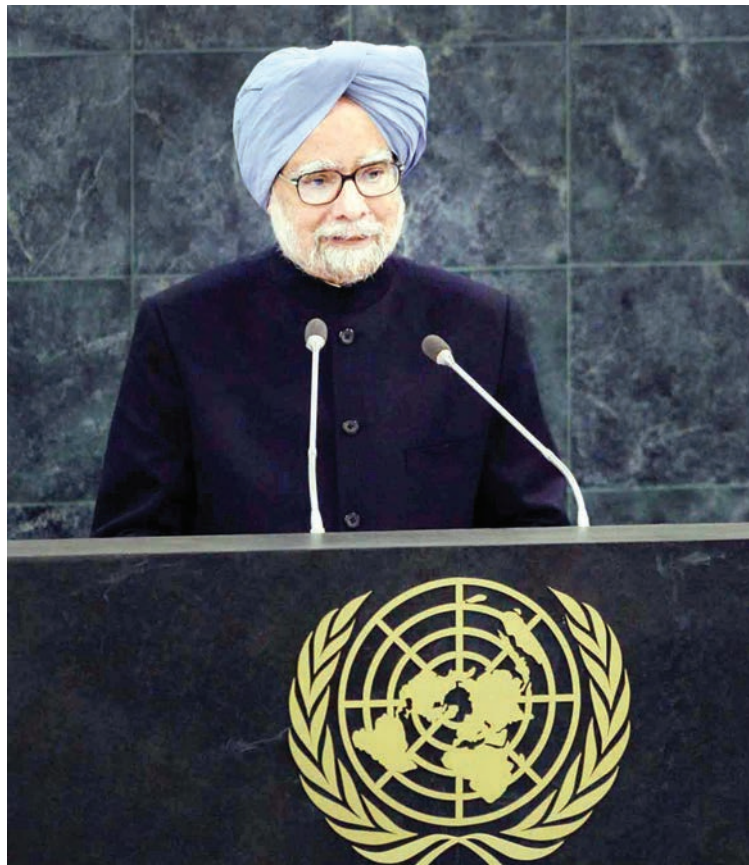




'A true friend': World leaders pay homage to Manmohan Singh



Dr. Manmohan Singh addressing UNGA Photo / Jay Mandal-on assignment

"MANMOHAN SINGH WAS AN OUTSTANDING STATESMAN": PUTIN
"HIS ECONOMIC REFORMS SPURRED INDIA'S RAPID GROWTH, AND HIS LEGACY WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED" : BLINKEN

DECEMBER 29, 2024

NEW DELHI / NEW YORK (TIP): World leaders came forward to pay glowing tributes to former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh with French President calling him "a true friend", while Russian President Vladimir Putin hailing him as "an outstanding statesman" who made a major personal contribution to strengthening friendly ties between the two countries.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken described Singh as one of the "greatest champions" of the US-India strategic partnership. Highlighting his pivotal role in advancing the US-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, Blinken said, "Dr Singh's work laid the foundation for much of what our countries have accomplished together in the past two decades. His economic reforms spurred India's rapid growth, and his legacy will always be remembered."

"At home, Dr Singh will be remembered for his economic reforms that spurred India's rapid economic growth. We mourn Dr Singh's passing and will always remember his dedication to bringing the United States and India closer together." It was during Singh's term in 2008 that India secured the civil nuclear deal with the US, which enabled the

CONTD ON PAGE 96

NOTICE
The INDIAN PANORAMA
Will bring out a profusely illustrated edition to mark the 76th Republic Day of India. Articles and advertisements are invited which may please be submitted to salujaindra@gmail.com by January 16, 2025. For any questions, please email or call 646-247-9458.

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Trump says he's 'believer in H-1B' visas; Quashes opposition to program



I have many H-1B visas on my properties. I've been a believer in H-1B. I have used it many times", Trump said in a phone interview with New York Post

DECEMBER 29, 2024 WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): President-elect Donald Trump has declared that he is a "believer in H-1B" visas, quashing the opposition to the programme for qualified professionals to work in the US that pitted the right-wing fringe against his advisers Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy.

"It's a great program," he told the New York Post in a phone interview on Saturday, December 28.

He said, "I've always liked the visas, I have always been in favor of the visas. That's why we have them."

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Biden and Trump lead tributes to 'extraordinary' Jimmy Carter after death



Jimmy Carter displays the Nobel Peace Prize File photo

DECEMBER 29, 2024 WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Joe Biden and Donald Trump have led tributes to former US President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Jimmy Carter, who has died aged 100.

Carter, who lived longer than any president in history, died on Sunday, December 29 afternoon at his home in Plains, Georgia.

Biden described him as "a man of principle, faith and humility," while Trump said all Americans owe Carter a "debt of gratitude".

Carter rose from a peanut farmer to become president in 1977, before being

forced out of the White House after just one four-year term when Ronald Reagan stormed to victory in the next election.

CONTD ON PAGE 96

Diljit Dosanjh dedicates Guwahati concert to Manmohan Singh



Diljit Dosanjh on Instagram shared his feelings for late Dr. Manmohan Singh. He wrote, "I bow my head in front of a man who loved his country and spent his life serving it". -File photo

DECEMBER 29, 2024 GUWAHATI (TIP): Punjabi singing sensation Diljit Dosanjh dedicated his concert to former prime minister Manmohan Singh, who died on the night of December 26.

CONTD ON PAGE 96





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COMMENT

Farewell to 2024 and Welcome to 2025:
Reflections and Expectations

As 2024 draws to a close, it is a moment of both reflection and anticipation—a time to evaluate the successes and setbacks of the past year and to look forward with cautious optimism to what 2025 might bring. The year gone by has been one of contrasts, marked by significant achievements as well as persistent challenges. From groundbreaking technological advancements to deepening geopolitical tensions, 2024 has left an indelible mark on the global stage. Let us take a closer look at the year's highlights and pitfalls before venturing into what the future may hold.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024**TECHNOLOGICAL BREAKTHROUGHS**

2024 witnessed unprecedented advancements in technology, particularly in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and renewable energy. AI technologies continued to revolutionize industries, from healthcare to education, enabling faster diagnostics and personalized learning experiences. Renewable energy projects reached new heights, with solar and wind farms delivering record outputs, making strides toward combating climate change.

GLOBAL HEALTH PROGRESS

Despite ongoing challenges, 2024 marked significant improvements in global health. The development of innovative vaccines and treatments for emerging diseases highlighted humanity's resilience and scientific ingenuity. Global collaboration through organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) demonstrated the power of unity in addressing health crises.

SPACE EXPLORATION

Space exploration reached new milestones in 2024, with multiple successful missions to the Moon and Mars. Private companies collaborated with national space agencies, pushing the boundaries of human potential. The discovery of promising evidence of microbial life on Mars captured the imagination of millions.

CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

The post-pandemic cultural revival

continued to gain momentum, with arts, literature, and cinema experiencing a renaissance. Festivals, exhibitions, and performances became platforms for cultural exchange, fostering understanding and creativity across borders.

THE CHALLENGES OF 2024**GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS**

Geopolitical conflicts deepened in 2024, with several regions experiencing prolonged instability. The war in Eastern Europe persisted, causing immense human suffering and economic disruption. Tensions in the South China Sea escalated, leading to concerns over potential flashpoints in the Indo-Pacific region.

ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

While some economies thrived, others struggled with mounting debt, inflation, and unemployment. Wealth inequality widened, exacerbating social unrest in both developed and developing nations. Efforts to address these issues often fell short, underscoring the need for more equitable policies.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change continued to pose an existential threat, with extreme weather events becoming more frequent and devastating. From wildfires in North America to flooding in South Asia, 2024 served as a stark reminder of the urgent need for collective action to mitigate environmental damage.

GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

The global refugee crisis reached alarming levels, driven by conflicts, economic instability, and climate-induced displacement. Countries grappled with the challenge of balancing humanitarian responsibilities with domestic concerns, often leading to polarizing debates and strained resources.

WHAT LIES AHEAD IN 2025?**GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS**

The year 2025 will likely see continued efforts to resolve longstanding conflicts. Diplomatic engagements, peace talks, and multilateral negotiations are

BY
INDRAJIT SALUJA

expected to gain momentum, though progress may be slow and fraught with challenges. The global community will need to prioritize dialogue over confrontation to address pressing security issues.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND INNOVATION

As the global economy stabilizes, 2025 may bring opportunities for inclusive growth. Investments in technology, infrastructure, and education could drive job creation and reduce inequalities. However, governments and organizations must remain vigilant against economic shocks and work toward sustainable development.

CLIMATE ACTION

2025 is poised to be a pivotal year for climate action. The implementation of commitments made at the COP30 summit in 2024 will be closely watched. Transitioning to green energy, preserving biodiversity, and strengthening disaster preparedness will remain key priorities for nations and communities worldwide.

TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

Technological innovation will likely accelerate in 2025, shaping industries and societies in unprecedented ways. AI, quantum computing, and biotechnologies are expected to open new frontiers, though ethical and regulatory challenges will need to be addressed to ensure responsible use.

GLOBAL HEALTH AND EQUITY

The fight against pandemics and endemic diseases will continue, with greater emphasis on universal healthcare access. Collaborative efforts to strengthen healthcare systems and address mental health issues will be critical for building a healthier and more equitable world.

A HOPEFUL OUTLOOK FOR 2025

Despite the uncertainties, 2025 holds the promise of progress and renewal. The lessons of 2024—resilience in the face of adversity, the power of innovation, and the importance of global cooperation—provide a foundation for optimism. Humanity's capacity for adaptation and ingenuity has been proven time and again, and it is this spirit that will drive us forward.

As we welcome 2025, let us commit to building a better, more compassionate world. May this new year bring peace to conflict-ridden regions, prosperity to struggling communities, and hope to all corners of the globe. Together, let us strive for a future that upholds the values of justice, equality, and sustainability—a world where every individual can thrive and contribute to the greater good.

Here's to a brighter, happier, and more harmonious 2025!

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Dr. Manoj Kumar
MohapatraAmbassador of India to Guatemala,
Honduras, and El Salvador

New Year Message

Dear Readers,

As we bid farewell to 2024 and welcome the dawn of 2025, I extend my warmest greetings to each one of you. A new year brings with it fresh aspirations, opportunities, and possibilities, and I am optimistic about the journey ahead.

The year 2024 holds special significance as it stands as a testament to the ever-strengthening bonds among the three countries under my jurisdiction - Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. In 2024, India's presence in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador was notably impactful, marked by robust diplomatic engagements and significant contributions in areas such as commercial and cultural ties.

Beyond diplomacy, India's engagement in the Central American region in 2024 has extended to impactful commercial initiatives and infrastructure projects. Guided by Prime Minister Modi's vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas, the Embassy actively collaborated with Indian companies such as SRAM & MRAM, Lakshmi Capital, Jio Platforms Ltd., Ashok Leyland, and C-DOT to execute transformative infrastructural projects in the region. These included the construction of a 22-kilometer metro line in San Salvador, the introduction of 5G technology in El Salvador and Honduras, the supply of buses to El Salvador, and the implementation of early warning systems and cybersecurity solutions in El Salvador. Guatemala has also witnessed significant investments from Indian firms, notably Yash Pakka Inc.'s \$500 million and Pearl Global's \$300 million, leveraging the country's strategic location as a gateway to the Western Hemisphere. The growing presence of major BPO companies such as HCL, TCS, and 24X7 has created substantial employment opportunities, further solidifying Guatemala's potential as a hub for enterprises targeting the U.S. market. Additionally, the launch of the Mega Tuk Tuk Minidor, supported by the Embassy in collaboration with Force Motors, underscored innovation in urban transportation and highlighted India's commitment to fostering sustainable solutions in the region.

This year marked significant achievements in fostering people-to-people connections. Highlights included organizing one of Latin America's largest Yoga events, with approximately 5,000 participants, and celebrating Indian festivals such as Holi with around 300 locals and Diwali with nearly 700 attendees in Guatemala City. The Embassy also hosted a Film Festival 2024, screening Indian movies in ten cities across Guatemala, enhancing cultural ties. In addition, we supported local Guatemalan communities by organizing free eye and health camps and donating essential medicines in collaboration with partners. A major milestone was the signing of a MoU on Tiger and Jaguar Conservation between the Governments of India and Guatemala, setting the stage for innovative wildlife protection initiatives.

As we look ahead to 2025, I am confident that the coming year will bring further progress and fresh initiatives, deepening India's presence and partnerships in the region. As we look forward to the upcoming year, let us wholeheartedly embrace the opportunities for collaboration and friendship, fostering an environment where ideas thrive and partnerships grow. Our collective journey is a testament to progress and mutual support, and in 2025, we are eager to build on the achievements of 2024, further deepening the bonds that unite us.

I extend a warm and heartfelt invitation to all members of the Indian diaspora worldwide to attend the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), which will be held in the vibrant city of Bhubaneswar, Odisha on 8-9 January 2025. This year's PBD holds special significance for me as it is being celebrated in my home state, a land renowned for its rich cultural heritage, stunning natural beauty, and timeless traditions. It is a matter of great pride and joy for me to personally invite you to this grand event that not only commemorates the invaluable contributions of our diaspora but also strengthens the bond between India and its global community. Odisha offers a unique opportunity for you to experience its famed hospitality, exquisite cuisine, and iconic landmarks such as the Sun Temple in Konark, the Jagannath Temple in Puri, and the serene Chilika Lake.

The Indian Panorama remains a shining symbol of the Indian diaspora's cultural and informational heritage, thriving at the vibrant core of New York. As a leading weekly publication, it bridges the Indian community with its roots, delivering a diverse range of news, insights, and stories that resonate deeply with its readers. I extend my heartfelt wishes to The Indian Panorama for its continued success, inspiring and educating its audience with many more enriching articles.

May the New Year bring joy, prosperity, and success to all of you. As we turn the pages of 2025, let us write them with the ink of unity and shared accomplishments.

Wishing you and your loved ones a year filled with peace, happiness, and significant achievements. Happy New Year!

Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra

Amb Parvathaneni Harish
Permanent Representative

संयुक्त राष्ट्र स्थित भारत का स्थायी मिशन
न्यूयॉर्क
PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

12 December 2024

MESSAGE

At the outset, I congratulate Indian Panorama for bringing out its Special New Year Edition.

I am happy to note that Permanent Mission of India was able to drive forward a broad range of engagements and activities, in pursuance of India's priorities in the United Nations (UN), throughout 2024. The high point of India-UN engagement during the year was the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take part in the deliberations of the Summit Of The Future in September 2024. He highlighted India's human-centric approach in its impressive SDG journey, through localization, pivoted on human welfare, food and health security.

Reformed multilateralism continued to be a focus. Challenges in effectively responding to critical global issues underscore the pressing need for UN Security Council reforms and revitalization of the UN General Assembly. It is imperative that the existing UN framework is made fit for purpose, reflective of current global realities and world order.

India was a leading voice, championing the development needs of the Global South. On questions of climate change and financing for development, India underlined the needs of countries in special situations, particularly those Small Island Developing States and developing country economies which bear the brunt of unsustainable debts. We demonstrated our commitment to our friends in the Global South through the implementation of demand-driven projects, with a tangible impact on the daily lives of common people, across sectors.

At a time when the world is marred by multiple conflicts and growing tensions, India, along with a core group of partner countries, anchored the unanimous adoption of the resolution on declaration of 21 December as World Meditation Day. A signature event was organized by the Mission on 20 December 2024 to commemorate the special occasion.

Looking ahead, the world leaders have laid out a roadmap in the Pact For The Future and the Global Digital Compact towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. In the spirit of India's civilizational dictum of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, "the whole world is one family" my team and I shall contribute our best in this endeavor.

I wish the readers of Indian Panorama good health, happiness and prosperity in 2025.

Happy New Year!

(P. Harish)

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PROF. INDRAJIT S SALUJA,
CHIEF EDITOR AND THE STAFF OF

The INDIAN PANORAMA
EVER TRUTHFUL

WISH OUR PATRONS
A HAPPY NEW YEAR

भारत का प्रधान कौंसल
न्यू यार्क



CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA
NEW YORK

December 9, 2024

MESSAGE

On this occasion of New Year, I wish all the readers of The Indian Panorama a very happy and prosperous 2025. I am glad that I have been given this opportunity to present my message in the New Year Special Edition.

The Indian Panorama's efforts to serve the NRIs and Indian Americans for Asian News, Immigration and Diaspora News in the United States is extraordinary, and I would like to congratulate the team for their contribution to the community. It is commendable that to see how The Indian Panorama embraced the digital age under the leadership of Prof. Saluja, reflecting a commitment to ensure timely access to relevant information for its readers.

Today, India is in a unique position. It is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, a rising power on the global stage, and has an untapped demographic dividend. The Indian Panorama's important efforts to inform the Indian diaspora population about new developments and happenings pertaining to India is pre-eminent.

Once again, I extend my heartiest greetings and best wishes for the New Year and hope that the Indian Panorama keeps on disseminating objective news and connecting people across the world.

Binaya S. Pradhan
(Binaya S. Pradhan)

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THOMAS R. SUOZZI
Representative
(D-NY 3rd District)
The US House of
Representatives

Message

Happy New Year! As we step into this new year, I wish peace, health, and happiness for all my friends in the Indian community. Your friendship and unwavering support are invaluable to me, and I'm excited about the prospect of deepening our connections and forming new alliances in the year ahead.

I want to express my sincere thanks to my friends at The Indian Panorama for their exemplary work and fair coverage throughout the years. Your support has been a tremendous encouragement, and I eagerly anticipate collaborating closely with you to achieve our shared goals in the coming year. Together, we can make a positive impact!"

Tom Suozzi

रमेश बाबू लक्ष्मणन
Ramesh Babu Lakshmanan



भारत का प्रधान कौंसल
अटलांटा
Consul General of India,
Atlanta

December 13, 2024



MESSAGE

Through this special edition of Indian Panorama, I extend my warmest greetings and best wishes to all readers and the team of The Indian Panorama.

Since its inception, Indian Panorama's efforts have strengthened the connection between the Indian-American community and their heritage, fostering unity and pride. The Indian diaspora continues to make significant contributions across diverse fields, including technology, academia, business, and public service. Their achievements not only bring pride to our nation but also underscore the values and resilience that define our community. These achievements are a testament to the enduring spirit and commitment of the Indian community, and The Indian Panorama plays an essential role in highlighting these accomplishments.

The year 2024 has been a transformative period for India, marked by remarkable advancements in areas such as digital innovation, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and sustainability. These milestones reflect the country's dynamic growth and its commitment to a brighter future.

The Consulate remains steadfast in its dedication to the welfare of the Indian diaspora. We are committed to addressing the needs of our community, strengthening cultural ties, and fostering collaboration that benefits both India and the USA.

Looking ahead to 2025, I warmly wish *The Indian Panorama* continued success. To all readers, may the New Year bring prosperity, joy, and success in all your pursuits.

Ramesh Babu Lakshmanan
(Ramesh Babu Lakshmanan)
Consul General



भारत का प्रधान कौंसल
ह्यूस्टन
CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA
HOUSTON

December 18, 2024

Message

I would like to congratulate the Indian Panorama for bringing out this elaborately illustrated Special Edition on the occasion of New Year 2025. Indian Panorama serves as a vibrant link between the Indian community in the USA.

Year 2024 has seen continued momentum of upsurge in the India-US relations with successful visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to the USA in September 2024. The Consulate General of India in Houston has also organized various events highlighting the mutual potential and opportunities for business, academic and other people-to-people connect between both the countries. The dynamic Indian American Community in the US is a strong pillar in strengthening the bilateral relations between our countries. We look forward to their continued support for our events and activities.

I also take this opportunity to extend seasons greetings and best wishes for everyone for a Happy New Year 2025.

D.C. Manjunath
(D.C. Manjunath)

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**SANT CHATWAL,
PADMA BHUSHAN
NEW YORK**

Message

My dear Professor Saluja,

I am glad to know that the Indian Panorama is bringing out a special edition on the occasion of the New Year. Congratulations!

The year 2024 has seen many ups and downs. We have watched nations develop and grow. India, in particular, has shown great potential for growth, notwithstanding the murky politics of the country and the weird views of the politicians.

We have had conflicts which caused a lot of pain to humanity. The war between Russia and Ukraine, and the Israeli-Palestinian / Hamas conflict have caused colossal loss of life and brought misery to millions while the world watched helplessly.

We saw some of our great men and women gone. The latest has been Dr. Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India, with whom I have had close contacts. He was a great man who had the vision to save the sinking ship of India. In fact, he is the father of the modern open economy of India. I am glad I was a part of the team assisting him in convincing the US to sign the nuclear deal with India. Dr. Manmohan Singh's death is a personal loss to me. However, we have to move on despite what we have lost. So, in that spirit, I wish readers and patrons of your newspaper a very Happy New Year.

The Indian Panorama is doing a great service to the Indian American community in the United States, and I would like to congratulate and thank the team for their service.

I wish all a Happy New Year, and The Indian Panorama, a continued success.

Sant Chatwal



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From Dr. Sudhir Parikh
Chairman, Parikh Worldwide Media, ITV Gold

Subject: Congratulatory Letter for Indian Panorama New Year special issue

I have seen Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja, Chief Editor of Indian Panorama, build this news outlet over many years. Since it was founded in 2006, Indian Panorama has sought to highlight news about the Indian immigrant community in the United States and its contributions to this country.

Today, this New York based English language digital weekly newspaper continues to inform the public about the achievements and activities of the Indian and Indian – American community, and their issues and future.

We, at Parikh Worldwide Media and ITV Gold salute Prof. Saluja and Indian Panorama for their efforts and wish them all the best for the future.

Padma Shri Dr. Sudhir Parikh, MD
Chairman & Publisher- Parikh Worldwide Media



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**HARRY BOLLA
CEO, BOLLA OIL CORP.
NEW YORK**



Message

Dear Professor, Saluja,

I am delighted to congratulate you on the release of the New Year special edition of The Indian Panorama.

It is truly heartening to see your publication continue its invaluable work of informing and educating the communities, particularly the Indian-American community, and serving as a vital bridge between the United States and India. Through your insightful coverage, you foster greater understanding and connection between the two nations, as well as between ethnic and mainstream communities.

Your commitment to this noble cause has been evident throughout 2024. The publication's efforts to highlight both the achievements and challenges faced by these communities are commendable. Notably, your coverage of the progress in cultural exchanges, technological collaborations, and the strengthening of bilateral ties between the US and India has been exemplary. At the same time, you have been a voice for those in need, shedding light on painful events like natural disasters, conflicts, and other moments of adversity. These efforts help bring people together, inspire hope, and promote resilience.

As we bid farewell to 2024, we acknowledge the hardships that have left a mark on us. Yet, despite the pain and loss, it is crucial to move forward with optimism and courage. The year 2025 brings with it new opportunities, hope, and the promise of a brighter future for all.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to you and your entire team for your unwavering dedication to this mission. Your efforts are truly making a difference, and I look forward to seeing your continued success in the coming year.

Happy New Year!
Harry Bolla



**NAVEEN SHAH CPA
PRESIDENT & CEO
NAVIKA CAPITAL GROUP**



Message

I am happy to know that The Indian Panorama is continuing its tradition of bringing out a New Year special edition. It is always a pleasure to see the publication offer insightful content and celebrate the spirit of the New Year in such a meaningful way. The Indian Panorama has been a valuable source of information and education, particularly for the Indian American community, shedding light on issues that matter most in their lives. Serving as a bridge between India and the US, as well as between Indian Americans and other ethnic and mainstream communities, The Indian Panorama has over the years gained recognition in wider circles across America, fostering better understanding of India and its people.

The newspaper has consistently projected Indian values and culture, helping broaden the scope of India's presence globally.

I congratulate Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja and the entire team of The Indian Panorama for the exceptional services they are rendering to the community. Their dedication continues to play a crucial role in strengthening the bonds between India and the US.

Happy New Year!
Naveen Shah



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January 1, 2025

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

Dear Friends,

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

As we celebrate the holiday season and bid farewell to 2024, we take this time to reflect on all the successes of the past year and look forward to the future with renewed hope and optimism. A brighter future lies ahead!

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

As we enter 2025, we look forward to building on the last year of achievement together, and we look to chart a path forward so that we emerge a stronger community and a better New York for all. As your New York State Legislator, and the Chair of the Committee on NYC Education, I will continue to push for public policies that improve the quality of our public education system, and commit to supporting programs and services that uplift our diverse communities in the new year and beyond.

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

Sincerely,



**New York State Assemblywoman
Jenifer Rajkumar**

Dear Indian Panorama readers,

In 2020, I made history when I became the first Indian-American woman elected to State Office in New York. Not only did we win, we won by the largest margin of any challenger in New York State in 2020.



I made history again in 2023 when I passed the historic Diwali School Holiday bill, enshrining the Diwali School Holiday into law forever.

As we reflect on 2024, we celebrate twelve months of historic milestones. This year, for the first time in history, all New York City schools closed in observance of Diwali. This is a monumental achievement that I was proud to deliver for our community. For generations to come, New York City will come together and observe Diwali.

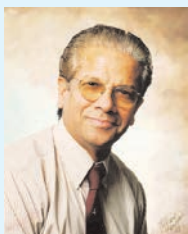
This year also marked the launch of my New York Asian American and Pacific Islander Commission that I created in Albany. The commission is now getting to work developing solutions for our safety, economic wellbeing, health, and political engagement.

I also successfully lobbied to bring the T20 Cricket World Cup to New York. Like many of you, I had the pleasure to witness the exhilarating India-Pakistan match, the single biggest sporting event of the year. Already there is discussion of New York hosting the 2028 Olympics cricket competition.

For all our triumphs in 2024, I look forward to all the historic firsts our community will achieve in 2025!

Very Truly Yours,

Jenifer Rajkumar
New York State Assemblywoman
38th District



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

Message

Happy New Year to everyone . A New Year is like a blank Book and the pen in your hands . As the new year approaches with new hopes , I wish you and your family a healthy peaceful New Year. I said this before, but repetition has its value.

Yet over the past two decades, most indicators of peacefulness have deteriorated. According to the 2024 global peace index, political instability and unresolved Internal conflicts are major factors.

What can an individual do ? -cooperation, tolerance, humility , moderation, honesty, self-control, and volunteerism . With such volunteerism and service above yourself (with no politics or religion.) the Rotary international brought together political will, professional will and people's will together and eradicated Polio from the planet .

As Mahatma Gandhi once said you be the change, you wish to see .

Happy New Year again.
Stay Safe, Stay Healthy, Stay Connected.

VK Raju



Satheesh Katula, MD, FACP, DipABLM
President, AAPI
Clinical Professor of Medicine
Board certified Hematologist and Oncologist
Global Healthcare Leaders Program (Harvard)
Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare (Stanford University)



Message

On the occasion of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, we celebrate the enduring contributions of the Indian diaspora across the globe. The Indian diaspora has played a pivotal role in shaping advancements in healthcare, particularly through innovations in the U.S. and India. The mass production of generic drugs in India has revolutionized global healthcare, not only benefiting Southeast Asia but the world at large. Despite significant challenges in areas such as cancer prevention, heart health, and infectious diseases, opportunities for collaboration between India and the global community are immense. India's regulatory environment offers a unique advantage for cutting-edge research, including stem cell studies and 3D printing, allowing for accelerated progress in these critical fields.

