195 crore) to the Telangana-based Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS).

The third highest donor, Thane-based Qwik Supply Chain donated 91.5% of its Rs 410 crore to the BJP followed by 6% (Rs 25 crore) to the Shiv Sena. It donated Rs 10 crore (2.4%) to Nationalist Congress Party. According to Zaubacorp, a website that scrapes data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and LinkedIn profiles, two of the directors of the firm are employees of the Reliance group and are directors of multiple



Reliance Group companies.

Mining behemoth Vedanta Limited donated Rs 230.15 crore, or 57.5% of its total bonds worth Rs 400.35 crore, to the BJP, followed by Rs 125 crore (31.2%) to the Congress.

The Kolkata-based RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group’s Haldia Energy donated 74.5% of its Rs 377 crore to the TMC followed by Rs 81 crore (21.5%) to the BJP.

For the BJP, which received Rs 5,594.2 crore, MEIL was the largest donor at Rs 584 crore, followed by Qwik Supply Chain at Rs 375 crore and Vedanta at Rs 230.15 crore. Others contributed Rs 4,032.15 crore. In all, the BJP netted Rs 6,061 crore of the Rs 8,252 crore between April 12, 2019 and January 11, 2024.

The TMC received its biggest chunk of funds from Future Gaming at Rs 542 crore, followed by Haldia Energy at Rs 281 crore and Dhariwal Infrastructure at 90 crore. Others contributed Rs 588.12 crore. In all, the TMC netted Rs 1,610 crore of the Rs 1,708 crore between April 12, 2019 and January 11, 2024.

For the Congress, the biggest donor was Vedanta at Rs 125 crore, followed by Western UP Power Transmission Company Limited at 110 crore and MJK Enterprise at 91.6 crore. In all, the Congress netted Rs 1,422 crore of the Rs 1,952 crore between April 12, 2019 and January 11, 2024.

The data disclosure has gained additional importance given that it was revealed just weeks ahead of general elections, where political funding is expected to be among the issues raised during the campaign.

The data solves the mystery of who anonymously donated Rs 10 crore to the Samajwadi Party by post. Keventer Food Park Infra, a part of the Kolkata-based FMCG group Keventer, donated 10 Rs 1 crore bonds to the SP. These bonds were bought on May 7, 2019 and redeemed by the party on May 10, 2019.

But another mystery — of who

handed over a sealed envelope with 10 Rs 1 crore bonds to the Janata Dal (United) in its office on April 3, 2019 — still persists because the bonds were credited into JD(U)’s account on April 10, two days before the cut-off of April 12.

Under the 2018 EB scheme — which was quashed by a Constitution bench of the Supreme Court on February 15 because it completely anonymised contributions made to political parties — each electoral bond is imprinted with a unique number that can assist in tracking the issuance and redemption of bonds, and in tracing the bond back to the purchaser.

On March 18, the bench led by Chief Justice of India Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud ordered SBI to disclose the unique serial number associated with each EB and all other information the bank possesses while supplying the ECI with data for public release.

On the day, the bench, also comprising justices Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, noted that the February 15 judgment required SBI to disclose all information in its possession, which will include alphanumeric numbers and serial numbers, besides the date of purchase or redemption, the recipient’s or buyer’s name, and the denomination of EBs.

It called for a categorical affidavit of the SBI chairman by 5pm on March 21 that the bank has disclosed all the information in its custody and that no details have been withheld. The court further directed that as soon as ECI receives the information from SBI, it will post it on its website “forthwith”.

Complying with this direction, the SBI chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara filed his affidavit on Thursday afternoon, stating that “SBI has now disclosed all details and that no details (other than complete bank account numbers and KYC Details) have been withheld from disclosure.”

## ‘Will lead to chaos’: SC refuses to stay appointment of new ECs

Noting that it would lead to “chaos and uncertainty” in the midst of the Lok Sabha elections, the Supreme Court on Thursday refused to stay the appointment of Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu under the recently enacted law that excluded the CJI from the Prime Minister-led selection panel.

“Now they (two new ECs) have been appointed... elections are round the corner... It’s a question of balance of convenience. We have to see what the effect is if we do (stay) it and what are the consequences which will follow.... There are no allegations against the persons (ECs) appointed,” a Bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Dipankar Datta said.

“We dismiss the applications for stay... We will give reasons later,” said the Bench, which also refused to grant an interim stay on the operation of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Terms of Office) Act, 2023, saying the Election Commission was not under the “thumb of executive”.

“At this stage, we cannot stay the legislation or put it under suspension by way of interim order. It would lead to uncertainty and chaos in case of stay,” it said, dismissing the pleas for stay filed by Congress leader Jaya Thakur and Association for Democratic Reforms.

The Bench, however, said it would examine the main petitions challenging the validity of the 2023 Act. Asking the Centre to respond to the petitions in six weeks, the Bench posted the matter for further hearing on August 5.

On Thursday, March 21, the Bench posed certain questions on the procedure adopted in appointing the new ECs, saying there could have been an opportunity given for the names to be examined.

“This could have easily been avoided by giving two-three days. You should have gone more slowly,” it said.

# Systematic effort to cripple Cong financially: Sonia Gandhi’s all-out attack on PM

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Congress on Thursday, March 21, fielded its top three leaders, party president Mallikarjun Kharge and former presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, to launch a frontal attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his administration, accusing the government of virtually freezing the main opposition party’s bank accounts weeks before the general elections.

In the first joint press conference addressed by the three, the leaders alleged there was no level playing field before the polls because the Congress was unable to operate its accounts. They also disclosed that in addition to the ongoing tax dispute with the Income Tax (I-T) department over the assessment year (AY) 2018-19, the party received a fresh notice on March 14 over alleged discrepancies in AY 1994-95, when the late Sitaram Kesri was the party treasurer.

“A systematic effort is underway by the PM to cripple Congress financially,” said Sonia Gandhi. Rahul Gandhi echoed her. “This is a criminal action on the Congress by the PM and the home minister. This type of activity doesn’t happen without them in today’s India,” he said.

The Congress leadership said that they were unable to book flights for its leaders or advertisement spaces due to the shortage of funds.

Kharge contrasted the Congress’s inability to operate its account to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) “amassing huge resources through electoral bonds and other means”. “This can’t be called a free and fair election.... In the 75 years of India’s democratic system, no other party has amassed so much money (as the



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi during a special press conference at the Congress party headquarters in New Delhi, on March 21.

BJP). For the first time, the government is making money from various ways. ...if you want an impartial election, our party’s account should be freed. BJP has never paid any income tax. We are waiting for the final decision of the law,” he said.

In her statement, Sonia Gandhi said the issues taken up were “extremely serious”.

“This issue affects not just the Congress, but impacts our democracy most fundamentally. A systematic effort is underway by the PM to cripple the INC financially. Funds from the public are frozen and money from our accounts is being taken away forcibly. However, even under these most challenging circumstances, we are doing our very best to maintain the effectiveness of our poll campaigning,” she added.

Registered political parties are exempted from paying tax on specified income such as voluntary contributions, house property, income from other sources and

capital gains, under section 13A of the Income Tax Act. But this exemption is subject to a set of stipulations, including maintenance of books of account, records of each contribution of more than ₹20,000 and audit reports by a chartered accountant. Additionally, political parties must not receive donation of more than Rs 2,000 otherwise than by way of cheque, demand draft or through bank account. Parties must also furnish their verified return of income for the previous year.

The Congress’s claim of full exemption was rejected on two grounds. One, the party did not submit its return of income within the time limit and two, the Congress received cash donations to the tune of ₹14.49 lakh in excess of ₹2,000. The Congress has rejected the allegation, saying it submitted returns within the stipulated time and the money received was from party legislators and office-bearers, and therefore could not be construed as “donations” under the IT Act.

## ‘Arunachal part of India’: US amid China’s territorial claims

NEW DELHI (TIP)

China and the US engaged in verbal skirmishing over India’s sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh with Beijing stating that it opposes American observations on the issue.

China’s reaction came hours the US State Department said the US “recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory” and “we (the US) strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the LAC”.

Speaking at his press conference on Wednesday, State Department Principal Deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said, “The United States recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory and we strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by



The Sela tunnel was virtually opened by PM Narendra Modi in Arunachal Pradesh recently. File Photo

incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control.”

In response, the Chinese Foreign Office said it “strongly deploras and firmly opposes” the US

recognition of Arunachal Pradesh as part of Indian territory, and told Washington that it had nothing to do with the India-China border dispute. It also accused the US of “instigating and using other countries’ disputes” for selfish geopolitical interests. “The question of the China-India border issue is between China and India and it has nothing to do with the US. It is well known that the US has been instigating and using other countries’ disputes by all means to serve its selfish geo-political interests,” said the Chinese Foreign Office spokesperson at a media briefing in Beijing on Thursday, March 21.

Earlier, the Chinese government had deployed its Foreign and Defence Ministries to criticise Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurating projects in Arunachal Pradesh that will further strengthen India’s border management.

Source: TNS

# India in history this Week

## MARCH 22 TO MARCH 28

### 22 MARCH

1890 Ramachandra Chatterjee became the first person to get off parachute in 1890.

1972 Mrs. Indira Gandhi resigned as Prime Minister in 1977.

1964 First rally of old cars held in Kolkata.

1957 A national calendar based on suspicion was adopted.



1969 Inauguration of Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited.

### 23 MARCH

1910 Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was born in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh.



1931 During the 1931 Indian independence movement, revolutionary Bhagat Singh and his associates Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged on this day.

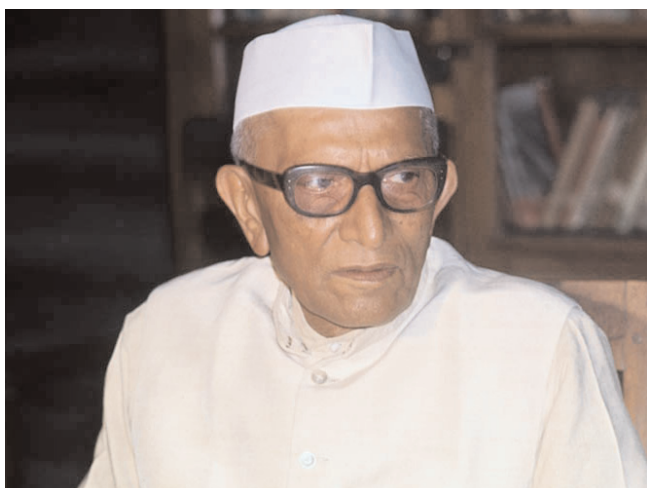
1986 First company of women was trained in Central Reserve Police Force.

1940 The All India Muslim League demanded a separate country for Muslims in 1940.

### 24 MARCH

1855 Long-distance telegraph message was sent from Calcutta to Agra for the first time.

1977 Morarji Desai became the fourth Prime Minister of India in 1977 and formed the first non-Congress government at the Center.



1990 The Indian Army left Sri Lanka and returned home in 1990.

1999 PN Bhagwati was elected vice-president of the



United Nations Human Rights Committee for a second consecutive term in 1999.

1855 British Cabinet Mission reaches India.

### 25 MARCH

1788 First advertisement of Indian language Bangla published in the newspaper 'Calcutta Gadget'.

1898 Swami Vivekananda gave initiation of celibacy to Sister Nivedita.

1954 The country's first helicopter "S-55" was launched in 1954 in Delhi.

2007 Team India out of World Cup cricket in 2007.

2017 Tanushree Pareek of Bikaner, Rajasthan, made the country and state proud by becoming the first woman officer of the country's Border Security Force (BSF) in 2017.



### 26 MARCH



1552 Guru Amardas became the third Guru of the Sikhs.

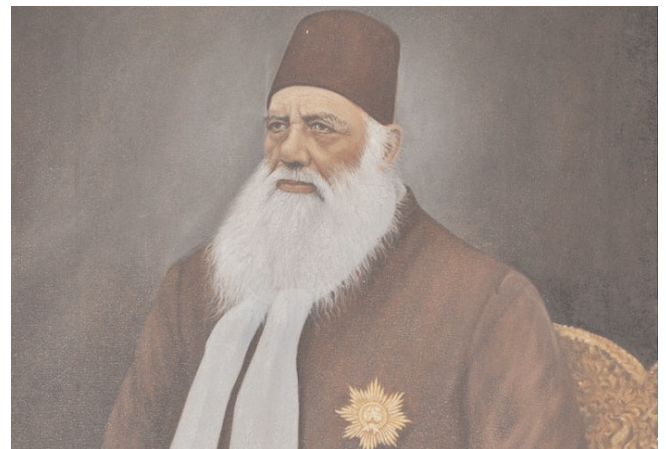


1907 Mahadevi Varma, the modern 'Meera' of Hindi literature world, was born.

1972 President of India VV Giri inaugurates the first International Sanskrit Conference.

1973 In the state of Uttarakhand, India, in 1973, farmers organized an eco-protection movement called "Chipko Movement" to oppose the cutting of trees.

### 27 MARCH



1898 Death anniversary of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who introduced modern education for the Muslims of India.

2010 India successfully test-fires Dhanush and Prithvi 2 equipped with nuclear technology at Chandipur, Odisha.

### 28 MARCH

1941 Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose escaped from detention and reached Berlin.

1977 Morarji Desai formed the government in India in 1977.

2000 West Indies' Courtney Walls broke Kapil Dev's record 435 wickets.

2013 The Internet's biggest attack on history.

2015 Saina Nehwal became the world's number one female badminton player.





# Remembering the Heroes: A Tribute to India's Martyrs on Martyrs Day



BY  
INDRAJIT SALUJA

## INDIA CELEBRATES MARTYRS DAY ON MARCH 23



The legacy of India's martyrs for freedom serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration for future generations.

Martyrs Day in India stands as a solemn reminder of the sacrifice and valor exhibited by countless individuals who fought for the country's freedom from British colonial rule. It is a day of reflection, commemoration, and reverence for those who laid down their lives in pursuit of liberty. As we observe this day, our thoughts naturally gravitate towards the courageous souls who inscribed the annals of India's independence struggle with their blood. Among these luminaries, one name shines brightly - Bhagat Singh. However, it is imperative to recognize that he, along with his comrades Rajguru and Sukhdev, represents a legion of martyrs who epitomized the spirit of selfless sacrifice. Delving into their lives, beliefs, and writings unveils the essence of their profound commitment to the cause of freedom.

March 23 holds a poignant significance in the history of India's freedom struggle as it marks the day when Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev were executed in Lahore Central Jail in 1931. While these three iconic figures are emblematic of the sacrifices made for India's freedom, they stand as symbols representing the multitude of unsung heroes who valiantly fought and perished in the struggle against colonial oppression. Their martyrdom underscores the indomitable spirit of resistance and the unwavering commitment to the cause of independence.

Bhagat Singh, often hailed as the epitome of revolutionary zeal, was more than just a martyr; he was a thinker, a visionary, and a fervent advocate of social justice. Born on September 28, 1907, in Banga, Punjab, Bhagat Singh was imbued with patriotic fervor from an early age. His revolutionary ideals were shaped by the prevailing socio-political milieu of colonial India, characterized by exploitation, inequality, and repression.

Central to Bhagat Singh's philosophy was his unwavering belief in the power of the masses to effectuate change. He viewed armed struggle not merely as a means to overthrow British rule but as a catalyst for social transformation. Bhagat Singh's commitment to the socialist ideology and his advocacy for the rights of the marginalized sections of society distinguished him as a visionary far ahead of his time.

The courage and audacity displayed by Bhagat Singh in his actions, most notably the Lahore Conspiracy Case and the Assembly Bomb Case, earned him widespread admiration and reverence.

His daring exploits, coupled with his eloquent writings, catapulted him into the pantheon of India's freedom fighters. Despite facing imminent death, Bhagat Singh remained resolute in his convictions, refusing to compromise his principles or seek clemency from the British authorities.

From an early age, Bhagat Singh was drawn to the ideals of socialism and Marxism, which provided him with a framework to understand and analyze the socio-economic injustices prevalent in colonial India. Influenced by the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, and other socialist thinkers, Bhagat Singh developed a nuanced understanding of class struggle, exploitation, and imperialism.

Bhagat Singh's political activism was grounded in the belief that the struggle against British colonial rule was intrinsically linked to the broader struggle for social and economic emancipation. He saw imperialism as not just a political domination but also an economic exploitation, with the British colonial rulers enriching themselves at the expense of the Indian masses.

Moreover, Bhagat Singh was deeply critical of capitalism, which he viewed as inherently exploitative and oppressive. He believed that the capitalist system perpetuated inequalities and injustices, concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few while impoverishing the masses. For Bhagat Singh, the fight against colonialism was inseparable from the fight against capitalism, as both systems worked hand in glove to perpetuate exploitation and subjugation.

Bhagat Singh's readings and writings reflect his intellectual depth and political acumen. Despite his young age, he was an avid reader and a prolific writer, penning numerous articles, essays, and pamphlets on a wide range of topics, including politics, history, philosophy, and socialism.

One of Bhagat Singh's most famous writings is his essay titled "Why I am an Atheist," in which he eloquently articulates his rejection of religious dogma and his embrace of rationalism and scientific thinking. In this essay, Bhagat Singh critiques organized religion for its role in perpetuating superstition, ignorance, and social divisions. He argues that blind faith in religious doctrines stifles critical thinking and inhibits social progress, advocating instead for a rational and scientific approach to understanding the world.

Bhagat Singh's prison diary, written during his incarceration, provides profound insights into his thoughts, feelings, and experiences as a revolutionary activist facing imminent death. In these poignant writings, Bhagat Singh reflects on the nature of martyrdom, the significance of sacrifice, and the enduring legacy of the freedom struggle. Despite the hardships he endured, Bhagat Singh remained steadfast in his convictions, refusing to compromise his principles or seek clemency from the British authorities.

Bhagat Singh's political beliefs and writings continue to inspire generations of activists, thinkers, and revolutionaries, both in India and around the world. His uncompromising commitment to socialism, his critique of colonialism and capitalism, and his unwavering advocacy for social justice and equality resonate with contemporary struggles for liberation and emancipation.

While Bhagat Singh's name often dominates discussions surrounding India's independence movement, it is essential to acknowledge the contributions of his comrades, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar. Alongside Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev formed the core of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), a revolutionary organization dedicated to the overthrow of British imperialism.

Rajguru, born in Khed, Maharashtra, and Sukhdev, hailing from Ludhiana, Punjab, shared Bhagat Singh's unwavering commitment to the cause of freedom. Their involvement in various acts of resistance, including the assassination of British police officer J.P. Saunders, exemplifies their dedication to the liberation struggle.

Despite their pivotal roles in the independence movement, Rajguru and Sukhdev often remain overshadowed by the towering figure of Bhagat Singh. However, their sacrifice and valor are integral to the collective memory of India's struggle for independence. It is incumbent upon us to commemorate their legacy and honor their contributions to the nation's history.

As we commemorate Martyrs Day and pay homage to the valiant souls who sacrificed their lives for India's freedom, let us not confine our reverence to mere rituals and ceremonies. Instead, let us imbibe the spirit of courage, sacrifice, and resilience exemplified by Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev, and countless other martyrs who made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of liberty.

The martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev serves as a potent reminder of the ideals that animated the freedom struggle. Their unyielding commitment to the principles of liberty, equality, and justice inspired generations of Indians to rise against colonial oppression. Moreover, their advocacy for socialism and their vision of a more equitable society resonate even in contemporary times.

The legacy of India's martyrs, particularly that of Bhagat Singh, transcends the boundaries of time and space, continuing to inspire and galvanize generations in the pursuit of freedom, justice, and equality. Their sacrifices serve as a poignant reminder of the price paid for independence and the unyielding spirit of resistance against oppression. The legacy of the martyrs for India's struggle for freedom is multifaceted, encompassing ideological, cultural, and socio-political dimensions.

At the heart of this legacy lies the indomitable spirit of courage and sacrifice exhibited by Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Their willingness to lay down their lives for the cause of freedom epitomizes the highest form of patriotism and selflessness. Their actions ignited a spark of rebellion that reverberated across the length and breadth of the country, mobilizing masses in the fight against British colonial rule.

The martyrs' steadfast commitment to the ideals of socialism and social justice left an indelible mark on India's political

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landscape. Bhagat Singh, in particular, advocated for the empowerment of the oppressed classes and the eradication of social inequalities. His vision of a society based on egalitarian principles continues to resonate with activists and thinkers striving for a more just and equitable world.

Moreover, the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh and his comrades catalyzed the evolution of the Indian nationalist movement, ushering in a new era of

militant resistance. Their daring acts of defiance, including the bombing of the Central Legislative Assembly and the assassination of British police officer J.P. Saunders, challenged the conventional strategies of nonviolent protest advocated by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi.

The legacy of the martyrs also underscores the significance of youth in driving social change and political transformation. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev were all in their twenties when they made the ultimate sacrifice for the country. Their idealism, passion, and

fearlessness continue to inspire young Indians to actively engage in the struggle for a better future.

Furthermore, the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh and his comrades served as a catalyst for the radicalization of the Indian nationalist movement, pushing it towards more assertive and confrontational tactics. Their actions forced the British colonial authorities to confront the growing tide of dissent and paved the way for the eventual attainment of independence.