The American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) has been instrumental in bridging the gap between the U.S. and India in healthcare. During the COVID-19 crisis, AAPI's response to the shortage of oxygen and medical supplies was exceptional. Through its AAPI-Adopt a Village program, the organization reached over 70 rural villages in India, screening populations for non-communicable diseases. AAPI's ongoing commitment to enhancing India's medical education system and facilitating collaboration in healthcare research promises even greater progress in improving health outcomes, especially in rural India. On this special day, we honor the invaluable contributions of the Indian diaspora and their continued dedication to global healthcare advancement.

Sincerely,
Satheesh Kathula

MANMOHAN SINGH (1932 - 2024)

Manmohan Singh, gentleman politician who opened up India's economy in 1991

HIGH POINT OF HIS 10-YEAR-LONG PRIME MINISTERSHIP WAS HIS HANDLING OF THE INDO-U.S. NUCLEAR DEAL; UNDER HIM, THERE WAS ALSO A GRADUAL DEPARTURE FROM THE NEHRUVIAN APPROACH TO FOREIGN POLICY; BEFORE HE BECAME INDIA'S FINANCE MINISTER, HE HAD HELD EVERY TOP ECONOMIC JOB, INCLUDING RBI GOVERNOR AND UNION FINANCE SECRETARY

Dr Manmohan Singh, the economist turned politician, served as prime minister of India for two terms, joining the likes of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi as one of India's longest-serving prime ministers. His two terms as Prime Minister from 2004 to 2009 and 2009 to 2014, were periods of high economic growth for India. However, his legacy extends to way before he held the highest executive office in the country. He has held almost all posts of significance to the economic welfare of the country, its industry and its people: from Governor of RBI to head of the Planning Commission and, crucially, as Finance Minister during an economic crisis, that saw India shed its Licence Raj and embrace market economics.

Born in 1932 in Punjab Province of what is now Pakistan, Manmohan Singh migrated to Amritsar during partition. He completed his Matriculation, Bachelor's and Master's from Punjab University before heading to the University of Cambridge, where he earned his honours degree in Economics in 1957.

After this, he earned his doctorate in Economics from Nuffield College at Oxford University in 1962.

Manmohan Singh's political career began after he joined the government of India in 1971 as an economic advisor for the Ministry of Commerce. Soon, he was appointed as the Chief Economic Advisor in the Finance Ministry.

Following his term at the Finance Ministry in 1972, Dr Singh held several governmental positions such as Secretary in the Ministry of Finance; Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission; Governor of the Reserve Bank of India; Advisor of the Prime Minister; and Chairman of the University Grants Commission.

Under the leadership of PV Narasimha Rao, Dr Singh served as the finance minister from 1991 to 1996. During his tenure, the economist played a key role in the liberalisation of the Indian economy, which allowed it to speed up development dramatically. His budgets reduced import tariffs and opened up the economy, bringing in foreign players to the Indian market and ringing in the era of globalisation for India.



Under his leadership, India recorded its highest GDP growth of 9 per cent and became the second fastest-growing major economy.

After the Congress party won the general elections of 2004, Dr Singh was tapped by Sonia Gandhi for the top post in the government. During his tenure as Prime Minister, major strides were made in the health and education sectors with the introducing the National Rural Health Mission and the Right to Education Act. His tenure also saw the

introduction of the MGNREGS for rural employment guarantee.

While the world reeled under the impact of the 2008 economic crisis, India's relative stability has been credited at least in part to deft management by Dr. Singh. His reputation is reflected in the then US President Barack Obama's comment at the 2010 G20 meeting, "I can tell you that here at G20, when the Prime Minister speaks, people listen".

The big test for Dr. Singh's political

savvy was the civilian nuclear deal with the US, which was finalised in 2008 after much political haggling with alliance partners in the UPA coalition as well as within the Congress party. During his second tenure as PM, his image would take a beating with the the 2G scam. After the Congress went out of power in 2014, Dr. Singh remained a respected voice as Rajya Sabha member.

Dr Singh is survived by his wife Mrs. Gursharan Kaur and three daughters - Upinder Singh, Daman Singh and Amrit Singh.

Condolences pour in from world leaders on Manmohan Singh's death

Condolences have poured in from across the globe, including from the US, Canada and Sri Lanka following the demise of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Leaders from neighbouring countries, including Nepal, Maldives and Afghanistan, expressed deep grief over Singh's passing, highlighting his contributions and warm relations with their nations.

Dr Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms, died at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences on Thursday night. He was 92.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called him "one of the greatest champions of the bilateral strategic partnership."

"Dr Singh was one of the greatest champions of the US-India strategic partnership, and his work laid the foundation for much of what our countries have accomplished together in the past two decades," US Secretary of State Tony Blinken said.

Offering sincere condolences to the people of India for the passing of Singh, Blinken said the leadership of the former prime minister in advancing the US-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement signified a major investment in the potential of the US-India relationship.

"At home, Dr Singh will be remembered for his economic reforms that spurred India's rapid economic growth. We mourn Dr Singh's passing and will always remember his dedication to bringing the United States and India closer together," Blinken said.

Former Canadian Prime Minister

From Page 8

Stephen Harper said he was saddened to learn of the passing of his former colleague, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

"He was an individual of exceptional intelligence, integrity, and wisdom. Laureen and I wish to convey our condolences to all his family and friends," he said.

Former Prime Minister of Nepal Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' said in a post on X, "Deeply saddened by the demise of Dr Manmohan Singh, a visionary leader and an extraordinary statesman. My heartfelt condolences to his family and the people of India. His legacy will inspire generations."

Former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed wrote X that he found the former Prime Minister as a "benevolent father figure" and a good friend of Maldives.

"So sad to hear Manmohan Singh has passed. I always found him a delight to work with and like a benevolent father figure. He was a good friend of the Maldives," Nasheed said.

Former President of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa called him a "visionary economist and the architect of India's economic liberalisation."

"Deeply saddened by the passing of former Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. A visionary economist and the architect of India's economic liberalization, his contributions shaped a new era for India. My heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and the people of India."

Former President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai in a post on X said that India has lost one of its most illustrious sons.

Calling him an "unwavering ally and friend to the people of Afghanistan", Karzai profoundly mourned Singh's passing and expressed his deepest condolences.

"India has lost one of its most illustrious sons. DrManmohanSingh was an unwavering ally and friend to the people of Afghanistan. I profoundly mourn his passing and extend my deepest condolences to his family, the



government, and the people of India. May his soul find eternal peace," Karzai said.

Government sources said a seven-day national mourning will be observed and that Singh's last rites will be conducted with full state honours.

India bid farewell to one of its most illustrious sons, Dr. Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister and an ace economist whose contributions to the nation's economic landscape and governance left an indelible mark. Dr. Singh, who passed away at the age of 92 today in New Delhi, was revered for his integrity, intellect, and quiet determination in shaping India's modern trajectory.

As soon as news of his passing came, PM Modi, taking to X, said: "India mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished leaders, Dr. Manmohan

Singh Ji. Rising from humble origins, he rose to become a respected economist. He served in various government positions as well, including as Finance Minister, leaving a strong imprint on our economic policy over the years. His interventions in Parliament were also insightful. As our Prime Minister, he made extensive efforts to improve people's lives."

Leader of Opposition and Congress stalwart, Rahul Gandhi paid his tributes to the former PM by writing: "Manmohan Singh Ji led India with immense wisdom and integrity. His humility and deep understanding of economics inspired the nation. My heartfelt condolences to Mrs. Kaur and the family. I have lost a mentor and guide. Millions of us who admired him will remember him with the utmost pride."

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi too paid her condolences. She wrote: "Few people in politics inspire the kind of

respect that Sardar Manmohan Singh ji did. His honesty will always be an inspiration for us and he will forever stand tall among those who truly love this country as someone who remained steadfast in his commitment to serve the nation despite being subjected to unfair and deeply personal attacks by his opponents. He was genuinely egalitarian, wise, strong-willed and courageous until the end. A uniquely dignified and gentle man in the rough world of politics."

Senior Congress leader, Salman Khurshid, wrote, "Deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India. His contributions to the nation and his dedication to public service will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones."

President Droupadi Murmu said former PM Manmohan Singh will always be remembered for his "service to the nation, his unblemished political life and his utmost humility", adding that his passing is a great loss to the nation.

Government declares 7-day mourning

The Union government declared a seven-day mourning in honour of former prime minister Manmohan Singh. During this period, the National Flag will be flown at half mast across India and there will be no official entertainment throughout these seven days. All Indian missions and High Commissions abroad have also been requested to adhere to the half mast. The Cabinet will be meeting at 11 am on Friday to pay tributes to the "architect of India's economic reforms".

Dr Manmohan Singh's last rites will be held in New Delhi on Saturday, Congress leader KC Venugopal announced, adding an official statement on the same will be released soon. Singh's funeral will be performed with full state honours, a notice from the central government said. The former prime minister's mortal remains were brought to his residence, 3 Motilal Nehru Marg, late on Thursday. Singh's body will be placed for the public to pay their last respects, ANI reported.



A Tribute to Dr. Manmohan Singh: A Visionary Economist and Statesman

BY PROF. INDRAJIT S SALUJA

The passing away of Dr. Manmohan Singh, India's former Prime Minister, marks the end of an era in Indian politics and economic thought. Known for his quiet demeanor, profound intellect, and relentless commitment to public service, Dr. Singh leaves behind an indelible legacy that will continue to shape India and inspire the world for generations to come. This tribute seeks to capture the essence of his life, his achievements, and his contributions to both national and international spheres.

To me, it is a personal loss. I had the opportunity to know and meet him, and interact with him. I studied his economic thought, and it is there for the world to see how transformative were his economic ideas. He was the man who built a solid economic structure of India. The simple and unostentatious man will be remembered as a builder of a colossal India.

I am tempted to trace the life of this gem of a person for the younger generation of Indians, particularly, the ones here in America, who have been fed for too long with all kinds of lies about this great man. It will be worthwhile to know him.

DR. SINGH'S EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Dr. Manmohan Singh was born on September 26, 1932 in Gah, a small village in the Punjab region of British India (now in Pakistan). His early years were marked by the tumultuous partition of India in 1947, during which his family migrated to India. Despite the hardships, Dr. Singh's academic brilliance shone brightly.

He pursued his undergraduate degree in Economics from Panjab University and went on to earn a master's degree from the same institution. His quest for knowledge took him to the University of Cambridge, where he completed another degree in Economics. Dr. Singh then pursued his DPhil in Economics from the University of Oxford, specifically Nuffield College, writing his doctoral thesis on "India's Export Trends and Prospects for Self-Sustained Growth."

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND EARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Singh began his illustrious career in academia as a professor of Economics at Panjab University and later at the prestigious Delhi School of Economics. However, his transition to policymaking and governance marked a turning point in his journey. In 1971, he was appointed as an Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, followed by a series of prominent roles:

Chief Economic Advisor (1972-1976): Dr. Singh's insights played a key role in shaping India's economic policies during a challenging period.

Governor of the Reserve Bank of India



The author is one of the Indian Americans who met Dr. Manmohan Singh at the Indian Embassy reception to him on his visit to the US in 2005

(1982-1985): His tenure as RBI Governor was marked by efforts to stabilize India's financial system.

Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission (1985-1987): Dr. Singh contributed significantly to the nation's long-term economic planning.

ARCHITECT OF ECONOMIC REFORMS

Dr. Singh's most defining role came in 1991 when he was appointed as India's Finance Minister in the government led by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. India was facing a severe economic crisis, with depleting foreign exchange reserves and soaring inflation. Against this backdrop, Dr. Singh unveiled a series of groundbreaking economic reforms, including:

LIBERALIZATION: Opening up India's economy to global markets by reducing import tariffs and encouraging foreign investment.

PRIVATIZATION: Reducing government control over key industries.

GLOBALIZATION: Integrating India's economy with the global market.

His visionary approach transformed India into one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. His iconic statement during the 1991 budget speech, "No power on Earth can stop an idea whose time has come," became emblematic of India's newfound confidence.

TENURE AS PRIME MINISTER

Dr. Manmohan Singh served as the 13th Prime Minister of India from 2004 to 2014, heading the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. As Prime Minister, his tenure was marked by remarkable achievements:

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Under his leadership, India achieved unprecedented economic growth rates, often exceeding 8% annually. Key initiatives included:

NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (NREGA): Providing a safety net for rural households.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT: Promoting transparency and accountability in governance.

ACCELERATED INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT: Expanding roads, ports, and power projects to sustain economic growth.

NUCLEAR DEAL WITH THE UNITED STATES

Dr. Singh's efforts to secure the historic India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement in 2008 underscored his diplomatic acumen. This agreement not only ended India's nuclear isolation but also paved the way for strategic partnerships in science, technology, and defense.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Dr. Singh's administration introduced landmark programs in education and healthcare, such as the National Health Mission and the Right to Education Act, aiming to uplift millions from poverty and illiteracy.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Dr. Singh's tenure saw India emerge as a key player on the global stage. He was instrumental in forging strong ties with major powers, including the United States, Russia, China, and Japan. His advocacy for South-South cooperation and his emphasis on combating climate change earned him international

acclaim.

Under his leadership, India gained greater prominence in multilateral forums such as the G20, BRICS, and the United Nations. Dr. Singh's measured and thoughtful diplomacy earned him respect among world leaders, many of whom sought his counsel on global economic and geopolitical issues.

PERSONALITY AND LEGACY

Dr. Manmohan Singh was a leader of few words but immense wisdom. Known for his integrity, humility, and steadfast dedication to the nation, he inspired admiration across party lines. Despite facing criticism during his second term as Prime Minister, particularly regarding corruption scandals, his personal reputation remained untarnished.

His ability to navigate complex economic challenges, coupled with his unwavering commitment to the welfare of India's citizens, cemented his status as a statesman of rare caliber. His academic rigor and pragmatic approach to policymaking set him apart as a leader who prioritized the nation's interests above all else.

TRIBUTES FROM WORLD LEADERS

Dr. Singh's demise has elicited heartfelt tributes from leaders worldwide:

Joe Biden, President of the United States: "Dr. Manmohan Singh's vision and leadership were pivotal in strengthening U.S.-India relations. His wisdom and kindness will be deeply missed."

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India: "India has lost a great leader and scholar. Dr. Singh's contributions to our nation's development will always be remembered."

Rishi Sunak, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom: "Dr. Manmohan Singh's economic reforms and global vision elevated India on the world stage. His legacy is one of hope and progress."

Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank: "Dr. Singh was a towering figure in global economics. His insights and humility left an indelible mark on international policymaking."

Dr. Manmohan Singh's life was a testament to the power of knowledge, integrity, and perseverance. From his humble beginnings to becoming one of the most respected leaders in the world, he exemplified the values of hard work and selfless service.

As India mourns the loss of one of its greatest leaders, the world remembers Dr. Singh as a visionary economist, a transformative Prime Minister, and a statesman who believed in building bridges rather than walls. His legacy will continue to guide India and inspire future generations to dream big and act with courage.

Rest in peace, Dr. Manmohan Singh—a true architect of modern India.

2025



K D Sharma
Chief Executive
Bank of India, New York
277, Park Avenue

India is an incredibly diverse nation. Built on a vibrant tapestry of linguistic groups, religions, culture, and heritage, India continues to shine as one of the leading democracies of the 21st century. As we welcome the New Year 2025, Bank of India celebrates the progress, resilience, and achievements of our nation and its people.

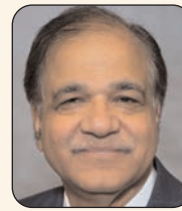
The year 2024 was a testament to India's unwavering spirit and growth, marking significant milestones in various fields. We, as Indians, stand united in cherishing our ancient values and heritage that have guided us through time and inspired us to strive for greater heights. At Bank of India, New York, we take immense pride in supporting the Indian diaspora and corporates for their banking requirements in India and the U.S. For over four decades, our New York branch has been a trusted partner, fostering strong and lasting relationships with our numerous happy clients. Your trust fuels our commitment to excellence, and we are excited to step into the New Year with renewed energy and dedication.

As ambassadors of India in the United States, let us continue to tread the path of prosperity and glory. The world's largest democracy, India, shares democratic values and aspirations with the United States of America. On this joyous occasion, Bank of India extends heartfelt greetings to the Indian diaspora, the Indian American community, and friends of India.

May 2025 bring peace, prosperity, and success to all. Together, let us work towards a brighter future and make the Tricolour soar even higher.

Happy New Year 2025!
Jai Hind!

Happy
New Year



Dr. Avinash Gupta, MD, FACC
President, Federation of Indian
Associations (FIA)



Message

Dear Friends,

The much-anticipated Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas 2025 in Bhubaneswar from January 8 to 10, 2025 is a moment of immense pride and joy for the global Indian diaspora. This annual celebration, a flagship initiative of the Government of India, reflects the vibrant spirit of over 32 million overseas Indians who continue to contribute significantly to their host countries while nurturing a deep bond with their motherland.

This year's Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas' theme highlights the diaspora's crucial role in advancing India's global stature. Bhubaneswar, the cultural heart of Odisha and home to the magnificent Konark Sun Temple and Jagannath Puri, is the perfect backdrop to reflect on our shared heritage and the strides we have made as a global community. As the President of FIA, representing one of the largest Indian diaspora organizations in the USA, I am deeply honored to witness the incredible achievements of our community members. FIA has always championed the values of unity, service, and cultural pride. From hosting the world's largest India Day Parade in New York City to spearheading initiatives that foster cultural, professional, and philanthropic engagements, FIA remains committed to strengthening the bonds between India and its diaspora.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of India and the Ministry of External Affairs for providing this platform to celebrate the invaluable contributions of the Pravasi Bharatiya community. I also commend the efforts of the Odisha government for organizing this event in a city known for its warmth, rich traditions, and forward-thinking vision.

On behalf of FIA and the Indian diaspora in the United States, I invite everyone to actively participate in Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas 2025. Let us celebrate our collective achievements, forge new collaborations, and contribute to India's growth story as it rises as a global leader.

As always, let us remember and cherish the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - The World is One Family, and continue to work towards building bridges between India and the world.

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!
Warm regards,
Dr. Avinash Gupta



FOUNDER, PRESIDENT
SHIKSHAYATAN FOUNDATION
SRINIKETAN FOUNDATION
NEW YORK



Message

Dear Prof. Saluja

I am delighted to know that The Indian Panorama is bringing out its New Year Special edition. Over the years, I have come to eagerly anticipate this edition, so much so that I start looking forward to it even before the year ends. It is always a remarkable reading experience, presenting the entire world and the whole year beautifully compressed into a single 100-page edition. The effort and precision that go into curating such a masterpiece are truly commendable. Congratulations on this great task, always accomplished with immaculate excellence!

On this occasion, I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the invaluable services The Indian Panorama has been providing in promoting Indian culture and arts. Your publication has been a steadfast supporter and promoter of my cultural organizations, Shikshayatan and Sriniketan. The media coverage you have generously provided for my endeavors has significantly contributed to enhancing the international recognition of these organizations. For that, I extend my heartfelt gratitude.

I wish you and your entire team, especially Bidisha Roy, all the success and happiness in 2025.

Purnima Desai

Know Mr. Prasanta Kumar Tripathy

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
STATE BANK OF INDIA, NEW YORK BRANCH

Mr. Prasanta Kumar Tripathy is a career Banker, who joined the State Bank of India as Probationary Officer in 1995. He has been a versatile banker across geographies with vast experience in areas of Retail, SME, Government Business, Corporate Banking, International Banking, Treasury Management, Risk Management, Human Resources Management, etc. Based on his extensive banking experience coupled with his exemplary leadership skills, the responsibility of steering Bank's flagship operations at SBI, New York Branch was entrusted to him in June 2021 and since then, he is at the helm of affairs as CEO of SBI, New York Branch.

His prior assignments include, Deputy General Manager of New Delhi Main Branch, Delhi. Where he was responsible for growth in deposits, Forex Business, Govt. Business, oversee Accounts of Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Finance, etc. His important task was to keep track of the PM CARES FUND ACCOUNT, which required direct reporting to Prime Minister's Office. He has worked as DGM and Chief Development Officer at Local Head Office, New Delhi as Head of HR department having 17000 staff members with responsibilities of hiring, training, industrial relations, business conduct & discipline management. He has also previously worked at Commercial Bank of India LLC, Moscow as Vice President (Credit) supervising Loan Syndications & Bi-lateral loans and Credit.



The Power of One Award: Honoring Diplomats Who Champion Peace

2024 POWER OF ONE AWARD PRESENTED TO F.M. JUAN RAMON DE LA FUENTE (MEXICO); AMB. FERIT HOXHA (ALBANIA); AMB. TAREK LADEB (TUNISIA); AND AMB. OLOF SKOOG (SWEDEN & EU).

I.S. SALUJA
DECEMBER 26, 2024

UNITED NATIONS (TIP): In a world often fraught with conflict and division, the role of diplomacy in fostering peace and understanding cannot be overstated. Recognizing the tireless efforts of diplomats who contribute significantly to the cause of global harmony, the Diwali Foundation launched the prestigious Power of One Award. This award is dedicated to diplomats at the United Nations who have made exemplary contributions to promoting peace and building bridges among nations. Spearheaded by Ranju Batra, a visionary leader with a passion for celebrating diversity and unity, the initiative has become a beacon of hope and recognition in the international community.

THE VISION BEHIND THE POWER OF ONE AWARD

The Power of One Award reflects the ethos of its founder, Ranju Batra, a driving force behind the Diwali Foundation. Her commitment to fostering understanding and celebrating diversity is well known, most notably through her successful advocacy for the issuance of the Diwali Stamp five years ago. The stamp, a significant milestone in recognizing the Indian festival of lights on an international platform, symbolized the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and unity over division. Similarly, the Power of One Award embodies the essence of diplomacy-bringing people together and finding peaceful solutions to complex



Moderator : David Bakradze, Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations

global issues.

The 2024 Award Ceremony is co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Chile, Georgia, Ghana, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kiribati, Morocco, and Trinidad and Tobago to the UN, UN Alliance of Civilizations, and the Diwali Foundation USA, Inc.

The Co-Sponsors of the 2024 annual "Diwali Stamp - The Power of One Awards" Ceremony include: personally



Awardees with organizers

Co-Sponsored by H.E. President Taye Astike Selassie of Ethiopia, and by the Permanent Mission to the United Nations of Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bhutan, Botswana, Cyprus, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Lithuania,

the Mediterranean, UNCPGA, Oman, and Sri Lanka

The 2024 Power of One Award Recipients are F.M. Juan Ramon de la Fuente (Mexico); Amb. Ferit Hoxha (Albania); Amb. Tarek Ladeb (Tunisia); and Amb. Olof Skoog (Sweden & EU).



Parvathaneni Harish, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations



Ravi Batra, Chair, National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs, and Moderator of the Award Ceremony

Those who spoke on the occasion, included o H.E. Harold Adlai Agyeman, Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations

- H.E. Dennis Francis, PGA78 and Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to UN
- H.E. Parvathaneni Harish, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations
- H.E. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations
- H.E. Paula Narvaez Ojeda, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations
- H.E. Aida Kasymalieva, Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the United Nations
- H.E. Sophia Tesfamariam, Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations
- H.E. Teburoro Tito, Permanent

Representative of Kiribati to the United Nations

- H.E. Kairat Umarov, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations
- Ms. Ranju Batra, Chair, Diwali Foundation USA, Inc
- Mr. Ravi Batra, Chair, National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs, and Moderator of the Award Ceremony

THE IMPACT OF THE POWER OF ONE AWARD

The Power of One Award has become more than just an accolade; it is a platform that highlights the transformative power of diplomacy. By honoring those who work tirelessly behind the scenes to resolve conflicts and build bridges, the award inspires others to embrace dialogue and cooperation.

Ranju Batra's vision and dedication have ensured that the award is not merely an annual event but a movement that champions the values of peace, unity, and understanding. Her ability to bring together global leaders and shine a spotlight on the unsung heroes of diplomacy underscores the importance of recognizing and celebrating the efforts of those who work toward a harmonious world.

A HOPEFUL FUTURE

As the world grapples with challenges ranging from geopolitical conflicts to climate change, the Power of One Award serves as a beacon of hope. It reminds us that even in the face of adversity, the actions of a single individual can ripple outward, creating waves of change.

The 2024 award ceremony not only honored the remarkable contributions of its recipients but also reaffirmed the vital role of diplomacy in shaping a better future.

The Power of One Award is a celebration of the indomitable spirit of diplomacy and a call to action for all who believe in the possibility of a peaceful, united world.



DIGESTIVE DISEASE CARE

DDC
Advanced
Comprehensive
Personalized

INVEST IN YOUR HEALTH

DDC and its Staff
Wishes Everyone a Very
Happy & Healthy New Year



Preeti Mehta MD



Nilesh Mehta MD



Alan Sandberg MD



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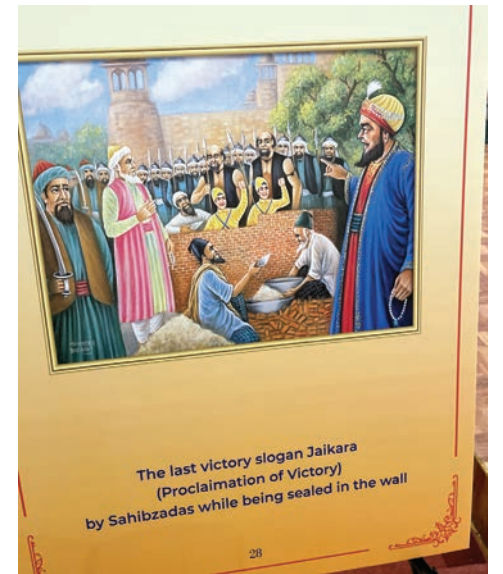
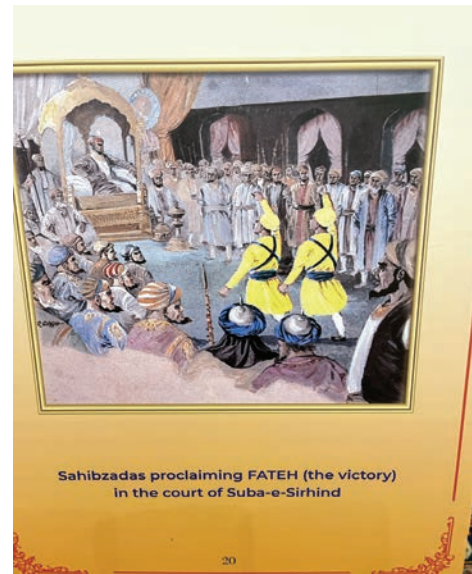
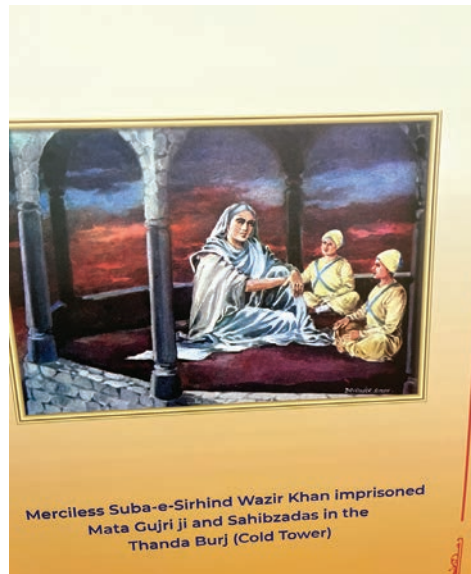
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Indian Consulate in New York Celebrates Veer Baal Diwas

AN IMPRESSIVE EXHIBITION OF PICTURES NARRATES THE STORY OF VALOR AND MARTYRDOM OF SAHIBZADA ZORAVAR SINGH & SAHIBZADA FATEH SINGH



Sahibzada Zorawar Singh aged 9 and Sahibzada Fateh Singh aged 7, the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the founder of the Khalsa Panth, were bricked alive on December 28, 1704 on the orders of Wazir Khan, the Mughal faujdar of Sirhind, for refusing to renounce their faith and embrace Islam -Photos / Jay Mandal-on assignment



DECEMBER 27, 2024

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): An exhibition highlighting the valor and sacrifices of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh aged 9 and Sahibzada Fateh Singh aged 7, the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, was organized at the Indian Consulate here on Veer Baal Diwas.