Their legacy serves as a beacon of hope

and inspiration for future generations, reminding us of the enduring power of ideals and the transformative potential of collective action. On this solemn occasion, let us reaffirm our commitment to upholding the values of freedom, democracy, and social justice for which these martyrs laid down their lives. As we reflect on their sacrifices, let us pledge to honor their memory by striving for a more just, equitable, and inclusive society. For in remembering the martyrs, we renew our resolve to build a nation worthy of their sacrifice.

# Bhagat Singh: A revolutionary hero of the Indian independence movement

**B**hagat Singh was an Indian revolutionary freedom fighter who was hanged to death by British colonisers at the age of 23 years. Fondly known as 'Shaheed (martyr) Bhagat Singh', he is considered a national hero of India's freedom struggle against colonial rule. As a teenager, Bhagat Singh popularised the slogan of 'Inquilab Zindabad' which eventually became the catchphrase of the Indian independence movement.

## Bhagat Singh's Life

Bhagat Singh was born in a Sikh family in Banga village of Faisalabad district (previously called Lyallpur), now in Pakistan's Punjab province, on 27 September 1907. As his family was deeply inspired by nationalism, he too became actively involved in the country's freedom movements.

He got admitted to the National College in Lahore, where he studied European revolutionary movements. When his parents tried to get him married, Bhagat Singh left home for Kanpur. In 1926, Bhagat Singh established the 'Naujawan Bharat Sabha (Youth Society of India)' and joined the Hindustan Republican Association (later known as Hindustan Socialist Republican Association). During that time, he met many anti-colonial activists.

In December 1928, Bhagat Singh, along with Sukhdev and Rajguru, planned to avenge the death of Indian nationalist leader Lala Lajpat Rai and plotted to assassinate the Superintendent of Police James Scott in Lahore.

However, in a case of mistaken identity, John Saunders, the Assistant Superintendent of Police was shot. To avoid being recognised and arrested for the crime, Bhagat Singh escaped from Lahore to Calcutta after shaving his beard and cutting his hair.

In April 1929, Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt bombed the Central Assembly Hall in Delhi, and shouted the slogan of "Inquilab Zindabad!". He was later arrested after the incident.

## Execution of Bhagat Singh

Bhagat Singh and his revolutionary comrades Rajguru and Sukhdev were



hanged by the British on March 23, 1931, in the Lahore Conspiracy case.

## Bhagat Singh's Revolutionary Activities

Bhagat Singh was a brave and passionate freedom fighter who took part in several revolutionary activities during India's struggle for independence from British rule.

## Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)

Bhagat Singh joined this group of like-minded young revolutionaries who believed in using force to overthrow

British rule and bring freedom to India.

**Assembly Bombing:** Bhagat Singh, along with his associates, threw non-lethal smoke bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi in 1929. They did this to protest against repressive laws and show their defiance to the British.

## Lahore Conspiracy Case

Bhagat Singh and his comrades were arrested after the assembly bombing. They were put on trial in what became known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case, where they boldly declared their

revolutionary aims and were willing to face the consequences.

## Hunger Strike

While in jail, Bhagat Singh and his fellow prisoners went on a hunger strike to demand better treatment and rights for political prisoners. Their courage and determination drew widespread support.

## Slogans and Writings

Bhagat Singh used his writings and slogans to inspire others and raise awareness about India's fight for freedom. His slogan "Inquilab Zindabad" (Long Live the Revolution) became iconic.

## Martyrdom

Bhagat Singh, along with Rajguru and Sukhdev, was sentenced to death for his involvement in the killing of a British police officer. Despite the option of saving his life by renouncing violence, he chose to embrace martyrdom, becoming a symbol of sacrifice for the nation's freedom.

Bhagat Singh's revolutionary activities demonstrated his unwavering commitment to India's independence and inspired countless others to join the struggle. His bravery and sacrifice continue to be celebrated, reminding us of the power of determination in the pursuit of justice and freedom.

## Bhagat Singh's Ideals and Beliefs

Bhagat Singh had strong ideals and beliefs that guided his actions during India's struggle for independence. Here's an explanation of his key ideals and beliefs:

### Patriotism

Bhagat Singh had deep love for his country, India. He believed in the idea of a free and independent India where every citizen could live with dignity and pride. He was willing to sacrifice everything for his homeland.

### Secularism

Bhagat Singh believed in a united and secular India, where people of all religions and backgrounds could coexist

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peacefully. He rejected any form of discrimination or religious division.

**Socialism**

Bhagat Singh was influenced by socialist ideas. He believed in a society where wealth and resources were shared more equally among the people, reducing poverty and inequality.

**Non-Violence vs. Revolution**

While he admired Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, Bhagat Singh felt that, in certain situations, a more forceful approach was needed to gain independence. He believed in using revolutionary means to overthrow British rule.

**Youth Empowerment**

Bhagat Singh had great faith in the power of young people to bring about change. He encouraged the youth of India to actively participate in the freedom struggle and take charge of their nation's destiny.

**Sacrifice**

Bhagat Singh believed that freedom came with a price. He was willing to sacrifice his life for the greater good of India. He famously said, "It is easy to kill individuals but you cannot kill the ideas."

**Fearlessness**

He displayed remarkable courage and fearlessness in the face of adversity. He was unafraid of the consequences of his actions and remained steadfast in his commitment to the cause.

Bhagat Singh's ideals and beliefs continue to inspire people today, reminding us of the importance of patriotism, equality, and the willingness to stand up for what is right in the pursuit of a just and free society.

**Bhagat Singh Quotes & Slogans**



Bhagat Singh's quotes and slogans are powerful words that continue to inspire and remind us of his unwavering dedication to India's freedom struggle.

"Inquilab Zindabad!" – This iconic slogan, which translates to "Long Live the Revolution," was often used by Bhagat Singh to inspire the masses in their fight for independence.

"They may kill me, but they cannot kill my ideas. They can crush my body, but they will not be able to crush my spirit." – Bhagat Singh emphasized the enduring power of his ideas and convictions.

"It is easy to kill individuals but you cannot kill the ideas." – He believed that while individuals could be silenced, the ideas of freedom and justice would persist. "Revolution is an inalienable right of mankind. Freedom is an imperishable birthright of all." – Bhagat Singh articulated the belief that every person has the inherent right to strive for freedom and justice.

"I am a man, and all that affects mankind concerns me." – He expressed his deep concern for the welfare of all humanity, emphasizing the universal nature of his cause.

"Merciless criticism and independent thinking are the two necessary traits of

revolutionary thinking." – Bhagat Singh stressed the importance of critical thinking and independent analysis in pursuing revolutionary goals.

"The sword of revolution is sharpened on the whetting-stone of ideas." – He highlighted the role of ideas and ideology as the driving force behind revolutionary actions.

**Bhagat Singh Legacy**

Bhagat Singh's legacy is a profound and enduring one, deeply rooted in his fearless commitment to the cause of India's independence and his unwavering dedication to justice and equality. This legacy continues to inspire not only Indians but people worldwide.

At the heart of Bhagat Singh's legacy is his unparalleled bravery and willingness to sacrifice his life for the greater good. He refused to bow down to British oppression and colonial rule, even when faced with the gravest of consequences. His sacrifice is a reminder of the extraordinary lengths to which individuals can go when they passionately believe in a cause.

Bhagat Singh's legacy is also deeply intertwined with his ideological beliefs. He was a fervent advocate of socialism,

secularism, and equality. His vision for an independent India was one where every citizen, regardless of their religion or background, would enjoy equal rights and opportunities. This vision continues to resonate with the principles of democracy and justice.

Bhagat Singh famous slogan, "Inquilab Zindabad" (Long Live the Revolution), remains a rallying cry for those who strive for social change and justice. It embodies the spirit of resistance against oppression and tyranny. Bhagat Singh's writings and speeches, which articulated his vision for a just society, continue to inspire scholars, activists, and thinkers.

The impact of Bhagat Singh's legacy extends to various aspects of Indian culture and society. His birth anniversary, observed on September 28th, is celebrated across the nation as a day of remembrance and reflection. Monuments, memorials, and museums dedicated to his memory stand as a testament to his enduring influence. Films, literature, and documentaries continue to be made about his life, ensuring that his story is passed down to new generations.

Moreover, Bhagat Singh's legacy has inspired countless individuals to stand up against injustice, tyranny, and inequality not only in India but around the world. His sacrifice and unwavering dedication serve as a beacon of hope for those who believe in the power of ordinary individuals to bring about extraordinary change.

In conclusion, Bhagat Singh's legacy is a testament to the indomitable spirit of a young revolutionary who dared to challenge the mightiest empire of his time. His principles of justice, equality, and freedom remain relevant, and his memory continues to ignite the flames of inspiration in the hearts of those who aspire to create a better and more just world. Bhagat Singh's legacy is not just a part of history; it is a living force that continues to shape the aspirations and dreams of a nation and its people.

# Freedom Fighter Shivaram Rajguru

Shivaram Hari Rajguru was a prominent Indian freedom fighter and revolutionary who played a crucial role in the Indian independence movement against British colonial rule. He was born on August 24, 1908, in a village called Khed near Pune, Maharashtra. Shivaram Rajguru is best known for his participation in the historic incident of Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt throwing non-lethal bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi on April 8, 1929, as a protest against repressive laws.

**Shivaram Hari Rajguru's Birth Anniversary**

August 24th commemorates the birth anniversary of Shivaram Hari Rajguru. Freedom fighter Rajguru, alongside Sukhdev and Bhagat Singh, faced the gallows on March 23, 1931, at the hands of the British government. Rajguru was born to Parvati Devi and Harinarain Rajguru on 24 August 1908 in the village of Khed, Maharashtra.

**Early Life and Education of Rajguru**



Shivaram Hari Rajguru was born into a middle-class family. His father expired when he was only six years old and the responsibility of family fell on his elder brother Dinkar. He received his primary

education in his village and later moved to Pune for further studies. Despite facing financial challenges, he was a bright student and excelled in academics.

As he matured, the ideology of

Lokmanya Tilak became a profound source of inspiration for Rajguru. He enlisted in the 'Seva Dal,' actively participating in training sessions held at Ghatprabha. Subsequently, he went on to join the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, dedicating himself to the cause of Indian independence.

Shivaram Rajguru grew up witnessing the injustice and exploitation the British Raj continually wrought upon India. In his late teens, Rajguru became a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), an organization founded in 1928 by prominent figures like Chandrasekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh. Rajguru held steadfast to the belief in militant nationalism, advocating that oppression should be met with unyielding ferocity and violence. He did not share Mahatma Gandhi's faith in non-violent Satyagraha.

An incident illustrating his unwavering

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determination was when he deliberately touched a hot iron with his bare hands. When Chandrasekhar Azad questioned the sanity of such an act, Rajguru explained that he was testing his resilience in preparation for potential police brutality.

Within the HSRA, Rajguru earned the moniker 'Gunman' due to his exceptional shooting skills, operating under the alias Raghunath. However, his most notable and enduring legacy was his role in the assassination of British police officer J.P. Saunders. This act was meticulously planned by Bhagat Singh, Chandrasekhar Azad, Sukhdev, and Rajguru, with Rajguru and Bhagat Singh firing the fatal shots.

Their motivation stemmed from a desire for revenge following the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, who was believed to have succumbed to injuries sustained during a brutal police lathi charge while protesting against the Simon Commission. Their

original target was James A. Scott, the police officer responsible for ordering the lathi charge. However, in a case of mistaken identity, Saunders was killed. Nevertheless, the revolutionaries declared that they had avenged Lala Lajpat Rai's death.

Following the assassination, Rajguru fled to Nagpur in an attempt to evade the police. Unfortunately, while travelling to Pune, he was apprehended and subsequently arrested.

**Assembly Bombing**

One of the most notable events in Rajguru's life was his involvement in the bombing of the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi along with Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt. The intention behind this action was not to cause casualties but to draw attention to the repressive nature of colonial laws. The revolutionaries wanted to use the trial that would follow to promote their cause.

In 1929, Rajguru, together with Bhagat

Singh and Sukhdev Thapar, faced arrest in connection with the Lahore conspiracy case. They were subsequently put on trial and ultimately sentenced to death for their participation in the assassination of J. P. Saunders. On the fateful day of March 23, 1931, Rajguru met his end through execution by hanging in Lahore jail, alongside Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev Thapar.

**Shivaram Hari Rajguru's legacy**

Shivaram Hari Rajguru's legacy is an indelible mark on India's struggle for independence. His martyrdom remains a poignant symbol of patriotism and selfless devotion to the nation, inspiring generations of Indians in their quest for freedom and justice. His fearless acts, such as testing his resilience by touching a hot iron, serve as a testament to his unwavering commitment.

Shivaram Hari Rajguru's legacy is also preserved through educational institutions, memorials, cultural

representations, and his enduring influence on activists advocating for social and political change, both in India and around the world. In essence, Shivaram Hari Rajguru's life and sacrifices continue to inspire and guide those who seek a more just and free society.

While Rajguru did not receive any official awards or honours during his lifetime, his stature in history transcends such recognition. He is widely celebrated as one of the foremost martyrs of the Indian independence movement and a true hero in the hearts of the Indian people.

Rajguru's birthplace has been rechristened as Rajgurunagar, an enduring tribute to his legacy. Additionally, his ancestral home now bears the name Rajguru Wada. Each year, the Hutatma Rajguru Samarak Samiti (HRSS) unfurls the national flag at Rajguru Wada on Republic Day, marking a solemn and patriotic tradition that honors his memory and the sacrifices he made for India's freedom.

# Sukhdev Thapar, one of the most powerful fighters of the freedom struggle

One of the most revolutionary leaders who played an important role in India's freedom struggle was Sukhdev Thapar. Born on May 15, 1907 in a Punjabi Khatri family of the Hindu community, Sukhdev Thapar laid down his life for India's independence. Born in Ludhiana, Punjab, Sukhdev Thapar's father's name is Ramlal Thapar and mother's name is Ralli Devi. Three years after his birth, Sukhdev Thapar's father died. Due to which Sukhdev Thapar grew up under the supervision of his uncle Lala Achintaram in the midst of various problems and challenges. Lala Achintaram believed in the Arya Socialist Ideology and was an active member of the Congress.

Sukhdev Thapar got a socially conscious atmosphere in his home since he was a child. It was then that he realized the meaning of subjugation. He was a witness to the brutal atrocities committed by the British on the people of India on many occasions. Because of which, from his childhood, he had anti-British sentiments in his mind and the tide of love for the country was raised in his mind. While still in school, Sukhdev Thapar refused to salute the British military officers who came to the school. The teacher had to face punishment for the non-courtesy treatment shown by Sukhdev Thapar towards the British military officer, yet he did not give up his self-respect. Sukhdev Thapar's uncle Lala Achintaram was a freedom fighter. His uncle had to be arrested in the fight against British colonialism. As a child, these bitter experiences from the British colonial rule naturally caused anger in his mind against the British. During his college studies, Sukhdev studied various revolutions in the world such as the Russian Revolution etc. Sukhdev Thapar tried to usher in a revolution against the



British in order to bring back his birthrights and freedom.

**Hindustan Socialist Republican Association**

After enrolling at the National College in Lahore in 1921, Sukhdev Thapar came in contact with many revolutionary youths, including Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan, Yashpal and many more. He subsequently joined the 1928 Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HRA). At that time, he was instrumental in forming revolutionary calls in Punjab and various parts of North India. It is to be noted that Sukhdev, who was the head of the Punjab unit of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, also played an important role in taking various important decisions in the organization. The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association is a fundamentalist organization involved in revolutionary activities against the British government. At first Sukhdev, along with his fellow fighters, were influenced by the father of anarchism, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin of Russia. Later on, however, the thoughts of the Indian Communists Chhabil Das and Sohan Singh Josh were attracted to ideologies and activities.

Apart from this, Sukhdev Thapar narrated to the students the glorious golden independent history of India. Through which the students tried to realize their historical importance and were determined to bring their birth rights. Importantly, along with other fellow revolutionaries, Sukhdev Thapar, together with Bhagat Singh, played a special role in the formation of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NJSB) in Lahore in 1926. Apart from preparing the youth for the freedom struggle against the British through the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, they also took various positive steps for the working and peasant class in protest against communalism and untouchability that developed a rational scientific temper. Apart from this, it also formed the Lahore Students Union and Bal Bharat Sabha for college and school students. In a word, they took various steps to increase the national consciousness among the youths of the country.

Later, Sukhdev Thapar participated in the protest against the Simon Commission. The Simon Commission was a commission set up by the British government on November 26, 1927 to investigate the development of government systems, education and development of representative institutions in British India and to suggest future policies on subsequent constitutional reforms. But no Indian was included as a member of the commission. For which protests were held democratically in different parts of India. On October 30, 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai, a prominent leader from Punjab, participated in the protest in Punjab against the Simon Commission. Lala Lajpat Rai was also seriously injured along with other protesters due to the lathi charge of the protesting mob by the

police force personnel at this democratic and peaceful protest site. As a result, Lala Lajpat Rai died on November 17, 1928.

Importantly, Sukhdev Thapar had some ideological differences with Lala Lajpat Rai. But he could not easily accept the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, who had to lose his life due to the inhumanity of the British. Considering Lajpat Rai's death as a national insult by the colonial bureaucracy, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association decided to avenge his death. The mastermind of this decision was Sukhdev Thapar. Bhagat Singh, Chandrasekhar Azad, Rajguru etc. have done this work successfully.

It may be recalled that on December 17, 1928, about a month after the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, police superintendent Scott was conspired to be killed by Chandrasekhar Azad and Rajguru. But by mistake, instead of Scott, they shot and killed police officer John P. Saunders. It is to be noted that the British escaped arrest and extensive raids to arrest the killers of John P. Saunders. Sukhdev is best known for his assaults in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. He is best remembered for his involvement in the assassination of Assistant Superintendent of Police, J.P. Saunders, on 17 December 1928, by Bhagat Singh and Shivaram Rajguru, undertaken in response to the violent death of the veteran leader Lala Lajpat Rai.

Even after being ordered to be hanged, Sukhdev Thapar, Bhagat Singh and their associates tried to awaken the public from jail with a strong attitude without being at all perturbed. Later, Sukhdev, Bhagat Singh, along with Shivaram Rajguru, were hanged on March 23, 1931. Their bodies were secretly cremated at the banks of the River Sutlej. Sukhdev's patriotism, who sacrificed his life for the country at the age of just 23, will remain an ideal and a source of inspiration for all.

# CELEBRATING NIKKI GIOVANNI FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

BY MABEL PAIS

"We've got to live in the real world. If we don't like the world we're living in, change it. And if we can't change it, we change ourselves. We can do something." - Nikki Giovanni



Nikki Giovanni

Credit / nikki-giovanni.com

Honor Women's History Month by joining NJPAC's in-person 'Standing in Solidarity' celebration of acclaimed poet Nikki Giovanni whose words have inspired the courage to dream for decades. She's an icon, activist and Afrofuturist feminist who emerged from the Black Arts Movement of the '60s and '70s. She speaks her truth with humor and heart, and her themes can feel otherworldly and hopeful in spite of the harsh realities during which they were written. This event takes place on Wednesday, March 27 at 6 pm in the Chase Room at NJPAC.

NJPAC's PSEG True Diversity Film is 'Going to Mars: The Nikki Giovanni Project,' winner of the U.S. Grand Jury Prize for documentary in the 2023 Sundance Film Festival. The film tells Giovanni's life story through her words including interviews, public appearances and candid interactions with family and friends. Making

the film was a seven year project for directors and producers Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson.

Following the screening, Stephenson will be in conversation with Donna Walker-Kuhne, Senior Advisor of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at NJPAC. Also appearing is Amina Bey, Executive Director of Newark Emergency Services for Families, and Naomi Extra who will perform one of her original poems. This program is a co-production of Women@NJPAC and Dodge Poetry.

## THE FILM

Winner of the Grand Jury Prize in the Sundance U.S. Documentary Competition, this beguiling documentary portrait follows poet and activist Nikki Giovanni as she approaches 80.

The film explores Giovanni's Afrofuturist-feminist philosophical outlook as well as her poignant relationship with her family, her political audacity, and her poetic eloquence, all knit together with a constant eye and ear for its subject's own aesthetic verve.

Looking back at a personal life and history cast in the long shadow of American racism, and forward to hopeful, possible futures, Giovanni acts as our guide and narrator, with refreshingly unorthodox filmmakers Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson refraining from traditional chronologies or talking-head conventions.

Going to Mars is fueled by constant intellectual engagement and radical imagination in the search for emotional and political fulfillment in a world of disenfranchisement. An HBO Documentary Films release.

## PANELISTS

### DONNA WALKER-KUHNE

### MODERATOR

Donna Walker-Kuhne is the founder of Walker International Communications Group, a marketing,

press, and audience development consulting agency. Her team specializes in multicultural marketing, group sales, multicultural press, and promotional events.

### MICHÈLE STEPHENSON

### FILM MAKER

Filmmaker, artist, and author, Michèle Stephenson, pulls from her Haitian and Panamanian roots to think radically about storytelling and disrupt the imaginary in non-fiction spaces. She tells emotionally driven personal stories of resistance and identity that center on the lived experiences of communities of color in the Americas and the Black diaspora.

### AMINA BEY

### PANELIST

Amina Bey is a Newark resident who was born, raised, and educated in New Jersey's largest city. She currently serves as the Executive Director of Newark Emergency Services for Families, Inc. (NESF), a non-profit organization in Newark, New Jersey that provides emergency assistance such as food, clothing, immediate shelter placement, rental assistance, utility assistance, and other support services for individuals and families in crisis throughout Essex County.