Gatka display by students of Akal Gatka

The exhibition on Thursday, December 26 on Veer Bal Diwas was to "commemorate the extraordinary valor and unparalleled sacrifices" made by 'Veer Sahibzadas', sons of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh.

Around 10 Sikh young kids from the Akal Gatka Group headed by Sardar Daler Singh, a former President of Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Sikh Center, New York, gave a thrilling display of Gatka- the traditional Sikh martial art.

Visitors to the exhibition

CONTD FROM PAGE 14



Deputy Consul General Varun Jeph related the story of the martyrdom of the Sahibzadas and said there was no parallel to the valor of the Sahibzadas



Prof. Indrajit S Saluja pleaded with the Sikh community to promote the rich values of the Sikh religion among kids



Sardar Daler Singh, Gatka trainer and President of Akal Gatka thanked the Deputy Consul General for inviting the Gaka group and honoring them.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the Deputy Consul General Varun Jeph described the valor of the Young Sahibzadas as unparalleled in the annals of human history. He had a word of appreciation for Prime Minister Narendra Modi who decided in 2022 to observe the Veer Baal Diwas to commemorate the valor and martyrdom of the Sahibzadas. "It (celebration of

Veer Baal Diwas) is a befitting tribute to Guru Gobind Singh ji, a befitting tribute to all the Gurus and to the community as well". our lives as we go ahead. And may the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib always show us the right path forward", Mr Jeph added.



A view of the gathering

"May the spirit of this day guide us in

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Saluja narrated the story of the valor and the martyrdom of the Sahibzadas and appealed to his community to ensure that the rich Sikh values are promoted among the Sikh youth. Prof. Saluja thanked the Consulate for organizing the historic Day.

Sardar Daler Singh thanked the Deputy Consul General for organizing the event and said his Gatka group would soon come back to give a display of Gatka at the Consulate. He appealed to the Sikh community to promote the rich Sikh values and be prepared always to make any sacrifice for the motherland.

Earlier, the Deputy Consul General gave certificates of appreciation to Gatka participants. He also presented shawls to Sardar Daler Singh and Prof. Indrajit Singh Saluja as a token of appreciation for their services.

A large number of members from the Indian-American community attended the event to pay their homage and tributes to the 'Veer Sahibzadas'.



Gatka boys with Deputy Consul General, Consulate staff and the guests. -

All photos by Ashish Chandratreya

Dr V K Raju: A Relentless Crusader against Avoidable Childhood Blindness

BY BIDISHA ROY



Dr. V.K. Raju, one of the leading ophthalmologists in the US, is committed to combat avoidable childhood blindness at home and abroad and restored sight to hundreds of thousands of patients worldwide

This could have been another success story of an Indian who has made a mark here in America and living an enviable life. But for this man the word 'success' had a different meaning - being loyal to his profession by serving the underprivileged, giving back to the community and his motherland, and working relentlessly for a mission. This is how one can define Dr. V.K. Raju, one of the leading ophthalmologists in the US, who is committed to combat avoidable childhood blindness at home and abroad and has helped restore sight to hundreds of thousands of patients worldwide.

Dr. V.K. Raju was born in Rajahmundry, AP, India. He completed both his ophthalmology residency and fellowship at the University of London. Dr. Raju is a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and the American College of Surgeons.

He is a founding patron member of AAPI. He is a Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at West Virginia University, Adjunct Professor of Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University and director of the International Ocular

Surface Society. He is also founder and president of The Eye Foundation of America, a non-profit organization dedicated to realizing a world without childhood blindness.

Dr Raju's humanitarian work began in 1977, shortly after he got a faculty position at West Virginia University. He went on a vacation to India, and a farmer came to get his eyes examined by him. and he did not have any instruments to treat him. The lack of medical care available around his hometown of Rajahmundry prompted Dr Raju to return to India the next year with personnel and equipment, and offered his first eye camp near his hometown; this was the inception of the Eye Foundation of America (EFA).

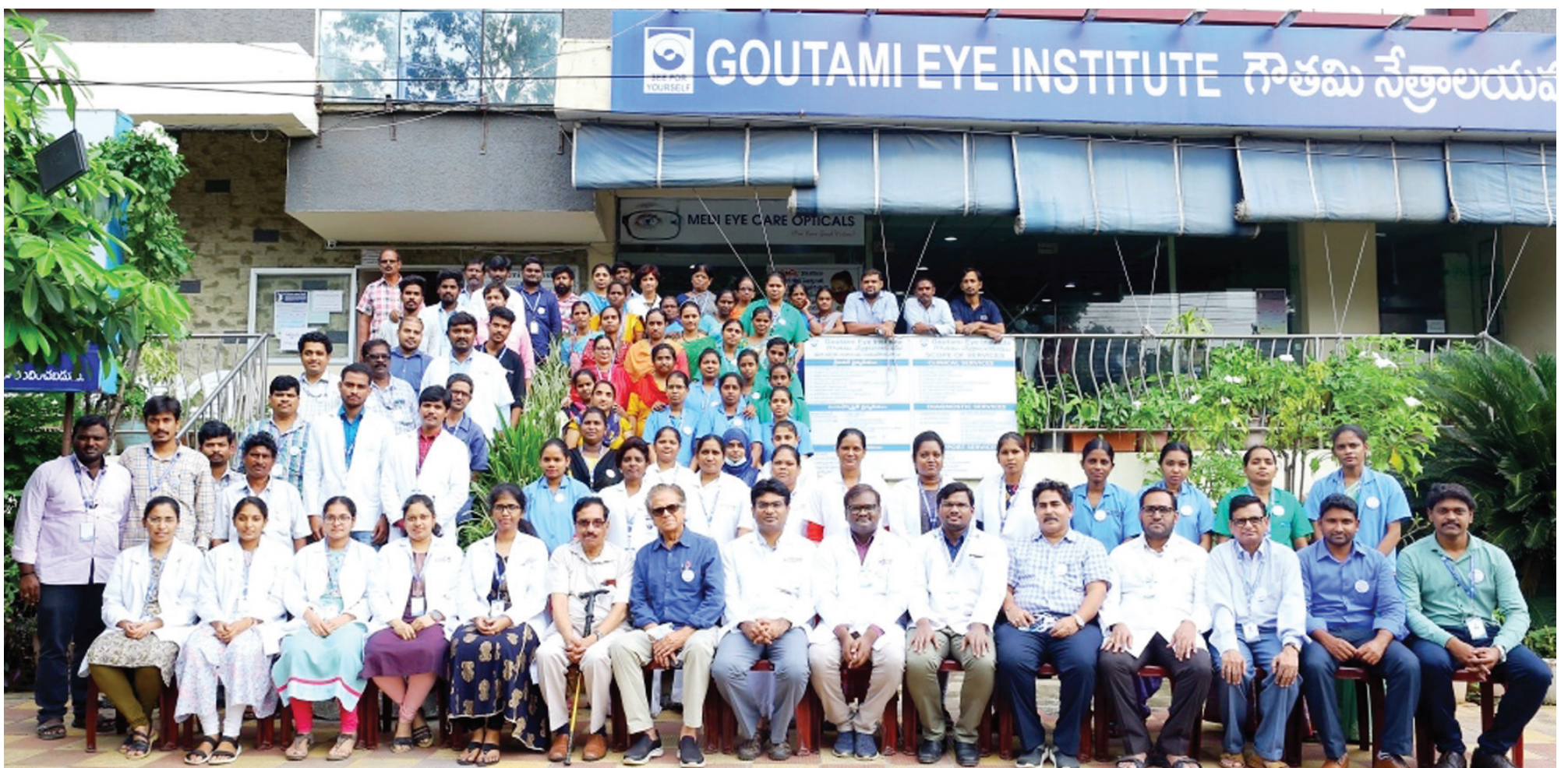
The Eye Foundation of America he founded has been rendering services since 1977 in India and 21 other developing countries. The mammoth works the EFA team has

done could be the envy of any humanitarian organization. When education and preventative measures are insufficient, medical and surgical interventions are performed. With the aim of permanently providing world-class state-of-the-art services to populations with poor access to health care, the EFA helped to build 2 hospitals in rural India: Srikiran Eye Institute and the Goutami Eye Institute. The Goutami Institute has a wing dedicated exclusively to children, and the EFA has future plans to build a service and research eye hospital in India where no child will be denied treatment and children from around the world can come to receive services.



Dr. Raju is founder and president of The Eye Foundation of America, a non-profit organization dedicated to realizing a world without childhood blindness

Dr. Raju and the EFA are also committed to finding new cures for age-old eye disease among children. These institutes are committed to providing innovative



The Goutami Eye Institute in India has a wing dedicated exclusively to children

CONTD ON PAGE 17

CONTD FROM PAGE 16

and compassionate care to the patients, by incorporating new technology and through patient education. His mission was to protect, preserve and restore the treasured gift of sight for improving quality of life by providing caring service, irrespective of the socio-economic status, with due emphasis on education and research.

Madhu Rachakulla, Past President, Telugu Fine Arts Society, shared his experience at Goutami while accompanying his mother for her cataract surgeries. "Encouraged by my friend, Mr. Sekhar Vemparala-a staunch supporter and fundraiser for the institute-I took my mother to Gautami Eye Institute. Her initial fear of undergoing surgery for both eyes was quickly replaced by a sense of comfort and confidence, thanks to the compassionate care and professionalism of the Gautami Eye Institute team.

"Mr. Vemparala's recommendation was well-founded, as the experience surpassed our expectations in every way. Upon arrival, we were warmly welcomed by the staff, and Dr. V.K. Raju himself took the time to introduce us to the Managing Director of the hospital. Their personal touch and commitment to patient care immediately put my mother at ease. A skilled surgeon was promptly assigned to her case, and her treatment was carried out with exceptional precision and care", recalled Madhu Rachakulla.

"Beyond my personal experience, what truly left me in awe was the institution's unwavering dedication to service. Gautami Eye Institute performs an astonishing 100 free cataract surgeries every day, bringing the gift of vision to those who might otherwise remain in darkness. For underprivileged individuals, the institute goes a step further by helping them secure financial assistance through government programs like Arogyasree cards. Additionally, the team conducts vision camps in rural areas, offering free eye screenings and cataract surgeries to those in need.



Family time

"Dr. V.K. Raju's vision for the institute is nothing short of inspiring. A renowned ophthalmologist with a heart for service, Dr. Raju has built a team that embodies his motto of selfless care. By combining top-notch medical expertise with a genuine commitment to uplifting the underprivileged, he and his team have created a model of healthcare that is both impactful and sustainable. Their work not only restores sight but also restores hope and dignity to countless individuals.

As the Past President of the Telugu Fine Arts Society (TFAS) in New Jersey, I have had the privilege of witnessing many acts of service within our global Telugu community. However, the work being done by Dr. V.K. Raju and the Goutami Eye Institute stands out as a shining example of how expertise, compassion, and a service-driven mission can transform lives."

The EFA not only trains medical practitioners to join the global fight against blindness through exchange programs, but also provides workshops and training opportunities for medical students and physicians. Dr. Raju's charisma and vision inspire the EFA's trainees return to their native countries to prevent and/or alleviate blindness in the field.

For the past 5 decades, Dr. Raju and the EFA have been actively and tirelessly on a crusade to eliminate avoidable blindness in areas plagued by poverty and poor access to medical care. Because Dr. Raju feels so incredibly thankful for his personal and professional gifts, he makes great effort to share those gifts with those in need of his services.

He believes that medical professionals in the United States are afforded many material comforts, and as such, only voluntary service can alleviate the feeling of intellectual poverty. He gives freely of his own time, money, and medical expertise to help the less fortunate.

Dr. Raju contributes to society in his home country of India and his adopted home

state of WV. In WV, Dr. Raju accepts patients who do not have medical insurance and performs surgical procedures that are not covered. If a patient is unable to pay for the costly services rendered, he asks for a small donation to the EFA. Dr. Raju performs free procedures that amount to an estimated \$25,000-45,000 per year. This allows many of these patients to remain functional members of society.

The execution of his vision, affordable and accessible healthcare, has provided innumerable individuals with the invaluable gift of sight. In children, this gift results in 75 years of a full and productive life. These children, who would be considered a burden to society, are then able to contribute to their families and to society.

Dr. Raju has received numerous awards, including the Academy's Outstanding Humanitarian Award, the Melvin Jones Fellowship from the International Lions Foundation, the Paul Harris Fellow Award from Rotary International, the Distinguished Community Service Award from the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Achievement Award from West Virginia University.

Dr. Raju has published two books, seventeen chapters, and over 100 publications in scientific journals.

Dr. Raju has a vast interest in medical history, establishing lectureships (Susruta and Charaka lectureships in USA) to enhance teaching and the prevention of blindness through service, research and most importantly, making people educated. Dr. Raju firmly believes that there are three solutions for every problem - first is education, the second is education, and the third is education.

As a physician, he has worked untiringly to educate patients as he feels patient education is one of the biggest challenges he faces both in the US and the developing countries. And this man is not ready to give up until he reaches the goal. With all of Dr. Raju's momentous achievements, he has also ensured that his life's work and vision are self-sustaining.



Dr. Raju has passed on his knowledge, plans, and vision to the future leaders of this movement: Dr. Leela Raju, Dr. Raju's daughter and fellow ophthalmologist

Dr. Raju has passed on his knowledge, plans, and vision to the future leaders of this movement: Dr. Leela Raju, Dr. Raju's daughter and fellow ophthalmologist, is the EFA's Secretary and Coordinator for Education and actively participates in its mission. "Our work is only just beginning," affirms Dr. Raju.

"The work of the Eye Foundation of America started in 1977. Rotary clubs and Rotary international have been an integral part of our goal of 'A world without childhood blindness.'" The Rotary international president said this year "imagine Rotary". Eye foundation of America with Rotary said, "imagine a world without childhood blindness."

"There is (almost) no more Polio on the planet; this incredible achievement is because of the Rotary international bringing together the three wills: political will, professional will, and people's will. Anything is possible today when these three wills come together, especially with today's resources and technology. Now as part of our five-year plan, we are embarking on an ambitious project to screen premature babies (who are at high risk for blindness) by telemedicine in India and beyond", said Dr. Raju, and we all know that this man is not going to stop until the goal is achieved.

Indian American Neeta Bhasin, Appointed to the First-Ever Asian American and Pacific Islander's Commission



Neeta Bhasin

DECEMBER 26, 2024

NEW YORK (TIP) : On December 12th, a historic event took place with the inauguration of the New York State Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Commission. Thirteen Asian Americans were sworn in, pledging to strengthen the connection between the Asian American community and New York State. The ceremony was graciously hosted by Queens College and its President, Frank H Wu.

Neeta Bhasin, the founder of Diwali at Times Square and Sammaan for All, has been appointed to the New York State Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Commission. She was sworn in along with other Commission members and Chair Gaurav Vasisht. The Commission aims to enhance the economic and social well-being of AAPI communities and address their health and educational needs.

The Commission's role includes making policy recommendations, coordinating programs, implementing public education campaigns, and raising awareness about state and local resources for AAPI individuals.

This Commission was established due to the unprecedented growth of the Asian American population and the unique challenges they face, including increased hate crimes.

Neeta Bhasin, the founder of Diwali at Times Square, Sammaan for All, and President of ASB Communications and EventGuru, is the first Indian American female who took the oath along with Commission members and the Chair Gaurav Vasisht to enhance the community's economic and social well-being and address the health and educational needs critical to AAPI communities throughout the state. The Commission will be housed in the New York State Department of State.

NYS Assemblywoman, Jenifer Rajkumar, the first Indian American legislator, introduced the AAPI Commission Bill, that was passed unanimously by the legislators in the Capitol.

On February 7th, 2024, NYS Governor Kathy Hochul signed the bill and joined more than 12 states with similar commissions and the White House.

The Asian American population in the USA is the fastest-growing ethnic community.



AAPI Commission Chair, Members and Dignitaries

This unprecedented growth has come with unique challenges, including increased hate crimes.

New York State Governor Kathleen Hochul, who could not join in person, shared her message.

"Welcome to the first-ever meeting of the NYS Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission. We established this Commission because your voices are essential to our state's future, and we are always looking to gain a deeper understanding of one another. We invested \$35 million to protect Asian American New Yorkers from Hate Crime and set \$30 Million to local AAPI organizations to serve their communities".

NY State Senator Jeremy Cooney, raised in the orphanage home in Calcutta, India, said, "We were waiting for this moment. I am pleased to have sponsored this legislation with another historic champion, Jenifer Rajkumar. The Asian Americans' voice is growing, but it needs to be heard. We have to let

our communities know that we are listening, that we care, and that there are great challenges and opportunities for New Yorkers coming to this country from all parts of this world."

(Photo N 2 here)

Chair of AAPI, Gaurav Vasisht, addressed the attendees, "AAPI community in NY is over 2 million with diverse culture, traditions, and language but what lies behind that diversity, and indeed what behind all of us together is lived experience, of sacrifice, perseverance and aspiration story about our own family. I encourage all of you to actively participate in the public forums that will be held statewide and submit comments and ideas to stay informed on the commission's work and progress. This is only the beginning. Together with your insights, collaboration, and passion, we can forge a path forward for meaningful change and impactful solutions for our community".

Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news

Indian American community leader Kartik Bhatt appointed Deputy Political Director of Veterans for America First Georgia Chapter



Kartik Bhatt has been named Deputy Political Director of the Veterans for America First (VFAF), Georgia State Chapter

DECEMBER 25, 2024

ATLANTA, GA (TIP) : Indian American community leader Kartik Bhatt has been named Deputy Political Director of the Veterans for America First (VFAF), Georgia State Chapter. The announcement was made by Jared Craig, the President of VFAF Georgia. Bhatt, a legal immigrant and an active figure in political advocacy, is also an honorary Sheriff's Deputy, a National Representative for Indians for Trump, and a member of the Trump campaign's Hindu Coalition.

Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news

Indian authorities bust drugs hidden in spice packets on US-bound flight, crack cartel



Investigations revealed the cartel's operations spanned multiple states, including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Goa.
Photo for representation only

DECEMBER 24, 2024

AHMEDABAD (TIP) : In a significant breakthrough, Indian authorities have dismantled a major drug trafficking operation, seizing approximately \$120,000 worth of drugs hidden in spice packets on a flight bound for the United States. The operation, led by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), resulted in the arrest of four individuals, including three Nigerian nationals, at Ahmedabad Airport. The bust uncovered 2 kilograms of ketamine cleverly concealed within spice packets, a method frequently employed by this cartel.

Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news

Indian-origin faces life in prison for attempting to entice 13-year-old girl



Kirtan Patel, 24, faces a minimum penalty of 10 years, up to life, in federal prison

DECEMBER 25, 2024

OCALA, FLA (TIP): An Indian national has pleaded guilty to attempting to entice a minor to engage in sexual activity, but instead engaged in a sexually explicit conversation with the undercover Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Orlando special agent.

Kirtan Patel, 24, faces a minimum penalty of 10 years, up to life, in federal prison. The sentencing date has not yet been set.

According to the plea agreement, between May 22-24, 2024, Patel communicated online with someone whom he believed was a 13-year-old girl.

Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news

Trump appoints Indian American entrepreneur as policy advisor on AI



Donald Trump has named Sriram Krishnan as Senior White House Policy Advisor on Artificial Intelligence

DECEMBER 23, 2024

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP) : US President-elect Donald Trump on Sunday, December 22, named Indian American entrepreneur, venture capitalist and author Sriram Krishnan as Senior White House Policy Advisor on Artificial Intelligence.

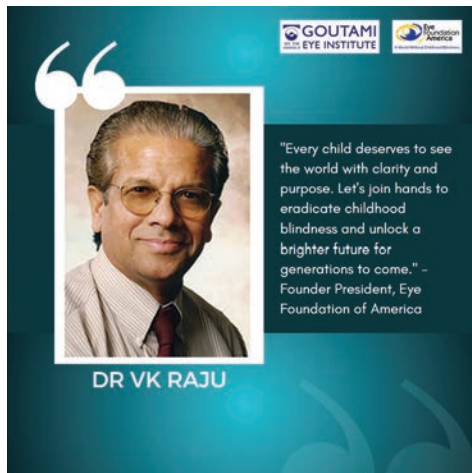
"Sriram Krishnan will serve as the Senior Policy Advisor for Artificial Intelligence at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy," Trump said on Sunday as he announced a number of appointments on artificial intelligence or AI.

Krishnan, who has previously led product teams at Microsoft, Twitter, Yahoo, Facebook and Snap, will work along with David O Sacks who will be the White House AI & Crypto Czar.

Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news

A World Without Childhood Blindness: Hope for Tomorrow - A Fundraiser for The Eye Foundation of America Planned in New Delhi, India

BY AJAY GHOSH



DECEMBER 27,, 2024

MORGANTOWN, WV (TIP): "Every child deserves to see the world with clarity and purpose. Let's join hands to eradicate childhood blindness and unlock a brighter future for generations to come," says Dr. Vadrevu K. Raju, a world-renowned ophthalmologist, philanthropist, and the founder of the Eye Foundation of America (EFA).

In response to this noble call, Grant Thornton, The Rotary Club District - 311 (Delhi) in collaboration with the Young Rotarians, who are truly committed, and the Gautami Institute have joined hands with the Eye Foundation of America to organize a major Fundraiser with the theme, "Hope for Tomorrow" at the prestigious India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on Friday, January 31, 2025.

Among the many initiatives Dr. Raju has undertaken, the upcoming Fundraiser in New Delhi is a pan-India Roll Out Program with the objective of raising \$500,000, which will be matched by the Eye Foundation of America. The funds raised will be utilized towards establishing 100 ROP screening centers across India; Training 500 healthcare professionals in ROP screening and treatment; and, Treating 10,000 ROP-affected babies annually across India.



Lord Rami Ranger, a well-known philanthropist, and successful businessman from the United Kingdom, who will be the Chief Guest at the

Fundraiser, while echoing the mission of EFA says, "Childhood blindness is a solvable problem, but it requires our collective action." According to Lord Ranger, a Board Member of the Eye Foundation of America and Eye Foundation of UK, who has been honoured by Her Majesty the Queen on Eight occasions for his Business leadership in and for community services, "Together, we can ensure that every child has access to quality eye care and a chance to reach their full potential."

Dr. Raju, a physician with a noble vision, who has dedicated his entire life to helping make "the world where every child can see, learn, and thrive without the shadows of blindness," while referring to scientific studies says, "Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) affects 200,000 premature babies in India annually, leading to irreversible blindness."

to the South Indian Journal of Ophthalmology, of the 3.5 million premature babies born in India, nearly one in six (600,000) babies are born less than 32 weeks gestational age. Estimating that 40% of them receive neonatal care and 80% of them survive, over 200,000 children are at risk for developing Retinopathy of Prematurity.

Dr. Raju, who has lived in England and the USA longer than in India, has visited India more than 140 times since 1977. Each visit is a working vacation to combat avoidable blindness among Indians, especially children. He founded "Eye Foundation of America" in 1979, which is active in India and 31 other developing countries across the globe.

A Faculty of the Department of Ophthalmology at Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Raju believes that Retinopathy can cause blindness; however, early detection and treatment can prevent blindness in up to 90% of cases. The EFA is now a global organization, whose noble initiatives have resulted in screening and treating a total of over 3.5+ million people in addition to one million school children, and the mission continues to impact many more every day around the world. EFA has performed hundreds of thousands of surgeries, and trained hundreds of eye care professionals to join in the global fight against preventable blindness.

Born in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, India, Dr. V.K. Raju is a Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at West Virginia University, Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, Director of the International Ocular Surface Society, Director of the Ocular Surface Research and Education

Foundation, Chairman of Goutami Eye Institute in Rajahmundry and is the President and Founder of the Eye Foundation of America, a non-profit organization dedicated to realizing a world without childhood blindness. Dr. Raju earned his medical degree from Andhra University and completed an ophthalmology residency and fellowship at the Royal Eye Group of Hospitals in London.

For the past four decades, Dr. Raju and the EFA have been actively and tirelessly on a crusade to eliminate avoidable blindness in areas plagued by poverty and poor access to medical care. The EFA's mission is to eliminate avoidable blindness under the guiding principles of service, teaching, and research.

This is accomplished through eye camps and brick-and-mortar hospitals in developing countries, training of medical personnel to serve the needy, and educating the population at large on preventative eye care and healthy lifestyle choices. With adequate education, patients are empowered to take charge of their lives and their own health and prevent further deleterious consequences of their poor lifestyle choices, while sharing this knowledge with their friends and families.

The public is educated on eye care and injury prevention, and local teachers are taught how to screen for early eye problems in children. Patients, their families, and the greater community benefit from preventative medical care, free procedures, and access to education.

When education and preventative measures are insufficient, medical and surgical interventions are performed. With the aim of permanently providing world-class state-of-the-art services to populations with poor access to health care, the EFA helped to build 2 hospitals in rural India: the Sri Kiran Eye Institute and the Goutami Eye Institute.

With all of Dr. Raju's momentous achievements, he has also ensured that his life's work and vision are self-sustaining. The Goutami Institute, which has been honoured as the Best Eye Hospital in the state of Andhra Pradesh by the state Government continues to add new buildings, more staff and equipment, and mobile clinics



to meet the growing demand for treatment for children and adults.

The Goutami Institute has a wing dedicated exclusively for children, and the EFA has future plans to build a service and research eye hospital in India where no child will be denied treatment and children from around the world can come to receive services. Dr. Raju and the EFA are also committed to finding new cures for age-old eye disease in children.

"I feel so incredibly thankful for my personal and professional gifts, and I make great efforts to share those gifts with those in need of my services," says Dr. Raju. "I am ever grateful to India for giving me stellar medical education for almost free. The work of EFA and the Goutami Eye institute wouldn't be possible without the support of our Board Members, who go beyond to enhance and help realize our mission to make the world free of blindness."