### DR. NAOMI EXTRA

### POET

Naomi Extra is a poet, writer, cartoonist and scholar who received a doctorate in American Studies from Rutgers University-Newark. Extra is the recipient of numerous fellowships and her work has been published in Boston Review, Zora, Glamour, Literary Hub, The Lily and The New Yorker.

### RSVP

RSVP is required to attend this in-person event. RSVP at [njpac.tfaforms.net/145?id=a2FUc00000028cbMAA](https://njpac.tfaforms.net/145?id=a2FUc00000028cbMAA)

## WOMEN LEADERS IN ARTS & EDUCATION



Women in Education

Credit / njpac.org

BY MABEL PAIS

Join NJPAC for an engaging panel discussion as it celebrates and explores the crucial role of women leaders in the realms of arts and education. This event takes place on Wednesday, March 27 at 3:30 pm via Zoom.

The panelists - accomplished women from diverse backgrounds - will share their experiences, insights and strategies for advancing women's leadership in K - 12 education and the arts. From fostering creativity in the classroom to breaking barriers in leadership positions, this discussion promises to inspire educators and administrators to champion gender equity and cultivate inclusive environments where all voices thrive.

Be a part of this dynamic conversation and join the panelists in shaping a brighter, more equitable future for our schools and communities.

### MODERATOR

### MARCIA WILSON BROWN

**MARCIA WILSON BROWN:** an alum of the Rutgers Newark law school, and upon graduation, clerked for New Jersey Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Wilentz. Following her clerkship, Ms. Brown joined the law firm of Smith and Mullen, specializing in race, sex and age discrimination litigation, and later in her own practice in Newark. Brown has more than 40 years of engagement in community development advocacy and governmental relations focused on public policy, housing, education, and nonprofit leadership issues. Brown ran the Minority Student Program (MSP) at Rutgers Law School Newark where she helped to create pathways for the admission of underrepresented and underserved students.

Currently, Brown is a member of the Long Branch Planning Board and the Monmouth Medical Center Patient Advisory Board, and a former member of the Long Branch Cable Commission. She is also a mother, grandmother, and faith walker.

### PANELISTS

### LYNETTE MAWHINNEY

Lynette Mawhinney: Chair of the Department of Urban Education and Professor of Urban Education at Rutgers University-Newark. She is also an affiliated faculty in the Africana Studies Department.

### SIMONE MAREAN

Simone Marean: Co-Founder & Co-CEO of Girls Leadership, a national educational nonprofit that teaches girls to exercise the power of their voice. In Girls Leadership's eleven years as a nonprofit, it has impacted over 300,000 girls, and is on track to reach one million girls by 2025.

### ASHLEY Y. LIPSCOMB

Ashley Y. Lipscomb: Co-founder & CEO of the Institute for Anti-Racist Education, Inc. She has experience working with, motivating, and advocating for students and educators.

### REGISTRATION

Registration IS required to participate. Professional development (PD) credit is also available on request.

### COST - PAY WHAT YOU CAN

Any amount to defray the costs of participation and those unable to afford making a contribution, is requested.

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

# REELABILITIES FILM FEST RAISES THE BAR ON ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

BY MABEL PAIS

Featuring RADHA MEHTA's 'Dosh'

The REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL: NEW YORK ([reelabilities.org/newyork](https://reelabilities.org/newyork)) is proud to present its 16th edition of films and schedule. There will be a star-studded opening night, following which the festival has 26 films selected for the Festival, April 3-10, 2024.

Raising the bar on accessibility and inclusion, the Festival will take place in multiple venues throughout NYC, Long Island and Westchester, with a selection of titles available online from April 3-10, 2024. This year brings together audiences to explore and celebrate the artistic expression and engaging stories of groundbreaking disabled talent.

The ReelAbilities Film Festival is the largest showcase in the United States dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities. Through riveting films and engaging conversations, accompanied by an Industry Summit and other cultural events, ReelAbilities brings the wider community together to celebrate and explore our shared human experience. All presentations bring groundbreaking accessibility, raising the bar on inclusive film screenings and events.

"These films are not just inclusive, they are first and foremost great films, and happen to highlight a variety of important topics such as disability inclusion, human rights, and other social issues," says Isaac Zablocki, ReelAbilities' co-founder and director. "This is our most diverse lineup to date and we are proud to feature authentic and first-person stories that bring these underserved images to the surface in the most responsible and engaging manner."

The festival slate announced to date includes 12 features and 14 shorts in the film lineup. Close to 60% of the films are World, US and NY premieres, and 50% are made by women filmmakers. At 42%, this year includes a record number of US-produced feature films, alongside films from the UK, Bolivia, Australia, the Netherlands, Kurdistan and more.

The ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York will continue to host its annual Industry Summit on April 8 and 9, highlighting topics of disability inclusion and equity in the film and performing arts industries, in partnership with The NYC Mayor's Office for Media and Entertainment. An expanded pitch program and a slate of industry awards will be announced in the coming weeks.

The festival will also showcase additional events and conversations relating to disabilities throughout the week of the festival including its popular Comedy Night, and The Future of Accessible Beauty panel.

2024 REELABILITIES FILM FESTIVAL  
LINEUP



Ezra, Opening Night film

Credit / reelabilities.org



La Lucha

Credit / reelabilities.org

Join the JCC Festival organizers at the 16th Annual ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York, April 3-10, celebrating disability through film, both virtually and in person in venues throughout NY.

**All films are followed by a conversation with filmmakers, protagonists and guests!**  
**OPENING NIGHT**

## EZRA - NEW YORK CITY PREMIERE

Dir. Tony Goldwyn; Narrative; English; US; 2023; 100 min

EZRA follows Max Bernal (Bobby Cannavale), a stand-up comedian living with his father (Robert De Niro), while struggling to co-parent his autistic son Ezra (introducing William Fitzgerald) with his ex-wife (Rose Byrne). When forced to confront difficult decisions about their son's future, Max and Ezra embark on a cross-country road trip that has a transcendent impact on both their lives.

Watch the trailer - [youtu.be/Q1-M9lwNlgQ](https://youtu.be/Q1-M9lwNlgQ)

WEDNESDAY APR 3; 6:00 PM; THE

## TIMES CENTER

([reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/times-center](https://reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/times-center))

## CLOSING NIGHT

### GOOD BAD THINGS

Dir. Shane D. Stanger; US; 2023; 96 min  
Danny, a young man with muscular dystrophy, steps out of his comfort zone and into the world of online dating after being disillusioned by failed relationships. An unexpected match with Madi, an enigmatic photographer, challenges him to be vulnerable and sparks a profound journey of self-acceptance, discovering the extraordinary beauty of his unique body.

Trailer - [youtu.be/WZ90D3lvLZM](https://youtu.be/WZ90D3lvLZM)  
WEDNESDAY APR 10; 6:00 PM;

MARLENE MEYERSON JCC  
MANHATTAN

([reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/marlene-meyerson-jcc-manhattan](https://reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/marlene-meyerson-jcc-manhattan))

## DARUMA

Dir. Alexander Yellen; US; 2023; 104 min

When day-drinking, unemployed paraplegic Patrick finds out he is the father of a 4-year-old girl he never knew existed, he enlists the help of his double amputee veteran neighbor Robert to drive him and his newfound daughter across the country to live with her maternal grandparents.

Clip - [youtu.be/BISGJlyYpzY](https://youtu.be/BISGJlyYpzY)

SATURDAY APR 6; 8:30 PM;  
MARLENE MEYERSON JCC  
MANHATTAN

TUESDAY APR 9; 7:00 PM; JCC OF  
STATEN ISLAND  
([reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/jcc-staten-island-stolzenberg-social-hall](https://reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/jcc-staten-island-stolzenberg-social-hall))

## IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE?

Dir. Ella Glendining; UK; 2023; 87 min  
While navigating daily discrimination, a filmmaker who loves her unusual body searches the world for another person like her and explores what it takes to love oneself fiercely despite society's misconceptions.

Trailer - [youtu.be/yZGIjQgg-c](https://youtu.be/yZGIjQgg-c)

THURSDAY APR 4; 8:15 PM;  
MARLENE MEYERSON JCC  
MANHATTAN

FRIDAY APR 5; 8:15 PM; MAYSLES  
DOCUMENTARY CENTER  
([reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/maysles-documentary-center](https://reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/maysles-documentary-center))

SUNDAY APR 7; 2 PM; DCTV  
FIREHOUSE CINEMA  
([reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/dctv-downtown-community-television-center](https://reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/dctv-downtown-community-television-center))

## LA LUCHA

Dir. Violeta Ayala;  
Australia/US/Bolivia; 2023; 93 min  
Activists lead a courageous 35-day, 250-mile journey across the Andes to reach the Bolivian capital, battling harsh conditions and hunger along the way. Confronting barricades, riot police, and hostility from fellow citizens, these activists persist and ultimately arrive in La Paz, rewriting national history.

Trailer - [youtu.be/aSmPUt\\_jRtE](https://youtu.be/aSmPUt_jRtE)

STREAMING APR 3-10  
SOCIAL JUSTICE FRIDAY: APR 5;  
6:00 PM; MARLENE MEYERSON JCC  
MANHATTAN

SATURDAY APR 6; 1:30 PM;  
MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE  
([reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/museum-moving-image](https://reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/museum-moving-image))

## LEFT ALONE RHAPSODY: THE MUSICAL MEMOIR OF PIANIST JOHN BAYLESS

Dir. Stewart M. Schulman; US; 2023; 100 min

At 25, Leonard Bernstein's protégé, John Bayless, debuted at Carnegie Hall, launching a 30-year-long recording career as a solo pianist, composer, and improviser. At 54, after a left-brain stroke immobilized his right side, John is determined to reinvent himself as a one-handed musician and storyteller.

Trailer - [youtu.be/EiaJ44Klys](https://youtu.be/EiaJ44Klys)

CONTD ON PAGE 23

CONTD FROM PAGE 22

## REELABILITIES FILM FEST RAISES THE BAR ON ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

STREAMING APR 3-10  
THURSDAY APR 4; 7:00 PM;  
BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY  
(reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/bpl)  
MONDAY APR 8; 6:00 PM;  
MARLENE MEYERSON JCC  
MANHATTAN

### LOUD LOVE

Dir. Bing Wang; USA; 2024; 90 min  
Pushing back against ongoing  
prejudice, deaf gay couple Alan and Brian  
pursue parenthood, raising two hearing  
children through international surrogacy.  
Loud Love follows their journey of  
fatherhood, family, and relationships.

Trailer: [youtu.be/o6BqtR0Bnu4](https://youtu.be/o6BqtR0Bnu4)

STREAMING APR 3-10  
SUNDAY APR 7; 5:30 PM; MARLENE  
MEYERSON JCC MANHATTAN

### NAME ME LAWAND

Dir. Edward Lovelace; UK; 2022; 82 min  
Deaf since birth, five-year-old Lawand  
undertakes a treacherous journey with  
his family from Iraq to Derby, home of the  
Royal School for the Deaf. When this new  
life comes under threat of deportation,  
they begin a new quest - a fight to stay in  
the place they now call home.

Trailer: [youtu.be/bZq0I84g4Uk](https://youtu.be/bZq0I84g4Uk)

MONDAY APR 8; 7:15 PM; JACOB  
BURNS FILM CENTER  
(reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/jacob-  
burns-film-center)

TUESDAY APR 9; 6:00 PM;  
MARLENE MEYERSON JCC  
MANHATTAN

US; 2023; 104 min

### OKTHANKSBYE

Dir. Nicole van Kilsdonk; Netherlands;  
2023; 92 min

Classmates at a boarding school for the  
deaf, shy Jamie and bold Imane set off on  
an unexpected road trip to Paris. When  
things do not go as planned, and the trip  
takes an adventurous turn, Jamie must  
come out of her shell.

Trailer - [youtu.be/baYa-4EWKQI](https://youtu.be/baYa-4EWKQI)

STREAMING APR 3-10  
WEDNESDAY APR 3; 5:30 PM;  
MANHATTAN COLLEGE KELLY  
COMMONS

(reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/manhattan-college)

### RALLY CAPS

Dir. Lee Cipolla; US; 2023; 95 min

In this star-studded family drama,  
young Jordy, who is recovering from a  
serious Little League baseball injury, goes  
to summer camp where he forms a  
friendship with Lucas, who just had  
Cochlear Implant surgery. Together, they  
form a special bond as friends and  
pitcher/catcher duo and lead their team in  
the camp championship game.

Clip - [youtu.be/VZox-vk7nIM](https://youtu.be/VZox-vk7nIM)

SUNDAY APR 7; 2:45 PM; MARLENE  
MEYERSON JCC MANHATTAN  
(Shown with: Deaf Giants)



Rally Caps

Credit / reelabilities.org



Dosh

Credit / reelabilities.org

TUESDAY APR 9; 7:00 PM; GOLD  
COAST IFF AT MANHASSET  
CINEMAS

(reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/gciff)

### SEXUAL HEALING

Dir. Elsbeth Fraanje; Netherlands; 2022;  
55 min

Evelien, a 53-year-old woman with  
cerebral palsy, sets out on a disarming and  
often funny quest for intimacy and  
exploration of her sexuality, unearthing  
needs she has been suppressing her entire  
life.

Trailer - [youtu.be/2CQ2tw1oirI](https://youtu.be/2CQ2tw1oirI)

STREAMING APR 3-10  
MONDAY APR 8; 8:30 PM;  
MARLENE MEYERSON JCC  
MANHATTAN

### TELL THEM YOU LOVE ME

Dir. Nick August-Perna; US; 2023; 103  
min

This true-crime documentary follows  
the story of an esteemed university  
professor who becomes embroiled in a  
controversial affair with Derrick Johnson,  
a non-verbal man with cerebral palsy,  
leading to a criminal trial that would  
challenge our perceptions of disability  
and the nature of consent.

Clip - [youtu.be/Y5TpsEOtcw0](https://youtu.be/Y5TpsEOtcw0)  
THURSDAY APR 4; 7:00 PM;  
MAYSLES DOCUMENTARY CENTER  
FRIDAY APR 5; 7:00 PM; CHELSEA  
FACTORY  
(reelabilities.org/newyork/venue/chel-  
sea-factory)  
SATURDAY APR 6; 6:15 PM;  
MARLENE MEYERSON JCC  
MANHATTAN

### REEL SHORTS

OUT OF THE BOX  
FILMS THAT PUSH THE LIMITS OF  
CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION.  
STREAMING APRIL 3-10  
MMJCCM: SAT, APR 6, 2 PM  
(NEURO) DIVERGENT  
A UNIQUE LENS INTO THE  
DIVERSE AND AUTHENTIC  
EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUALS  
WITH NEUROLOGICAL  
DIFFERENCES.  
STREAMING APRIL 3-10  
MMJCCM: SUN, APR 7, 1 PM  
MENTAL HEALTH  
POIGNANT AND INSIGHTFUL  
REFLECTIONS ON THE COMPLEXITIES  
OF MENTAL HEALTH.  
STREAMING APRIL 3-10

MMJCCM: SAT, APR 6, 4:30 PM

### DOSH - EAST COAST PREMIERE

DIRECTED BY RADHA MEHTA  
16 Min; English, Hindi; United States;  
Narrative; Short; Open Captions

#### Family, motherhood

When her son's life is put at risk at their  
family's pre-wedding ritual, a mother with  
hearing loss must decide how to seek help  
for her husband to keep her family safe.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

ReelAbilities strives to include all people.  
All films are presented with open  
captions and all venues are accessible to  
mobility devices. At the MMJCC, the main  
festival venue, the following are available:  
ASL Interpretation; CART; Audio  
description; Hearing assist; Information  
in Braille

For specific accommodation at all other  
venues, please check online or contact the  
screening venue directly.

Wearing a mask is encouraged.

FOR FULL FESTIVAL SCHEDULE +  
INFO, VISIT:  
REELABILITIES.ORG/NEWYORK.

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



## Ankita Lokhande: Not in any rat race

After a successful stint on Bigg Boss 17, Ankita Lokhande is all set to star on the big screen with 'Swatantra Veer Savarkar'. Ankita will be essaying the part of Yamuna Bai, Savarkar's wife, who faced her own ordeal while her husband fought other battles. The actor spoke to IndiaToday.in an exclusive interview and said that she wants to be a part of meaningful films.

Ankita shared that she's chosen a career path where she wants to associate with meaningful cinema. "I don't want to be seen everywhere. I want to exclusively be part of certain things. That's how I want to roll, that's how I like things. I want to do very different kinds of roles. That also gives me confidence that I can go through such challenging parts. I don't want to be part of a rat race. I don't want to run. I do not have a problem with people who do that, but it's not meant for me. Whatever comes my way, I will pick the best out of the lot. I am very choosy and pick my work wisely. I may make mistakes, but that's going to be my decision only," the actor said.

# 'Amar Singh Chamkila' not a work of fiction, it's true, authentic: Imtiaz Ali

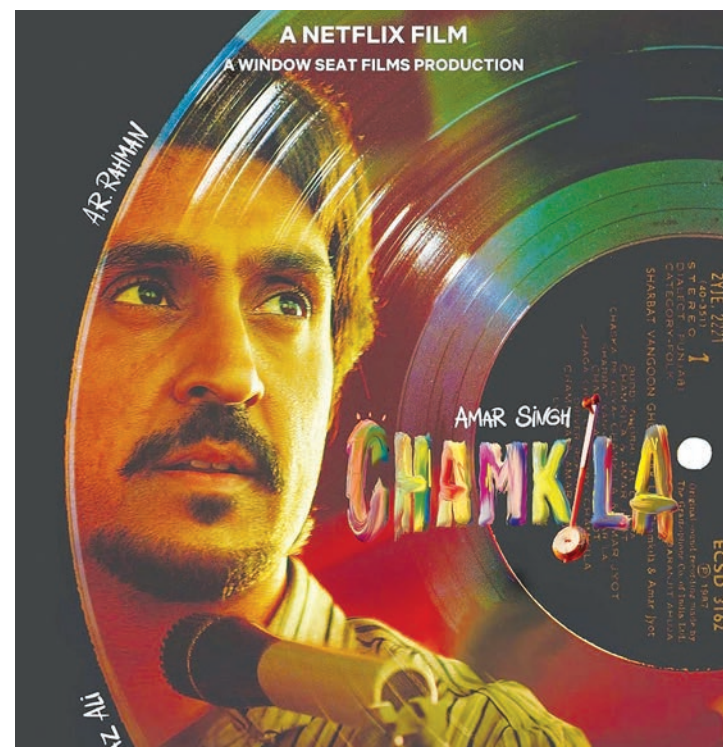
Filmmaker Imtiaz Ali, speaking exclusively to IndiaToday.in, revealed that his upcoming film, 'Amar Singh Chamkila' is not a work of fiction. The film, which features Diljit Dosanjh and Parineeti Chopra, is a biopic on the life of legendary Punjabi singer, Amar Singh Chamkila. He also opened up about the reason behind doing this biographical drama.

In his interview, Imtiaz explained that he stayed authentic and true to the story and how much of the film is based on the fiction. He said, "As far as I know, it's completely authentic and true. I have not taken any shortcuts. I have not made any scenes out of my imagination. I have tried to be very authentic for my own sake because I feel that I always make films by imagination, but how would this film be different from the others for me? Also, as a filmmaker, when you go out looking for the truth, you end up knowing more dramatic things."

The 'Jab We Met' director also revealed that he never thought of making a biopic. Explaining further, he said, "I have never made a biopic before. But I would often hear about Amar Singh Chamkila through my friends, especially from my production head Rajesh Sharma. He would always say that I should make a film on the singer. In fact, he was the first person who told me about Chamkila."

He continued, "Then, I started listening to his music and found many things interesting about him. Finally, six years back, around the release of 'Love Aaj Kal 2', a gentleman called Harpreet, had the rights to the film Chamkila, which was very difficult to get. For some reason, he felt that he should approach me to direct this film."

"I did ask him 'why did you come to me to make this film?'. I am not even from Punjab, and he said 'Aap ki film mein Punjab bahut his khoobsurati se dekha ya jata hain' (In your films, Punjab is portrayed beautifully). It took five years because I did not have much knowledge about Chamkila. Then, Covid happened, and I was visiting Punjab with Chamkila at back of my mind. I started listening to the stories of the singer and it got interesting. I had my own view and



story to tell through Chamkila and that's when I decided to make the film," he added.

Amar Singh Chamkila, with his raw and unabashed lyrics, challenged societal norms and became a voice for the marginalised. His music transcended geographical boundaries and resonated with audiences across generations.

His songs, often addressing taboo subjects with unfiltered honesty, remain relevant even today. By immortalising Chamkila's legacy on celluloid, Imtiaz Ali aims to introduce his artistry to a wider audience and pay homage to his contribution to Punjabi music.

'Amar Singh Chamkila' will premiere on Netflix on April 12.

Source: India Today

## Choli Ke Peeche: Kareena grooves on remix of Madhuri's iconic number

Who can ever forget the controversial yet ironic song Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai from Subhash Ghai's 1993 crime drama Khal Nayak, filmed on Madhuri Dixit? Now, the makers of Rajesh A Krishnan's upcoming heist comedy Crew have rehased the track and guess who features in the revamped version? Kareena Kapoor.

The new song that the YouTube handle of Tips Official dropped on Wednesday is a groovier version of the original. After hinting at remixing the memorable song through its instantly recognisable coo-coo hook in the trailer, the makers of Crew have finally unveiled the music video, featuring Kareena.

Snippets from the film, featuring the scenes between Tabu and Kapil Sharma, and Kriti Sanon and Diljit Dosanjh, have been peppered throughout the music video. However, the highlight is Kareena grooving and lip-syncing to the song in a flowy pink dress at a nightclub. The actor looks gorgeous as she pays a tribute to Madhuri through this recreation.

The new song has been remixed by Akshay & IP, sung by Diljit Dosanjh and IP Singh, and written by IP Singh. The original song was sung by Ila Arun and



Alka Yagnik, composed by Lakshmikanth-Pyarelal, and penned by Anand Bakshi. The voices of Ila and Alka have been partially retained in the recreation.

## 'BAAGHI 4': TIGER SHROFF AMPS UP ACTION IN FIRST GLIMPSE, FILM TO RELEASE IN 2025

Tiger Shroff stirred up excitement after he shared the first glimpse of 'Baaghi 4' on March 20. This comes after the fourth part of the popular franchise was announced at the Prime Video event on March 19. The film will release in theatres in 2025. The sneak peek of 'Baaghi 4' kicks off with the actor showcasing his signature hardcore action, guaranteed to send your adrenaline soaring. From the looks of it, the team seems determined to elevate the action to new heights. The video also gives a glimpse of the actor's sequences from a previous franchise that showcases Tiger effortlessly leaping over helicopters and trains.

The film will grace the theaters next year in 2025. He captioned the video and wrote, "The franchise closest to my heart, also the most challenging for my heart (Accompanied by laughter, face exhaling and red-heart emojis) got this far thanks to your love. #2025 #baaghi4 #sajidnadiadwala @nadiadwalagrandon @wardakhannadiadwala (sic)."







## Michelle Pfeiffer to star in Oh.What.Fun

Filmmaker Michael Showalter has teamed up with Hollywood veteran Michelle Pfeiffer for his next feature film.

Written by Showalter and Chandler Baker, the film is a holiday comedy, titled Oh.What.Fun.

The project, which is backed by Amazon MGM, is based on a short story from Baker that was originally published by Amazon Original Stories.

Pfeiffer will essay the role of Claire Clauster, who organises a special Christmas outing when her family forgets her in the shuffle. By the time they realise their mistake, she's gone missing. Their Christmas is in jeopardy, but Claire has other plans.

# Jessica Alba says she could have been potential target for a predator

Jessica Alba has opened up about how she found success at a young age, but her time in the industry wasn't traumatic. In an interview to Elle India, the Hollywood actor, who started her career at the age of 13 with Camp Nowhere (1994) and rose to prominence at 19 as the lead actor in the show Dark Angel (2000–2002), said her mother would join her at work.

Jessica said, "I could have been a potential target for a predator, but luckily, I wasn't. There were a few times when things felt uncomfortable, but they never escalated too much, thankfully. I'm truly grateful to God for this because many others haven't been as fortunate, especially starting out young as I did. Having my mom (Catherine Jensen) with me all the time really made a difference."

She also spoke about her over-three-decade career as an actor, and navigating the complex world of Hollywood as a woman. Jessica said, "I never let my guard down [as an actor]. I was always pretty tough, pretty in-your-face about it. I probably channelled more of that tough, masculine energy. When I look back at why I was probably so tough for so much of my life, it was probably just to safeguard myself from a lot of people."

Jessica has played a variety of roles ranging from light comedy to gritty drama since beginning her career.



She made her feature film debut in 1993 in Hollywood Pictures' comedy Camp Nowhere (1994). She branched out into TV in 1994 with a recurring role in Nickelodeon's popular comedy series The Secret World of Alex Mack (1994). Her first starring role in a major studio film was the Honey (2003). In 2005 she starred opposite

Bruce Willis in the critically acclaimed Sin City (2005). She then starred as Sue Storm 'The Invisible Girl' in Marvel's action-franchise blockbuster Fantastic Four (2005). Some of her other films include Valentine's Day (2010), Spy Kids 4: All the Time in the World (2011), and Sin City: A Dame to Kill For (2014).

## Johnny Depp breaks silence after Blow co-star Lola Glaudini accuses him of abuse

Actor Johnny Depp has reacted after his Blow co-star Lola Glaudini accused him of verbally abusing her on sets of their 2001 film. As reported by Deadline, Johnny's response came after an episode of the Powerful Truth Angels podcast from January 30 recently emerged on social media. In the podcast, Lola recounted how she was mistreated by Johnny.

In a statement to Deadline, Johnny's representative said, "Johnny always prioritises good working relationships with cast and crew and this recounting differs greatly from the recollection of other members on set at the time."

According to the report, Lola said that while filming a scene for Blow, director Ted Demme told her to 'burst out laughing' while Johnny delivered a monologue. "I hear the cue, and I go haha, I do a big laugh or whatever. Johnny Depp, when they say cut, walks over to me, comes up to me, sticks his finger in my face



and he goes, 'Who the f\*\*\* do you think you are? Who the f\*\*\* do you think you are? Shut the f\*\*\* up. I'm out here, and I'm trying to f\*\*\*ing say my lines and you're f\*\*\*\*\* pulling focus. You f\*\*\*\*\* idiot. Oh, now, oh now it's not so funny? Now you can shut up? Now you can f\*\*\*\*\* shut the fuck up? The quiet that you are right now, that's how

you f\*\*\*\*\* stay.'"

Lola shared that it happened on the first day on the set and she hadn't met Johnny before that. She added that he was with the star whom she 'idolised' and was 'so excited to work with', but he 'reamed me in my face'. Lola revealed her thought at that point was not to cry.

She recalled that Johnny approached her later and said that earlier, he was 'really in his head' and staying in his character, 'doing this Boston accent', adding it was 'really f\*\*\*\*\* with him'. He added that he wanted to make sure "we're cool and everything". Lola said that she replied she was 'totally cool'.

Blow was a biographical crime drama film directed by Ted Demme, about an American cocaine kingpin and his international network. Apart from Johnny and Lola, the film also starred Penelope Cruz, Franka Potente, Rachel Griffiths and Paul Reubens, among others.

Source: HT

## WILL SMITH SAYS HE READ QURAN 'COVER TO COVER DURING RAMADAN'

Will Smith gave an insight into his spiritual journey in an interview. The Hollywood actor spoke about his appreciation for the Quran and its impact on his life during a chat with Egyptian



journalist Amr Adeeb on the Big Time Podcast. Will said that he 'read all holy books' in the last couple of years, and added he 'read the Quran cover to cover during Ramadan this year'. The interview, which is being widely shared online now, took place in December 2023. Will Smith said, "You know the last two years of my life have been a difficult time and my attention turned inward. And I was just talking to someone earlier about how I read all the holy books. I read the Quran. I read the Quran cover to cover during Ramadan this year (2023). This is the spiritual-seeking phase of my life. This is the period of my life that I am trying to cultivate as wide, open and loving a heart as I will be able to." The actor also said, "I love the simplicity of the Quran. It's so clear. It's crystal clear..."

## CHINA SAYS IT 'FIRMLY OPPOSES' US RECOGNITION OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH AS PART OF INDIAN TERRITORY

**BEIJING (TIP):** China on March 21 said it firmly opposes the US recognition of Arunachal Pradesh as part of Indian territory and affirmed that Washington has nothing to do with the India-China border dispute.

It also accused the US of "instigating and using other countries' disputes" for selfish geopolitical interests.

China's strong reaction came hours after US State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel's remarks that the United States "recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory."

Patel also said, "We (the US) strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control."

"China strongly deplores and firmly opposes this," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a media briefing while replying to a question posed by the official Chinese media.

The delimitation of the China-India boundary has not been completed, Lin said adding, "'Zangnan' (the official Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh) has always been China's territory. This is an undeniable basic fact."

"The question of the China-India border issue is between China and India and it has nothing to do with the US," he said.

"It is well known that the US has been instigating and using other countries' disputes by all means to serve its selfish geo-political interests," the spokesperson said.

The comments by the US official came days after the Chinese military reiterated its claim over Arunachal Pradesh following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state.

Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang on March 15 said that the southern part of Xizang (the Chinese name for Tibet) is an inherent part of China's territory, and Beijing "never acknowledges and firmly opposes" the "so-called Arunachal Pradesh illegally established by India."

China, which claims Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet, routinely objects to Indian leaders' visits to the state to highlight its claims.

On March 9, Prime Minister Modi dedicated to the nation the Sela Tunnel built at an altitude of over 13,000 feet in western Arunachal Pradesh that will provide all-weather connectivity to the strategically located Tawang district and is expected to ensure better movement of troops along the frontier region. (PTI)

# Russia fires 31 missiles at Kyiv in first attack in weeks; 13 hurt

**KYIV (TIP):** Russia fired 31 ballistic and cruise missiles at Kyiv before dawn on March 21 in the first attack on the Ukrainian capital in 44 days, officials said. Air defences shot down all incoming missiles, though 13 persons, including a child, were injured by falling wreckage, they said.

Residents of Kyiv were woken up by loud explosions around 5 am as the missiles arrived at roughly the same time from different directions, said Serhii Popko, head of the Kyiv City Administration.

Ukraine's air force said Russia launched two ballistic missiles and 29 cruise missiles against the capital.

An 11-year-old girl and a 38-year-old man were hospitalised, the city administration said. Eight other people sustained light injuries, according to Mayor Vitali Klitschko. Ukraine's Emergency Service said around 80 persons were evacuated from their homes.

Falling wreckage from the intercepted missiles set fire to at least one apartment building, burned parked cars and left craters in streets and a small



park. Some streets were littered with debris, including glass from shattered windows.

The attack came after repeated Ukraine aerial attacks in recent days on Russia's Belgorod region near the border with Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin had threatened on

Wednesday to "respond in kind" to the attacks.

At an event in the Kremlin, Putin said Russia "can respond in the same way regarding civilian infrastructure and all other objects of this kind that the enemy attacks. We have our own views on this matter and our own plans." — AP

## UK PM Rishi Sunak's flagship bill to fly migrants to Rwanda hits deadlock

**LONDON (TIP):** British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's flagship legislation aimed at flying illegal migrants to Rwanda has hit another set of parliamentary hurdles after the House of Lords delivered multiple defeats on the draft bill, sending it back to the Commons.

The Safety of Rwanda Bill will return for members of Parliament to vote on in mid-April after the Easter recess as the Upper House peers rejected the changes of the House of Commons in seven votes, with majorities ranging between 30 and 55, on March 20 night.

They expressed support for amendments to water down the hardline legislation that seeks to deem the East African country safe in law to block legal challenges to migrants being flown out to Rwanda while their asylum claims are assessed.

While the Opposition Labour Party has branded the scheme a costly "gimmick", the Conservative government has said it is a key tool to tackle soaring illegal migration via dangerous small boats crossing the English Channel.

"It is crystal clear, as we are seeing from the Labour Party's opposition in this House, that while we are committed to stopping the boats, the Labour Party would keep them coming," said Sunak in the Commons, when questioned about his Rwanda scheme on Wednesday.



"Since I became Prime Minister, the number of small boat crossings is down by over a third. That is because we have doubled National Crime Agency funding and we have increased illegal immigration enforcement raids by 70 per cent. We have closed 7,500 bank accounts, deported 24,000 illegal migrants and processed over 112,000 cases — more

than at any point in the last two decades," he claimed.

Labour Leader Keir Starmer accused the government of wasting taxpayer's money on the scheme, which has a reported bill of around GBP 600 million.

"The tragedy is we know the Prime Minister does not even believe in the Rwanda gimmick... His great hope is to placate those in his party with a couple of empty planes, praying they will not notice when the flights stop going, the boats are still coming and the costs keep mounting," said Starmer.

The Rwanda bill, meanwhile, remains in a deadlock phase between the two Houses of Parliament until an agreement can be reached on the final wording. The government is expected to hold consecutive days of votes in both Houses once Parliament is back in session post-Easter next month until a consensus can be found.

This means the likelihood of the first flights of migrants taking off for Rwanda is not before June at the earliest after the bill clears its parliamentary journey and receives the King's royal assent to become law.

The legislation is crucial to Sunak's stated priorities ahead of a general election, with his "stop the boats" pledge hinging on this flagship policy to fly asylum seekers out to Rwanda and show he is cracking down on illegal migration to the UK shores. (PTI)

# South Korean chemical tanker capsizes off Japan; 8 killed, 2 missing

**TOKYO (TIP):** A South Korean chemical tanker capsized off an island in southwestern Japan on March 20, authorities said, killing eight people on board. One crew member survived, and the fate of two others was unknown.

Officials said the tanker was carrying 980 tons of acrylic acid, a corrosive organic compound that is used in adhesives, paints and polishes. No leak has been detected, and officials are studying what environmental protection measures may be needed in case there is a leak.

The Japan Coast Guard said it received a distress call from the chemical tanker Keoyoung Sun, saying that it was tilting while seeking refuge from the weather near Japan's Mutsure Island, about 1,000 km (620 miles) from Tokyo in southwestern Japan.

The ship was completely capsized by the time rescuers arrived at the scene. Footage on Japan's NHK television showed the ship lying upside down, a rough sea washing over its red underside.

The ship was carrying 11 crew, of whom nine have been found, authorities said. The one crew member confirmed alive is from Indonesia, and the coast guard was still searching for two more.

South Korean officials held a meeting



Wednesday to discuss the capsizing. During the meeting, Vice Foreign Minister Kang Insun asked officials to mobilise all available resources to support rescue works and assist the relatives of South Korean crew members, according to the Foreign Ministry.

The ship was en route from the Japanese port of Himeji to Ulsan in South Korea, the coast guard said. Its captain was South Korean, and its crew

included another South Korean national, a Chinese national and eight Indonesians, according to the coast guard.

Acrylic acid is also used in plastics, resin and coatings, and can irritate the skin, eyes and mucous membranes, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

No other details, including how the ship capsized, were immediately known. (AP)

## North Korea claims progress in developing a hypersonic missile designed to strike distant US targets

**SEOUL (TIP):** North Korea successfully tested a solid-fuel engine for its new-type intermediate-range hypersonic missile, state media reported on March 20, claiming a progress in efforts to develop a more powerful, agile missile designed to strike faraway US targets in the region.

A hypersonic missile is among an array of high-tech weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un publicly vowed to introduce in 2021 to cope with what he called deepening US hostility.

Outside experts say Kim wants a modernised weapons arsenal to wrest US concessions like sanctions relief when diplomacy resumes.

On Tuesday, Kim guided the ground jet test of the multi-stage solid-fuel engine for the hypersonic missile at the North's northwestern rocket launch facility, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

It cited Kim as saying the strategic value of the new missile with an intermediate-range is as important as intercontinental ballistic missiles targeting the US mainland and that "enemies know better about it".

It said that a timetable for completing the development of the new weapons

system was "set through the great success in the important test".

Intermediate-range missiles possessed or pursued by North Korea are the weapons systems primarily aimed at attacking the US Pacific territory of Guam, home to US military bases.

Those missile can also reach Alaska, and with a range adjustment they can be used to strike closer targets like US military installations in Japan's Okinawa island, experts say.

In recent years, North Korea has been pushing to develop more weapons with built-in solid propellants, which make launches harder to detect than liquid-propellant missiles that must be fuelled before liftoffs and cannot last long.

The North's pursuit of hypersonic weapons is also meant to defeat US and South Korean missile defence systems, but it's unclear the North's hypersonic vehicles proved their desired speed and maneuverability during tests in recent years, analysts say.

In January, North Korea said it flight-tested a new solid-fuel intermediate-range ballistic missile tipped with a hypersonic, maneuverable warhead, in a likely reference to the missile mentioned in Wednesday's KCNA

dispatch.

In November, North Korea said it had tested engine tests for an intermediate-range missile but didn't say whether it's designed to carry a hypersonic warhead.

While the North's missile test in January was likely related to the development of its first-stage rocket, this week's engine test appeared focused on the development of its second-stage rocket in part of the North's efforts to increase the weapon's flying speed, said Chang Young-keun, a missile expert at South Korea's Research Institute for National Strategy.

Chang said the latest engine test suggests North Korea could soon test-launch the new hypersonic missile.

After short-range tests with hypersonic weapons, North Korea would want to increase their ranges with maneuverable hypersonic warheads, Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute, said. He said the capacities of the new missile can be assessed when it's test-flighted.

On Monday, South Korea, the US and Japan said they detected the multiple ballistic missile test-launches by North Korea in what was the country's first missile firings in about a month. (AP)

## ISRAEL WORKING ON NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY PLAN FOR FIRST TIME

**TEL AVIV (ISRAEL) (TIP):** For the first time in its history, Israel is working to ensure food security in the country. As such, Israel's Ministry of Agriculture said that it is "changing its face and focusing its mission" in a new way and, in cooperation with other ministries, is developing a proposal for a national plan to that end.

To emphasise the importance of this, the ministry intends to change its name to "Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security". The ministry said that in the coming days it will submit a decision-making proposal for the government's approval to formulate a national plan for food security that will include the formulation of goals for the supply of food to the entire population until the year 2050, with intermediate goals for the years 2030 and 2040.

For the purpose of formulating the plan, an inter-ministerial work team will be established, headed by the director general of the Ministry of Agriculture, with the participation of representatives of the relevant government ministries, including the National Security Headquarters, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Economy and Industry, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Housing and Construction, the Ministry of Welfare and many other ministries. (ANI)

## VAPES TO BE BANNED IN NEW ZEALAND IN BID TO PREVENT MINORS FROM TAKING UP HABIT

**WELLINGTON (TIP):** New Zealand said on March 20 it will ban disposable e-cigarettes, or vapes, and raise financial penalties for those who sell such products to minors.

The move comes less than a month after the government repealed a unique law enacted by the previous left-leaning government to phase out tobacco smoking by imposing a lifetime ban on young people buying cigarettes.

New Zealand's Associate Health Minister Casey Costello said on Wednesday that e-cigarettes remain "a key smoking cessation device" and the new regulations will help prevent minors from taking up the habit.

"While vaping has contributed to a significant fall in our smoking rates, the rapid rise in youth vaping has been a real concern for parents, teachers and health professionals," Costello said.

Under the new laws, retailers that sell vapes to children under 18 years of age will face fines of up 100,000 New Zealand dollars (USD 60,000), while individuals will be fined 1,000 New Zealand dollars (USD 600). (AP)

## AFTER LOSING SEVEN SOLDIERS, PAK AIRSTRIKES KILL 8 IN AFGHANISTAN

**KABUL (TIP):** The so-called Durand Line turned hot on March 19 as the Taliban retaliated with heavy weapons against Pakistani airstrikes on its territory.

Cross-border clashes were also reported at Parachinar in Afghanistan on the border while the Taliban defence ministry said it had targeted Pakistani troops at the border in response to the airstrikes. "The Islamic Emirate, which has a long history of freedom struggle against superpowers, does not allow anyone to invade its territory. The people of Pakistan and the new government should stop some of their Generals from continuing wrong policies," said Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid.

Pakistan's fighter jets had carried out a predawn strike in two bordering Afghan provinces with terrorists belonging to the Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group being the prime targets, said the Pakistan foreign office. It blamed the group along with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) for several terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, resulting in "deaths of hundreds of civilians and law enforcement officials".

Afghanistan's Taliban, on the other hand, claimed the airstrikes on its territory killed five women and three children in Khost and Paktika districts. It also said the main target of the strikes, Abdullah Shah, was in fact living in Pakistan though he did have a house in Afghanistan because his tribe was spread on both sides of the Durand Line.

The immediate trigger for the Pakistani airstrikes was an attack on a Pakistan army post in Mir Ali in North Waziristan that killed seven, including two officers. The Pakistan army also conducted ground operations in its territory, killing eight militants, including a "high value target". Taliban denied the Pakistani claim that the attacks were launched from Afghan soil. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan does not allow anyone to compromise security by using Afghan territory. Pakistan shouldn't blame Afghanistan for the lack of control, incompetence and problems in its own territory," said Mujahid.

"Such incidents can have very bad consequences, which will not be in Pakistan's control," he warned while alleging that "houses of common people were targeted" in the airstrikes. "We have made our utmost effort and continue to do so. But one thing we must accept is that Afghanistan shares a very long border area with Pakistan, and there are places with rugged terrain, including mountains and forests, and places that might be out of our control," he said (TNS)

# Two Pakistani soldiers, 8 Baloch terrorists killed in attack on Gwadar Port Authority complex

**KARACHI (TIP):** At least two soldiers of the Pakistani Army were killed and eight Baloch terrorists were "sent to hell" when security personnel foiled an attempt by heavily armed Baloch insurgents to storm the Gwadar Port Authority complex in the restive Balochistan province, the military has said.

The port complex hosts several government and paramilitary offices and the strategically located Gwadar Port remains one of the focal points of the billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Project.

A press release from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military's media wing, said a group of terrorists attempted to enter the Port Authority Colony but were successfully thwarted by security forces personnel on March 20.

"Own troops employed for security responded immediately and effectively engaged the terrorists, and in ensuing fire exchange, all eight terrorists were sent to hell," the statement said late on Wednesday.

Two sepoys were killed in the exchange of fire, the statement said.

A large quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives was also recovered from the possession of the militants from the separatist Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).

Balochistan, bordering Iran and



Afghanistan, is home to a long-running violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups have previously carried out several attacks targeting the USD 60 billion CPEC projects.