Dr. Raju has generously and freely given his own time, money, and medical expertise to help the less fortunate for the past several decades. Dr. Raju's over 40 years of noble work have helped and is continuing to restore vision to millions in India and abroad. Never too tired to give his best for preventing, caring for, and sustaining the vision of the visually impaired, Dr. Raju says, "Our work is only just beginning."



Dr. Raju says childhood blindness has far-reaching consequences. 75% of blind children never attend school. Blindness reduces employability by 50%. Blindness increases poverty and social isolation. Urging everyone to be part of this noble mission, Dr. Raju says, "Together, Let Us Illuminate Young Lives and Create A World Without Childhood Blindness. Your Support Can: Change Lives, Restore Vision, And Empower Futures. Now, Let's All Join the Movement; Be Part of Something Extraordinary."

For more information, please contact
info@eyefoundationofamerica.org

Jaishankar to visit Qatar this week, review bilateral ties

External affairs minister S Jaishankar will visit Qatar this week for meetings with the West Asian country's top leadership to review bilateral ties and discuss regional issues.

Jaishankar will be in Qatar from December 30 to January 1, when he will meet the Prime Minister and foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, the external affairs ministry said.

The visit will enable the two sides to review various aspects of bilateral relations, including political, trade, investment, energy, security, cultural, and people-to-people ties, and regional and international issues, the ministry said. Jaishankar will travel to Qatar after a six-day visit to the US, where he met officials of the outgoing Joe Biden administration and members of the transition team of president-elect Donald Trump. This will be Jaishankar's second visit to Qatar since the two sides resolved an imbroglio last year over eight former Indian Navy personnel who were detained in the West Asian country, reportedly on charges of espionage, and sentenced to death.

4 die after inhaling toxic gas at chemical plant in Gujarat

Four workers died after inhaling toxic fumes following a gas leak at a chemical plant at Dahej in Gujarat's Bharuch district, police said on Sunday, December 29.

The company said all four were given immediate medical care but could not be saved. It has announced Rs 30 lakh ex gratia to the kin of each victim.

A company employee and three contractual workers fell unconscious after poisonous fumes leaked from a pipe at a production unit of the Gujarat Fluorochemicals Limited (GFL) on Saturday night, Dahej police station inspector BM Patidar said. They were rushed to a private hospital where all four of them died, he said. The bodies were sent for postmortem and further probe into the incident was underway, the official said.

The deceased have been identified as Rajesh Kumar Maganadiya (48), (hailing from Bharuch), Mudrika Yadav (29) (from Adhaura in Jharkhand), Suchit Prasad (39) and Mahesh Nandlal (25) (both from Sonbhadra in Uttar Pradesh), police said. In a media statement, GFL said the incident occurred around 8 pm on Saturday and the gas leak was "immediately detected and contained by the team". "However, (four) individuals in the windward direction experienced adverse health effects and were promptly given due primary treatment at our onsite Occupational Health Center. They were referred to Bharuch Hospital for advanced medical care. Unfortunately, despite all our efforts, the four individuals succumbed to complications," it said.

Case against Prashant Kishor for 'inciting' Bihar civil service aspirants' protest

PATNA (TIP)

The Bihar Police have filed a case against poll strategist-turned-politician Prashant Kishor and others for allegedly instigating the students' protest being held by Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) aspirants in Patna's Gandhi Maidan.

According to the police, Kishor and other members of his party provoked the candidates, prompting them to take to the streets and create disturbances in different parts of the city.

A case was also filed against the Jan Suraj Party Bihar chief for holding the protest near Gandhi Maidan, despite the district administration rejecting their request.

Thousands of aspirants continued their protest at Gandhi Maidan on Sunday, seeking re-examination of the 70th BPSC preliminary examination and a meeting with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. The protest began on December 13 and, since then, has won the backing of several key politicians, educationists and activists.

The Bihar Police, in a statement, said that Kishor's Jan Suraj Party on Saturday had informed the district



administration of their intention to hold a Chattra Sansad (student parliament) at Gandhi Maidan. The district administration, however, rejected the request and informed the party about its decision.

"Despite this, on Sunday, the party gathered an unauthorised crowd near the Gandhi statue, inciting the protest and creating a law and order situation," the police said.

The case was filled against more than 19 people, including Manoj Bharti, the president of the Jan Suraj Party, Rahmanshu Mishra, a coaching institute operators - Nikhil Mani Tiwari, Subhash Kumar Thakur, Shubham Snehlil; Prashant Kishor, along with two bouncers accompanying him - Anand Mishra and Rakesh Kumar Mishra; and

others.

Additionally, over 600 unidentified people were also listed as accused. The District Magistrate of Patna confirmed the development, saying that an investigation into the matter is underway.

Earlier on December 29, Kishor expressed his support for the protesting candidates, calling for an end to the corruption in Bihar's examination. He slammed Nitish Kumar for "going to Delhi on a private visit but having no time for the youth of his own state", news agency PTI reported.

Speaking to the protesting candidates in Patna, Kishor said, "The Chief Minister does not have time to listen to the grievances of the protesting aspirants and has gone to Delhi. The protest will continue till their demand for the cancellation of the exam is not accepted. I am always with the protesting students."

He went on to say that before joining the protest, he held extensive talks with education sector officials. "No exam in Bihar has happened without corruption or paper leaks. We must unite to ensure this ends," Kishor said.

Constitution stood test of time, guided every citizen, says PM on Mann Ki Baat

NEW DELHI (TIP)

In the 117th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the Constitution had stood the test of time and had been the guiding light for Indian citizens.

"On January 26, 2025, our Constitution will complete 75 years. It is a matter of honour for all of us as the Constitution has stood the test of time in every sense of the term. It is our guiding light, and it is on account of the Constitution of India that I am here today," he said on Sunday. He said the government had rolled out a website, 'constitution75.com' to help citizens in connecting with the Constitution's legacy.

Talking about the upcoming 'Mahakumbh', the PM hailed the religious congregation as a symbol of unity. "There is no discrimination — no one is big or small. Such a scene of unity in diversity cannot be seen anywhere else in the world. Therefore, our Kumbh is also the Mahakumbh of unity."

The PM highlighted that for the first time, an AI chatbot will be used in the Mahakumbh, through which all the information related to the



Mahakumbh would be made available in 11 Indian languages. Besides, the venue would be covered with AI-powered cameras, which will help devotees in finding their kith and kin, in case they get separated, he added. "Digital navigation will help you reach ghats, temples, akharas and parking spaces," Modi said.

He further said that creator economy was bringing new momentum to India's journey of becoming a \$5 trillion economy. Creator economy refers to a software-driven economy that is built around content creators or businesses directly selling their products or services to

the audience, leveraging social media and AI tools. The PM also urged the youth to participate in the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) that will be held in India next year.

During his address, Modi also remembered four icons of the Indian cinema — late actor and director Raj Kapoor, singer Mohammed Rafi, actor and producer Akkineni Nageswara Rao and director Tapan Sinha. "Their films always carried messages regarding the social consciousness and national unity. Their lives are an inspiration for our entire film industry," remarked PM Modi.

He further said, "At the end of last month, a Tamil teaching programme was started in Fiji with the support of the Government of India."

Quoting a WHO report, Modi said India had seen an 80 per cent reduction in the number of malaria cases and deaths due to the ailment between 2015 and 2023.

Citing a study by the Lancet journal, Modi said the chances of starting cancer treatment on time in India had also increased, owing to the 'Ayushman Bharat Yojana'. Source: TNS

Manmohan Singh funeral row: Congress alleges mismanagement, BJP retorts

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The row over former prime minister Manmohan Singh's state funeral spilled into Sunday, December 29, with BJP accusing the Congress of levelling "baseless allegations" of disrespect and mismanagement against the Centre. The opposition party had called the government's arrangements for Singh's state funeral a "shocking display" of disrespect and mismanagement.

Hitting back, BJP asked the Congress to stop "politicising" the former prime minister's death by levelling "baseless allegations" and accord him the dignity he deserved.

On Saturday, the Congress' media and publicity department chief Pawan Khara levelled a host of allegations against the Centre on the arrangements for Singh's state funeral at Nigambodh Ghat, saying it was "a shocking display of disrespect and mismanagement".

"No news agencies except DD (Doordarshan) was allowed; DD focused on Modi and Shah, barely covering Dr Manmohan Singh's family. Only three chairs were kept in the front row for Dr Singh's family. Congress leaders had to insist on seats for his daughters and other family members," he had said in a post on X.

"The Prime Minister and ministers did not stand up when the national flag was handed to the widow of the late prime minister or during the gun salute. The family was given inadequate space around the pyre due to soldiers occupying one side. The public was kept out, left watching from outside the venue," he had added.

Khara had also alleged that Union Home Minister Amit Shah's motorcade disrupted the funeral procession, leaving cars belonging to Singh's family members stuck outside.



Former prime minister Manmohan Singh's ashes immersed at Asth Ghat at Majnu ka Tila in New Delhi on Sunday. Photo: PTI

The gate was closed and the family members needed to be located and brought back in, he had claimed.

"Dr Singh's grandchildren performing the last rites had to jostle for space to reach the pyre. Diplomats were seated elsewhere and were not visible. Shockingly, the Prime Minister did not stand when the king of Bhutan stood," Khara had said.

In a point-by-point rebuttal to Khara's charges, BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya on Sunday accused the Congress of politicising the former prime minister's death.

"It's a shame that the Congress continues to politicise former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh death," he said.

On Khara's charge that no news agencies except DD was allowed in to cover the event, Malviya said, "MoD

(Defence Ministry) has no role in the coverage of functions. In the past as well, only DD has done the coverage. The restriction on entry is by security agencies. National functions are also covered by DD only." "Seating at the funeral site is arranged by CPWD (Central Public Works Department) in consultation with the Delhi Police. The number of seats in the front row was kept at a maximum, as per the available space. Five seats were earmarked for family members in the first row. These were occupied by Mrs Manmohan Singh and her three daughters," he said.

The remaining 20 seats were for constitutional authorities who were to lay a wreath, he added.

"These included the President of India, the king of Bhutan, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, Cabinet ministers, leaders of the opposition and service chiefs, among others," he said.

"No other person was allotted a front-row seat. In the second row, eight seats were earmarked for family members. In the next two rows, the enclosure was earmarked for family members," he added.

On Khara's charge that Modi and the Union ministers did not stand up when the national flag was handed to Singh's widow or during the gun salute, Malviya said the state funeral was done with "full military honours".

"There was no deviation in the process," he added.

Reacting to the charge that Singh's family was given inadequate space around the pyre, Malviya said the site for the funeral was communicated by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

"Only ceremonial personnel were there around the pyre. The whole space was available for family and priests. No other officials occupied that area," he added.

'PHYSICAL RELATIONS' CANNOT AUTOMATICALLY MEAN SEXUAL ASSAULT: DELHI HIGH COURT

The Delhi High Court has acquitted a man in a POCSO case, saying the use of phrase 'physical relations' by the minor survivor cannot automatically mean sexual assault.

A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Amit Sharma allowed the appeal by the accused, who was awarded imprisonment for the remainder of his life, and observed that it was unclear how the trial court concluded that there was any sexual assault when the survivor had voluntarily gone with the accused. The court asserted that the leap from physical relations or 'samband' to sexual assault and then to penetrative sexual assault must be established by evidence and cannot be deduced as an inference. "The mere fact that the survivor is below 18 years cannot lead to a conclusion that there was penetrative sexual assault. The survivor, in fact, used the phrase 'physical relations', but there is no clarity as to what she meant by using the said phrase," the court said in the judgement passed on December 23.

"Even the use of the words 'samband banaya' is not sufficient to establish an offence under Section 3 of the POCSO Act or under Section 376 IPC," it held.

Delhi assembly polls: BJP attempting to alter electoral rolls, claims Kejriwal

NEW DELHI (TIP)

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday, December 29, accused the BJP of trying to manipulate voter list in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly elections.

Speaking at a press conference alongside Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, Kejriwal claimed the BJP was trying to win elections through "unfair means" after failing to present strong candidates or issues.

"BJP has already lost the elections. They don't have a chief ministerial face or even proper candidates. They only aim to win through manipulation, but we won't let them succeed," Kejriwal said. The former Delhi chief minister also alleged that the BJP had filed 11,000 voter deletion applications in one constituency alone, but the move was halted at Chief Election Commissioner's intervention. "We exposed this, and thankfully, it was stopped," Kejriwal said that a large-scale operation began on December 15, with 5,000 voter deletion applications and 7,500 addition requests filed so far in his assembly constituency, New Delhi.



He claimed this could alter 12 per cent of the constituency's votes.

The total number of voters in the constituency, he said, is 106,873, as per the voter list published on October 29 after the summary revision, which was conducted between August 20 and October 20.

"Operation Lotus has now reached my constituency. They are attempting

to manipulate the electoral rolls to change the election outcome," Kejriwal alleged.

"This kind of manipulation undermines democracy. We appeal to the Election Commission to continue its strict monitoring to prevent such malpractice," he said.

AAP trying to register 'illegal voters': BJP

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has alleged that Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was trying to register "illegal voters" due to fear of defeat in the upcoming Delhi assembly elections.

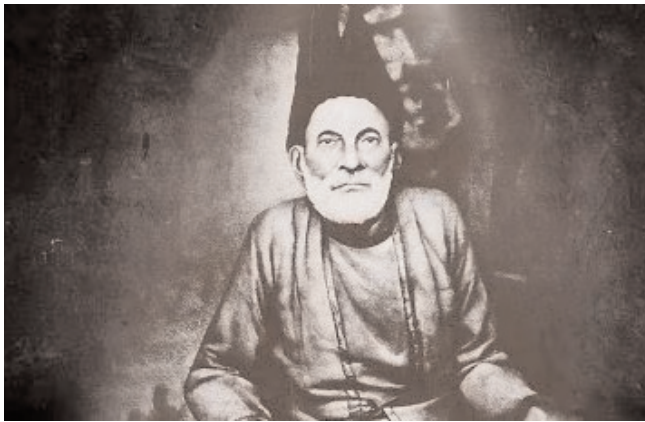
"We have provided multiple pieces of evidence but Kejriwal is merely attempting to cover up his 'wrongdoings' by creating confusion among the people," PTI quoted Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva as saying at a press conference.

The BJP's allegation comes after Kejriwal reiterated his allegation that the saffron party was "manipulating" changes in electoral rolls of his New Delhi constituency by filing applications to delete more than 5,000 votes since mid-December.

India in history this Week

DECEMBER 27 TO JANUARY 2

27 DECEMBER



1797 Famous Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib was born in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

1861 The first public bid for tea was concluded in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

1911 'Jana Gana Mana' was sung for the first time at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress.

1975 372 people died in the Chasnala coal mine accident in Dhanbad.

2008 'Taare Zameen Par' won the Best Film Award at the V. Shantaram Awards ceremony.



28 DECEMBER

1668 Sambhaji, son of Maratha ruler Shivaji, died due to imprisonment and torture by Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.

1855 The first session of the Indian National Congress took place in Bombay, in which 72 delegates attended.

1896 Bande Mataram was sung for the first time at the Kolkata session of the Indian National Congress.

1928 The speaking film Melody of Love was screened for the first time in Kolkata.

1984 The Congress won the Lok Sabha elections under the leadership of Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

2000 An illustrated postage stamp of Rs 3 in a set of five postage stamps was released by the Indian Postal Department in honor of the gallantry award winners.

2013 The Aam Aadmi Party formed the government in Delhi with the support of the Congress.



1932 India's famous industrialist Dhirubhai Ambani was born.

29 DECEMBER

1530 Humayun, son of Mughal emperor Babur succeeded him.

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

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

1985 Sri Lanka granted citizenship to 43,000 Indians.



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

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

30 DECEMBER

1975 Death of Hindi poet and ghazalkar Dushyant Kumar.



1971 Renowned scientist Vikram Sarabhai died in Trivandrum.

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



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

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

1906 The All India Muslim League was established

in Dhaka (now Bangladesh).

31 DECEMBER

1925 Hindi writer Shrilal Shukla was born.

1984 Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister and



Congress President for the first time.

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

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

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

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

01 JANUARY



2001 Calcutta was officially named Kolkata.

1971 Broadcasting of cigarette advertisements on television was banned.

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



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

02 JANUARY

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

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



DR. DIPAK NANDI MD

LET THIS NEW YEAR BE A TIME OF NEW BEGINNINGS, SHARED JOYS, AND CONTINUED GROWTH FOR ALL.

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New Year



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What will a second Trump presidency bring?

- HOW WILL THE WORLD, AND INDIA, NEGOTIATE TRUMP 2.0?
- WHY IS TRUMP THREATENING PUNITIVE TARIFFS ON SOME COUNTRIES?
- WILL HE USHER IN CHANGES IN IMMIGRATION POLICIES?
- WILL HIS SECOND TERM ALSO LIKELY WITNESS AMERICA'S CONTINUING WITHDRAWAL FROM GLOBAL, MULTILATERAL AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT?



BY NARAYAN
LAKSHMAN

When U.S. President-elect Donald Trump is administered the oath of office on January 20, 2025, and officially kicks off his second term at the White House, it will be the onset of four years that herald the deepening of domestic and foreign policy priorities enacted in his first term as President. On the cards are a reimposition of punitive tariffs against nations exporting to the U.S., and India is likely to feature on that list; a tough stance on immigration; and changes in foreign policy, with America likely to see the continuing withdrawal from global, multilateral and regional engagement like in his first term.

WHAT TARIFFS POLICIES AND TAX CUTS ARE LIKELY TO BE TABLED BY THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION?

The first Trump administration started a trade war with China when it hit Beijing in 2018 with a punitive net tariff coverage of nearly 15% of all U.S. imports. In that case, his administration had already imposed several tariffs prior to 2018 as well, with the result that there were overlapping tariffs on a number of products; for example, the 25% tariff that was imposed that year was over and above an antidumping tariff of approximately 66% that was already in place. Despite this somewhat chaotic approach to tariff imposition, one fact was clear - China was the main target on the global stage: at 11.1% import coverage by U.S. special tariffs in 2018, the rate slapped on Beijing dwarfed the rate for other exporters to the U.S., including India, at 0.2%. In terms of products, the U.S. special tariffs preponderantly targeted imports of intermediate goods, and to a much lesser extent capital goods and final products. This is likely to have impacted the final price of finished goods based on intermediate goods sourced within the U.S.

During his 2024 campaign, Mr. Trump had affirmed that he would impose an across-the-board tariff of somewhere between 10%-20% on the entire \$3 trillion worth of U.S. goods imports and a China-specific additional tariff of 60%. Assuming that the focus on intermediate goods continues in this context, this would imply a significant jump from his first term in terms of the value of goods impacted, most likely additional tens of billions of dollars' worth on commodities such as steel and aluminum and at least \$300 billion worth of Chinese goods. Retaliation from China, the E.U., India, and other trading partners of the U.S. is sure to follow swiftly.



Donald Trump swearing in as the 45th President of America January 20, 2017

File Photo : Wikipedia

Regarding the high likelihood of a corporate tax cut, it could come in the form of renewing the lapsing cuts that Mr. Trump had introduced in 2017, through the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. This despite - or perhaps precisely because of - the fact that the policy did reduce taxes for most people, though it disproportionately benefited the wealthy, according to the non-partisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Their analysis at the time noted this policy resulted in households with incomes in the top 1% receiving an average tax cut of more than \$60,000 if the cuts were maintained, compared to an average tax cut of less than \$500 for households in the bottom 60%. Additionally, the Trump tax cut "was expensive and eroded the U.S. revenue base... and failed to deliver promised economic benefits," the CBPP noted.

Other economic policy actions that the Trump White House might advocate for include a carbon-border adjustment tax and quantitative restrictions on investments into U.S. assets such as infrastructure and essential medicine production capabilities, by China.

His administration would also likely seek the inputs of the Department of Government Efficiency - led by the "tech bros" Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy - to reduce wastage and inefficiencies within the purview of the federal government, including by rationalizing the actions of bureaucrats and cutting down on regulations across sectors. While the duo has hinted at potentially finding \$2 trillion in savings through this initiative, including via mass layoffs and the shutting down of some agencies entirely, critics have challenged the size

of the potential gains that could be made here.

WHAT ACTION IS EXPECTED ON IMMIGRATION?

Going by the Trump campaign's policy promises in the lead-up to the 2024 election, there is a distinct possibility of a large-scale deportation of undocumented workers. However, there may be several obstacles that the White House might encounter as it carries out this possibly unprecedented action. Firstly, across several states, key urban hubs have vowed to be "sanctuary cities" and pass laws to limit local law enforcement cooperation with the federal government's Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This is likely to make it politically complicated to carry out detention and deportation actions on a sizeable scale and in a short time frame. Secondly, the Trump campaign is yet to share details on the cost of such operations to the exchequer, but non-partisan analysts such as the American Immigration Council estimate that such an immigration proposal could potentially cost taxpayers considerably more than \$300 billion. These estimates notwithstanding, there is little doubt that Mr. Trump will attempt to accelerate deportations to fulfil his campaign promises, especially as the first Trump administration deported close to 1.5 million people - almost the same number as outgoing President Joe Biden and far less than former President Barack Obama, who turned away nearly 3 million people over eight years in office.

WHAT IMPACT COULD BE EXPECTED REGARDING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY?

Mr. Trump has proclaimed publicly without explanation or details that he can and will end the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict. On the former, he has said he would end the war even prior to Inauguration Day, even if he views the conflict through the lens of halting the "endless flow of American treasure to Ukraine" and demanding that NATO allies in Europe reimburse Washington for its war-related expenses if they expect military support from the U.S. against future Russian aggression.

Regarding Israel, the incoming President has followed in Mr. Biden's footsteps and criticized the Israeli government's aggression in Gaza, although Mr. Trump had tacitly expressed support for Israel by moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in his first term.

WHAT BOLSTERS MR. TRUMP'S INTENTIONS?

While the Trump 2.0 administration is yet to spell out critical details regarding its policy plans on the domestic and international fronts, one thing is certain: Mr. Trump enjoys an overwhelming mandate expressed through the result of the 2024 election. Further, he will be fundamentally operating from a position of institutional strength given the federal government trifecta, which implies that the White House will enjoy the luxury of greater cooperation in getting policies sanctioned by Congress, and possibly important cases ruled in his administration's favor by a sympathetic U.S. Supreme Court.

(The author is Opinion editor at The Hindu)

How the Right overtook the Left in India

THE LEFT IS STILL FIXATED ON THE REVOLUTION AND IS RELUCTANT TO EMBRACE THE MULTILAYERED DEMANDS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS



BY TIKENDER SINGH
PANWAR

"The national question is crucial for both the Left and the Right, though their approaches differ. For the Left, it involves uniting all democratic sections of society against external enemies, particularly imperialism. This was evident during the colonial period. However, in independent India, the narrative of a foreign enemy could not be sustained as strongly due to obvious reasons.

In contrast, for the Right, the national question is less about unity among the people and more about promoting the narrative of 'Hindu nationalism' against perceived 'others'. During the independence movement, this narrative did not gain much traction, as Indian nationalism against British rule was able to mobilize larger sections of society. Over the last few decades, however, this second form of 'nationalism' has increasingly dominated the narrative and has become more and more pronounced with time."

There is a famous dialogue from the Hindi film 3 Idiots: "Dekho hum kahan nikal aaye aur tum kahan reh gaye" (See where we have reached and where you are left)." The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) cohorts could be saying this to the Communists in India.

The RSS will complete 100 years in 2025. The Communist movement in India

is also a century old. The Left produced some of the most valiant fighters during the independence movement even as the Right was cozying up to the British empire. It is no secret that a large share of prisoners in Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were Communists. Despite such a glorious past, the reality is that the Indian Left is now in a labyrinth.

Today, the Right clearly dominates Parliament: the BJP alone occupies 240 Lok Sabha seats. The Left parties combined occupy just eight seats. Compare this to the first general elections in independent India in 1951-1952 when the Congress was in power and the Communist Party of India (CPI) was the principal opposition party.

At present, the Right is also far ahead in terms of organizational strength and structure. The total membership of the Left parties (those who contest elections) is not more than 2 million and the mass organizations that they represent number around 30 million. The RSS alone has a membership of over 7 million, and the BJP has a membership of more than 100 million.

THE TRAJECTORY OF THE LEFT AND RIGHT

The rise and fall of these political entities depends on various historical episodes, the foremost being changes in the social production system. The initial years of development after the 1950s saw the establishment of industrial towns and the emergence of a strong Left-leaning working class. Major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Kolkata witnessed a robust presence of the Left, which was reflected in their political strength. However, the capitalist production system underwent significant changes after the mid-1980s. The rise of fragmented production, a diminishing organized working class, and the corresponding growth of informal sector workers pushed the Left out of the political scene.

Meanwhile, the Right maintained its presence through cultural interventions - a space largely neglected by the Left. Informal sector workers became fertile ground for identity politics based on caste and religion. Consequently, there has been a parallel rise of the Right and the decline of the Left in Indian cities.

Another critical factor was the strong presence of the Left in rural India, driven by the 'land reforms' slogan and related movements. These were influential across the country for a long time. However, over the past few decades, newer classes within the peasantry have emerged and many of them have shifted towards the Right.

Beyond land reforms, the Left struggled to build sustainable layers of governance, except in West Bengal, Tripura, and Kerala. It remained overly preoccupied with the imminence of a

revolution and the idea of capturing state power. It sidelined all other essential matters. And the revolution never materialized.

The national question is crucial for both the Left and the Right, though their approaches differ. For the Left, it involves uniting all democratic sections of society against external enemies, particularly imperialism. This was evident during the colonial period. However, in independent India, the narrative of a foreign enemy could not be sustained as strongly due to obvious reasons.

In contrast, for the Right, the national question is less about unity among the people and more about promoting the narrative of 'Hindu nationalism' against perceived 'others'. During the independence movement, this narrative did not gain much traction, as Indian nationalism against British rule was able to mobilize larger sections of society. Over the last few decades, however, this second form of 'nationalism' has increasingly dominated the narrative and has become more and more pronounced with time.

Another major element relates to the idea of modernism and the role of the Constitution. Undoubtedly, the Constitution is rooted in the finest modernist values of equity, secularism, socialism, and more. However, the nation-state remained influenced by feudal and semi-feudal values, which continue to shape its character.

Unlike in the West where modernism evolved out of the defeat or destruction of class feudalism, which was preceded by the Renaissance, religious reformation and enlightenment, in India no worthwhile renaissance could take place. The religious reformation that took place in some parts of the country could not disintegrate the caste system which affected all Indian religions, and the Brahmanical enlightenment could not produce a new anti-caste equalitarian philosophy. India has a peculiar situation now, where the Constitution is far ahead of the polity and human values, which are still evolving. This gives fertile ground for the Right to make advances on both post-truth narratives and campaigns on religious and identity issues.