The BLA is opposed to China's investments in Balochistan and accuses Beijing and Islamabad of exploitation of the resource-rich province, a charge rejected by the authorities.

Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects being carried out under the aegis of the CPEC.

BLA's Majeed Brigade, which was formed in 2011, is a particularly lethal

guerilla cell of the BLA.

It was named after a guard of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was killed while attempting to assassinate the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) founder.

It has been alleged that the group also maintains sanctuaries in areas along the Pak-Iran border.

The brigade, which is the suicide squad of the BLA, mostly targets security forces and Chinese interests in Pakistan. It also claimed responsibility for the April 2022 suicide attack outside the Karachi University's Confucius Institute. (PTI)

## 32 INDIAN FISHERMEN DETAINED BY SRI LANKA NAVY FOR ALLEGED POACHING

**COLOMBO (TIP):** At least 32 Indian fishermen were detained by the Sri Lankan Navy on March 20 off the coast of Talaimannar and near the islet of Delft in the northern province for allegedly fishing in the island nation's waters, an official statement said.

The Navy held two Indian trawlers along with 7 fishermen off Talaimannar, it said, adding that naval personnel also seized three more Indian trawlers and held 25 Indian fishermen off the Delft Island.

The two Indian trawlers along with 7 fishermen were brought to the Talaimannar Pier while three Indian trawlers and 25 Indian fishermen were brought to Kankasanthurai harbour.

They will be handed over to the Fisheries Inspectors of Mannar and Mailadi for onward legal proceedings, the statement said.

The Navy has so far held 23 Indian trawlers and 178 Indian fishermen in island waters thus far in 2024, and handed them over to authorities for legal action, it added.



The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters.

The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries.

Fishermen from both countries are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other's waters.

In 2023, the island nation's Navy arrested 240 Indian fishermen along with 35 trawlers for allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan waters. (PTI)

## INDIAN NAVY ASSISTS HIJACKED BANGLADESHI-FLAGGED CARGO VESSEL

**DHAKA (TIP):** An Indian naval warship and a long-range maritime patrol aircraft extended assistance to a Bangladeshi-flagged cargo vessel after it was hijacked in the Indian Ocean, in the latest in a series of such support missions by the Indian Navy in the region.

The Navy said on March 22 that the safety of the crew held hostage by armed pirates was ascertained and the Indian Navy warship continued to maintain its presence in the close vicinity of the vessel till its arrival in the territorial waters of Somalia.

After receiving information about the hijacking of the ship, the Navy on March 12 deployed Long-Range Maritime Patrol aircraft (LRMP) P-8I.

The Navy said that on receipt of intimation, the LRMP was immediately deployed, and on locating the merchant vessel in the evening of March 12, it attempted to establish communication to ascertain the status of the ship's crew members. "However, no response was received from the ship," it said. (PTI)



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# Benefits of oiling your hair

Oiling is perhaps the best thing you can do to your hair. In the long run, this practice is your key to healthier and stronger hair.

## Natural goodness for hair

The first benefit is that natural hair oil, meaning the least processed, comes packed with several of the vitamins and micro-nutrients that are found in food. So hair oil is basically hair food.

## Revitalises hair tissues

The second benefit of a hair oil massage is the way it penetrates the skin. A shampoo-conditioner, no matter how good its components, can't match the way hair oil goes deep into the skin and does its job revitalising the skin tissue.

## Relaxing massage for healthy scalp

The third benefit of a thorough hair oil massage is that it boosts blood circulation in the scalp. The oil is spread evenly around the scalp, sending nutrients directly to all the hair roots.

## Fights hair fall

Hair oil does the job of fighting hair fall and of aiding hair regrowth. Therefore, whether you've got a hair loss problem or not, you can use a hair thickening oil, and the results can only be good.

## Tames frizz

Using hair oil is a great way to control frizzy hair. On days when



your hair seems all out of control and frizzy, rub some hair oil on your palms and run through the hair lightly. This will cause the frizz to settle immediately and also provide nourishment to the hair.

## Tips for oiling your hair

- Ideally, your scalp should be clean for the hair oil to work really well.
- Wash hair with a degreasing shampoo and let the hair dry out completely.
- Then apply hair oil the same day or the next day (before dirt builds up again on the scalp).
- Massage the oil in gently for about 10 to 15 minutes but thoroughly, covering every inch of the scalp. If you can warm the hair oil slightly before applying, it will spread better.
- Leave this on for at least 3 hours before washing off. You could even leave the hair oil on overnight, if you're so inclined. Keeping it more than 24 hours will make the hair weak as it will start accumulating dirt.
- Oil your hair at least once a week however for dry hair twice a week is advisable.



## Home remedies to reduce wrinkles

Wrinkles are a natural part of ageing, but there are ways to reduce the appearance of wrinkles skin care routine. Reducing wrinkles and fine lines is a multi-faceted process that requires a combination of different techniques. By following a well-balanced skincare routine and using effective home remedies, you can achieve a more youthful appearance. Following are the top 10 effective home remedies that will help you reduce and prevent wrinkles on face, under-eye areas, etc.

### Eat a healthy, vitamin-rich diet

Your skin is the largest organ in your body - and just like your body it needs proper nutrition. Poor nutrition can contribute to fine lines and wrinkles, so it's important to eat a balanced diet. If you don't have sufficient time or your daily routine is irregular, then you can take doctor-recommended supplements for skin. They will complement your diet and make sure your skin and body is getting all the essential vitamins and minerals for healthy, wrinkle-free skin.

### Avoid cigarettes and alcohol

Cigarettes and alcohol are also major contributors to wrinkles, or faster ageing of the skin. There's no need to suffer from wrinkles and fine lines - they can be reduced with a little effort. As a matter of fact, some simple tips and healthy routine without the use of cigarettes or alcohol will go a long way in helping you reduce wrinkles on face and under eyes.

### Prevent wrinkles with a home-made face mask

Another great option is to make a face mask out of honey, yogurt, applesauce, and rose water. This will help to moisturise the skin and reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

### Use a Hyaluronic acid serum for face

The power of Hyaluronic acid is undisputed - it provides effective and long-lasting hydration for your face without any negative or harmful effects. It's best to use a dermatologist-recommended Hyaluronic acid serum for face with natural and proven ingredients.

### Hydrate, hydrate, and hydrate!

Hydration is key when it comes to reducing wrinkles - make sure you drink plenty of water every day!

Most anti-ageing skincare products have ingredients such as Hyaluronic acid and antioxidants that give you a softer and smoother skin texture. However, the way these skin ingredients work is by providing natural, intense, and deep hydration for your skin. This does not mean that you skip out on drinking water. Dermatologists recommend drinking sufficient water regularly as it helps to flush out toxins from your skin and gives you a younger-looking appearance.

## FOOD CORNER

# Chana masala

## Ingredients

800g canned chickpeas or 720g jar giant chickpeas, 3 onions, quartered, 3 garlic cloves, 5cm piece of ginger, 2-3 green chillies, roughly chopped, 1½ tbsp ghee, ½ tsp ground coriander, ½ tsp ground cumin, ½ tsp chilli powder (Kashmiri if possible), 1 tsp turmeric, 1 tsp garam masala, 1 ½ tsp amchoor powder (optional), 3 medium tomatoes, around 300g, roughly chopped, or 400g can chopped, tomatoes, 1 lemon juiced, ½ small pack coriander leaves, to serve

## Method

- Drain the chickpeas, add to a large pan with 400ml of water and season. Bring to the boil, then turn off the heat and set aside to allow the chickpea flavour to infuse the water.
- Blitz the onions with the garlic, ginger and green chillies. Melt the ghee in a large saucepan, then add the onion mix with a pinch of salt and cook for 8-10 mins, until softened.
- Stir in the spices, and cook for 3 more mins, adding



a splash of the chickpea water to stop them sticking to the bottom of the pan. Add the tomatoes and another splash of water and cook for 5 mins, squishing the tomatoes with a spoon as they soften. Tip in the chickpeas, along with their cooking water. Cook for 10 mins. Season well, add the lemon juice, and a splash of water if you like a looser curry. Scatter with the coriander, to serve.

# Diet for kidney health: Foods to consume & avoid

**M**aintaining kidney health involves a balanced diet that supports overall well-being while managing specific dietary restrictions. A kidney-friendly diet typically emphasizes low-sodium, low-fat foods and includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Limiting phosphorus, potassium, and protein intake may also be necessary, depending on individual needs.

Dr Roshan Kore, Consulting Dietician, NHRCC Children's Hospital, says, "A balanced diet rich in whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables is essential for maintaining kidney health. Limiting sodium, phosphorus, and potassium intake is crucial, as these can exacerbate kidney diseases. Incorporating foods like leafy greens, berries, fish, and low-fat dairy can provide essential nutrients while supporting kidney function."

One must adopt a balanced diet to prevent kidney diseases. "Emphasizing low-sodium, low-fat, and low-cholesterol foods is crucial. Opting for fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins like fish and poultry, and healthy fats such as those found in nuts and olive oil can promote kidney health. Incorporating foods rich in antioxidants like berries and leafy greens helps protect against oxidative stress," shares Dr Suparna Mukherjee, Charge, of Clinical Nutrition, Narayana Health City, Bangalore.

Hydration is also key; adequate water intake helps flush out toxins and prevents kidney stones. "Avoiding processed foods, sugary drinks, and excessive alcohol



consumption can further safeguard against kidney damage. Remember, a mindful approach to nutrition not only supports overall health but also plays a pivotal role in preventing and managing kidney diseases," adds Dr Kore.

Additionally, limiting processed foods, sugary beverages, and excessive protein intake can reduce the risk of kidney damage.

"Remember, a wholesome diet is not only vital for overall health but also plays a pivotal role in safeguarding our kidneys for the long term," signs off Dr Mukherjee.

Source: News18



## Why popping vitamin pills without doctor's prescription may harm you

**W**hile it may seem fancy to take vitamin supplements daily, regular consumption without consulting a doctor may be detrimental to your health, warned health experts.

Vitamin pills may help people with deficiencies, the elderly or pregnant women, but research has shown that overdose may result in problems like digestive issues, kidney stones and even heart disease. The pills are also not a substitute for a healthy diet.

"Without medical supervision, using multivitamin pills or calcium on a regular basis can have negative health consequences. Taking too much of these supplements might result in overdosing, which can harm organs over time and cause symptoms like nausea, vomiting and stomach pain," Senior Consultant Mohan Kumar Singh of Department of Internal Medicine at Marengo Asia Hospital in Gurugram, told IANS.

"These supplements may also interfere with prescribed medicines, reducing their effectiveness or perhaps resulting in negative side effects. Taking too many multivitamins might throw off the body's natural nutrient balance, sometimes resulting in imbalances or deficiencies. Nutritional imbalances can be made worse by specific vitamins or minerals interfering with the usage or absorption of other nutrients," he added.

Multivitamins typically contain about 26 different vitamins and minerals, often providing 100 per cent of the recommended daily allowance of these micronutrients.

However, "multivitamins are not required by everyone and should not be considered a replacement of a balanced diet inclusive of fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, healthy fats, and proteins," Lead Consultant Tushar Tayal at CK Birla Hospital in Gurugram, told IANS.

He noted that multivitamins should not be consumed regularly without confirming the deficiency through blood tests.

Source: IANS

# Foods to beat high cholesterol levels

**K**eeping cholesterol levels in check can not only prevent you from the risk of early death but also infuse more energy and happiness into your daily life. As we all know that cholesterol itself isn't bad and the waxy substance aids in building cells and producing certain hormones. However, courtesy our modern lifestyle choices, we are accumulating too much of it in our body due to our poor eating habits and lack of an active lifestyle. High cholesterol levels in the body can wreak havoc putting us at risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure all the risk factors which could affect quality of our life and even prove to be fatal.

Modifying your diet to include healthy alternatives to fatty and sugary eatables is the first step towards overall well-being and reducing your cholesterol levels. From choosing heart-healthy fats like avocados, nuts and olive oil to staying away from processed foods and trans fats, here's what one can do to keep the cholesterol levels in control. Nutritionist Bhakti Arora Kapoor in her latest Instagram post talks about the heroes and villains of cholesterol – HDL (high-density lipoprotein) and LDL (low-density lipoprotein) and explains how one can boost the good while keeping the bad at bay.

### Flaxseeds

Flaxseeds contain alpha - linolenic acid, an essential omega-3 fatty acids which been shown to lower LDL cholesterol, as well as triglycerides levels. You can add flaxseeds to your breakfast cereal, sandwich, or yoghurt. If you are fond of baking, you can add them to your cookies, muffins, and other baked goods.

### Fish oil

Fish oil is an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids. Regular intake of these fatty acids in the form of fish like mackerel, salmon, lake trout, sardines and halibut help in lowering the cholesterol levels and the risk of developing cardiovascular disease.



### Garlic

Garlic contains a high concentration of allicin, a sulfur containing compound which is known for reducing total and LDL cholesterol significantly. Chew a few cloves of garlic in the morning and at bedtime regularly. Raw garlic works better than cooked ones. You can also add them to your curries for added taste and nutrition.

### Dark leafy greens

While all vegetables are good for your heart, dark leafy greens are particularly beneficial. Dark leafy greens, such as kale and spinach, contain lutein and other carotenoids, which are linked to a lower risk of heart disease.

### Legumes

Legumes contain a lot of fibre, minerals and protein. Replacing some refined grains and processed meats in your diet with legumes can lower your risk of heart disease. Eat dal-chawal, cheela, dosa or soup to enjoy legumes.

Source: HT

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## We now have a chip for generative AI era, says Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang

As big tech companies aim to lead the generative AI race, Nvidia Founder and CEO Jensen Huang has said that they have created a processor for the GenAI era.

Huang introduced the company's new Blackwell computing platform at the GTC conference in the US, saying that increased computing power can deliver for everything from software to services, robotics to medical technology and more.

"Accelerated computing has reached the tipping point — general purpose computing has run out of steam," Huang told more than 11,000 attendees during his keynote address.

Delivering a massive upgrade to the world's AI infrastructure, Huang introduced the Nvidia Blackwell platform "to unleash real-time generative AI on trillion-parameter large language models". Huang also presented Nvidia NIM — a reference to NVIDIA inference microservices — a new way of packaging and delivering software that connects developers with hundreds of millions of GPUs to deploy custom AI of all kinds.

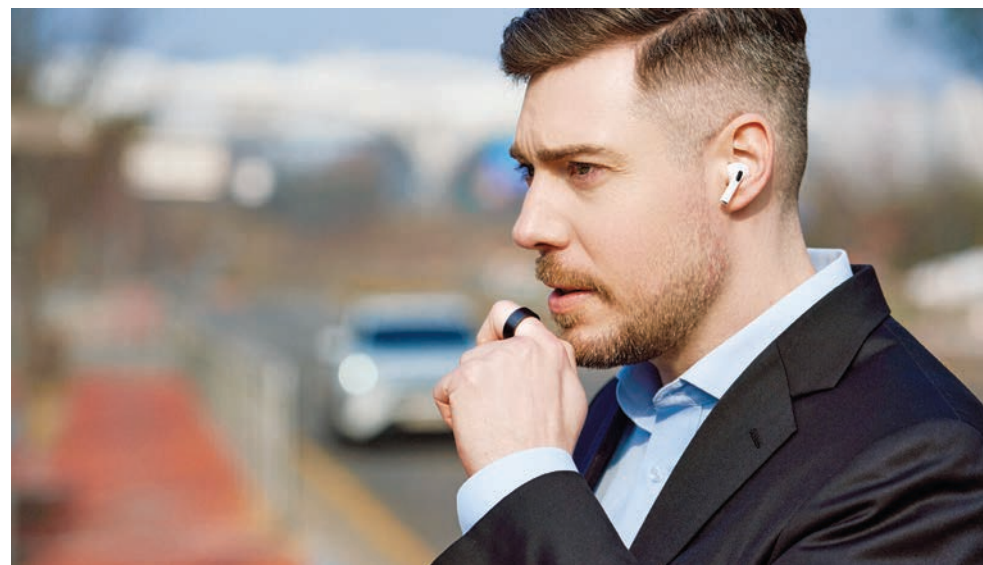
# WIZPR Ring, the AI-powered smart ring with voice activation, translation, and more

Seoul-based VTouch Inc. has announced the world's first-of-its-kind smart wearable ring, the WIZPR Ring. VTouch is among the world's leading AI/deep learning companies and has showcased the ring at the recently held CES 2024, where it bagged the Innovation Award. The all-new WIZPR Ring comes with advanced AI capabilities to provide users with the unique ability to whisper commands discreetly.

According to the company, the device excels at filtering out background noise and responding exclusively to close-range speech. The ring signifies a significant leap forward in AI-powered wearable technology.

"AI-based conversational computing is expected to be the next big thing that goes beyond the limitations of 'graphical user interfaces' such as PCs and smartphones. With WIZPR RING, we aim to realise a conversational computing environment where you can interact with AI by talking to it with your voice anytime, anywhere, without having to look at a screen," said SJ Kim, Founder & Co-CEO of VTouch.

The device effortlessly switches between various AI assistants using a button press or with the mention of a scenario-specific aid. Users can activate tailored interactions through a triple-press button or set a greeting using personal data. For discrete interactions, users can whisper commands. The device



can also be connected using Bluetooth for quick and efficient conversation of spoken words to texts.

The WIZPR Ring is priced at \$199 (about Rs 16,559) and is currently available for pre-order through a crowdfunding campaign. As an early bird supporter, the unit can be obtained at \$139 (about Rs 11,566).

The makers claim that the ring offers seamless voice conversations through the ring and the user's earphones. It is activated using a built-in proximity sensor and microphone and this eliminates the need to activate it via pressing buttons. The device unlocks almost instantly when brought close to the mouth, allowing immediate voice

input without wake words, terminating recognition when away.

It comes with high-accuracy, noise-resistant proximity recognition and ensures privacy by isolating the user's voice from the surroundings. It essentially picks up even the softest of whispers, allowing for a secure space for conversation. Besides, it also doubles up as a versatile digital assistant and can be paired with its smartphone app integrating a variety of AI tools and assistants such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and more. The ring also grants control over smart home devices, listens to incoming texts, and several other services. This virtually eliminates the need to check the smartphone each time.

Source: *The Indian Express*

## 2023 'hottest year' records lowest sea ice, glaciers; 90% ocean experienced heatwave conditions: WMO

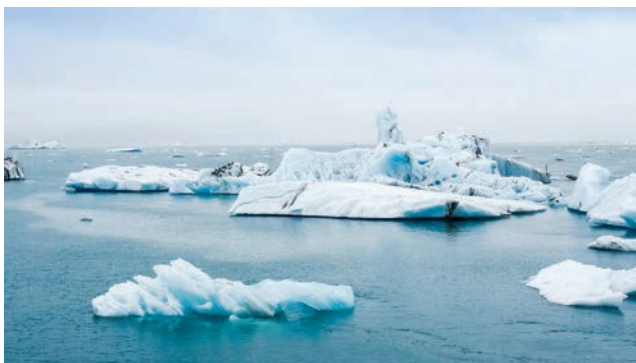
The fact that 2023 was the hottest year on record that smashed the global temperature record has already been confirmed by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Now, according to the State of Global Climate report, which reconfirms 2023 as the "hottest year on record by clear margin", on an average day in the year nearly one third of the global ocean remained gripped by a marine heatwave, harming vital ecosystems and food systems.

"Towards the end of 2023, over 90 per cent of the ocean had experienced heatwave conditions at some point during the year. The global set of reference glaciers suffered the largest loss of ice on record (since 1950), driven by extreme melt in both western North America and Europe according to preliminary data," as per the latest WMO report released ahead of the World Meteorological Day on March 23.

Records were broken for ocean heat, sea level rise, the Antarctic sea ice loss and glacier retreat. The extreme weather undermined socio-economic development. However, the renewable energy transition provides hope, it said.

"Heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires and rapidly intensifying tropical cyclones caused misery and



mayhem, upending every-day life for millions and inflicting many billions of dollars in economic losses," according to the WMO State of the Global Climate 2023 report.

### Alarming state of oceans, sea ice, glaciers

The unprecedented ocean warmth, glacier retreat and Antarctic sea ice loss is cause for particular concern, according to the WMO statement.

In 2023, global mean sea level reached a record high in the satellite record (since 1993), reflecting continued ocean warming (thermal expansion) as well as the

melting of glaciers and ice sheets.

The rate of global mean sea level rise in the past 10 years (2014–2023) is more than twice the rate of sea level rise in the first decade of the satellite record (1993–2002).

Meanwhile, Antarctic sea-ice extent reached an absolute record low for the satellite era (since 1979) in February 2023 and remained at record low for the time of year from June till early November.

The annual maximum in September was 16.96 million km<sup>2</sup>, roughly 1.5 million km<sup>2</sup> below the 1991–2020 average and 1 million km<sup>2</sup> below the previous record low maximum, it said.

Arctic sea-ice extent remained well below normal, with the annual maximum and minimum sea ice extent being the fifth and sixth lowest on record respectively.

"There are two principal ice sheets, the Greenland Ice Sheet and the Antarctic Ice Sheet. Combining the two ice sheets, the seven highest melt years on record are all since 2010, and average rates of mass loss increased from 105 Gigatonnes per year from 1992–1996 to 372 Gigatonnes per year from 2016–2020. This is equivalent to about 1 mm per year of global sea level rise attributed to the ice sheets in the latter period.