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

Jyoti Basu, former Chief Minister of West Bengal, once spoke of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)'s "historic blunder". He was referring to the party's decision not to allow him to be the Prime Minister after the 1996 Lok Sabha polls threw up a hung Parliament. His remark warrants deeper reflection. The Left is still fixated on the revolution and is reluctant to embrace the multi-layered demands of electoral politics. If the Left is unwilling to take full



The total membership of the Left parties (those who contest elections) is not more than 2 million and the mass organizations that they represent number around 30 million. The RSS alone has a membership of over 7 million, and the BJP has a membership of more than 100 million.

File photo for representation
Credit: The Hindu

responsibility, why should people trust them with their votes? This disconnect is evident in Kerala, where voters support the Left in Assembly elections but turn to other parties in general elections. On the other hand, the Right maximizes every electoral success to further its agenda. In every national and Assembly election over the last 10 years, it has been clear that the Right tries to ensure that no opportunity is left unutilized.

This divergence also highlights the contrasting leadership styles of the Left and Right. The generation of Left leaders who built mass movements and endured state repression is nearly gone. Leaders such as H.K.S. Surjeet, who spent over a decade in jail, represent a fading legacy. Today's Left leadership often emerges from educational institutions - a natural progression - but lacks the experience of building movements on the ground. In China, the Communist Party believes in building cultural consciousness. Even Xi Jinping was sent to work on the farmland for years away from his university. But this is not the case in India. On the other hand, leaders of the Right spend time with their cadre and help build leadership. Before he became Prime Minister, when Narendra Modi was in charge of States, he would constantly spend time with the cadre and even stay in their homes.

Globally, the pendulum of social and political ideologies has swung to the extreme Right and India is no exception. The question is: when will it swing back, and what will catalyze that shift?

(Tikender Singh Panwar, Former Deputy Mayor, Shimla, and Member, Kerala Urban Commission. He is a Visiting Senior Fellow, Impact and Policy Research Institute. He served as political secretary of Sitaram Yechury)

MANIPUR CONFLICT NOT JUST A LOCAL CRISIS

IT IS A MICROCOSM OF THE BROADER CHALLENGES OF MANAGING DIVERSITY IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY



BY LT GEN DS
HOODA RETD

"MANIPUR'S CONFLICT IS NOT JUST A LOCAL CRISIS BUT A MICROCOSM OF THE BROADER CHALLENGES OF MANAGING DIVERSITY IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY. INDIA'S ETHNIC MOSAIC IS BOTH ITS STRENGTH AND A VULNERABILITY. HANDLING ETHNIC DIVERSITY IS NOT ABOUT SHARPENING DIFFERENCES BUT EMBRACING THEM WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF MUTUAL RESPECT AND SHARED ASPIRATIONS. THE NORTHEAST EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT PEACE IS POSSIBLE WHEN GOVERNANCE IS INCLUSIVE, LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBLE AND ETHNIC HARMONY TREATED AS THE FOUNDATION OF A RESILIENT DEMOCRACY."

The conflict in Manipur, now in its 19th month, shows few signs of an early resolution. In his address on Vijay Diwas on December 16, Chief Minister Biren Singh blamed the unrest on 'certain agencies' that are attempting to destabilize the state. He further cited the role of politically motivated and one-sided information as a major contributor to Manipur's instability. He also claimed that misinformation had been conveyed to Central leaders, creating confusion regarding the appropriate course of action.

In evaluating the situation in Manipur, it is helpful to reflect on how the Indian State has effectively managed insurgencies across the Northeast and

why Manipur has now diverged as an exception. The Northeast has long been a battleground of ethnic assertions, with armed movements emerging soon after Independence. These movements, primarily fueled by tribal groups asserting their identities, have raised demands ranging from secession to calls for greater autonomy. The Indian State has adopted a two-pronged approach to address them: overwhelming military force to establish control and sagacious accommodation of ethnic aspirations.

The Army initially adopted harsh measures, like the forcible relocation of villages, large-scale cordon-and-search operations and retributive punishments. The military's role in suppressing insurgencies has often drawn criticism for human rights violations, yet it succeeded in establishing the writ of the State.

Alongside, the government displayed great foresight in addressing the concerns of different ethnic identities. The states of Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya were carved out of Assam, while Manipur and Tripura went from UTs to statehood. Articles 371A, 371C and 371G were incorporated in the Constitution, providing special provisions for the tribal communities. Autonomous councils under the Sixth Schedule further empowered ethnic groups like Bodos, Dimasas, Karbis, Khasi, Garos and Chakmas, giving them legislative and administrative control over land and local customs.

A concerted effort was made to get the armed cadre to eschew violence through generous surrender programs. One criticism of this was that the cadre remained in designated camps and were never absorbed into civil society through rehabilitation and, thus, retained their militant group identity. While not perfect, the dual strategy of control and accommodation was successful in significantly reducing violence in the Northeast, with terror-related deaths dropping from over 1,000 in 2008 to just 13 in 2022.

Manipur represents a volatile blend of three major communities - Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis - each with distinct cultural traditions. All groups maintain armed militant factions, often regarded as crucial for safeguarding their identity in a multi-ethnic landscape. The Meiteis, as the majority community residing in the central valley, have traditionally held significant political power in Manipur. However, they lack the constitutional safeguards available to the tribal Nagas and Kukis, such as quotas in education, jobs and land rights. This imbalance has long been a source of tension. Frequent blockades by tribal groups to press their political demands also affected the Meiteis by disrupting daily life, deepening economic woes and worsening



Turmoil: Manipur represents a volatile blend of three major communities - Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis.

File photo

inter-community ties.

On the other hand, the tribal communities view the special provisions as essential protections against cultural erosion - protections that they argue are necessary due to their minority status. State and Central governments have sought to balance a complex interplay of differing types of accommodation - political power for the Meiteis and special safeguards for the tribals. While this meant that some grievances of the Meiteis remained unaddressed, a fragile status quo was maintained.

In a sensitive ethnic environment, self-aggrandizing politicians can exacerbate conflict by using ethnic identities as a tool to mobilize support, portraying themselves as the protectors of one group while demonizing another.

This is what happened in Manipur when the CM's rhetoric against the Kukis became strident. While he justified his actions as acting against illegal immigrants, drug traffickers and encroachers on forest land, they sparked alienation among the Kukis. In March 2023, the state government withdrew from the Suspension of Operations agreements with the Kuki National Army and Zomi Revolutionary Army, signaling an end to negotiated peace efforts.

David Lake and Donald Rothchild, in their seminal work *Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict*, argue that "stable ethnic relations can be understood as based upon a 'contract' between groups. Such contracts specify, among other things, the rights and responsibilities, political privileges and access to resources of

each group... ethnic contracts channel politics in peaceful directions."

Any perceived imbalance in this contract can ignite conflict. In Manipur, this imbalance was exacerbated by exploitative politics and ethnic activism that created a deep polarization between the Meiteis and Kukis. Violence appeared inevitable, and the spark came in May 2023 when the Manipur High Court directed the state government to recommend granting ST status to the Meiteis.

Today, the geographical and psychological divide between the Meiteis and Kukis is nearly complete. The state forces appear to be helpless actors as armed civilian gangs from both sides roam the countryside in search of defenseless victims. Amid the civil war in Myanmar and instability in Bangladesh, the situation in Manipur is acquiring a larger national security dimension.

We must learn some lessons. Manipur's conflict is not just a local crisis but a microcosm of the broader challenges of managing diversity in a pluralistic society. India's ethnic mosaic is both its strength and a vulnerability. Handling ethnic diversity is not about sharpening differences but embracing them within the framework of mutual respect and shared aspirations. The Northeast experience shows that peace is possible when governance is inclusive, leadership responsible and ethnic harmony treated as the foundation of a resilient democracy.

(Lt Gen DS Hooda is a retired Indian Army Officer)

Purnima A Desai - The Ultimate Advocate of Indian Culture through Selfless Work

BY BIDISHA ROY



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

Money, name, fame - she wants nothing; just wants to work selflessly. Her credo: "Duty with sincerity and honesty" takes into account the importance of hard work. She is a staunch believer in "Work is Worship" and "God helps those who help themselves". She is no other than Purnima A Desai - a true cultural ambassador of India.

A motivating and dedicated teacher in vocal and instrumental music, dance, languages, and Indian philosophy, Purnima A Desai is the founder and President of Shikshayatan Cultural Center and Sriniketan Foundation, both based in New York. The philanthropic organizations, instrumental in encouraging and supporting Indian culture through music and art, promote the beauty, good will, and tranquility of Indian art and culture through in depth educational workshops teaching children and women Hindi, violin, dance, poetry, and painting.

Born in a Brahmin family in Kolkata, India in 1949, Purnima lived in there for 19 years, then moving to Delhi where she lived for 4 years. In 1972 she got married to Ashok C Desai, a pharmacist by profession. It was a brief one year stay in Mumbai, before she moved to New York in 1973.



Purnima with her husband Ashok C. Desai and their three daughters Komal, Tejal and Kaveeta

Purnima's liaison with the cultural world started in Kolkata at a very early age when she started learning Bharatnatyam, Manipuri, and Kathak dance. Highly educated with a number of degrees under her belt, Purnima, who is a B.A. (Edu. Hons.), C.C.O.S.W.,

M.B.A., Real Estate Manager., and Computer Programmer, never got disconnected from her cultural roots.

After a brief corporate career in New York, Purnima took a hiatus for her children. Mother of three daughters, Purnima founded the cultural organization- Shikshayatan, which means house of learning, in 1988 as she felt the need for such an organization to impart knowledge about Indian Culture to the young generation who are born and brought up in U.S. A. and who are deprived of the rich Indian cultural heritage. Shikshayatan opened its doors to all nationalities to come together for peace, harmony and team spirit and successfully and continuously offered vocal and instrumental lessons flexibly throughout the calendar year since its inception, providing a stage for young and old performers alike.

In 2015, she founded Sriniketan Foundation with the objective of building awareness through mind, body and soul evolution through various therapies. Each year, the organization showcases the talent of internationally renowned artists and recognizes their phenomenal talent, unrivaled contributions, and dedication to preserving the heritage of Hindustani Classical Music.

Purnima has celebrated many festivals of India, birthdays of saints, sages, patriotic leaders to give the knowledge of India and her sacrifices, morality, and spirituality. She was blessed by saints, sages, spiritual masters like Amma, Sant Morari Bapu, Acharya Mridula Shastri, Swami Bua ji, dignitaries and diplomats- Hillary Clinton, Gary Ackerman Dr. Karan Singh, Dr. Abid Hussain, Lalit Mansingh, Neelam Deo, Shashi Tripathi, scholars, renowned artists- Sonal Mansingh, Padmini Ramachandran, Archana Joglekar, Pandit Ramesh Narayan, Partho Bose, Aditya Narayan Chatterjee and many more, poets - Dr. Bijoy Mehta, community leaders, world renowned astrologers and healers Swami Chakradhar, Shakunta Devi and many community leaders.



Purnima's candid moment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Purnima is an acknowledged vocalist who has many music albums to her credit. She has authored many books - a Children's book, book of patriotic songs, and another that contains spiritual songs. Theater also fascinates her. She is a script writer, producer and director of small plays -Apna Desh Apne Tyohaar and Bal Ramayan for Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, NY. As a program director of cultural events, Purnima has produced and directed more than hundred cultural programs for youngsters and adults for various organizations, institutions, ashrams, temples, churches, libraries, schools, delegates, etc. And she does not stop here! She is a painter with proficiency in oil painting. She is a journalist too in her own right. She

is publisher/editor of Abhyudaya, an educational and literary magazine in Hindi & English for children, youth, and adults.

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

She has received a number of recognitions, honors and awards. She is a recipient of Dharma Kalyaan Jyoti Madalsa Award by Maa Yog Shakti. All Brahmin Convention 2001 commenced by Brahmin Samaj of U.S.A. honored her with an award of "Excellence and Accomplishments for brilliance, versatility, expertise, dedication, commitment and dignifying Worldwide Brahmin Community through [her] prolific, meritorious contribution and glorious accomplishments in the field of cultural and Educational activities". On March 17, 2006, World Business Forum honored her with the awards: "Person of the Year" and "Woman of the Era" at the Hilton Hotel in NY. She also received the "Samaaj Bandhu" and "Best Teacher's Award" from the Probidhini Foundation; "Sangeet Vishaarad" on May 17th 2009 from Maha Mandaleshwar Maa Yog Shakti Saraswati. She received a citation from New York City Council for being "an outstanding citizen, one which is worthy of the esteem of both community and the great City of New York" on October 2, 2009.

Purnima is also a recipient of "AMBASSADOR FOR PEACE" from Universal Peace Foundation in 2011.



Purnima is seen with other artists in an event organized by her

"I'm extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to acquire the best from both India and the United States," says Purnima. "Over the course of my life both countries have given me so much opportunity and my gratitude for them is infinite. Now through my organization I proudly guide our young future generation to balance their life and remain peaceful and profoundly connected to both cultures."

"My sole purpose is for children to connect to their roots and they should know what inspirational and enrichment they can acquire from their Indian heritage," says Purnima.

According to Purnima, it's ideal for Indian American people to embrace both cultures as merging idealism from their different values, beliefs, and norms. She feels absolutely blessed and overwhelmingly lucky to be a citizen while maintaining spirituality and enlightenment from her country.

"My heartfelt purpose is keeping people healthy physically and spiritually and to help the needy less fortunate people," says Purnima. "We should all be mindful that wealth is not everything. I teach holistic health, healing, and proper nutrition. If you are healthy you can acquire wealth. But if you own lavish properties and have millions in the bank but are malnourished and sickly you can never enjoy life."

RING IN THE YEAR OF THE SNAKE WITH NJ SYMPHONY

BY MABEL PAIS

The New Jersey Symphony will present a special performance for the 2025 Lunar New Year Celebration ringing in the Year of the Snake. Music Director Xian Zhang will conduct the performance on Saturday, January 25, 2025, at 7:30 pm at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

The orchestral Celebration Concert will then feature a program that blends Eastern and Western musical traditions. Xian Zhang will conduct the New Jersey Symphony, who will be joined by pianist Min Kwon, tenor Michael Fabiano, the Peking University Alumni and Starry Arts Children's Choruses and the Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team.

First developed by Zhang in 2019, the Lunar New Year Celebration weaves together the best in classical music from the East and the West. Zhang leads a program that includes Li Huanzhi's 'Spring Festival Overture,' selections from Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23, 'Arirang,' 'Yuan Ri,' 'The Red Dragonfly' arranged by Nicholas Hersh and Puccini's 'E Lucevan le stelle' from 'Tosca' and selections from 'Turandot.'

Min Kwon and Michael Fabiano are set to perform, with special appearances from Starry Arts Children's Chorus and Peking University (PKU) Alumni Chorus, which consists of former members of PKU's student choir alongside singers from the Chinese community in New York and New Jersey. The evening will also feature a performance by the Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team.

Earlier this year, the Symphony held a composition competition and invited New Jersey-based composers of all backgrounds, ages and ability levels to submit their own solo piano arrangement of the Korean folk song 'Arirang.' Patricio Molina, the winner of the competition, will have his arrangement performed at the concert by pianist Min Kwon. Leading up to the performance, Molina will also participate in at least one workshop with Kwon.

PROGRAM

All ticket holders are invited to attend a pre-concert Cultural Exchange Festival in the Prudential Hall lobby that will feature artisans and performers from Prince Kung's Palace Museum in Beijing. Gates will open at 6 pm.

2025 LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION WITH XIAN ZHANG CELEBRATION OF THE YEAR OF THE SNAKE

Xian Zhang conductor
Min Kwon piano
Michael Fabiano tenor
Peking University Alumni Chorus
Starry Arts Children's Chorus |
Rebecca Shen, director
Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team
New Jersey Symphony
Newark - Saturday, January 25, 7:30 pm,
New Jersey Performing Arts Center



Xian Zhang with the New Jersey Symphony

Credit : NJ Symphony

Li Huanzhi Spring Festival Overture
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Selections
from Piano Concerto No. 23
Traditional arr. Patricio Molina
Arirang
Traditional 'Yuan Ri'
Traditional arr. Nicholas Hersh 'The
Red Dragonfly'
Giacomo Puccini 'E Lucevan le stelle'
from 'Tosca'
Giacomo Puccini Selections from
'Turandot'

For more information and updates on
concerts and tickets, visit
njsymphony.org/events.

TICKETS

To purchase tickets to the Concert, visit
my.njsymphony.org.

Concert Tickets
Saturday, January 25 - Gates Open at 6
pm

CULTURAL EXCHANGE FESTIVAL

Welcome the Year of the Snake with
a cultural exchange.

The event commences with a Cultural
Exchange Festival in a tradition that
invites all audience members to a
celebration of community and cultural
exchange before the concert. This year's
event will feature artisans and
performers from Prince Kung's Palace
Museum in Beijing.

7:30 pm: Celebration Concert in
Prudential Hall

VIP TICKETS

5:30 pm: Cultural Exchange Festival &

VIP Reception

VIP ticket holders will receive early
access to the festival before it opens to the
public.

VIPs will sip cocktails and savor a tasty
dinner buffet at the VIP reception, which
overlooks the lobby festival and
performances.

To purchase VIP Tickets, visit
njsymphony.org/events/detail/2025-lunar-new-year-celebration-vip-event

SPONSORSHIP

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njsymphony.org/assets/doc/LNY25-Sponsorship-Brochure-121323-2-d6f122b47b.pdf

XIAN ZHANG

Zhang has an exceptional ear for
balance, as well as the ability to
draw the softest, most transparent
tones imaginable from the
orchestra...With such skills and obvious
audience appeal, Zhang should prove a
valuable addition to the Met's conduction
staff." - New York Classical Review

2024-25 marks the GRAMMY and Emmy
Award-winning conductor Xian Zhang's
ninth season as music director of the New
Jersey Symphony. Starting in 2025-26,
Zhang will also hold the role of music
director at Seattle Symphony. Zhang holds
the position of conductor emeritus of
Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, having
previously held the position of music
director between 2009-2016.

The 2024-25 season sees Zhang return to
the Metropolitan Opera in New York to

conduct David McVicar's acclaimed
production of Puccini's Tosca.

Zhang is in high demand as a guest
conductor, appearing regularly with
Philadelphia Orchestra and Los Angeles
Philharmonic, returning to both in 2024-
25. Her recording with Philadelphia
Orchestra and Time for Three, Letters for
The Future (released 2022 on Deutsche
Grammophon), won multiple GRAMMY
Awards in the Best Contemporary
Classical Composition (Kevin Puts'
Contact) and Best Classical Instrumental
Solo categories.

Zhang previously served as principal
guest conductor of the BBC National
Orchestra & Chorus of Wales, the first
female conductor to hold a titled role with
a BBC orchestra and principal guest
conductor of Melbourne Symphony
Orchestra. In 2002, she won first prize in
the Maazel-Vilar Conductor's
Competition. She was appointed New
York Philharmonic's assistant conductor
in 2002, subsequently becoming their
associate conductor and the first holder of
the Arturo Toscanini Chair. Learn more
at xianzhangconductor.com.

MIN KWON

"To say the audience was thrilled with
the performance would be an
understatement of high order....a truly
grand performance. - The Daily
Performance."

Korean-born American pianist Min
Kwon excels in a versatile career that

CONTD ON PAGE 29

CONTD FROM PAGE 28

encompasses concerti, solo recitals and chamber music appearances, while in high demand around the world as pedagogue, arts advocate and administrator. She has held professional engagements in over 60 countries on seven continents and all 50 US states.

Professor of piano at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University since 2002, Dr. Kwon is also the founder and director of the Center for Musical Excellence (CME), a non-profit dedicated to mentoring and supporting gifted young musicians. As artistic director of 'Music Made Here,' a concert series inaugurated in 2018 and 'CME in Harding Homes,' Kwon brings world class talent to intimate venues.

As soloist, Kwon has performed extensively in Europe, North and South America and Asia, with such orchestras as Philadelphia, North Carolina, Atlanta, New Jersey and Fort Worth and more. Among the distinguished conductors with whom she has collaborated are James Conlon, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Alan Gilbert, Vaktang Jordania, Gerhardt Zimmerman and Xian Zhang.

As recitalist, Kwon has performed at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall, where she returns each year as artistic director of critically acclaimed, themed concerts featuring Rutgers pianists.

An avid chamber musician, she has performed in numerous duo and chamber recitals around the world including recent appearances in New York, Madrid, Rome, Curaçao, Malaysia, Vienna, Prague, Luxembourg and Serbia.

With her sister, violinist Yoon Kwon (first violin at the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra), she has given over 200 recitals on Community Concert Tours (CAMI).

In addition to her collaboration with Yoon Kwon on concert tours, the duo made a recording for RCA Red Seal/BMG in 1996 as the first Koreans to do so in the Company's 100-year history.

A recent release, 'CME Presents: Piano Celebration'-for which she was producer, artistic director and performer-celebrates composers and pianists from 17 countries.



Min Kwon

Credit : NJ Symphony

Kwon holds Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees from The Juilliard School and a Bachelor of Music degree from The Curtis Institute of Music, completing post-doctoral studies in Salzburg. From 2015-2018, she served on the Juilliard Council as the first and only alumna/a to be invited. She counts among her teachers and mentors Eleanor Sokoloff, Martin Canin, Leon Fleisher, Hans Leygraf, Dorothy DeLay, Jerome Lowenthal and Leif Ove Andsnes. Kwon is a Steinway Artist.

MICHAEL FABIANO

Born in Montclair, New Jersey, this tenor of Italian descent attended the University of Michigan and the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. He was the recipient of the 2014 Beverly Sills Artist Award and the 2014 Richard Tucker Award, Fabiano is the first singer to win both awards in the same year. Learn more at michaelfabianotenor.com.

PEKING UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHORUS

Peking University (PKU) Alumni Chorus was founded in 2014. It consists of

former members of PKU Student Choir and seasoned singers from the Chinese community in the Greater New York area. In the past nine years, the ensemble has performed at every Chinese New Year Concert organized by PKU Alumni Association of Greater New York, as well as made appearances at major stages in the New York area such as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center and Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center. In 2019, the chorus performed Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with other choruses at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle and Carnegie Hall. In February 2019, the chorus appeared in the New Jersey Symphony's first Lunar New Year concert. This year marks the seventh consecutive year of collaboration between the chorus and the NJ Symphony.

Conductor and pianist Conrad Chu has served as the chorus' conductor since 2016 being well-versed in opera, orchestral and choral repertoire, with a strong affinity for contemporary styles. Learn more at english.pku.edu.cn.

STARRY ARTS CHILDREN'S CHORUS

In 2015, violin educator and experienced children's choir conductor Rebecca Xiaoxing Shen founded the Starry Arts Group Children's Chorus. The chorus regularly performs at a variety of community events, including at libraries, nursing homes, care centers and multicultural festivals, earning widespread praise. From 2019 to 2023, the chorus was invited to collaborate with the New Jersey Symphony for five consecutive years, performing at the Lunar New Year Celebration Concert at NJPAC, where it received enthusiastic applause at each performance. In September 2023, it was invited to perform as part of a thousand-person choir at the "World Culture Festival" in Washington, DC. Most recently, the chorus won first place in the group competition at the Global Elite Talent Competition, which concluded in January 2024.

EDISON CHINESE SCHOOL LION DANCE TEAM

The Edison Chinese School Lion Dance Team was founded in 2014 by Peter Shen with the goal of using lion dance as a cultural ambassador to share Chinese traditions with the community. Combining both dance and martial arts, the team regularly performs at significant events such as Chinese New Year celebrations, National Day, and other important occasions.

The team's coach, David Shen, is a professional dancer and martial artist. He has choreographed many pieces for the young performers, tailoring each to fit the specific event and the needs of the group.

Over the years, the team has performed at a variety of venues, including libraries, parks, schools, senior centers and other locations, bringing the rich Chinese cultural heritage to diverse audiences.

THE NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

New Jersey Symphony is a GRAMMY and Emmy Award-winning orchestra. Under the direction of the Music Director Xian Zhang, the Symphony performs more than 60 concerts at mainstage venues across the state, including Newark, Princeton, New Brunswick, Red Bank and Morristown as well as schools and public spaces statewide.

Programming at the Symphony reflects an unwavering commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion while providing students across the state unparalleled opportunities to achieve musical excellence through its Youth Orchestra and other outreach programs.

In 2024, the Symphony announced it would continue to deliver its statewide activities from a new, permanent office, rehearsal and concert space in Jersey City, set to open in 2026. For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit the website at njsymphony.org or the newsroom for press releases and photos.

CONNECT WITH NJ SYMPHONY

Follow NJ Symphony on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X and YouTube

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



Lunar New Year, Lion Dance Team

Credit : NJ Symphony

YOUTH MUSICIANS IN PEACE CONCERT PERFORM ON INSTRUMENTS RESTORED FROM HOLOCAUST

BY MABEL PAIS

Wharton Arts' musicians will present A Concert for Peace with 'Violins of Hope,' a poignant tribute to human resilience and the power of music, on Sunday, January 12, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark.

Led by Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Helen H. Cha-Pyo, this special concert showcases the extraordinary 'Violins of Hope,' precious stringed instruments that survived the Holocaust. These instruments, some of which were played by prisoners of ghettos and death camps, have been meticulously restored by Israeli luthiers Amnon and Avshi Weinstein. Today, they serve as symbols of survival and perseverance, bringing hope to audiences worldwide. Join us for an unforgettable performance of remembrance, reflection, and renewal as we commemorate the resilience of the human spirit and honor the legacy of those who perished in the Holocaust.

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS) will perform works by Felix Mendelssohn, Paul Frucht, David Winkler, and Leonard Bernstein. During the rise of Hitler's Third Reich in the twentieth century, Mendelssohn's music was banned by the Nazis and his statue in Leipzig was destroyed (now rebuilt). Two ensembles of the New Jersey Youth Chorus, Coriste and



Asi Matathias and GRAMMY winner Ranaan Meyer with Restored Holocaust Violins
Credit: Wharton Arts

Camerata, along with the Harmonium Choral Society, will join NJYS on stage, along with guest artists Asi Matathias and GRAMMY winner Ranaan Meyer.

"The Concert for Peace with Violins of Hope is more than just a performance-it's a profound tribute to the enduring stories of human resilience, carried by these precious violins," said Helen H. Cha-Pyo, Artistic

Director and Principal Conductor. "Through the voices of Wharton Arts youth musicians, a combined intergenerational chorus, and newly composed works performed alongside award-winning soloists, we bring these stories to life, ensuring their legacy inspires and uplifts generations to come."

Wharton Arts Trustee Courtney Pantirer said, "Each instrument comes with a history of its owner which is an incredible way to share their story, the story of European Jewry, and to keep their memories alive. Now more than ever it is important to educate and teach this new generation. We are so excited to bring this incredible concert to our communities in New Jersey and be able to educate about the Holocaust while looking to the future."

TICKETS & MORE INFORMATION

For Tickets and more information, visit WhartonArts.org

Ticket holders are invited to a free pre-concert talk with luthier Avshi Weinstein and display of Violins of Hope at 1:30 p.m.

A roundtable talk with a display of the instruments will take place on January 11 at 6:30 p.m. Pre-registration is required at WhartonArts.org.