Source: *TNS*





## JSW, MG Motor join hands to make inroads into car market

Indian conglomerate JSW Group and Chinese automotive manufacturer SAIC Motor-owned MG Motor India today kick-started their joint venture to produce both electric and internal combustion engine cars to capture a large chunk of the Indian market.

In the joint venture, JSW group will pick up 35 per cent stake, Indian financial institutions 8 per cent, MG dealers 3 per cent and employees 5 per cent, taking the total to 51 per cent. The stakeholders together will invest Rs 5,000 crore in the first phase, which will be utilised to ramp up the existing capacity and launch new vehicles. The joint venture is targeting to sell one million electric vehicles in India by 2030.

There are plans to launch a new product, including NEVs (new energy vehicles) every three to six months, with two new products slated to be launched this year.

Also, the company will expand its production capacity in Halol, Gujarat, with a focus on producing NEVs. This will significantly increase the production capacity from the current 1,00,000 plus to up to 3,00,000 vehicles annually. *Source: TNS*

# US sues Apple in landmark iPhone monopoly lawsuit

WASHINGTON (TIP)

The US Department of Justice sued Apple on Thursday, March 21, for illegally maintaining a monopoly for its iPhone by stifling competition and imposing exorbitant costs on consumers.

The lawsuit, also brought by multiple US states, attacked the iPhone for raking in hundreds of billions of dollars by making it difficult for consumers to switch away to cheaper smartphones and devices.

The long anticipated case against Apple sees the company founded by Steve Jobs in 1976 clash with Washington after largely escaping US government scrutiny for nearly a half century.

It joins Amazon, Google and Facebook-owner Meta which are also facing antitrust lawsuits in the United States.

News of the lawsuit sent shares in Apple down by as much as 3.75 percent on Wall Street on Thursday.

At the heart of the case is Apple's alleged exclusionary practices that set strict and at times opaque conditions on firms and developers seeking to reach the iPhone's 136 million US users.

According to the lawsuit, these rules and decisions have been designed to force Apple users into staying in the Apple ecosystem and buying the company's more expensive hardware, the iPhone.

"Consumers should not have to pay higher prices because companies violate the antitrust laws," said Attorney General Merrick Garland.

"If left unchallenged, Apple will only continue to strengthen its smartphone monopoly," he added.



## Apple fights back

The far-reaching case singled out practices that it said was making Apple richer to the detriment of advancing innovation and technology for consumers.

In a statement, Apple denied the merit of the lawsuit, saying it was "wrong on the facts and the law, and we will vigorously defend against it."

If successful, the suit would "set a dangerous precedent, empowering government to take a heavy hand in designing people's technology," the company added.

The lawsuit for example accused Apple of squashing the creation of Super Apps, one-stop web portals that could exist on an iPhone and give consumers other ways to get services, such as music, photo or movies.

Other big tech giants such as Meta have long dreamed of opening such super-apps on the iPhone, which accounts for roughly half of the smartphone market in the United States.

The accusations also target Apple's wallet, which is the only application allowed on the iPhone to access the technology to make tap payments in stores, forcing others to pay a fee.

Messaging apps are under the microscope too, with prosecutors accusing Apple of making it hard for Apple users to interact easily with Android phone users, coercing them to buying the more expensive iPhone.

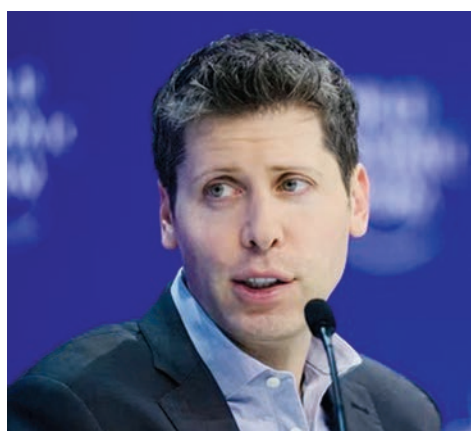
The broad case also mentions smartwatches, with the Apple Watch only being available through the iPhone, and competing smartwatches having very limited functionality on the iPhone.

## Sam Altman's Reddit stake rises over \$200 million after IPO

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman's stake in Reddit rose by \$200 million to over \$613 million following the social media company's IPO debut. Shares of the 19-year-old company jumped 48% in New York Stock Exchange trading to close at \$50.44. Sam Altman - who is among the biggest Reddit shareholders - has a control of 7.6% of outstanding shares after the offering, according to the company's prospectus. This is behind only Condé Nast parent Advance Magazine Publishers and Chinese internet giant Tencent.

But Sam Altman is restricted from selling Reddit shares for six months during the so-called lockup period.

Prior to the emergence of OpenAI in recent years, Sam Altman was best known as a startup investor and as the president of Y Combinator, a position he exited in 2019. His investment portfolio includes past or present stakes in Airbnb, Uber, Instacart, Stripe and Asana. His top bet is Reddit where he



was also on the company board until January 2022 when the firm said he stepped down.

In 2014, Sam Altman led Reddit's \$50 million Series B funding round, after using the service every day for nine years, he shared. At the time, he called the website "an example of something that started out looking like a silly toy for wasting time and has become something very interesting."

## Equity indices join rally in global markets as US Fed plans rate cut

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty joined a rally in global markets on Thursday, March 21, after the US Federal Reserve maintained its projection of three rate cuts this year. According to experts, Construction, metals, PSU banks, media & entertainment, energy, consumer durables, financial services and pharma were among the major sectors which moved the index higher.

According to data, Sensex settled 540 points higher at 72,641 levels while the Nifty 50 shut at 22,012, up 173 points. The US Federal Reserve kept the policy rate unchanged in the range of 5.25% to 5.5%. It signalled that it remains on track to cut interest rates by 75 basis points in 2024.

"The Indian markets gained significantly. From the low made near 71,675 zone in the previous session, the Sensex managed to move past the important 50-EMA (Exponential Moving Average) level of 72,200 zone and breached the 72,500 levels intraday. Sensex gained 515 points and sentiment



has improved along with a positive bias, so a further rise can be anticipated. Construction, metals, PSU Banks, media and entertainment, energy, consumer durables, financial services and pharma were among the major sectors which moved the index higher today," said Shiju Koothupalakkal, Technical Analyst, Prabhudas Lilladher Pvt Ltd.

According to market experts, the Federal Reserve's March policy was on expected lines. Though they indicated that three cuts will happen this year, however experts are of the view the quantum of rate cuts will not be more than 75 bps." *Source: TNS*

# HOLI: RIOT OF COLORS

Holi is a vibrant festival deeply rooted in Indian culture and tradition. Held annually with great fervor and enthusiasm, it marks the victory of good over evil. This year, the celebrations of Holi will commence on 25th March.

Across India, Holi is celebrated with exuberance, bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds in a joyous atmosphere of camaraderie and unity.

The significance of Holi stretches back through the annals of mythology, with various legends contributing to its rich tapestry of lore. One such tale recounts the story of Prahlad and Holika, symbolising the triumph of devotion and righteousness over tyranny and deceit. Another legend celebrates the divine love between Radha and Krishna, whose playful antics with colors have become synonymous with the festival.

At the heart of Holi lies a vibrant explosion of colours as revellers joyfully smear each other with gulal (coloured powders) and splash water in a kaleidoscope of hues. The air resonates with laughter and music as communities come together to partake in the festivities. From bustling city streets to tranquil villages, the spirit of Holi permeates every corner of the country, transcending barriers of caste, creed, and social status.

Beyond its symbolism and rituals, Holi embodies a spirit of inclusivity and forgiveness, encouraging people to set aside differences and embrace the shared humanity that binds us all. It serves as a reminder of the power of love and compassion to overcome adversity and foster bonds of friendship and understanding.

As the colors of Holi spread joy and cheer, they also serve as a potent metaphor for the vibrancy and diversity of Indian culture. Through its kaleidoscope of colours, Holi reflects the mosaic of traditions, languages, and customs that define the fabric of Indian society. It is a celebration of life itself, a testament to the enduring spirit of resilience and renewal that unites us all.

## Origins and Significance Of Holi

Holi is an ancient festival deeply ingrained in Indian culture and derives its origins from a blend of mythological tales and symbolic traditions. Among these legends, the story of Prahlad and Holika stands out, symbolising the triumph of righteousness over malevolence.

According to Hindu mythology, Prahlad, a devout young prince, defied his tyrannical father, King Hiranyakashipu, who sought to suppress his devotion to Lord Vishnu. Enraged by Prahlad's faith, the king conspired with his sister, Holika, who possessed a boon granting her immunity to fire. Together, they plotted to burn



Prahlad alive.

However, divine intervention saw Holika consumed by the flames while Prahlad emerged unscathed, protected by his steadfast devotion. This tale of divine intervention and the ultimate triumph of good over evil forms the cornerstone of Holi's significance.

Another mythological narrative associated with Holi is the divine love between Radha and Krishna. In Hindu tradition, the playful antics of Lord Krishna, who delighted in smearing colours on his beloved Radha and her companions, have become synonymous with the festival. Their enduring love story, steeped in the vibrant hues of Holi, symbolises the joyous arrival of spring and the renewal of life.

The colors of Holi hold profound symbolic significance, reflecting the cyclical rhythms of nature and the eternal struggle between light and darkness. As winter gives way to spring, the vibrant hues of Holi herald the renewal of life and the awakening of nature from its slumber. They represent the triumph of good over evil, as depicted in the tale of Prahlad and Holika, where the forces of righteousness emerge victorious against tyranny and oppression.

Moreover, the colours of Holi serve as a potent metaphor for forgiveness and reconciliation. During the festival, old grievances are buried beneath layers of vibrant hues, replaced by gestures of goodwill and camaraderie. To heal past wounds, and embrace the spirit of renewal and rejuvenation.

In essence, Holi is not merely a festival of colours but a celebration of life itself—a testament to the



resilience of the human spirit and the enduring power of love, forgiveness, and renewal.

## Rituals and Traditions celebrated on Holi:

Holi, the festival of colors, is steeped in a tapestry of ancient rituals and traditions that add depth and vibrancy to the celebration. From the lighting of bonfires to the playful smearing of coloured powders, each ritual holds symbolic significance and reflects the spirit of joy and renewal that defines Holi.

One of the most significant rituals observed during Holi is the lighting of holy bonfires on the eve, known as Holika Dahan. This ritual commemorates the legend of Prahlad and Holika, symbolising the victory of good over evil. As dusk descends, communities gather around

massive pyres stacked with wood, symbolic of the triumph of righteousness over tyranny. Amidst chants and prayers, the bonfires are lit, engulfing the darkness in a blaze of light and warmth. The crackling flames of Holika Dahan symbolise the burning away of negativity and impurities, paving the way for new beginnings and fresh starts.

As the sun rises on Holi, the atmosphere is charged with excitement and anticipation. People emerge from their homes adorned in white, ready to partake in the colourful revelry that lies ahead. The air is filled with the scent of blossoms and the sound of laughter as friends and families gather to exchange greetings and good wishes.

Central to the celebration of Holi is the playful tradition of applying coloured powders, known

as gulal, and spraying coloured water, using devices called pichkaris, on friends and family. As the day unfolds, streets and squares transform into a riot of colours as people of all ages join in the merriment. Faces and clothes are smeared with bright hues, creating a kaleidoscope of colours that symbolises the arrival of spring and the abundance of nature's bounty.

Amidst the revelry, the aroma of sweet delicacies fills the air, adding a culinary dimension to the festivities. Traditional sweets and savouries are prepared with love and care, symbolising the spirit of generosity and hospitality that defines Holi. Among the most beloved delicacies are gujiya, sweet dumplings filled with khoya and nuts, and thandai, a refreshing drink infused with spices and flavoured with bhang (cannabis extract). These delectable treats are shared among friends and neighbours, fostering a sense of community and camaraderie.

Beyond their culinary appeal, these sweets and delicacies hold deeper cultural significance, symbolising the sweetness of life and the joy of abundance. They evoke memories of childhood and family gatherings, where laughter and love flowed freely, transcending barriers of age and background.

In essence, the rituals and traditions of Holi serve as a bridge between the past and the present, connecting generations and cultures in a colourful tapestry of joy and celebration. As people come together to mark the festival, they reaffirm their bonds of friendship and solidarity.

### Social Harmony and Unity

Holi, with its kaleidoscope of colors and infectious spirit of joy, serves as a powerful catalyst for fostering social harmony and unity among people from diverse backgrounds. Across India, and indeed across the world, Holi transcends barriers of caste, creed, and gender, bringing together individuals in a celebration of shared humanity and brotherhood. One of the most striking aspects of Holi is its ability to break down social barriers and foster a sense of inclusivity and belonging. Regardless of one's social status or background, everyone is equal in the eyes of the colors. On this day, hierarchies dissolve as people from all walks of life gather together to revel in the joyous festivities.

Holi serves as a melting pot of cultures and traditions, where people of different faiths and beliefs come together to celebrate in harmony. In towns and villages across India, temples, mosques, and churches open their doors to all, welcoming worshippers and revellers alike in a spirit of communal solidarity. It is a time for bridging divides and building bridges of understanding and empathy. Moreover, Holi serves as a platform for promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding. In cities with diverse populations, such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata, people from different religious backgrounds come together to



celebrate Holi in a spirit of mutual respect and camaraderie. It is a time for sharing traditions and fostering a sense of unity in diversity.

Beyond its borders, Holi has also gained popularity as a symbol of multiculturalism and global solidarity. In countries with significant Indian diaspora communities, such as the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom, Holi celebrations have become annual fixtures on the cultural calendar, attracting people of all nationalities and backgrounds. These celebrations serve as opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and dialogue, promoting understanding and appreciation of Indian culture and traditions.

In essence, Holi is more than just a festival of colours—it is a

celebration of the human spirit and the bonds that unite us as a global community. Through its vibrant festivities and inclusive ethos, Holi inspires us to embrace diversity, celebrate unity, and build a more harmonious and inclusive world for future generations to come.

### Different Types of Holi Celebrations

#### Shimga or Rang Panchami – Maharashtra

In Western India, particularly in Maharashtra, Holi is colloquially known as Rang Panchami or Shimga. The celebrations include all the Holika Dahan, a common tradition which involves lighting a firewood pyre on the night before the actual celebrations. On the following morning, which is the Rang Panchami day, people celebrate

Holi with wet and dry colours and water. The festivities here can go on for a week.

#### Royal Holi – Rajasthan

Moving further north to Udaipur, Rajasthan, locals here too follow the traditional practice of Holika Dahan, albeit a bit differently. The celebrations here are known to be truly grand and are organized by the royal Mewar family of Udaipur. There is a fancy procession as part of the festivities and it includes several decorated horses and the royal band. The traditional fire is lit later and an effigy of Holika is set on fire.

#### Kahila Holi aka Khadi Holi – Uttarakhand

Moving to our final destination of North India, Uttarakhand, we discover that Holi here is actually known by a number of different names. Baithaki Holi, Mahila Holi, Khadi Holi are all common names for the festival here. Festivities here include revellers donning traditional attire and singing & dancing to folk tunes going around the city. This gathering of people is known as a Toli and locals greet each other by smearing colour on each other's faces and dancing and singing all along. Unlike other parts of India, song and dance are an essential part of the Holi celebrations in Uttarakhand.

#### Lathmar Holi – Uttar Pradesh

Largely celebrated all across Uttar Pradesh, Lathmar Holi finds its origins in Hindu Mythology. It is believed that Lord Krishna tried to tease Radha and play Holi with her in her village Barsana. The local women got angry and chased him away with lathis.

#### Phaguwa – Bihar

We now eastwards to Bihar where Holi is known as Phaguwa in the local dialect, Bhojpuri. Like many other Indian states, Holika Dahan is an integral part of the celebrations here as well. The celebrations of Holika Dahan too are similar to other states. On the following day, Holi is celebrated with wet and dry colours and traditional music and folk songs throughout the day.

#### Dol Jatra aka Basant Utsav – West Bengal

As we continue our journey of the different Indian states, we now take a stop at the land of roshagulla, West Bengal! Holi here is known as Basant Utsav or Dol Jatra. Basant essentially means spring in Bengali while Utsav means festival. Women here dress mainly in yellow, a colour that signifies abundance. If you want to get the best seats to watch the celebrations here, head to Shanti Niketan in a quaint location known as Bolpur. This little place is the epicentre of everything that depicts the rich Bengali culture. Holi celebrations here are unparalleled till date. In addition to the many colors that are always a part of Holi, there is also recitals of Rabindranath Tagore's poetry and traditional song & dance programs.



**BEJAN DARUWALLA AND  
CHIRAG DARUWALLA**



### ARIES

Ganesha says that the stars of the people of Aries will be on high this week. There may be long or short-distance travel in connection with career business at the beginning of the week. Those who are trying for their career or studies abroad can get to hear some good news. Money invested in any scheme or business in the past will become a big reason for profit. However, they should avoid making risky investments and if they do, they must take the advice of their well-wishers once. In the second half of the week, people who are preparing for the exam competition can get to hear some good news. The success of the child will become a big reason for your respect and there will be an atmosphere of happiness in the house. There will be intensity in the love relationship and mutual trust will increase. Married life will remain happy. There will be many opportunities to spend happy moments with your spouse and family. Health will be normal.

### TAURUS

Ganesha says that the beginning of the week will prove to be auspicious for those people associated with Taurus who were wandering for livelihood for a long time. During this, they will achieve the desired success in their careers and businesses. This time will prove auspicious for those doing goal-oriented work. They may get praise and a bigger position from their boss for better work. People associated with politics may also have their wishes fulfilled and their respect and influence in society will increase. In the second half of the week, some domestic problems may cause you concern, but you will eventually be able to find solutions to them with your intelligence and discretion. In this work, you will have the full help and support of a senior member of the house. Love relations will be normal. Married life will remain happy. Better coordination will be seen with the spouse. Be careful of seasonal diseases in the second half of the week.



### GEMINI

Ganesha says that luck will be seen knocking at the doors of Gemini people this week. At the beginning of the week itself, you will get new employment opportunities. However, during this time you will be in a state of confusion regarding which step to take and what decision to take. They may get big offers from other institutions, but while accepting them, it would be appropriate to brainstorm and clarify work-related information and salary, etc., otherwise, you may have to face problems later. If you have been facing a recession in business for some time, then this week will be a relief for you. You will get the desired profit in business and opportunities to increase it. In the middle of the week, you will need to pay some attention to your health because during this time you may become a victim of seasonal illness, or any old disease may re-emerge. Avoid ignoring the feelings of your love partner in a love relationship, otherwise, there may be a rift. You will get full support and assistance from your spouse in married life.



### CANCER

Ganesha says that this week will prove to be mixed for the Cancerians. This week, you will need to avoid both laziness and pride, otherwise, your ready-made work may get spoiled. At the beginning of the week, a dispute with a dear person will be a major cause of your concern. In such a situation, it will be better for you to leave your ego and clear the misconceptions. While resolving disputes related to family or ancestral property, resort to negotiation rather than dispute. Financially, this time will prove to be auspicious for you. Obstacles related to business will be removed and profit will be received. There will be intensity in love relationships, and you will get an opportunity to spend quality time with your love partner. You may get a big surprise gift from your life partner in the second half of the week.



### LEO

Ganesha says that this week can be a little volatile for the people of Leo. During this, disputes related to land and buildings can become a major cause of your concern. Due to getting less support from relatives than expected, the mind will remain upset. The tendency to postpone work can become a major

cause of your problems. There is a possibility of injury. Health-related problems will also be seen adding to your problems. However, during this time a dear person like a love partner or life partner will be seen to be able to bear your sorrows and problems. If you want your love relationship to be strong and not to break, then you should avoid ignoring the compulsions and feelings of the love partner.



### VIRGO

Ganesha says that the stars of luck for Virgo zodiac people seem to be rising. At the beginning of the week, you can get benefits and respect for any big decision or work done in the past. Due to an increase in enthusiasm and bravery, you will be able to complete the work which has been pending for a long time. There will be profit from the powerful government. In the second part of the week, the mind will be engaged in religious-social activities. You will get an opportunity to do great work by associating with an organization or a special person, which will increase your respect in society. A plan will be made for auspicious work at home. If you were thinking of proposing to someone, then things will happen. Your female friend will prove to be very helpful in this work. At the same time, love and harmony will increase among people who are already in a love relationship. Married life will remain happy. To spend time happily with your spouse, you can go on long or short-distance travel. Health will be normal.



### LIBRA

Ganesha says that if the people of the Libra zodiac manage to manage their time and energy this week, then they will get more auspicious results than they expected. Since luck is with you at this time, you will get full support from all family members at home and seniors and juniors at work. You will get a chance to work on new projects. There will be desired profit in business. The mind will remain cheerful due to desired progress in long pending cases. Employed people can get better opportunities to move forward. A female friend will prove very helpful in this task. People engaged in the preparation of examination competitions will get good news. In the second half of the week, a family member can give a big surprise. Manglik's work can be completed at home. If you have been thinking of buying a dear thing for a long time, then you can buy it or you can get it as a gift from someone. There

will be strength in a love relationship and closeness with a love partner will increase.