WHARTON ARTS

Learn more at WhartonArts.org

THIBAUDET PLAYS RAVEL WITH NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY AND EDUSEI CONDUCTS

BY MABEL PAIS

JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET is set to perform with the New Jersey Symphony this January 9-12. Kevin John Edusei will conduct the four performances. The performances will take place at New Jersey locations, January 9-12 (see program below).

The program begins with Donghoon Shin's 'Of Rats and Men,' which draws inspiration from two short stories: Franz Kafka's 'Josefine, die Sangerin oder Das Volk der Mause' ('Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk') and the Chilean writer Roberto Bolano's 'Police Rat.' Shin's piece makes use of the entire orchestra's instrumentation while maintaining a transparency that allows different layers of sound to emerge.

The first half of the program closes with Ravel's Piano Concerto in G, a work built upon broad musical influences. The sprightly outer movements feature jazz and blues influences, while Ravel drew inspiration from Mozart's Clarinet Quintet for the central, beautifully simple slow movement.

The second half of the program features Sibelius' Symphony No. 2, which was composed between 1901 and 1902. Arguably Sibelius' best-known work, the Second Symphony is known for its unconventional first movement form and the stirring nationalistic hymn that forms the main thrust of the finale.

PROGRAM

Jean-Yves Thibaudet Plays Ravel
New Jersey Symphony Classical



THIBAUDET
Credit: njpac.org

Kevin John Edusei conductor
Jean-Yves Thibaudet piano
New Jersey Symphony
Newark - Thursday, January 9, 1:30 pm,
New Jersey Performing Arts Center
Princeton - Friday, January 10, 8 pm,
Richardson Auditorium
Newark - Saturday, January 11, 8 pm,
New Jersey Performing Arts Center
New Brunswick - Sunday, January 12, 3 pm,
State Theatre New Jersey
Donghoon Shin Of Rats and Men
Maurice Ravel Piano Concerto in G
Jean Sibelius Symphony No. 2

For more information on concerts and tickets, visit njsymphony.org/events.

Kevin John Edusei

Highlights of Kevin John Edusei's 2024-25 season include debuts with the New York Philharmonic, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Taiwan Philharmonic Orchestra and at the Musikverein with the Vienna Radio



EDUSEI
Credit: kevinjohnedusei.com

Symphony Orchestra.
A strong advocate of contemporary music, Edusei's carefully curated programs across the 2024-25 season include premieres of works by Hannah Kendall, Thomas Larcher, Samy Moussa, Brian Nabors, Derrick Skye and Gabriella Smith.

Learn more at kevinjohnedusei.com, X: @kevinjohnedusei & Facebook:

facebook.com/kevinjohnedusei.conductor

Jean-Yves Thibaudet

Over three decades, through elegant musicality and an insightful approach to contemporary and established repertoire, Jean-Yves Thibaudet has earned a reputation as one of the world's finest pianists. He is especially known for his diverse interests beyond the classical world, including numerous collaborations in film, fashion and visual art. He is a devoted educator and the first-ever artist-in-residence at the Colburn School, which awards several scholarships in his name.

A prolific recording artist, Thibaudet has appeared on more than 70 albums and six film scores; his extensive catalog has received two GRAMMY nominations, two ECHO Awards, the Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik, the Diapason d'Or, the CHOC du Monde de la Musique, the Edison Prize and Gramophone awards.

Learn more at jeanyvesthibaudet.com

The New Jersey Symphony

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



HAPPY *New Year*
2025

Sending warm wishes for a Happy New Year
and a future filled with happiness.

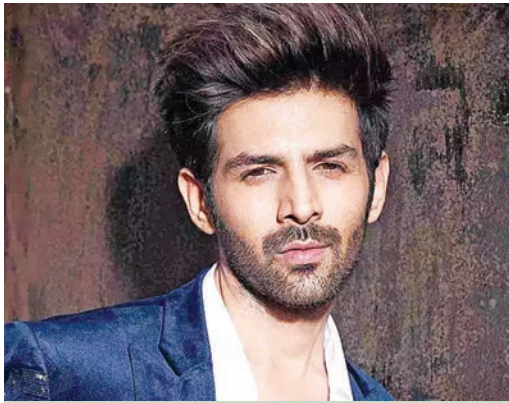
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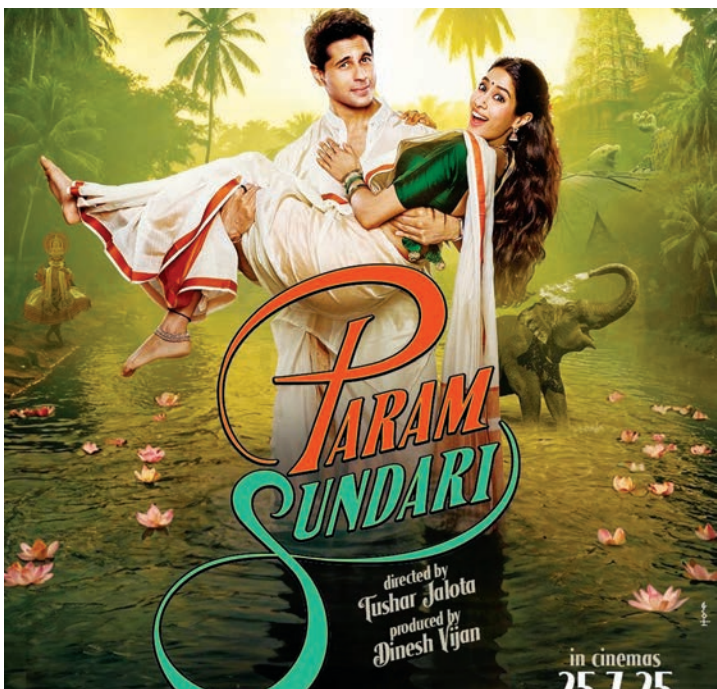
Kartik Aaryan teams up with Karan Johar for Tu Meri Main Tera, Main Tera...

Fans of Kartik Aaryan have reason to celebrate as the actor is set to star in a new romantic drama titled Tu Meri Main Tera, Main Tera Tu Meri. The film, directed by Sameer Vidwans and produced by Karan Johar along with Dharma Productions and Namah Pictures, is scheduled for a 2026 release.

This collaboration marks a significant moment as Karan Johar and Kartik Aaryan team up for the first time after a previously planned project did not materialise.

The announcement was made on December 25, when Karan Johar shared a video on Instagram, describing the film as the "best Christmas gift" for fans.

The video, which Kartik also shared, created a buzz online, especially after Kartik's engagement with a mysterious post by Dharma Movies that hinted at his involvement. While the film's leading lady has not been announced yet, anticipation is high among fans. Kartik Aaryan, who recently enjoyed success with 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3', is expected to bring his charm to this new venture. His previous collaboration with Sameer Vidwans was in the film 'Satyaprem Ki Katha'. Meanwhile, 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3' is set to stream on Netflix from December 27, adding to Kartik's growing list of achievements.



Malaika breaks silence on Arjun Kapoor's 'I'm single' remark: 'It's his prerogative'

Malaika Arora and Arjun Kapoor dated each other for several years before reportedly parting ways earlier in 2024. Recently, Arjun confirmed at a public event that he is single currently. And now, Malaika has finally broken her silence on their situation, stating that she doesn't want to discuss her personal life publicly, because that will only attract more scrutiny.

In a recent interview with ETimes, Malaika reacted to Arjun's public comment about being single. She said that she wants to keep certain aspects of her life private, and said, "I will never choose a public platform to talk about my personal life. So, whatever Arjun has said is entirely his prerogative." In an earlier interaction with the paparazzi, Arjun had declared, "Nahin ab main single hoon, relax karo (No, I am now single. Relax).

Arjun Kapoor and Malaika Arora started dating in 2018, after her divorce from ex-husband Arbaaz Khan in 2017. They made their relationship Instagram-official in 2019. Both of them were quite comfortable about discussing their relationship in public, with Arjun often being asked if a wedding was on the cards. Rumours of their spilt had been doing the rounds for a while, especially after they deleted their photos together from social media. However, Arjun stood by Malaika's side after her stepfather Anil Mehta passed away earlier this year.

Talking about showing up for his ex-partner, he had said in an interview with Raj Shamani, "When what happened with dad and Khushi-Janhvi, there was an impulse. And in this case also, there was an instinct and impulse. If I've formed an



emotional bond with somebody, I would always like to believe that I will be there regardless of the good and the bad. If I'm invited for the good, I will be there. And if I'm needed for the bad,

I will be there. I'm not somebody who has a lot of friends, I'm not doing this for all and sundry. If that person doesn't want me there, I'll maintain a distance, as I have in the past."

Param Sundari: Sidharth Malhotra's swag meets Janhvi Kapoor's grace in new film

Actors Sidharth Malhotra and Janhvi Kapoor's new film was announced today. Titled Param Sundari, it has been directed by Tushar Jalota. The makers of the upcoming film shared the thrilling announcement through a fun video on Instagram.

Maddock Films, the film's official production house, shared the announcement on their official Instagram handle and wrote, "North ka swag, South ki grace – two worlds collide and sparks fly. Dinesh Vijan presents #ParamSundari, a love story directed by Tushar Jalota, coming to cinemas on 25th July 2025. Meet the suave Sidharth Malhotra as Param and the vivacious Janhvi Kapoor as Sundari (sic)."

Produced by Dinesh Vijay, Param Sundari will hit theatres on July 25, 2025.

The production house also shared a post introducing Sidharth's character, Param. "Introducing Sidharth Malhotra as North ka Munda Param, all set to charm his way into your hearts (sic)", read the caption. Introducing Janhvi, they wrote, "Introducing Janhvi Kapoor as South ki Sundari, here to melt your heart with her grace (sic)."

Sidharth Malhotra was last seen in the Prime Video show Indian Police Force, co-starring Raashi Khanna, Shilpa Shetty and Vivek Oberoi. It was directed by Rohit Shetty.

On the other hand, Janhvi's last film was Devara: Part 1, with Jr NTR and Saif Ali Khan. Janhvi made her Telugu debut with the film, now streaming on Netflix.



Jackie Chan and Ralph Macchio unite for Karate Kids

Action-movie legend Jackie Chan has united with the original Karate Kid, Ralph Macchio, for the upcoming Karate Kid: Legends. Sony Pictures just dropped a trailer of the film featuring Chan, Macchio, and Ben Wang. The youngster is known for works such as Chang Can Dunk and American Born Chinese. He will be collaborating with arguably the biggest names in the Karate Kid universe and will need to fill some big shoes. Chan's last stint in this universe was in the 2010 remake, starring Jaden Smith as the protagonist.

While the Snake in The Eagle's Shadow star is returning after a long time, Macchio has been going strong, playing Daniel LaRusso in the spinoff Cobra Kai. Part two of the sixth season dropped on November 15, and the show has amassed a lot of love and support from all audiences. The film's release was further delayed because the makers did not want it to clash with Cobra Kai.

The trailer of the film shows Ben Wang's character struggling to make a place for himself after moving from Beijing to New York with his mother.

Christopher Nolan's next with Tom-Zendaya adapted from Homer's epic

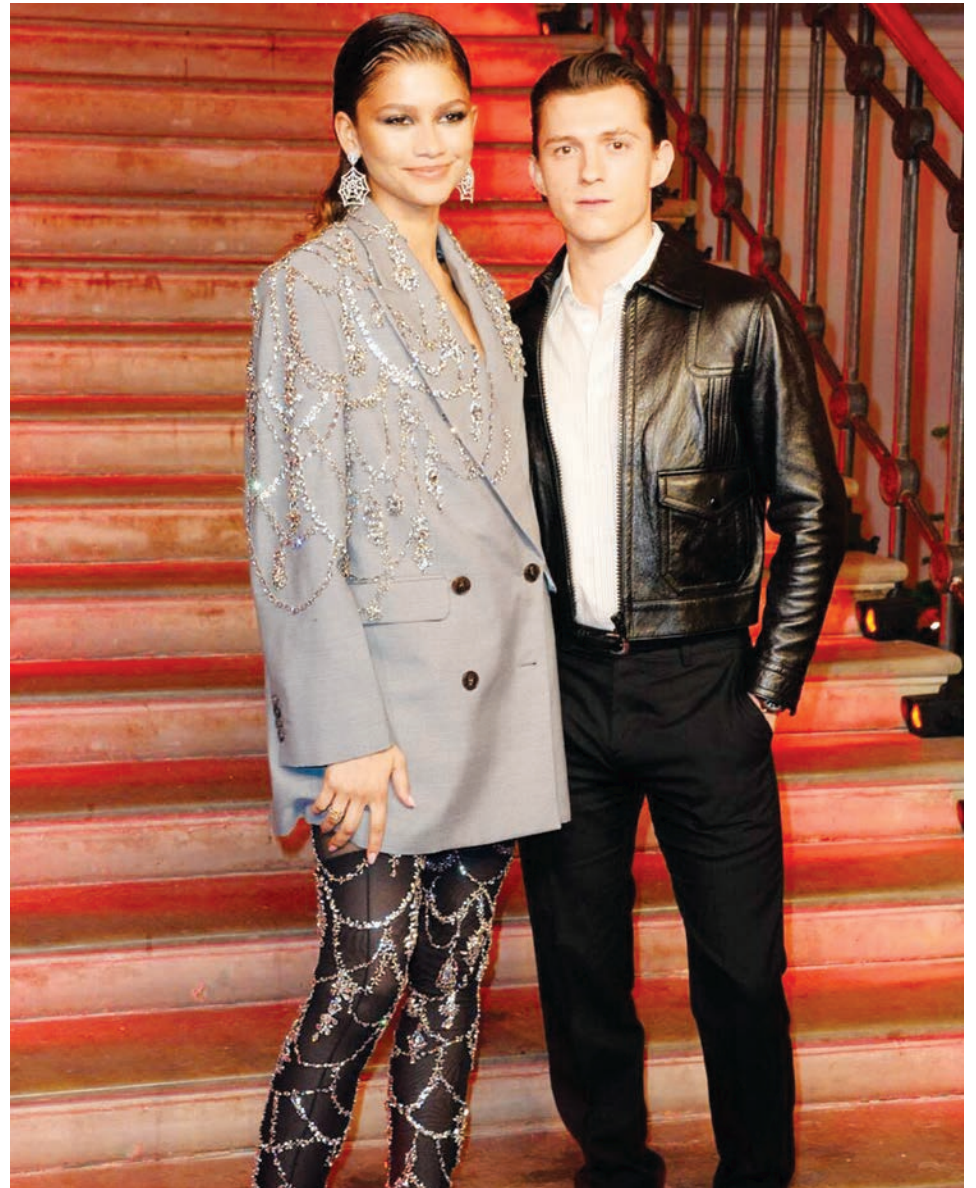
Acclaimed Hollywood director Christopher Nolan's next project is an adaptation of Homer's epic, titled, The Odyssey. The film will feature a star-studded cast including Matt Damon, Tom Holland, and Zendaya. This new venture marks Nolan's return to adapting classic literature, following his acclaimed works in original storytelling.

Universal Studios recently shared the announcement that Nolan's much talked-about film has finally got a title. Slated for a theatrical release in the summer of 2026, the highly-anticipated film is an adaptation of ancient Greek poet Homer's genre-defining epic, The Odyssey.

The Studio's post on X read, "Christopher Nolan's next film, The Odyssey, is a mythic action epic shot across the world using brand-new IMAX film technology. The film brings Homer's foundational saga to IMAX film screens for the first time and opens in theatres everywhere on July 17, 2026 (sic)."

Besides Tom Holland, Zendaya and Matt Damon, the film also reportedly features Robert Pattinson, Anne Hathaway, Lupita Nyong'o, and Charlize Theron in important roles. The Odyssey is expected to go on floors early next year and will hit IMAX theatres on July 17, 2026.

The Odyssey is a celebrated Greek epic that chronicles the adventures of Odysseus as he attempts to return home after the Trojan War.



Blake Lively's co-stars support her in lawsuit against Baldoni



Actors America Ferrera, Amber Tamblyn, and Alexis Bledel, Blake Lively's former co-stars from The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, have publicly supported the actor after she filed a lawsuit against her It Ends With Us director and co-star, Justin Baldoni, accusing him of sexual harassment and orchestrating a smear campaign against her.

"As Blake's friends and sisters for over twenty years, we stand with her in solidarity as she fights back against the reported campaign waged to destroy her reputation," the trio said in a joint statement shared on Instagram.

"Throughout the filming of It Ends With Us, we saw her summon the courage to ask for a safe workplace for herself and colleagues on set, and we are appalled to read the evidence of a premeditated and vindictive effort that ensued to discredit her voice," they added.

The lawsuit, which Lively filed on Friday, alleges that Baldoni and the studio embarked on a "multi-tiered plan" to damage her reputation following a meeting in which she and her husband, Ryan Reynolds, addressed "repeated sexual harassment and other disturbing

behaviour" by Baldoni and a producer on the movie.

Ferrera, Tamblyn, and Bledel, who have been close friends with Lively for more than two decades, highlighted the broader implications of her allegations. "The hypocrisy is astounding. We are struck by the reality that even if a woman is as strong, celebrated, and resourced as our friend Blake, she can face forceful retaliation for daring to ask for a safe working environment," they wrote. The statement further commended Lively's courage: "We are inspired by our sister's courage to stand up for herself and others."

Earlier, It Ends With Us author and executive producer of the film, Colleen Hoover, supported Lively. "@blakelively, you have been nothing but honest, kind, supportive and patient since the day we met. Thank you for being exactly the human that you are. Never change. Never wilt," she wrote on Instagram.

Bryan Freedman, the attorney representing Baldoni and his production company, Wayfarer Studios, dismissed Lively's lawsuit in a statement, describing it as "shameful" and containing "entirely false allegations."

SHYAM BENEAL: 14 DECEMBER 1934 - 23 DECEMBER 2024

Prolific arthouse auteur whose lens captured the many realities of India

His lens empathetic, rooted to the Indian reality and always political, Shyam Benegal was the arthouse pioneer who rewrote the rules of cinema with films such as "Ankur", "Nishant" and "Bhumika" that blazed an alternate path to mainstream movies.

The pioneer of parallel cinema, one of India's greatest directors whose work found an audience in the most discerning of global film circles, died in a Mumbai hospital on Monday, December 23, evening. It was just nine days after he celebrated his 90th birthday.

Benegal, who burst on the scene with his first film "Ankur" in 1974, was a chronicler of India's times and politics, that rare artiste who worked both in non-fiction and fiction across varied mediums -- films, documentaries, biopics and ambitious TV shows.

The title of his debut film, translating to seedling, was perhaps prophetic. "Ankur", which delves into caste struggles and feudalism in a small village in India, was the first of his more than 25 films that included "Mandi", "Manthan", "Junoon", "Kalyug" and "Zubeidaa".

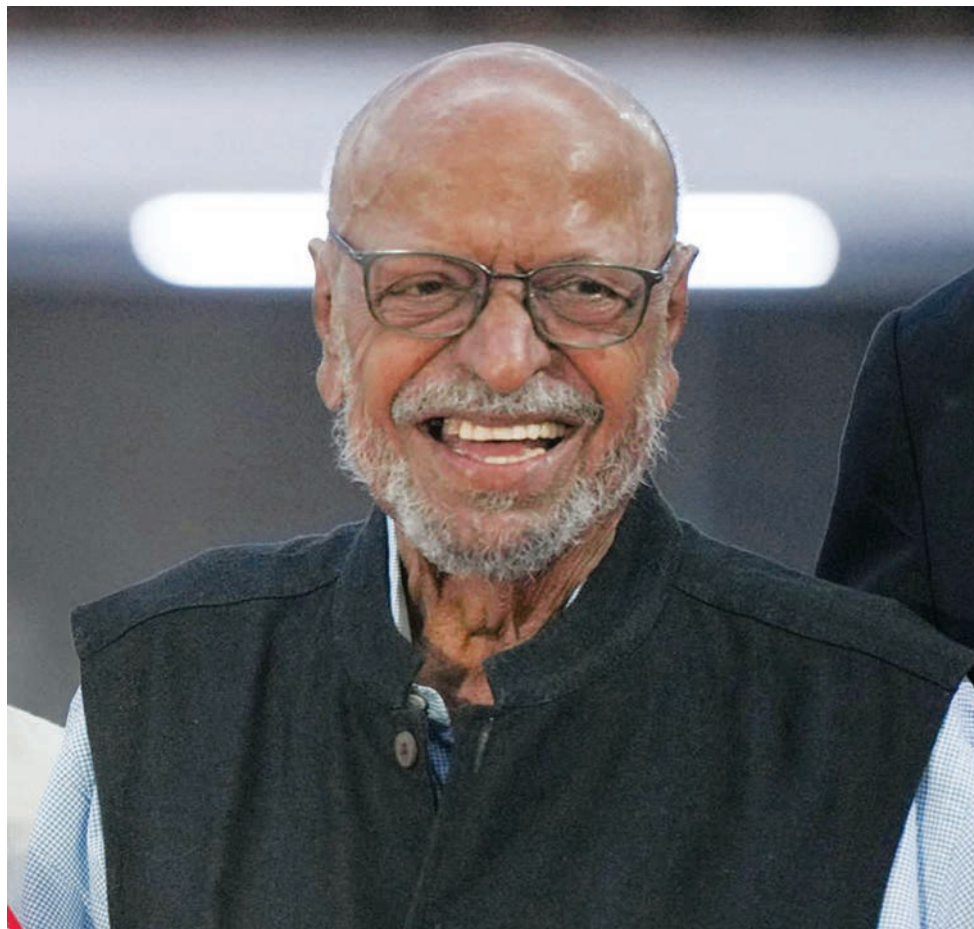
The remarkable oeuvre boasts the documentary on another great, "Satyajit Ray, Filmmaker", and television shows, the ambitious "Bharat Ek Khoj", based on Jawaharlal Nehru's book "Discovery of India", and "Samvidhaan", a 10-part serial on the making of the Constitution.

Through his work, which was distinctly different and alternate to mainstream movies as audiences knew till then, Benegal made several stars out of great actors. There was Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil, Naseeruddin Shah and Girish Karnad of course. And then there were those stars such as Shashi Kapoor and Rekha who gave arguably their best performances in "Kalyug" and "Vijeta".

The filmmaking was both deeply personal and inherently political. Telling stories of class and caste struggles, feminist concerns, rural distress and community dynamics. The gaze was incisive, the themes serious and the treatment sometimes sombre and other times satirical.

If "Kalyug" is a modern day retelling of the Mahabharata, "Bhumika" is a searing profile of a woman filmstar and her often exploitative relationships, "Mandi" deals with a brothel and its occupants who deftly navigate the men in their lives and "Welcome to Sajjanpur" about an aspiring novelist turned letter writer is an outright satire.

Fondly called Shyam Babu by friends and colleagues, Benegal was a pillar of meaningful cinema of the 1970s and 1980s alongside Sai Paranjpye, Govind



Nihalani, Mani Kaul, Saeed Akhtar Mirza, and Kumar Shahani.

Benegal disliked the term "middle cinema" used to bracket his films and preferred that his work be called "new or alternate cinema".

"I don't remember who said this: 'Every social act of yours is also a political act whether you like it or not,'" he told PTI in 2022.

"One has to be as objective as possible and the second point is to be sympathetic. If you are not objective, you are already colouring the story with your subjectivity. Sympathy is necessary. When I say sympathy, I mean empathy so you can be one with the subject," Benegal said.

His was the cinema of and by the

erudite, attracting some of the most talented in the business.

The late playwright Vijay Tendulkar wrote the screenplay "Manthan", a film on the milk cooperative movement in Anand, Gujarat, made with Rs 2 funding from five lakh farmers, and "Nishant", set in a feudal family. The late music composer Vanraj Bhatia, cinematographer Govind Nihalani and the great theatre director Satyadev Dubey worked with him in multiple films. Girish Karnad wrote the screenplay for "Bhumika" and Ruskin Bond for "Junoon".

Benegal was understated about his achievements.

"There are people who have done wonderful things. There's nothing

unique in what one has done. You do what you think you want to do. That's not unique. Climbing Mount Everest is unique," he said.

Interestingly, Mahatma Gandhi was the one personality Benegal explored in all his complexities and significance. In "The Making of the Mahatma", Rajit Kapoor portrayed Gandhi during his South African years. Gandhi appeared in two episodes of "Bharat Ek Khoj" and was played by Neeraj Kabi in 10-part series "Samvidhaan". In his biopic on Netaji, 2005's "Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero", the role of Gandhi was enacted by Surendra Rajan.

"It is very difficult to judge or ascertain this but I do believe Gandhi's influence has been very profound on Indians. It may not necessarily show on the surface but somewhere it has to do with the idea of compassion and a sense of humanity," he had once said.

The beginnings of the extraordinary career in the moving visual began in advertising.

And it was probably in his genes. Born in Tirumalagiri, now in Telangana, Benegal grew up with cinema around him. His father was a still photographer who also made short films. He was also a second cousin of film legend Guru Dutt.

Benegal did his masters in economics from Hyderabad's Osmania University. He planned to take up teaching but decided against it. The young Benegal soon moved to Mumbai looking for work and initially thought about assisting Guru Dutt but gave up on that as he had his own ideas.

Next, he took up a job as copywriter at an advertising agency. After a while, his agency shifted him to the film department sensing his inclination towards the medium where he began making ad films until becoming a full-time filmmaker. He then made documentaries for the Films Division of India before making his feature film debut with "Ankur".

He was a much awarded filmmaker. Benegal received many National Awards in his career. He got the Padma Shri in 1976 and the Padma Bhushan in 1991. In 2005, he was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, India's highest award in the field of cinema. Benegal also served as a Rajya Sabha MP from 2006 to 2012.

Unwell with chronic kidney disease and notwithstanding his 90 years, Benegal was unwilling to call it a day.

"I'm working on two to three projects; they are all different from one another. It's difficult to say which one I will make. They are all for the big screen," Benegal told PTI just last week on the occasion of his 90th birthday. It was possibly his last interview.

Source: PTI

Dipak Nandi - A Saga of Achievements through Dedication and Innovation



Dr. Dipak Nandi, a distinguished neuropsychiatrist and entrepreneur

Dr. Dipak Nandi, MD, is a testament to the power of dedication, innovation, and the relentless pursuit of excellence in healthcare. Born with a passion for improving lives, Dr. Nandi's journey began at the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi, India from

where he graduated in 1981. Renowned globally for its rigorous training and academic excellence, AIIMS provided Dr. Nandi with the strong foundation he needed to embark on his extraordinary career. Armed with a vision to make significant contributions to the healthcare sector, he moved to the United States, where he began redefining the boundaries of neuropsychiatry and healthcare management.

CLINICAL EXCELLENCE

Over the past four decades, Dr. Nandi has established himself as one of New York's leading neuropsychiatrists. His clinical practice is marked by a deep commitment to patient care and an exceptional ability to diagnose and treat complex neurological and psychiatric disorders. Patients and colleagues alike admire his compassionate approach and innovative treatment methodologies. Dr. Nandi's expertise is underscored by his board certification and status as a diplomat of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. This unwavering dedication to his field has cemented his reputation as a trusted and respected figure in neuropsychiatry.

ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES

While Dr. Nandi's clinical achievements are remarkable, his entrepreneurial spirit sets him apart. He has been a pivotal figure in the healthcare outsourcing industry, leveraging sophisticated IT-enabled services to streamline critical processes like insurance claims, telemedicine, and revenue cycle management. Through his innovative mindset, Dr. Nandi has improved operational efficiencies for healthcare providers, allowing them to focus on delivering exceptional patient care rather than navigating administrative complexities.



Dr. and Mrs. Nandi with India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

Dr. Nandi's ventures have set new benchmarks in healthcare outsourcing, particularly through the adoption of advanced IT solutions. By optimizing revenue-related processes and enhancing telemedicine services, he has significantly improved the financial stability of healthcare practices while ensuring timely and effective care for patients. His entrepreneurial efforts have earned him

several prestigious awards, recognizing his ability to seamlessly blend medical expertise with business acumen. These accomplishments have not only contributed to the sustainability of healthcare providers but have also enhanced patient outcomes across the board.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY

Dr. Nandi's impact extends far beyond his clinical and entrepreneurial achievements. As a member of the United States India Business Council (USIBC) and the Board of Directors for the Nargis Dutt Memorial Foundation, he has played a crucial role in fostering international collaboration and supporting oncology treatment in the Indian subcontinent. His philanthropic efforts reflect his unwavering commitment to addressing healthcare disparities and giving back to society. Through his work with the Nargis Dutt Memorial Foundation, Dr. Nandi has been instrumental in providing critical resources for cancer treatment and research, benefiting countless individuals and families.



Dr. Nandi interacts with Senator Chuck Schumer

Dr. Nandi's contributions also include his active involvement in celebrating cultural values and festivals such as Diwali. Working alongside Jennifer Rajkumar, he has championed efforts to highlight the importance of this festival in promoting cultural unity and awareness within the broader community. His endeavors emphasize the intersection of culture and healthcare, demonstrating his dedication to fostering inclusivity and shared understanding.

A LEGACY OF INNOVATION AND DEDICATION

Dr. Dipak Nandi's most notable attribute is his unwavering focus on innovation. Throughout his career, he has been dedicated to finding groundbreaking solutions that redefine the healthcare landscape. Whether through the adoption of cutting-edge technologies or the development of more efficient workflows, Dr. Nandi has consistently driven positive change in the industry. His ability to navigate the complexities of the healthcare system with vision and purpose makes him a true pioneer.

In a world where the healthcare landscape is constantly evolving, Dr. Nandi's work stands as a beacon of hope and progress. His relentless pursuit of excellence, coupled with his commitment to societal betterment, inspires those around him to strive for greater heights. By streamlining critical processes and advocating for innovative approaches, Dr. Nandi has not only transformed the operations of healthcare providers but has also improved the quality of care delivered to patients.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Dr. Dipak Nandi, a distinguished neuropsychiatrist and entrepreneur, has been honored with several prestigious awards recognizing his significant contributions to healthcare and his leadership within the Indian-origin physician community in the United States.

- Distinguished Physician Award by the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPIO): This accolade honors Dr. Nandi's exceptional contributions to healthcare and his role as a trailblazer for physicians of Indian origin in the U.S



Dr. Nandi receiving the Distinguished Physician Award from AAPIO-QLI

L to R: Mrs. Mehra, Congressman Tom Suozzi, Mrs. Nandi, Dr. Dipak Nandi, Raj Bhayani, Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar, New York State Senator John Liu, Dr. Tarun Wasil, Dr. Inderpal Chhabra, Dr. Tajender Jinna

- Highlight of the Evening Awardee: Celebrated alongside Ms. Kalpana Patel, Ms. Anuradha Kumar, and Dr. Jyoti Chakote, Dr. Nandi was recognized for outstanding contributions to medicine, business, and community service, serving as an inspiration to the community and more

These accolades underscore Dr. Nandi's unwavering dedication to excellence, innovation, and service.

INSPIRATION AND VISION



The family jubilates Dr. Nandi's honor

Dr. Nandi's story is one of perseverance, vision, and a heartfelt desire to improve lives. His ability to bridge the gap between clinical practice and entrepreneurial innovation serves as an inspiration to healthcare professionals worldwide. He actively participates in mentoring programs, sharing his insights and experiences with aspiring doctors and medical students. His vision is to create a healthcare ecosystem that seamlessly integrates technology, compassion, and efficiency to deliver optimal patient outcomes.



The Nandi family

Dr. Dipak Nandi's journey from a promising medical student in New Delhi to a revered neuropsychiatrist and entrepreneur in the United States is a testament to what can be achieved through dedication and innovation. His relentless pursuit of excellence has not only transformed the way healthcare providers operate but has also enhanced the quality of care received by patients. As a physician, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, Dr. Nandi exemplifies the power of vision and commitment in making a lasting impact on society. His legacy will undoubtedly continue to inspire and influence future generations of healthcare professionals and leaders.

AIR CANADA FLIGHT CATCHES FIRE ON LANDING AT HALIFAX AIRPORT; ALL PASSENGERS EVACUATED SAFELY

OTTAWA (TIP): An Air Canada flight coming from St John's city on Newfoundland Island had a rough landing at the Halifax airport in Goffs in Nova Scotia province that saw the aircraft skid down the runway and part of it catching fire.

A statement issued by the airport said the incident involved Air Canada Flight 2259, which was operated by PAL Airlines, CBC News reported.

The incident happened around 9:30 pm local time. The statement does not say how many people were on the plane.

The people on board were evacuated, and then taken to a hangar to be checked out by paramedics, CBC News said.

Due to the incident, the Halifax airport was temporarily closed on December 28 night.

A passenger told CBC News that one of the plane's tyres did not deploy properly upon landing.

"The plane started to sit at about a 20-degree angle to the left and, as that happened, we heard a pretty loud, what almost sounded like a crash sound, as the wing of the plane started to skid along the pavement, along with what I presume was the engine," she said.

The passenger said the plane then skidded down the runway for a "decent" distance as the pilots worked to stop the plane.

"The plane shook quite a bit and we started seeing fire on the left side of the plane and smoke started coming in the windows," she said.

The airport said one of its runways has since reopened. (PTI)

GIANT WAVES KILL ONE IN ECUADOR, PERU PORTS CLOSED

PERU (TIP): One person died in Ecuador and ports closed across Peru as massive waves up to four meters (13 feet) high pummeled the region, officials said December 28.

Many beaches along the central and northern stretches of the Peruvian coastline were closed to prevent risk to human life, local authorities said.

Waves there submerged jetties and public squares, sending residents fleeing to higher ground, according to images on local media.

In neighboring Ecuador, the National Secretariat for Risk Management said a body was recovered in the coastal city of Manta.

"The Manta Fire Department reported that, at 6:00 am, the body of a missing person was found lifeless in the Barbasquillo sector," the agency announced on social media. (AFP)

Flags fly at half-mast as South Korea probes its worst plane crash

30 DEC 2024

MUAN (TIP): Flags flew at half-mast on December 30 as South Korea mourned 179 people killed in the worst plane crash on its soil, as investigators probe why the Jeju Air plane crash-landed and burst into flames.

The country has started seven days of national mourning, with the acting president flying to the crash site in southwestern Muan for a memorial as teams of US and South Korean investigators raced to establish what caused Sunday's disaster.

The Boeing 737-800 was carrying 181 people from Thailand to South Korea when it made a mayday call and belly-landing before crashing into a barrier and bursting into flames.

Everyone on board Jeju Air Flight 2216 was killed, save two flight attendants pulled from the wreckage.

Officials initially cited a bird strike as a likely cause of the crash, which flung passengers from the plane and left it "almost completely destroyed", according to fire officials.

However, Seoul said on Monday it would conduct a special inspection of all 101 Boeing 737-800s in operation in the country, with US investigators, possibly including from the beleaguered plane manufacturer Boeing, joining the probe into the crash.

"We are reviewing plans to conduct a special inspection on B737-800 aircraft," said Joo Jong-wan, head of the aviation



policy bureau at South Korea's transport ministry.

South Korea has a solid air safety record and both black boxes from Flight 2216 -- the flight data recorder and the cockpit voice recorder -- have been found.

South Korean investigators said Monday that 141 of the 179 victims had now been identified using DNA analysis or fingerprint collection, according to a statement from South Korea's ministry of land.

Victims' families camped out at the airport overnight in special tents set up in the airport lounge after a long, painful day waiting for news of their loved ones.

"I had a son on board that plane," said an elderly man waiting in the airport

lounge, who asked not to be named, saying that his son's body had not yet been identified.

At the crash site early Monday, a middle-aged man and woman kept their gaze fixed through the fence, where remnants of the plane -- seats, gates, and twisted metal parts -- were still scattered across the field near the charred tail.

The smell of blood was still in the air.

Soldiers carefully combed through a field of reeds next to the runway, engaged in what appeared to be a search for body parts.

South Korea's acting president, Choi Sang-mok, who has only been in office since Friday, said the government was making "every effort" to identify victims and support bereaved families. (AFP)

Kazakhstan crash: Azerbaijan President claims Russia shot down plane, accuses Moscow of cover-up

29 DEC 2024

KAZAKHSTAN (TIP): Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said December 29 that the Azerbaijani airliner that crashed last week was shot down by Russia, albeit unintentionally, and criticized Moscow for trying to "hush up" the issue for days.

"We can say with complete clarity that the plane was shot down by Russia. (...) We are not saying that it was done intentionally, but it was done," he told Azerbaijani state television.

Aliyev said that the airliner, which crashed Wednesday in Kazakhstan, was hit by fire from the ground over Russia and "rendered uncontrollable by electronic warfare." Aliyev accused Russia of trying to "hush up" the issue for several days, saying he was "upset and surprised" by versions of events put forward by Russian officials.

"Unfortunately, for the first three days we heard nothing from Russia except delirious versions," he said.

The crash killed 38 of 67 people on board. The Kremlin said that air defense systems were firing near Grozny, the regional capital of the Russian republic of



Chechnya, where the plane attempted to land, to deflect a Ukrainian drone strike.

Aliyev said Azerbaijan made three demands to Russia in connection with the crash.

"First, the Russian side must apologize to Azerbaijan. Second, it must admit its guilt. Third, punish the guilty, bring them to criminal responsibility and pay compensation to the Azerbaijani state, the injured passengers and crew members," he said.

Aliyev noted that the first demand was "already fulfilled" when Russian President Vladimir Putin apologized to him on Saturday. Putin called the crash a "tragic incident" though stopped short of acknowledging Moscow's responsibility.

He said that an investigation into the

crash was ongoing, and that "the final version (of events) will be known after the black boxes are opened."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian state media on Sunday that Putin had spoken to Aliyev over the phone again, but did not provide details of the conversation.

The Kremlin also said a joint investigation by Russia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan was underway at the crash site near the city of Aktau in Kazakhstan. The plane was flying from Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, to Grozny when it turned toward Kazakhstan, hundreds of kilometers (miles) across the Caspian Sea from its intended destination, and crashed while making an attempt to land.

Passengers and crew who survived the crash told Azerbaijani media that they heard loud noises on the aircraft as it was circling over Grozny.

Dmitry Yarov, head of Russia's civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia, said Friday that as the plane was preparing to land in Grozny in deep fog, Ukrainian drones were targeting the city, prompting authorities to close the area to air traffic. (AP)

German security chiefs to face questions over Christmas market attack

30 DEC 2024

BERLIN (TIP): German security and intelligence chiefs are due on December 30 to face questioning about the car-ramming attack that killed five people and wounded more than 200 at a Christmas market 10 days ago.

They will be quizzed about possible missed clues and security failures before the December 20 attack in the eastern city of Magdeburg, where police arrested the 50-year-old Saudi psychiatrist Taleb al-Abdulmohsen at the scene.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, Saxony-Anhalt state officials, and the heads of Germany's domestic and foreign intelligence services are expected to face a closed-door committee hearing in parliament from 1200 GMT.

Abdulmohsen is the only suspect in the attack in which a rented BMW sport utility vehicle ploughed through the crowd of revellers at high speed, leaving a trail of bloody carnage.

Investigators have yet to declare a suspected motive in the assault that used a motor vehicle as a weapon, which recalled past jihadist attacks, including in Berlin and in the French city of Nice in 2016.

Abdulmohsen, by contrast, has voiced strongly anti-Islam views, sympathies with the far right, and anger at Germany for allowing in too many Muslim war refugees and other asylum-seekers.

According to unconfirmed media reports citing unnamed German



security sources, he has in the past been treated for mental illness and tested positive for drug use on the night of his arrest.

The Saudi suspect has been remanded in custody in a top-security facility on five counts of murder and 205 counts of attempted murder, prosecutors said, but not so far on terrorism-related charges.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who faces elections in February, has declared that Germany needs to "investigate whether this terrible act could have been prevented".

"No stone must be left unturned," he told news portal t-online on Friday, echoing similar comments by Faeser.

Scholz said that "over the years, there have been repeated clues" about the suspect, adding that "we must examine

very carefully whether there were any failings on the part of the authorities in Saxony-Anhalt or at the national level".

German media digging through Abdulmohsen's past and his countless social media postings have found expressions of anger and frustration, and threats of violence against German citizens and politicians.

Saudi Arabia said it had repeatedly warned Germany about Abdulmohsen, who came to Germany in 2006 and was granted refugee status 10 years later.

A source close to the Saudi government told AFP that the kingdom had in the past sought his extradition.

Germany has not officially commented on this claim, but would usually deny requests to send people granted asylum back to the country they fled. (AFP)

SOUTH KOREAN INVESTIGATORS SEEK ARREST WARRANT FOR PRESIDENT YOON OVER MARTIAL LAW

SEOUL (TIP): Investigators probing South Korea's Yoon Suk Yeol over his declaration of martial law said December 30 they sought an arrest warrant for the suspended president after he failed to report for questioning.

"The Joint Investigation Headquarters filed an arrest warrant for President Yoon Suk Yeol with the Seoul Western District Court", said the probe team in a statement.

The application by investigators marks the first attempt to forcibly detain a sitting president in the country's constitutional history.

Yoon was stripped of his presidential duties by parliament over his short-lived martial law declaration this month. A constitutional court ruling is pending on whether to confirm the impeachment.

Yoon's dramatic action plunged South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades.

A former prosecutor himself, Yoon had been summoned three times for questioning, but refused to present himself each time -- including by yesterday's deadline.

The conservative leader faces criminal charges of insurrection, which could result in life imprisonment or even the death penalty. He is being investigated by prosecutors as well as a joint team comprising police, defence ministry, and anti-corruption officials. (AFP)

Fifth baby freeze to death in Gaza amid Israel's blockade

29 DEC 2024

DEIR AL-BALAH (TIP): A 20-day-old infant froze to death in Gaza on December 29 amid Israel's continuous blockade of humanitarian aid including food, medicines and winter essentials. Jomaa al-Batran was the fifth infant to die of hypothermia in Gaza's tents where hundreds of Palestinians, displaced multiple times due to Israel's 15-month-long genocidal war have sought shelter amid rains and extreme cold.

According to his father Yehia, Jomaa al-Batran was found with his head as "cold as ice" when his parents woke up on Sunday. The baby's twin brother, Ali, was moved to the intensive care unit of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

Their father said the twins were born one month premature and spent just a day in the nursery at the hospital, which like other health centers in Gaza has been overwhelmed and is only partially functioning.

He said medics told their mother to keep the newborns warm, but it was impossible because they live in a tent and temperatures regularly drop below 10 degrees Celsius (50 degrees



Fahrenheit) at night.

"We are eight people, and we only have four blankets," al-Batran said as he cradled his son's pale body. He described drops of dew seeping through the tent cover overnight. "Look at his color because (of) the cold. Do you see how frozen he is?"

Children, some of them barefoot, stood outdoors and watched him mourn. The shrouded infant was laid at

the feet of an imam, barely larger than his shoes. After prayers, the imam took off his ankle-length coat and wrapped it around the father.

"Feel warm, my brother," he said.

At least four other babies have died from the cold in recent weeks, according to local health officials.

Three of the five Palestinian babies who froze to death in less than a week lived in the "humanitarian zone" in al-

Mawasi.

According to Israel's weather service, temperatures in Gaza in recent days were as low as eight degrees Celsius (46 Fahrenheit) at night.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, displaced multiple times amid relentless attacks by the Israeli army, crammed into often ramshackle tents as the cold, wet winter sets in. Aid groups have struggled to deliver food and supplies and say there are shortages of blankets, warm clothing and firewood.

According to multiple reports, Israel has been deliberately preventing food, water, medicine and other essentials from entering into Gaza. It has also repeatedly attacked aid convoys and civilians gathered to collect whatever aid that manages to pass through the borders.

The U.N. has declared a famine in parts of Gaza. An independent panel of aid experts found that nearly half of the Palestinians in the enclave are struggling with hunger. Many go days without eating. Palestinian authorities say dozens of children have starved to death. (Agencies)

Pakistan's 2024: Troubled ties with neighbours, economic woes and the Imran Khan 'problem'

29 DEC 2024

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan was haunted by political uncertainty, economic instability, a deteriorating security situation and troubled relations with neighbours in 2024.

But what defined the year were not just these perennial ills but the country's inability to tackle incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan.

Amid political turbulence, Pakistan hosted a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) conclave, which was also attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar -- the first high-ranking Indian minister in nearly a decade to visit Islamabad amid frosty ties between the two neighbours.

The last Indian foreign minister to visit Pakistan was Sushma Swaraj. She had travelled to Islamabad to attend the 'Heart of Asia' conference on Afghanistan in December 2015.

In his address at the SCO event, Jaishankar said, "If friendship has fallen short and good neighbourliness is missing somewhere, there are surely reasons to introspect and causes to address."

He also said if activities across borders are "characterised" by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows and connectivity in parallel.

His remarks were seen as directed towards Pakistan, which has troubled



relations with all its neighbours.

If the year began with Iran conducting missile strikes within Pakistan in January, targeting Baloch militants, it ended with Pakistan carrying out airstrikes in Afghanistan, killing at least 46 people, including women and children, according to Afghanistan's Taliban government.

Pakistan says the target was militants.

witnessed a series of terror attacks, particularly in troubled Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces in 2024, among the toughest years for its security

forces.

According to the details shared with Parliament by the interior ministry, 924 people were killed and 2,121 injured in 1,566 terrorism incidents in the first 10 months of the year. At least 573 dead and 1,353 injured belonged to law enforcement agencies, including the army.

On the economic front, Pakistan was on the verge of default in 2022 and only averted it due to the timely intervention by the International Monetary Fund. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif takes credit for pulling the country back from

the brink of bankruptcy and turning around the economy.

In 2024 inflation came down to single digits, policy rates reduced from 22.5 to 15 percent, foreign exchange reserves improved, and the stock market made record gains.

But it was jailed former prime minister Imran Khan who often hogged the headlines.

In the elections in February, independent candidates backed by Khan's party surprised everyone by winning more than 100 out of the 226 seats in a hung parliament.

And then the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz threw in a surprise, nominating Shehbaz Sharif as the prime ministerial candidate instead of the party supremo and three-time former premier Nawaz Sharif. As the PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party struck a power-sharing deal to form a coalition government led by Shehbaz, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) decided to sit in the Opposition.

Khan was arrested in August 2023 after his conviction in a case of corruption and has remained behind bars since then.

Contrary to expectations, the former cricketer's popularity swelled in 2024, proving right his words—uttered before he was ousted as PM in 2022 after losing a trust vote in Parliament—that he would be "more dangerous when out of power." (PTI)

Student body wants B'desh's 'Mujibist' constitution buried

DHAKA (TIP): The Anti-Discrimination Students Movement on December 29 announced that it would issue a belated Proclamation of July Uprising that seeks to "bury" Bangladesh's 1972 constitution, calling it a "Mujibist" charter that had paved way for "India's aggression."

The interim government distanced itself from the "Proclamation" while former PM Khaleda Zia's party said it was disappointed and added, if there is anything bad in the constitution, it can be amended.

The platform's convener Hasnat Abdullah told a press conference here, "The Mujibist '72 constitution will be buried (in the new proclamation) in the very place where the one-point declaration was made during the July uprising." (PTI)

Helicopter makes emergency landing near Kathmandu after being hit by bird

KATHMANDU (TIP): A helicopter en route to Kathmandu carrying five US nationals had to make an emergency landing at Banepa, 50 kilometres east of the capital, after it was hit by a bird on December 29.

The 9N-AKG chopper, belonging to the private Heli Everest airlines, was coming from Lukla, gateway to Mt Everest, when it was struck by the bird at 11 am, an official said.

The pilot managed to land the aircraft safely, the official added.

According to the airline, the helicopter was carrying five US nationals as passengers and one Nepali pilot.

Although the helicopter did not suffer any damage, it would go through a technical test before it becomes ready for another flight, the airline said. (PTI)

Afghan forces retaliate, target Pak sites

KABUL (TIP): Afghanistan's Defence Ministry said on December 28 that its forces hit several points inside Pakistan in retaliation for deadly airstrikes last week.

Pakistan on December 24 launched an operation to destroy a training facility and kill insurgents in Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province. The strikes killed dozens of people, mostly women and children.

Comments from the Taliban Defence Ministry on Saturday, posted on X, said its forces targeted Pakistani points that "served as centres and hideouts for malicious elements and their supporters who organised and coordinated attacks in Afghanistan." Ministry spokesperson Enayatullah Khwarzami gave no further information about the strikes, including how they were carried out and if there were any casualties on either side.

However, a pro-Taliban media outlet, Hurriyet Daily News, cited ministry sources as saying that the strikes killed 19 Pakistani troops and three Afghan civilians. No one from Pakistan's Foreign Ministry was immediately available for comment.

People celebrated Afghanistan's retaliation in the country's southeastern Khost province, according to the organiser, Rasheedullah Hamdard.



Thousands turned out to show their happiness and assure the Afghan military of their support against Pakistan. Khost neighbours Paktika, which was targeted last week.

"All of them were chanting angry slogans against this action by Pakistan, such as death to Pakistan," Hamdard said. "All Afghans are brothers, so it is necessary that the nation and government show their pride in their blood," he added.

Pakistani officials have accused the Taliban of not doing enough to combat cross-border militant activity, a charge the Taliban government denies, saying it does not allow anyone to carry out attacks against any country from its soil. (AP)



SGML Eye Hospital USA extends Best Wishes to Indian Panorama on Pravasi Bhartiya Divas Edition

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- **Lead us from darkness to light to prevent blindness in rural India**
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Online transfer – Zelle ID	tbpatel434@gmail.com or contact 848-391-0499
Online App – Zeffy Link & QR Code	https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/donate-to-make-a-difference-2921 
Online App – PayPal Venmo, Apple Pay, Debit/Credit Card Link & QR Code	https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=7965A J4TBHU22  

Landmark events that made headlines in 2024

FROM NATIONAL POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AND ADVANCES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, HERE ARE THE TOP ISSUES THAT CAPTURED EVERYONE'S ATTENTION THIS YEAR

The year 2024 has been a whirlwind of significant events across the globe, spanning politics, science, technology, culture, and natural phenomena. From breakthroughs in artificial intelligence to groundbreaking diplomatic agreements, here's an in-depth look at the events that shaped the world in 2024.

Iran-Israel Conflict

On April 14, Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles towards Israel in retaliation for an Israeli attack on its consulate that occurred in Damascus, Syria, on April 2. This attack became the immediate cause of the escalating conflict between Iran and Israel.

Although Iran and Israel have a long history of bitter conflict and covert military actions against each other, this was the first time Iran has launched a direct attack of this scale aimed at targets within Israel.

Heatwaves

Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heatwaves are becoming increasingly common worldwide. This summer, India also experienced the impact of more frequent heatwaves, which have had devastating effects on human health and the environment.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD)- A heatwave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs during the summer season in the North-Western parts of India. Heatwaves typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July. The extreme temperatures and resultant atmospheric conditions adversely affect people living in these regions as they cause physiological stress, sometimes resulting in death.

Misuse of Deepfakes

In the General Elections of 2024, the widespread misuse of deepfakes significantly complicated the battle against misinformation. A deepfake video featuring actors Ranveer Singh and Aamir Khan purportedly endorsing a particular political party went viral during the elections. Earlier, a video that supposedly shows actress Rashmika Mandanna entering an elevator sparked a major controversy online. What initially appeared to be genuine was, in fact, a deepfake of the actress. The original video featured a British Indian girl, whose face was morphed to replace Mandanna's.

Deepfakes constitute fake content —

Iran-Israel Conflict



Bangladesh Political Upheaval



India-Canada Diplomatic Row



often in the form of videos but also other media formats such as pictures or audio — created using powerful artificial intelligence (AI) tools. It is an amalgamation of the words “deep learning” and “fake” and it means fabricated videos generated from existing face-swapping techniques and technology.

They are called deepfakes because they use deep learning technology, a branch of machine learning that applies neural net simulation to massive data sets, to create fake content. It employs a branch of artificial intelligence where if a computer is fed enough data, it can generate fakes that behave much like a real person.

Bangladesh Political Upheaval

The political upheaval in Bangladesh in August 2024 resulted in the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the establishment of an interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. This event is considered a significant turning point in Bangladesh's history and has introduced new dynamics in regional politics.

India and Bangladesh share a unique relationship rooted in a common cultural heritage, shared principles, and values. However, recent regime changes in Bangladesh are affecting this relationship, particularly with the rising concern over atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh, which has become a significant challenge in their bilateral relations.

India-Canada Diplomatic Row

In mid-October 2024, the sharp escalation of the diplomatic row between India and Canada, a first-of-its-kind situation in India's diplomatic relations with the West, raised concerns about potential ripple effects in a range of areas, including trade and people-to-people ties.

Notably, the diplomatic tension between India and Canada escalated on October 14, when India ordered the expulsion of six Canadian diplomats while also announcing its decision to withdraw the Indian High Commissioner to Canada and “other targeted diplomats,” citing security concerns after Ottawa identified them as “persons of interest” in its investigation into the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

The bilateral ties between India and Canada are long-standing and significant. Canada is home to a high percentage of Sikhs. However, the two countries' bilateral relations have been affected by various issues, such as Khalistani separatism and Canada's position on human rights in India. These issues have

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led to increased tensions and have impacted diplomatic interactions.

Political Upheaval in Syria

The Syrian civil war saw major developments in December this year. The government of President Bashar al-Assad, who has ruled the Middle Eastern country since 2000, faced sudden and intense attacks from the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. On December 8, the group reached the capital, Damascus, and celebrated the fall of Assad's regime.

Notably, New Delhi was preparing to revive its political and economic ties with Damascus late last month. On November 29, India and Syria held Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi. India has been a keen developmental partner for Syria and is also actively involved in the capacity-building of the Syrian youth.

The Syrian civil war began around the "Arab Spring" of 2010, dubbed so as many countries in the Middle East and North Africa saw uprisings against authoritarian governments that had been in power for decades. Foreign governments, such as the United States and Russia, also engaged with the conflict based on their respective strategic interests.