### SCORPIO

Ganesha says that the people of the Scorpio zodiac will have to stop worrying and start thinking this week. At the beginning of the week, some problems will increase your anxiety, while help from close friends will be a big reason for relaxation. If there is any family dispute related to land-building, then it would be better to settle it outside the court-court, otherwise, you may have to go around for a long time. If you are doing business in partnership with someone, do not make the mistake of leaving it completely in the hands of your partner. It would be appropriate to move forward, especially after settling money-related matters. During this, be very careful with those people who are often trying to create a rift in your love relationship. There can be estrangement with your spouse about something. Ignoring a health-related matter can force you to visit the hospital.



### SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says that this week is lucky and successful for the people of Sagittarius. This is the time to leave the fun and take advantage of the big opportunities that have come your way. If you get any big responsibility in the field, then try to fulfill it in a better way. Time is on your side; you will get support from both seniors and juniors. People will not only listen to what you say but will also not get tired of praising them. Decisions taken earlier regarding business will become a major reason for profit. The journeys made for career business will prove to be fruitful. With the help of people associated with power and government, you can also get big benefits. You can get the fortune of being associated with a big and profitable scheme. Love relations will be intense. Trust and closeness with the love partner will increase. Your family may accept your love relationship and agree to your marriage. The life of married people will be happy. Any good news related to your spouse will be a great reason for happiness in the family. People preparing for examination competitions can also get good news. Health will be normal.

## BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : MARCH 25 TO MARCH 31 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR  
BEJAN DARUWALLA

### MARCH 25

Ganesha says that you will be active and adaptive in your approach to life. Your capacity for communication will reach an all-time high, and as a result, you will be the talk of every meeting you attend. Today is the perfect time to meet new people and broaden your horizons. There is a possibility that you will get the opportunity to travel, which will allow you to learn and develop. Make sure you have your feet on the ground by engaging in some self-reflection when you're out on an adventure. If you keep the lines of communication and understanding open with the people in your personal life, those connections will flourish.

### MARCH 26

Ganesha says brace yourselves for a tornado of inspiration today. Because of this, now is the best time for you to engage in artistic pursuits because your imaginative faculties will be more active than ever. You are encouraged by the universe to break free from traditional ways of thinking and to embrace the singular viewpoint that you possess. Today, the importance of one's connections with others cannot be overstated. Whether you're renewing old friendships or forging brand-new ones, you should make it a priority to surround yourself with positive people. Keep in mind that other people's energy can catch from you, so try to radiate joy wherever you go.

### MARCH 27

Ganesha says the universe will be working in your favor. This will be the best day of your life. You have a reputation for having a temperament that is both insightful and empathic. You can anticipate an increase in your emotional intelligence today, which will enable you to interact with the people around you on a more meaningful level. Opportunities to demonstrate your talents will present themselves, particularly in spheres that require compassion and understanding on the part of their practitioners. Take on the obstacles that life throws at you, for they are the stepping stones to your own personal development. You are about to be confronted with an unexpected development in regard to your finances. Keep in mind that your intuition is your compass; always put your faith in it.

### MARCH 28

Ganesha says you will embark on a path that leads to enlightenment and self-discovery. Your innate leadership characteristics will be increased, and as a result, people who are looking for direction will look to you as a light. You've always been a dreamer, but now is the moment to put those dreams into motion and make them a reality. The stars indicate that there will be a substantial shift in either your professional or personal life, one that will bring you closer to the meaning of your existence. Change is inevitable, so you might as well get used to it since it's the universe's way of telling

you that you're ready for the next chapter.

### MARCH 29

Ganesha says today is the day of master builders, and the day that is about to begin is a day of construction and creation. You will discover the tools and the motivation you need to make your visions into reality, whether it be a new endeavour, a new relationship, or a personal goal. Your capacity for analysis will improve to an unprecedented level, making it much simpler for you to handle difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, it is important to set aside time for leisure. Your health and well-being are of the utmost importance; thus, make sure you get enough rest and appreciate the straightforward joys that life has to offer.

### MARCH 30

Ganesha says you that you have always been the rock of stability for a lot of people. Your hard work is being recognized by the cosmos today, and as a result, you will experience an abundance of good fortune. Your caring demeanour will garner praise and admiration in unexpected places, such as the workplace and the comfort of your own home. Even if you're used to looking out for the needs of others, today is the day to put your own needs first. Engage wholeheartedly in pastimes and pursuits that make you happy. In terms of money, stability is on the horizon, but you should avoid making rash choices in the meantime.

### MARCH 31

Ganesha says prepare for a successful day today. Your doggedness will be unrivalled, and it will propel you closer to achieving your objectives. Even though your professional life is the focus of your attention, you shouldn't ignore your mental and emotional health. Take some time off and savour the time you spend with those you care about. The constellations point to the arrival of an advisor or mentor in your life who can provide you with wisdom and direction. Maintain an attitude that is receptive to new information and keep in mind that every event, whether positive or negative, contributes to your personal growth narrative.

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### CONTD FROM PAGE 36

#### CAPRICORN



Capricorn

Ganesha says that this week will be moderately fruitful for Capricorn people. At the beginning of the week, the mind will be a little upset if the planned work is not completed on time. Obstacles in work and bitterness in relationships will be a major cause of your concern. During this, you should try to avoid domestic troubles. Your opponents may misrepresent what you say to others. Due to the lack of cooperation between seniors and juniors in the workplace, one may have to face problems. During this time, your opponents can also remain active, in such a situation there will be a need to proceed with extreme caution. Stay away from speculation, shares, etc. during this time. Take a step forward in the direction of the love affair and avoid showing it, otherwise, you may have to face humiliation or humiliation.

#### AQUARIUS



Aquarius

Ganesha says that for the people of Aquarius, this week will sometimes be seen with happiness and sometimes with sorrow. If you have been waiting for a long time to get a position or important

responsibility, then your wish may be fulfilled at the beginning of this week. will stick with you because your opponents will try to confuse or mislead you. Then they will try to put obstacles in your way. While this week you will get opportunities for progress in your career and business, your health will hinder the opportunities that come your way. In such a situation, take special care of your routine and health, otherwise, you may have to go to the hospital. Be especially aware of seasonal diseases. Compared to the first half of the week, the second half can be a little relief, during this time with the help of a female friend, the misunderstandings in the love affair will be removed and the relationship with the love partner will once again be seen to be back on track. Staying with your spouse in difficult times will make it easier to resolve difficulties.



Pisces

#### PISCES

Ganesha says that this week is going to be very lucky for the people of Pisces. At the beginning of the week, any religious or auspicious program can be held at home. During this period, you will be happy to meet a dear person after a long time. Disputes related to land / building will be resolved with the help

of an influential person. If any matter related to power or government has been stuck for a long time, then you will get success in it this week. The government's decision will go in your favor. Additional sources of income will be created. You will get the desired profit in business and opportunities to further it. Students engaged in the preparation for examination and

competitions can get much-awaited success. This week your love train will be seen filling the tracks. Your better tuning will be seen with the love partner, and you will have a pleasant time with him. Married life will remain happy. Achievement related to the child side will be a big reason for your happiness. Health will be normal.

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**H**ola Mohalla, also called Hola, is a three-day long Sikh festival which normally falls in March. It takes place on the second day of the lunar month of Chet, usually a day after the Hindu spring festival Holi but sometimes, coincides with it.

Hola Mohalla is a big festive event for Sikhs around the world. The fair held during Holi and Hola at Anandpur Sahib is traditionally a three-day event but participants attend Anandpur Sahib for a week, camping out and enjoying various displays of fighting prowess and bravery, and listening to kirtan, music and poetry.

For meals, which is an integral part of the Sikh institution, visitors sit together in pangats (queues) and eat lacto-vegetarian food of the langars.

The event concludes on the day of Hola Mohalla with a long, "military-style" procession near Takht Kesgarh Sahib, one of the five seats of temporal authority (referred as "Panj Takht") of the Sikhs.

The word "Mohalla" is derived from the Arabic root hal (alighting, descending) and is a Punjabi word that implies an organized procession in the form of an army column. But unlike Holi, when people playfully sprinkle colored powder, dry or mixed in water, on each other, the Guru made Hola Mohalla an occasion for the Sikhs to demonstrate their martial skills in simulated battles.

Together the phrase "Hola Mohalla" stands for "mock fight". During this festival, processions are organised in the form of army type columns accompanied by war-drums, standard-bearers, who proceed to a given spot or move in state from one gurdwara to another. The custom originated in the time of Guru Gobind Singh who held the first such mock fight event at Anandpur in February 1701.

The military exercise, which was personally supervised by the Guru, was carried out on the bed of the River Charan Ganga with the famous Hindu temple of Mata Naina Devi in the Shivaliks as the backdrop.

The Indian government eventually accorded it the status of a national festival.

On this three-day grand festival, mock battles, exhibitions, displays of weapons, etc. are held, followed by Kirtan, music and poetry competitions. The participants perform daring feats, such as Gatka (mock encounters with real weapons), tent pegging, bareback horse-riding, standing erect on two speeding horses and various other feats of bravery. There are also a number of Darbars where the Sri Guru Granth Sahib is present, and Kirtan and religious lectures take place.

On the last day a long procession, led by Panj Pyaras, starts from Takhat Keshgarh Sahib, one of the five Sikh religious seats, and passes through various important Gurdwaras like Qila Anandgarh, Lohgarh Sahib, Mata Jitoji and terminates at the starting place (Keshgarh Sahib). For people visiting Anandpur Sahib, langars (voluntary community kitchens) are organized by the local people as a part of seva (community service). Raw materials like



wheat flour, rice, vegetables, milk and sugar are provided by the villagers living nearby. Women volunteer to cook and others take part in cleaning utensils and other manual tasks that need to be carried out. Traditional cuisine is served to the pilgrims who eat while sitting in rows on the ground (Pangat).

Sikhs in large numbers still assemble at Anandpur Sahib on this day and an impressive and colorful procession is taken out in which the Nihangs, in their traditional panoply, form the vanguard while parading their skill in the use of arms, horsemanship, tent-pegging, and other war-like sports.

Originally known as Akalis, the Nihang Singhs are endearingly designated as Guru's Knights or the Guru's beloved. They still carry the military ambience and heroic style that was cultivated during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh. Nihangs constitute a distinctive order among the Sikhs and are readily recognized by their dark blue Bana and their ample Dumallas.

The most spectacular event at Hola Mahalla is the magnificent procession of Nihangs on horses and elephants and on foot carrying a variety of traditional and modern weapons and demonstrating their skill in using them.

The Hola Mahalla festival is unique and distinguishable from other festivals in that the Nihang have tried to preserve the traditional form and content as established during its inception, and strictly observed by the Akalis, for more than three centuries.

#### Highlights

- It is a yearly fair where Nihangs, renowned for their courageous acts dating back to the days of Ranjit Singh, demonstrate their martial arts skills in a distinctive yet traditional style.
- The Nihangs, adorned in their



ceremonial garb, show the people gathered, their astonishing feats of fighting, drills and 'gatka' or mock-battles.

- Daredevil acts like bareback horse-riding, standing upright on two speeding horses and many other such performances.
- Since the Hola Mohalla Festival is celebrated after Holi, the festival of colours is also celebrated during the three days.
- According to Guru Gobind Singh, "mostly during festivities of Hola Mohalla, a sword is often in

demand at Nanded, so each member in the ceremony (jaloos) must have one in his hand."

- An exciting part of the Sikh community is their cuisine. The Langars, which is a Sikh community kitchen, prepares delicious vegetarian food. Visitors enjoy their meal sitting together on Pangats.
- Visitors also enjoy a traditional line of Kirtans and Bhajans which are devotional songs and various religious lectures, music and poems.

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# Sikh History This Week

MARCH 22 TO MARCH 28

## 22nd March

1923 First declaration of the Babbar's owning the murders and open letter by the Babbar Akalis to Lt. Governor, Punjab, was issued in "Babbar Akali Doaba" newspaper.

1924 3rd Shahidi Jatha of 500 valiant Akali Satyagrahies, led by Sardar Santa Singh of Chuck No. 133, Sargodha, marched from Amritsar to Gangsar, Jaito.

1946 Akali Dal passed resolution for an independent Sikh State.

## 23rd March

Third attempt to kill Labh Singh Dhadda also aborts



1931 Bhagat Singh Shaheed was hanged to death in the Lahore central jail along with Shivram Rajguru and Sukhdeo. Shaheed BHAGAT SINGH: was one of the leader Sikh revolutionaries of the early 20th century who earned the fame of causing explosion in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi and of committing daring acts of killing British Police Officers. He and his associates were hanged on March 23rd of 1931. Their bodies were secretly cremated on the bank of the Satluj river near Ferozpur. The associated secrecy was to avoid public outcry and any subsequent outburst of violence.



1985 Sikh Women's Seminar was held in Toronto. The seminar's primary objective was to bring the Sikh women together, whereby they could discuss various issues facing the community. There was a need for such a forum where Sikh women could assemble, deliberate, and contribute toward the development of programs for the Sikh youth. The following papers were presented at the seminar: A Potrait of South Asian Canadian Women; Role of Women in Sikh Society; What is Leadership; Role of Sikh Women in Canadian Society; Role of Women in Sikh Leadership; and Participation of Sikh Women in Community Life.

## 24th March

1664 Guru Har Krishan Ji visited Aurangzeb's court. This is the time Guru Sahib visited Aurangzeb's

court, when Ram Rai emphatically declared that the decision of his father in selecting his younger brother as his successor to the pontificate of Guru Nanak was based on cogent reasons, and that he was now under the command of the new Guru.

1847 The British being aware of the Sikh's emotional and sentimental attachment to Golden Temple and other shrines, issued special instructions to the British subjects to be careful in maintaining the sanctity of the shrines.

1922 Meeting at Rajowal by Kishan Singh Gargaj group to devise ways and means of reforming the toadies

1945 Master Tara Singh denounces the Acharyae Formula.

## 25th March

1830 Baba Ratta Ji Nirankari was born.

1921 13th Sikh Education Conference was held in Hoshiarpur that and lasted until Mar. 27. This conference saw the rise of militant Akalis who advocated non-cooperation with the British government and were deeply inspired by Master Mota Singh. They met sperately and created disturbances in the conference as well as worked on a sperate program. They were equally patriotic believing in the militant traditions of the Nihangs.

1921 The militant Akalis hatched a conspiracy to murder the officials respobsinle for the Nanakana carnage. 1972 Mohan Singh Tur became President of Akali Party. 1981 The SGPC unanimously passed the resolution "Sikhs are a Nation." With the passing of such a resolution by the Sikh Parliament and with the ratification of this resolution by the Jathedar of the Akal Takht on April 21, 1981, the issue stood finally decided by the whole of the Sikh nation. On May 11, 1981, the Akali Party also passed a resolution to that effect.



1986 Surjit S. Barnala himself ordered firing at the Sikhs who were observing holy festival at Anandpur Sahib, killing several Sikhs.

## 26th March



1644 Gur Gadhi Diwas, Guru Har Rai Sahib Ji (1644).

1746 The forces of Yahiha Khan and Lakhapat Rai seized and set fire to the Kahnuwaan forest. 7,000 Singh were martyred here while another 3,000 were taken to Lahore and martyred there.

1746 Matta Sunder kaur Ji sent a mace of Kalgidhar to honor Jassa Singh Ahluwalia.



1748 Raja Amar Singh of Patiala was born. He was a thorough gentleman.

1923 Amar Singh, granthi of Kot Fatuhi, is arrested

## 27th March

1843 Raja Suchet Singh murdered. Raja Suchet Singh was brother of Raja Dhiyan Singh Dogra and Gulab Singh Jammu. He was a popular proponent of Sikh Raj. Sher-e-Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, personally bestowed the honor Raja on Suchet Singh.

1923 Hazara Singh Sirbrah of Behbalpur is murdered.

1924 The 4th shahihi jatha of 500 valiant Akali satyagrahies, led by Sardar Puran Singh Bahowal, marched from Anandpur Sahib to Gangsar, Jaito.

## 28th March

1552 Gur Gadhi Diwas, Sri Guru Amar Das Sahib.



1620 Guru Hargobind Ji had to marry Nanaki despite his refusal. This was an unfortunate upshot of the jubilation in Sikh community caused by Guru Sahib's release from seven years of incarceration. Within a few months two brides were pledged to him by their parents. Under the customs prevalent at that time, on Guru Hargobind's refusal, those girls would have remained unmarried throughout their life. So he had to marry Nanaki on March 28, 1620, and Mehrai also called Marwahi on July 10, 1620. The first incident occurred too close to his release. Taken aback at the second incident, he announced that no one should pledge his daughter to him in future.

1965 SGPC resolves at its general meeting to establish Punjabi Suba.



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# Phalgun Purnima: The most fortunate day of the year

Purnima's are considered the most fortunate days of the year, they are celebrated all over India in the name of Poonam, Poornima, and Poornamasi, and so on. On this holy occasion, most devotees keep a fast and worship Lord Vishnu. The word "Purnima" is a Sanskrit word that means "Full Moon." Hence, the full moon i.e the last day of every month in the Hindu Calendar is referred to as the Purnima.

The Phalgun Purnima occurs at the end of the Shukla Paksha in the month of Phalguna, which is also the last month of the year. The Phalgun Purnima marks the end of the Hindu Calendar and promises the beginning of a new year. Now that we have a basic idea as to what is, let us find out ahead why it is so important in the Hindu religion.

## Significance of Phalgun Purnima

As per the Hindu calendar, the Phalguna month is the last month of the year. Therefore, the Phalguna Purnima is considered highly significant in the Hindu religion, given the fact that it is the last day of the year. Holika Dahan, which is one of the biggest rituals in the Hindu religion, is celebrated on this very day. The day marks the arrival of spring and it is believed that on this day the Moon strongly influences the Planet Earth with its energies.

The day is the last full moon of the year and it is believed that if a devotee observes a fast and worships the moon and Lord Shri Hari Vishnu with all sincerity on this auspicious day, then he/she shall be free of all his past and present sins. Devotees all over the country worship Lord Shri Hari Vishnu on this day in order to obtain salvation. According to the Hindu religion, salvation is the ultimate destiny of human life on Earth.

The day of the Phalgun Purnima is also celebrated as the Laxmi Jayanti, which is the birth anniversary of the Goddess of fortune, wealth, and abundance, Goddess Laxmi. Considering the fact that so many occasions collide on this highly fortunate day, makes it one of the most important days in the Hindu religion.

## Fasting Method

Lord Narasimha, who is considered the fourth incarnation of Lord Shri Hari Vishnu, is worshipped on the day of the Phalgun Purnima. It is believed that worshipping Lord Narasimha, Lord Shri Hari Vishnu, and Goddess Laxmi on this auspicious day brings health, wealth, and prosperity into the house. Therefore, below mentioned is the Puja and fasting method that needs to be followed on the Phalgun Purnima in order to please Lord Shri Vishnu and Goddess Laxmi and obtain their blessings.

- Wake up early in the morning and take a bath with pure water.
- After the bath, wear clean clothes and worship Lord Vishnu.
- After the Puja, take a vow to keep a fast from sunrise to moonrise.
- Break the fast after the moon rises in the evening.
- Make sure your thoughts are positive on this day and that you do not hurt anyone's feelings.

## Puja Method

The Holika Dahan is the festival that marks the victory of good over evil. It is celebrated on the day of the Phalgun Purnima and is a very important festival for Hindus all over the world. In the next section we shall discuss the story behind the Holika Dahan, but before that let us take a look at the Holika puja method



that is to be followed on the Phalgun Purnima.

- Collect dry cow dung and wood sticks in an open space.
- Place the following items on a plate and offer them to Holika Mata: Kumkum, Rice, Turmeric, Henna, Gulal, Roli, Coconut, a Handful of Wheat, Lachha Cotton, a Lotus, some Flowers, and Garlands.
- Now light the wood sticks and cow dungs of fire, which is also called "Burning Holika."
- Chant the following mantra in the name of Lord Narsimha.

*"Om Nrisimhaye vidmahe vajranakhaya dhimahi tan no simhah Prachodayat"*

*Vajra nakhaya vidmahe tikshna damstraya dhimahi tan no narasimhah Prachodayat"*

Perform an aarti and circumambulate around Holika. Make the children circumambulate and take the blessings of their elders.

## Story Behind Phalgun Purnima

Thousands of years ago, during Satya Yuga, the kingdom of demons was ruled by King Hiranya Kashyap. The king of demons had made life miserable for everyone on Earth and caused a lot of trouble for everyone on the planet. He was so overconfident as he had asked for a boon from Lord Brahma after years of penance and meditation, which was granted to him. The boon was that Hiranya Kashyap shall never be killed by a man nor a woman, not an animal nor a bird, not during the day or during the night, not by a

supernatural weapon nor a hand weapon, not inside his palace nor outside his palace and finally not by a God nor by a demon. When he was granted this boon, it was as though he was immortal and he began believing himself to be the all mighty. Therefore, he ordered everyone in the kingdom to stop worshipping Lord Shri Hari Vishnu and start worshipping him instead, and that anyone who shall not agree to do so, shall be killed.

## The Fear Of Hiranyakashyap

Everyone in the kingdom began worshipping him out of the fear of death. However, Hiranyakashyap's own son, Prahlad was a sincere devotee of Lord Vishnu, and he continued to worship Lord Shri Hari Vishnu against the orders of his father. This infuriated Hiranyakashyap and he decided to have Prahlad, his own son killed. Nevertheless, Prahlad continued to worship Lord Vishnu and chanting the name of "Hari."

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

**"Everyone thinks how to become a better son or daughter, mother or father, brother or sister, husband or wife, and man or woman. But no one puts actual thoughts on that they are all HUMAN and how to become a better HUMAN. What can we do to learn how to be a better human? "**

**-- Arish K Sahani**



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CONTD FROM PAGE 1

## ED arrests Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

Singh have already been arrested in the same case. Telangana Chief Minister's daughter Kavitha has also been arrested in the case.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said that it has moved the Supreme Court to quash the arrest of Kejriwal and has asked for an urgent hearing after the Delhi High Court declined to grant him immediate protection.

AAP plans a big protest in Delhi. In order to foil the protest, Delhi Police on Friday, March 22 morning beefed up security with heavy personnel deployment and multi-layer barricading on roads leading to BJP headquarters where AAP leaders and workers will stage protest against the arrest of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Paramilitary personnel in anti-riot gear have also been deployed to maintain law and order situation in the area.

The traffic police have requested commuters to avoid routes leading to central Delhi in anticipation of huge gathering of AAP workers.

Roads leading to the BJP headquarters and ED office in central Delhi have been closed.

AAP leaders have asked party workers to reach the BJP headquarters and commence a protest at 10 am on Friday against Kejriwal's arrest.

In Punjab, Aam Aadmi Party plans big protests against Arvind Kejriwal's arrests on March 22. Party has asked its supporters to reach Amb Sahib Gurdwara by 12 noon, to start the protests. Amb Sahib Gurdwara is in Mohali. Chief Spokesperson of AAP, Punjab, Malvinder Singh Kang, said that volunteers have already started reaching Mohali for the protests. The protest will be led by the state unit's working president, Budh Ram. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann is leaving for Delhi to participate in protest there.

It is a developing story.

## Stormy Daniels says she is 'absolutely ready' to testify at Trump's hush money trial

Defense lawyers have attempted to prevent Daniels from serving as a witness at trial by arguing her testimony would be salacious and prejudicial to the jury. The judge overseeing the case, Juan Merchan, denied Trump's efforts this week in a ruling that cleared the way for testimony from Daniels, Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen, and two others who received hush-money payments ahead of the 2016 election.

Trump last April pleaded not guilty to a 34-count indictment charging him with falsifying business records in connection with a \$130,000 hush money payment Cohen made to Daniels just days before the 2016 presidential election.

Jury selection for the trial is currently scheduled to get underway in mid-April in New York City. The former president has denied all wrongdoing.

## U.S. urges 'immediate' ceasefire at UN as Gaza war grinds on

A new version circulated by the U.S. and seen by AFP, the agency says, stressed "the need for an immediate and durable ceasefire" to protect civilians and allow aid into the territory.

No vote has been scheduled on the text but Blinken told Saudi media outlet Al Hadath on Wednesday, March 20, that support for the resolution would send a "strong message".

The U.S. secretary of state, whose diplomatic push is running alongside mediation efforts in Qatar, will land in Israel on Friday.

The Qatar talks were considering a Hamas proposal for a six-week ceasefire to allow hostages to be exchanged for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel and increased aid deliveries.

But a senior Hamas official based in Lebanon, Osama Hamdan, said Israel's response had been "largely negative" and called it "a step backwards".

The U.S. and Israel are also engaged in a diplomatic tug-of-war over the southern Gaza city of Rafah, the last part of the territory still largely untouched by Israeli ground troops.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have fled to the city to escape fighting elsewhere, but Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted a ground incursion is the only way to finally root out Hamas.

U.S. officials said they supported Netanyahu's goal but wanted Israel to try strategies short of a potentially catastrophic invasion of an area where around 1.5 million people are hemmed in by the Egyptian border.

## INDIA bloc stands united behind Arvind Kejriwal

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and his predecessor Rahul Gandhi expressed their outrage without naming Mr. Kejriwal. Mr. Kharge, connecting Mr. Kejriwal's arrest to the freezing of Congress party's accounts, wrote on X that the BJP is trying to weaken the Opposition because though it is making false claims of victory each day, it is scared of the expected results.

Mr. Gandhi, in a similar vein, posted on X: "A scared dictator wants to create a dead democracy. If capturing all the institutions including the media, breaking up parties, extorting money from companies, freezing the accounts of the main opposition party was not enough for the "Asuri Shakti" (demonic power) now the arrest of the elected Chief Ministers has also become a common thing."

Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal called the arrest a "diversionary tactic" on a day when complete data on electoral bonds was released, which he said, will expose BJP's "extortion racket". Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said the Opposition is going into this election with its "hands and feet tied" and on a "playing field that is far from level".

He posted on X: "If a Model Code of

Conduct exists to prevent the government from taking decisions that could favor the ruling party, why would a similar code not apply to government departments like IT and ED, whose actions are directly interfering with the functioning of democracy?"

Senior Opposition leader and founder of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) Sharad Pawar strongly denounced the ED's action and said: "I strongly condemn the vindictive misuse of Central agencies to target the Opposition, especially as general elections loom. This arrest showcases the depth to which BJP will stoop for power. 'INDIA' stands united against this unconstitutional action against."

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said the latest arrest will only cement people's desire to defeat the BJP, defend democracy and the Indian Constitution. "All Opposition leaders who defected and joined the BJP are protected and patronized," he said. CPI general secretary D. Raja too called it a desperate action from the government. "They know the hollowness of their claims of 400 seats and that's why the Opposition is being targeted by abusing Central agencies," he said.

Senior Trinamool Congress leader Derek O' Brien pointed out that the ED's steps comes at a time when the Model Code of Conduct has just kicked in. Posting on X, he asked: "Earlier, his administrative powers were snatched through an illegal ordinance. How can we expect fair elections in India if sitting CMs & prominent opposition leaders are arrested weeks before polls? If SC & ECI fail to act now, who will stand with people against BJP's oppressive politics in future?"

## Pope repeats call to negotiate in Ukraine, Gaza

"Let us never forget, war is always a defeat. We cannot go forward during a war. We must make every effort to talk, to negotiate."

Francis sparked outrage with an interview broadcast earlier this month where, talking about Ukraine, he praised those who "have the courage to raise the white flag and negotiate". Kyiv - which has been fighting a Russian invasion for two years - reacted with outrage, recalling the Vatican's envoy and saying it would "never" surrender. (Source: AFP)

CONTD FROM PAGE 12

## Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Team Visits El Salvador to Survey Proposed Metro Line Project

The team engaged in detailed discussions and site inspections to assess the feasibility and optimization of various aspects of the metro line project such as route alignment, station design, signaling systems, rolling stock procurement, and safety protocols. The DMRC has also entered into a Non-Disclosure Agreement with Lakshmi Capital to elevate their collaboration and cooperation in the technical aspects of the project to a higher level. The team



also conducted a presentation for the officials of the Government of El Salvador to inform them about their working plan, their assessment of the survey and the proposed implementation of the metro project.

Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra also participated in the survey and played a crucial role in enhancing collaboration between the DMRC team, Lakshmi Capital, and the Government of El Salvador. During the welcoming of the delegation from the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation to El Salvador, he expressed confidence that the team's vast expertise, capabilities and experience in other countries would significantly contribute to advancing efforts to enhance public transportation infrastructure and improve connectivity in El Salvador. Appreciating the proactive approach of the Salvadoran government and their dedication to strengthening infrastructure in the country, he expressed gratitude for their confidence in India's capabilities. The DMRC team assured their commitment to sharing their knowledge and closely collaborating with partners to ensure the successful implementation of this transformative project. The Government of El Salvador welcomed the visit of the delegation and termed it as a significant step forward in an effort to enhance public transportation infrastructure and improve connectivity in El Salvador.

Following thorough technical discussions by the DMRC team, a Concession Agreement is scheduled to be signed in the first week of April 2024 with a goal to complete the project within 3-4 years. Technical expertise of DMRC will be vital in drafting the Concession Agreement and addressing financial aspects. Additionally, this visit will facilitate valuable exchanges of best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions for metro rail projects, enhancing collaboration between the parties. Furthermore, following the signing of the Concession Agreement, a delegation from the Government of El Salvador is scheduled to visit the DMRC office in New Delhi to gain firsthand experience of the metro train operations in the city.

# Khajuraho: The architectural masterpiece of India

**K**hajuraho, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in Madhya Pradesh, is known around the world for its stunning temples adorned by erotic and sensuous carvings. A small town located in the Bundelkhand region, Khajuraho is a brilliant example of Indian architecture and its culture back in the medieval period. The architecture of these Hindu and Jain temples depict the erotic forms of love, the carvings on the walls display passion in the most sensuous yet aesthetic ways. Built between 950 to 1050 AD the sheer confrontational nature of these carvings shows a stark paradox with the conventional Indian ideals about eroticism, leaving everybody spellbound.

Art in this small town is engrained in all of its structures and are a classic example of the finesse of India's cultural and artistic heritage. The best part about Khajuraho is that although scores of plunderers tried to destroy the whole complex, they could never succeed, even though they managed to reduce the number of temples and caves to 25 from a staggering 85 at the time it was created.

## Dulhadev Temple

Built in the year 1130 the Dulhadev Temple enshrines a beautiful shivalingam and striking sculptures of Apsaras and other ornamented figures. The temple also has a stunning sculpture of Lord Shiva with his wife Parvati, the intricate details of the carvings adding to the charm of the overall architecture.

## Kandariya Mahadev Temple

Built around 1025-1050 AD, this temple exudes grandeur and finesse in its architecture. With beautiful frescos of women in various postures adorning the walls of this temple, this place is one of the most stunning tourists sites in Khajuraho.



Kandariya Mahadev Temple has an artistically engraved shrine with over 800 images of women, most of which are more than 3 feet high. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and has a shivalingam at the centre of Garba Griha. Made of a typical sandstone structure, the artistic representation of eroticism on the walls of this temple are bound to give a new perspective on India's cultural heritage.

## Lakshman Temple

The oldest and most aesthetically

pleasing temples among the Western group of Temples, the Lakshman temple is named after the ruler of that time. The trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is depicted in the horizontal beam over the entrance of the temple.

## Parsvanath temple

This temple is the largest among the Eastern group of temples and has intricately detailed carvings on its walls. The most intriguing side of the architecture of this temple is the aesthetic

blend of Hindu, muslim and Buddhist styles.

The highlights of the temple are the sculptures on the northern outer walls.

## Vishwanath Temple

Dedicated to Lord Shiva, this temple is one among the western group of temples. It has a beautiful marble shivalinga as the main deity. An imposing image of Brahma is also housed in this temple. A massive sculpture of Nandi the Bull is also enshrined alongside the Shivalingam.



# History This Week

MARCH 22 - MARCH 28

**MARCH 22**



March 22, 1972 - The Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed by the U.S. Senate and then sent to the states for ratification. The ERA, as it became known, prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender, stating, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," and that "the Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." Although 22 of the required 38 states quickly ratified the Amendment, opposition arose over concerns that women would be subject to the draft and combat duty, along with other legal concerns. The ERA eventually failed (by 3 states) to achieve ratification despite an extension of the deadline to June 1982.

**MARCH 23**



March 23, 1775 - Patrick Henry ignited the American Revolution with a speech before the Virginia convention in Richmond, stating, "I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"

**MARCH 24**



March 24, 1934 - The Philippine Islands

in the South Pacific were granted independence by President Franklin D. Roosevelt after nearly 50 years of American control.

March 24, 1989 - One of the largest oil spills in U.S. history occurred as the oil tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound off Alaska, resulting in 11 million gallons of oil leaking into the natural habitat over a stretch of 45 miles.



Birthday - Harry Houdini (1874-1926) was born (as Erik Weisz) in Budapest, Hungary. He came to the U.S. with his family as an infant and lived in New York City. He began as a Coney Island magician, then became a world famous escape artist, known for escaping from chains, handcuffs, straightjackets, locked boxes and milk cans filled with water. He died on Halloween 1926 from a burst appendix and was buried in Queens, NY.

**MARCH 25**

March 25, 1807 - The British Parliament abolished the slave trade following a long campaign against it by Quakers and others.



March 25, 1911 - A raging fire erupted inside a garment factory in New York City killing 123 young women employed as low-paid seamstresses, along with 23 men. The fast-spreading flames engulfed the 8th and 9th floors of the Triangle

Shirtwaist Company in lower Manhattan in just a few minutes. About 50 of the victims had jumped to their deaths rather than perish from the flames. The sensational tragedy spurred national interest concerning the rights of mostly-immigrant women workers of the New York garment industry who labored long hours six or seven days a week in cramped, dangerous conditions for about \$5 weekly pay.

**MARCH 26**



March 26, 1979 - The Camp David Accord ended 30 years of warfare between Israel and Egypt. Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed the treaty of mutual recognition and peace, fostered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

March 26, 1992 - Soviet Cosmonaut Serge Krikalev returned to a new country (Russia) after spending 313 days on board the Mir Space Station. During his stay in space, the Soviet Union (USSR) collapsed and became the Commonwealth of Independent States.



Birthday - American playwright Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) was born in Columbus, Mississippi. His works featured Southern settings and include; The Glass Menagerie, Night of the Iguana, and two Pulitzer Prize winning plays, A Streetcar Named Desire and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof .

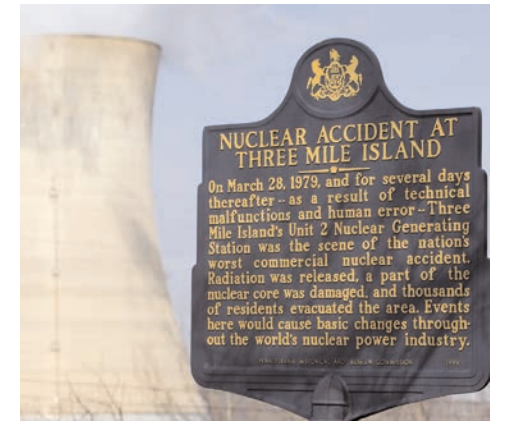
**MARCH 27**



March 27, 1977 - The worst accident in the history of civil aviation occurred as two Boeing 747 jets collided on the

ground in the Canary Islands, resulting in 570 deaths.

**MARCH 28**



March 28, 1979 - Near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident occurred in which uranium in the reactor core overheated due to the failure of a cooling valve. A pressure relief valve then stuck causing the water level to plummet, threatening a catastrophic nuclear meltdown. The accident resulted in the release of radioactive steam into the atmosphere, and created a storm of controversy over the necessity and safety of nuclear power plants.



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Achanta Sharath Kamal and MC Mary Kom (R).

## Sharath chosen as flagbearer for Paris, Mary chef de mission

Veteran table tennis player and reigning CWG champion Sharath Kamal will be India's flagbearer at the Paris Olympics while legendary boxer MC Mary Kom was today appointed the chef de mission of the country's contingent.

The 41-year-old table tennis player symbolises "the unity and spirit of our contingent as they compete on the Olympic stage", the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) said in a statement.

"It has been an unbelievable three weeks," Kamal said. "From not even sure of an Olympics berth to playing the way I did in Singapore last week, jumping 54 spots in the rankings, to being named India's flagbearer," he added. Kamal was India's flagbearer at the closing ceremony of the 2022 Birmingham CWG, where he won three gold medals.

Six-time world champion Mary Kom, bronze medallist at the 2012 London Olympics, will be assisted by luger Shiva Keshavan, who has been appointed the deputy chef de mission.

Olympics bronze medallist Gagan Narang will oversee India's operations at the shooting range, which is afar from the main venues.

IPL 17

# CSK, Mumbai get new captains as Pant returns after over a year

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The never-ending speculation surrounding Mahendra Singh Dhoni's retirement, Virat Kohli's 16-year drought, the second chance that life has offered Rishabh Pant and Rohit Sharma's World Cup agony will make for intriguing subplots in the Indian Premier League (IPL) beginning on March 22.

Known to do the unexpected, Dhoni stepped down as Chennai Super Kings' captain on the eve of the IPL opener against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, handing over the reins to Ruturaj Gaikwad, a man he mentored for the leadership role. "We have been working hard to prepare leaders. We have been slow on life after MS Dhoni. But trusting the youngsters has paid off well for us. I have already had a word with the youngsters like Rutu about leadership and captaincy. It is a great opportunity for him to lead the team," CSK coach Stephen Fleming said.

Delhi Capitals' Pant, back from the brink after a life-threatening accident, will be desperate to show the world that he can still hit those one-handed sixes with elan.

Rohit will be the last person to show his scars hidden behind his typical Mumbaikar nonchalance as he gets down to enjoying his



From left: LSG's skipper KL Rahul, SRH's Pat Cummins, PBKS' vice-captain Jitesh Sharma, KKR's Shreyas Iyer (sitting), CSK's Ruturaj Gaikwad, DC's Rishabh Pant, MI's Hardik Pandya (sitting), RCB's Faf du Plessis, GT's Shubman Gill and RR's Sanju Samson with the trophy. PTI

evening dates at the Wankhede albeit without the captain's title. The partisan crowd would, nonetheless, look forward to his trademark pull shots.

For other captains, they need to win the on-field games but Hardik Pandya needs to win the dressing room too. There will be seniors with bruised egos, knowing that a shot at leadership has bypassed them. They could well be difficult to handle.

As for Kohli, he would be in pursuit of that elusive jewel in his crown. By his own admission, he has been longing for a big title and his own passionate approach to the

game would be a key factor in deciding whether the RCB men manage to emulate the women this year. A bigger prize is also at stake for at least 10 to 12 other players, who will be vying for eight slots on the New York-bound flight that will take off at the end of May for the T20 World Cup in the USA and the Caribbean.

There will be unbelievable comebacks by some; a few new stars will emerge; there will also be those usual rags-to-riches stories and all of it could unfold in a matter of four minutes, the time it takes to deliver one over.

Source: Agencies

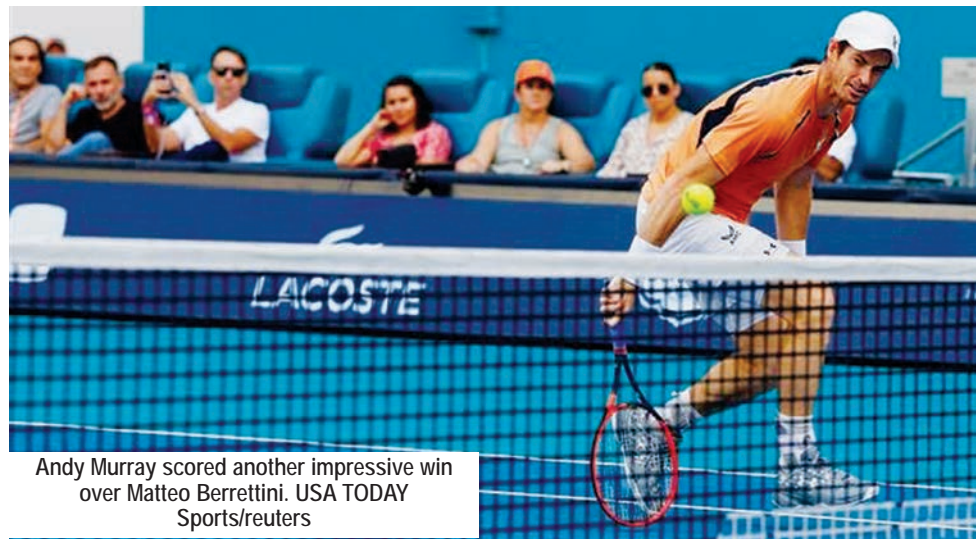
## Miami open: Murray has last laugh vs Berrettini, again

Andy Murray won another lengthy match with Matteo Berrettini, who appeared weary and leaned on his racquet to keep his balance during Murray's 4-6 6-3 6-4 victory at the Miami Open.

Playing his first match on the ATP Tour this season, Berrettini was serving with Murray leading 5-2 in the second set when he seemed to become dizzy, resting his racquet on the court to hold himself up. He was visited by a medical attendant, who checked his blood pressure before play continued.

Berrettini left the court after dropping that set but was able to finish the match, which lasted 2 hours and 49 minutes. It was a rematch of Murray's 6-3 6-3 4-6 6-7(7) 7-6 (10-6) victory that lasted nearly five hours in the first round of the 2023 Australian Open.

"It was obviously a great win for me,"



Andy Murray scored another impressive win over Matteo Berrettini. USA TODAY Sports/reuters

Murray said. "Started off a little bit slow but then I did think I played pretty well across then end of the first set through to the end of the match."

Naomi Osaka, a two-time US Open champion, beat Elisabetta Cocciaretto 6-3 6-4 in her return to Miami. The runner-up to Iga Swiatek in her last appearance

in 2022 advanced to face No. 15 seed Elina Svitolina in the second round. Elsewhere, Sloane Stephens celebrated her 31st birthday by beating Angelique Kerber 6-2 6-3. Donna Vekic beat Karolina Pliskova 6-4 2-6 6-2; and Americans Danielle Collins and Shelby Rogers advanced with three-set victories.

### Heartbroken Aryna asks for privacy

Aryna Sabalenka said her "heart is broken" by the death of Konstantin Koltsov, asking for privacy for herself and the family of the former Belarusian hockey player she had dated. Koltsov died Monday, days before the second-ranked Sabalenka was set to begin play in the Miami Open. "Konstantin's death is an unthinkable tragedy, and while we were no longer together, my heart is broken," Sabalenka said in a statement.

Source: AP



## 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**



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In 2018 Prasanth, Sushanth and Nisanth were diagnosed and treated for Prematurity Retinopathy. An illness in premature babies which can cause blindness.

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