The Arab Spring also echoed in street protests in Syria. But Assad put it down with force unleashing a harsh crackdown on those opposing the regime. This set off a civil war, with the US backing the rebels while Russia, Iran and Hezbollah backing Assad.

One Nation, One Election Debate

The discussion on simultaneous elections has been a prominent topic throughout the year. Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, along with the Union Territories Laws (Amendment Bill), 2024. This has reignited the debate over "One Nation One Election" (ONOE). Some believe that simultaneous elections would benefit the citizens, while others argue that it would undermine the basic structure of the Constitution of India.

Notably, the high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind has recommended that the government take a "one-time transitory measure", which would require the Union government to identify an "appointed date" immediately after a Lok Sabha election and all state assemblies that go to poll after the said date would have their terms expire with the Parliament.

Simultaneous elections, popularly referred to as "One Nation, One Election", means holding elections to Lok Sabha, all state Legislative Assemblies, and urban and rural local bodies (municipalities and panchayats) at the same time. Currently, all these elections are held independently of one another, following timelines dictated by the terms of every individual elected body.

Trump comes back to power

Donald Trump won the election in the US to become the 47th President of the United States of America. Trump got 312 electoral college votes, while his rival, Kamala Harris from the Democratic Party could manage only 226. Trump's



Trump comes back to power



victory in the US is likely to ensure the revival of 'America First' as well as America pulling back from several international organisations, which Trump thinks drain American taxpayers' money.

PM Modi gets third consecutive term

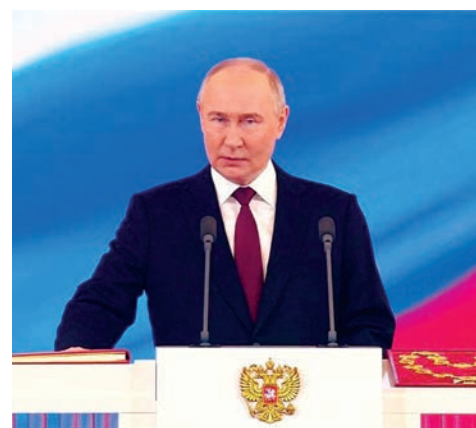
In India, Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the general elections for the third consecutive term, defeating the alliance, dubbed INDIA. The election victory of PM Modi is slated to propel India towards strategic autonomy, meaning India will be able to make decisions that are best suited to its national interests, regardless of what major powers in the world want India to do.

South Korean President imposes emergency, impeached

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared an "emergency martial law" on December 3, accusing the opposition of controlling the parliament; however, within some hours, it was lifted. Following this, the South Korean leader was impeached by the parliament. Notably, the president had survived the first vote after members of his ruling People Power Party boycotted the vote.

German chancellor loses confidence vote

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz lost a confidence vote in the Bundestag, the German federal parliament. Scholz got only 207 in the 733-seat lower house against 394 voting against him while 116 abstained. The no confidence vote followed after the chancellor fired his finance minister in a long-running dispute over how to revitalise Germany's stagnant economy. This saw Scholz's three-party government collapsing in



Germany.

Labour Party wins in the UK

UK's Labour Party won the election in the UK on July 5TH, which dramatically reshaped the political landscape in the country. Keir Starmer became the Prime Minister defeating the Conservative Party's Rishi Sunak, ending the Tories' 14-year continued control of the British parliament.

India-China reach border consensus

In October, both India and China confirmed that they reached an agreement to end the standoff between both the Asian giants. After the Galwan clash in 2020, the agreement melted the ice as relations between both countries stooped to very low. In December, China and India reached a six-point consensus to address border issues during crucial talks between National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Vladimir Putin gets presidency again

In Russia, Vladimir Putin cemented his position by winning the election. Putin will leave Josef Stalin behind if he completes his current six-year term. Putin got 87 per cent of the total votes polled.

Five nations join BRICS

Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates joined BRICS in 2024. This will see a major portion of the world get represented in one of the most prominent non-western groups.

Bitcoin's meteoric rise

Bitcoin's meteoric rise to over \$100,000 is reminiscent of previous post-election surges. Notably, the cryptocurrency had

already hit \$81,000 shortly after Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential elections earlier this year. Historically, Bitcoin's price has shown a pattern of significant gains following the US presidential elections, which often coincide with its halving cycles - events that reduce its supply and drive up prices.

Pakistan general election

Pakistan also went to the polling booths in 2024, in February, to elect members of the 16th National Assembly. But the election was anything but fair. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by Imran Khan, was not allowed to contest the elections, due to which its leaders appeared as independent candidates on the ballot.

Despite this and alleged rigging by the military, PTI-backed independents defied the odds and emerged as the largest bloc. However, they were not allowed to form the government, and a last-minute coalition of PML-N, PPP, MQM and others was given the green light.

Vinesh Phogat's Olympic Disqualification

Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat was disqualified from the Paris 2024 Olympics after being found 100 grams overweight for the women's 50kg category just before her gold medal bout. After defeating top contenders, including defending Olympic champion Yui Susaki, Phogat was on the cusp of gold, only to see her dreams shattered at the mandatory weigh-in.

This disqualification ended her bid to become the first Indian woman to win an Olympic gold in wrestling. Despite an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, the decision stood, leaving India reeling from a missed Olympic medal. A dejected Phogat soon announced her retirement, marking a tragic conclusion to her career.

India's Triumph in the T20 World Cup

India clinched their second T20 World Cup title after a 17-year hiatus, defeating South Africa by seven runs in a thrilling final. Captain Rohit Sharma made history by becoming the first-ever captain to win 50 T20Is, further solidifying his legacy in the sport.

Expansion of Cricket in the United States

The 2024 T20 World Cup featured matches in the United States, including a high-profile India vs. Pakistan game held at a pop-up stadium in Long Island. This initiative was part of the ICC's broader strategy to globalize cricket and tap into new markets, marking a pivotal moment in the sport's history.

Typhoon Yagi (Enteng)

In early September, Typhoon Yagi struck parts of East Asia, leading to approximately 844 deaths. The typhoon brought torrential rains and strong winds, causing severe flooding and landslides.

Enga Landslide in Papua New Guinea

On May 24, a catastrophic landslide in the Enga Province of Papua New Guinea resulted in a tragic loss of life, with estimates ranging from 670 to over 2,000 fatalities. The disaster buried entire villages, making rescue operations challenging.

Natural disasters that rocked the world in 2024

THE YEAR 2024 WAS MARKED BY SEVERAL DEVASTATING NATURAL DISASTERS THAT CAUSED WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION AND LOSS OF LIFE, EMPHASIZING THE GROWING IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON GLOBAL WEATHER PATTERNS. HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT NATURAL DISASTERS OF THE YEAR

Noto Earthquake



The year 2024 has seen a horrifying variety of natural disasters resulting in tragic deaths and destruction that have shocked the world. Events, including everything from earthquakes to hurricanes and landslides, have left in their wake grieving survivors and destroyed homes and livelihoods. Of course, natural disasters have afflicted humanity since the dawn of time—but now we have a sinister extra factor to contend with: climate change.

Noto Earthquake

A powerful earthquake struck on New Year's Day, heralding a disastrous start to 2024 for the people of the Noto Peninsula in western Japan. NASA's Earth Observatory reported, "The 7.5 magnitude main shock was followed by dozens of strong aftershocks in the following minutes, hours, and days." The principal quake struck at 4:10 in the afternoon. Just to make a bad situation worse, there was heavy snowfall in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and the resulting fires, hampering rescue efforts. NASA geophysicist Eric Fielding said that some areas of the Noto Peninsula were lifted as much as 13 feet (4 meters). Around 84,000 homes were damaged, leaving a repair bill that may be as high as \$17.6 billion, with 14,000 people directly affected by the destruction. And grimly, 281 people lost their lives, with many more badly injured.

Spain Floods

On October 29, as much as 20 inches (51 cm) of rain fell on the southeastern Spanish province of Valencia in just eight hours. Unsurprisingly, this

massive deluge resulted in flash floods and devastating destruction. The city of Valencia, which lies on the Mediterranean coast, and the surrounding towns and farmland were heavily flooded, and a total of 216 people died, almost half of them over the age of 70. The rain turned streets into rivers, and cars were tossed aside as if they were toys. NASA's Earth Observatory reports that the exceptionally high levels of rainfall "came from a high-altitude low-pressure weather system that became isolated from the jet stream." This happened when a cold front collided with warm air over the Mediterranean. In the aftermath of the floods, public outrage at a perceived lack of warning and poor response from rescue services spilled over into angry demonstrations. When King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia visited Valencia, angry survivors pelted the royal couple with mud as they toured the streets.

Uganda Garbage Landslide

The Kiteezi garbage dump, clearly visible on Google Maps satellite view, is the only place to dispose of garbage in Uganda's capital city, Kampala. The satellite pictures also reveal the fact that there are homes nestled cheek-by-jowl with the festering mountain of trash, which covers a 36-acre site in the city. Some of the residents of those homes were the victims of a garbage landslide in August when torrential rain caused a substantial portion of the trash mountain to collapse. Around 1,000 people were forced to leave their homes, but it turns out that by escaping with their lives, they were the fortunate ones, even though many lost everything. Meanwhile, rescuers dug their way

Spain Floods



Uganda Garbage Landslide



through tons of garbage in a desperate effort to locate survivors. A few days after the Kiteezi disaster, the Kampala police announced a confirmed death toll of 35, with 28 people still unaccounted for.

Hurricane Helene

Helene, the deadliest hurricane since Katrina 20 years ago, swept in from the Atlantic in late September, making landfall in Florida. From there, it worked its way across Georgia, both Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee, and Alabama. As it tracked across the southeastern states, it left a terrible trail of destruction in its wake. Rescue and recovery efforts continued for days after Helene had completed its bout of devastation. More than a week after the hurricane had blown through, the Associated Press

reported that more than 230 people had lost their lives in the fearful storm. Those who survived Helene had to cope with widespread power outages, intense flooding, and massive destruction of infrastructure. North Carolina's Governor Roy Cooper highlighted the ferocious strength of Helene, saying, "We knew storms could cause damage, but we weren't expecting the magnitude of this one – water raging in rivers all over in a way we've never seen before."

Wayanad Landslide

In July, it was the Wayanad district in India's Kerala region on the country's southwestern coast that experienced just how devastating the forces of nature can be. Torrential rain, 22 inches (56 cm) in two days, caused landslides, and by early August, the grim death toll had risen to

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392, with 150 people reported as being missing. The casualties came in small villages on steep hillsides where many of the inhabitants worked on local tea plantations. The Hindu website told the tragic story of two of the villages that were engulfed by the landslide, Mundakkai and Chooralmala, both places previously best known for their “scenic landscapes and waterfalls.” However, in the massive landslide, which originated in a nearby mountaintop and barreled some 5 miles (8 km) down the course of the Iruvaniphuzha River, these two villages were virtually wiped out. Weeks later, the gruesome task of identifying bodies continued, with some of the dead only identified with the use of DNA testing.

Indonesian Volcano

Volcanic Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki on Indonesia’s Flores Island erupted in early November, sending hot ash soaring 6,500 feet (1,981 meters) into the skies. A flow of deadly lava and cascading rocks hit villages on the mountain’s slopes, about 2 miles (3.2 km) from the eruption. The Indonesian Center for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation called for a complete evacuation for all those living within a four-mile radius of Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki “due to the ejection of incandescent material.” The evacuation came after ten people had already lost their lives. BBC News reported that a video shot by people at the scene of the eruption showed survivors “covered in volcanic ash, rock showers and homes ablaze, as well as the scorched aftermath of the disruption.” In fact, there had been considerable advance warning of a likely eruption as Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki had been emitting clouds of smoke and ash since December 2023. As a result, many people had previously left the area or the casualty level would almost certainly have been higher.

Typhoon Yagi

Typhoon Yagi raged across several Asian countries in early September, including Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar, but Vietnam was the worst affected country. The overall death toll of Yagi was 600, with 42 fatalities in Thailand, 242 in Myanmar, and 300 in Vietnam. The majority of the casualties were caused by flash floods and landslides resulting from the extreme rainfall that Yagi brought to the region. The Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) reported that there were “still people missing who are presumed dead.” CDP cited the case of one especially tragic incident in the Vietnamese village of Lang Nu in Lao Cai province. There, the torrential rain caused a landslide, which overwhelmed the hamlet’s population of 158. At least 48 of the villagers lost their lives, while a further 17 were injured. Some 39 were missing and assumed to be dead, so that less than half the people of the village had survived to tell the horrifying tale. As well as a high death toll overall, Vietnam also suffered the destruction of around 237,000 homes.

Drought in Zambia

A severe drought got underway in the



Hurricane Helene

African nation of Zambia in January 2024, and the following month, the African country’s president, Hakainde Hichilema, declared an official national disaster. The United Nations has said that the landlocked South African nation experienced the worst water shortage during the growing season in three decades. This has caused food shortages in Zambia, but it’s not just the agricultural sector that has been damaged. Up to 80% of Zambia’s electric power is generated by one hydroelectric scheme, the Kariba Dam, with its mighty 420-foot (128-meter) wall creating the world’s largest man-made lake. But thanks to the drought, water levels have fallen too low to power the turbines fully, severely curtailing the electricity supply. In November, the Guardian reported that the drought continued with no sign of rains, and that meant the Kariba generator might have to close altogether. Already, Zambians are reduced to just three hours of electricity each day.

Ethiopian Landslide

It was on July 21 and 22 that two massive landslides, triggered by torrential rainfall, engulfed several Ethiopian villages in the Gofa Zone region. Within a couple of days of the catastrophe, the death toll stood at 257, with the UN warning that the total number of fatalities was likely to increase to perhaps as high as 500. Some 15,000 people were evacuated from the Kencho Shacha Gozdi district as further landslides were a distinct possibility. Harrowing reports emerged of survivors desperately digging through deep mud with their bare hands in an effort to find those buried by the disastrous landslides. Speaking to Agence France-Presse, survivor Tseganesh Obole told how she and her six children had been buried in the mud. Although she had escaped with two of her youngsters, a distraught Tseganesh explained that “four of my children died and remained buried.”

Las Vegas Heat Wave

Las Vegas residents know that



Wayanad Landslide



Las Vegas Heat Wave

summer inevitably brings high temperatures that can be hard to bear. But the heatwave that baked the city in 2024 was way beyond normal. During the three summer months—June, July, and August—the average daily temperature was 96.2°F (35.7°C), the hottest summer Las Vegas has experienced since records began in 1937. Weather service meteorologist Morgan Stessman told the Las Vegas Review-Journal that, “We

blew [the summer] record out of the water.” In December, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported that the Clark County coroner’s office had confirmed that 491 deaths could be attributed to the exceptionally hot summer, up from 309 heat fatalities in 2023. Grimly, the coroner’s office also pointed out that nearly all of those killed by heat and aged under 40 had a contributing cause of death of drug or alcohol abuse.

How India flexed its global power muscles in 2024

In 2024, India showcased assertive foreign policy, focusing on economic diplomacy and strategic engagements. Key highlights included resolving military tensions with China, securing control over Chabahar Port in Iran, and navigating strained ties with the Maldives. India also strengthened ties with Sri Lanka, handled Canada's allegations regarding a Sikh extremist's death, and maintained a balanced stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, emphasizing diplomacy.



India's foreign policy in 2024 showcased a bold stance, with India asserting its influence not only in its immediate neighbourhood but also on the global stage. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in December highlighted a decade-long shift toward prioritizing economic diplomacy, a trend that continued to define India's strategic engagements this year.

As per Jaishankar, India's foreign policy today is based on three principles. "Active engagement with countries, nation's interests first under any circumstance and humanitarian approach with ethics".

Here's how India flexed its global power muscles in 2024:

India stares down China

It took India and China 21 rounds of Corp Commander-level talks on disengagement to end the military impasse that plagued the relationship for five years. While military disengagement had been achieved earlier at four points, the same remained elusive in Depsang and Demchok, the two friction points.

China maintained that the impasse in these areas were legacy issues that predated the 2020 standoff and should not be allowed to block resumption of normal bilateral exchanges. However, India too steadfastly maintained there couldn't be any progress in ties till the time disengagement is completed in the remaining areas, calling it an essential basis for peace in the border areas.

Patient and persevering diplomacy helped clinch the disengagement agreement with China, Jaishankar said.



Both the countries agreed to return to the patrolling agreements along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh that were in place before the Galwan clashes in 2020 after several negotiations.

Chabahar port powerplay

India's agreement with Iran in May to manage the strategic Chabahar Port for the next decade marked a significant milestone, as it was the first time India assumed management of a port overseas and that too amid Iran's tensions with the US and Israel. This move underscores Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on using strategic ports to bolster regional connectivity and influence.

Chabahar port is a vital link in India's efforts to enhance connectivity with Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the broader Eurasian region. It also serves as a counterbalance to Pakistan's Gwadar Port and China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative.

The pact with Iran was signed despite the looming threat of US sanctions. Although the sanctions were never imposed, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed concerns raised by the US about the "potential risk" to companies involved



in the India-Iran joint venture. Jaishankar stressed that India would "work at" explaining Chabahar's importance as a project serving the region's broader interests.

Maldives comes back

India's relationship with Maldives faced turbulence after Mohamed Muizzu, known for his pro-China and anti-India stance, assumed office as president. Mere hours after his swearing-in, Muizzu demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel stationed to operate three aviation platforms gifted by India. Following negotiations, the Indian military personnel were replaced with civilian operators.

Tensions escalated further when three Maldivian deputy ministers made controversial remarks about

India and Prime Minister Modi on social media. The Maldivian Foreign Ministry swiftly distanced itself from the comments, leading to the suspension of the three junior ministers.

Amid these strained ties, President Muizzu made his first bilateral visit to India in October, as Maldives grappled with an economic crisis. The financial challenges facing his country were likely a key topic in discussions with India. Before the visit, Muizzu adopted a conciliatory tone, stating that he has never opposed India and acknowledging that New Delhi was aware of Maldives' financial difficulties and willing to assist.

Sri Lanka sides with India

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on his inaugural foreign

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visit since taking office in September assured Prime Minister Modi that Sri Lanka would not permit its territory to be "used in any way that is detrimental to the interest of India.

The assurance from Sri Lankan president came at a crucial point as China is intensifying its presence in the Indian Ocean region, particularly targeting Indian interests.

China's control over Hambantota Port, acquired through Sri Lanka's debt default, has enabled Beijing to station vessels like the Yuan Wang 5, a 25,000-tonne satellite and missile tracking ship. This development concerns India due to Sri Lanka's geographical proximity.

Despite India's initial objections in August 2022, Sri Lanka eventually permitted Chinese vessels to dock for 'replenishment' at Hambantota. Meanwhile, Chinese surveillance vessels keep on patrolling the Indian Ocean region and using the Hambantota port.

China secured a 99-year lease on Hambantota port after Sri Lanka struggled with loan repayments. The \$1.7 billion project, with phase one completed in 2010, required annual payments of \$100 million, which Colombo failed to meet.

The Canadian challenge

India in October this year expelled six Canadian diplomats and announced withdrawing its high commissioner and other targeted officials from Canada after strongly dismissing Ottawa's allegations linking the envoy to a probe into the killing of Sikh extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in a major downturn in already frosty ties between the two nations. India's decision to recall High Commissioner Sanjay Verma and some other diplomats came shortly after the Canadian Charge d'Affaires Stewart Wheelers was summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Wheelers was bluntly told that baseless "targeting" of the Indian envoy and other officials was "completely unacceptable".

India is not neutral in Russia-Ukraine war

Despite opposition of the West, India has managed to find a middle way on the Russia-Ukraine conflict while also constantly underlining its strong relations with Russia. During the BRICS summit in October, when Prime Minister Modi visited Russia, President Vladimir Putin remarked that he believed Modi would understand his comments without translation, highlighting the strong relationship between the two nations. Modi responded with a hearty laugh. India's approach to the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been shaped by its steadfast commitment to peace, dialogue, and diplomacy. This year, Modi visited Ukraine and met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, reaffirming India's stance. During the meeting, Modi emphasized that India has never been neutral in the conflict but has consistently sided with peace.

India's role in the conflict has drawn



international attention. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, after her meeting with Zelenskyy, pointed out the potential roles India and China could play in resolving the crisis. Following his visit to Kyiv, Modi telephoned Putin to share his perspectives. Apart from the BRICS summit visit, Modi visited Russia in July, holding extensive talks with President Putin. While India has not proposed a peace formula like those of Brazil or China, it has maintained contact with all stakeholders, advocating for negotiations and emphasizing the importance of Russia's involvement in peace summits for a sustainable resolution to the conflict.

Diplomatic win in Qatar

In a significant diplomatic win for India in February, eight former Indian Navy personnel, who were initially sentenced to death in Qatar on charges of spying, were released, marking a crucial turn of events in a case that had garnered international attention and led Modi critics to make it a test case for his global diplomatic clout.



India's diplomatic efforts led to the commutation of the capital punishment to extended prison terms for the eight veterans, who had been facing severe charges in Qatar. This decision came after sustained diplomatic intervention by India, showcasing the effectiveness of bilateral engagements in resolving complex legal matters. Expressing

gratitude for the release of the Indian nationals, the Indian government welcomed the decision made by the Amir of the State of Qatar to facilitate their return. The swift resolution of this sensitive issue underscores the significance of diplomatic dialogue and cooperation between nations in addressing challenges faced by their citizens abroad.

Modi returns, Rahul finds foothold: Revisiting the grand political tamasha India witnessed this year

The year 2024 was significant for Indian politics as the Election Commission carried out the world's largest electoral exercise with 642 million people voting to decide who would rule the nation for the next five years.

The elections were carried out in seven phases between April and June with thousands of government functionaries - who were manned by an even greater number of security forces -- managing a whopping 10.5 lakh polling booths across the country.

The year also witnessed several states electing their new governments, with all but two retaining those in power. The opposition also got a new lease of life this year despite being on the losing side in the general elections.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi became the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha as his party won 99 seats, nearly double the number it had scrambled to in 2019. The grand old party celebrated the performance like a win against the larger-than-life figure of Narendra Modi, who became the Prime Minister for the third consecutive time, though with figures far below the BJP's expectations.

In the national capital, the tug of war between the Centre and the elected Aam Aadmi Party government witnessed strong pulls and drags this year. The tension peaked when AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal was jailed in March for his alleged role in the Excise Policy Scam. He functioned as Delhi Chief Minister behind bars for the next seven months until the Supreme Court granted him bail with conditions, following which he quit, paving the way for his party leader Atishi to take over as Delhi CM.

The resignation, arrest, and return of Hemant Soren in Jharkhand, the fall of the Biju Janata Dal government in Odisha after 24 years, the return of Chandrababu Naidu as Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, the maiden Assembly Elections in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, and the NDA's landslide victory in Maharashtra Elections were some of the other major political developments the country witnessed in 2024.

Here is a sneak peek into these and other landmark events in Indian politics this year.

Hemant Soren's Fall And Rise

Four-time Jharkhand Chief Minister, Hemant Soren dogged it out against the central government in the very first month of 2024 but managed to retain power amid a high-decibel political drama at the fag end of the year.

The gripping political potboiler saw Soren quitting as chief minister hours before he was arrested by the



Enforcement Directorate in a land scam case on January 31. Ahead of his arrest, the agency could not confirm his whereabouts for around 24 hours before he showed up in Ranchi. Soren claimed the charges against him were nothing but a vindictive action on the part of the BJP-led central government.

His chosen replacement Champai Soren functioned as Jharkhand CM for barely five months till Hemant was released on bail on June 28. Less than a week later, Champai Soren resigned as CM, making way for Hemant who took oath as CM on July 4. The move did not go down well with Champai Soren who

quit JMM and joined the BJP on August 30.

In the November Assembly Elections, Hemant Soren signed off the year with flying colours as the JMM-led alliance won 56 seats, the party's best performance since inception. Soren was unanimously elected as leader of the legislature party and again took oath as Chief Minister on 28 November.

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal Is Jailed

Embroiled in controversies that saw him running the Delhi government from behind bars for several months, Aam Aadmi Party National Convener Arvind Kejriwal was on a political roller-coaster in 2024.

With several of his key party members and ministers in the Delhi government already arrested in the alleged excise policy scam, Kejriwal also was on the Enforcement Directorate's radar.

He managed to dodge multiple summons by the central agency before he was arrested on March 21 after the Delhi High Court rejected his plea for anticipatory bail. Kejriwal knew his arrest was around the corner and had time and again mentioned it in his prior public speeches.

The BJP were all but sure of him resigning from his post but Kejriwal stayed put and ran the Delhi government from jail for several months. He attempted to get bail from the Delhi High Court however the same was rejected multiple times.

During his jail time, Kejriwal's legal battles took several twists and turns. He was granted interim bail by the Supreme Court from May 10 to June 1, 2024, to allow him to campaign for the Lok Sabha elections. After his interim bail expired, Kejriwal surrendered at Tihar Jail on June 2.

Delhi Rouse Avenue Court granted him bail on June 20. However, the Enforcement Directorate challenged the trial court order before the Delhi High Court which stayed the bail order on June 21. Five days later, the CBI arrested Kejriwal in a different case linked to the alleged excise policy scam.

The Supreme Court granted Kejriwal interim bail on July 12, but he remained in jail due to the CBI arrest. He was finally granted bail by the Supreme Court on September 13, 2024, after spending over five months in prison.

The bail, however, came with certain conditions including prohibiting him from making public statements about his arrest by the CBI. He was also ordered not to enter the office of the Delhi Chief Minister and sign any official files in his capacity as the Chief Minister.

Just four days later, on September 17, Kejriwal resigned as the Chief Minister

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of Delhi. He made it clear that he would only consider taking up the role again if he received a public mandate. On September 21, Atishi, the Delhi education minister till then, replaced Kejriwal as the youngest woman CM of Delhi.

2024 General Elections: A Mammoth Exercise

India witnessed its 18th general elections this year as the entire country voted to choose the next central government. Of the 96.8 crore (968 million) people who were eligible to vote, 64.2 crore exercised the right including 312 million women, the highest-ever participation by female voters.

The 44-day electoral exercise was the second longest in country after the first parliamentary elections of 1951-52, which lasted for more than four months. The polls were conducted in seven phases beginning April 19 and ending June 1. The results were declared on June 4.

The BJP-led NDA alliance won the elections with Narendra Modi returning as Prime Minister for the third consecutive time. The BJP's performance, however, was below expectations and it had to heavily rely on two main allies—the Telugu Desam Party of Andhra Pradesh and Janata Dal (United) of Bihar—to form a coalition government.

Eyeing 400 of the 543-seat Lok Sabha, BJP managed to win only 240 while its main partners TDP and JD(U) won 16 and 12 seats respectively. Overall, the NDA won 293 seats.

In 2019, the BJP won 303 seats with the NDA's final tally at 353. In contrast, Congress recorded a turnaround winning 99 seats, nearly double its 2019 tally of 52, thereby coming back as a potent opposition.

Narendra Modi Takes Oath As PM For Third Consecutive Time

On June 9, Narendra Modi took oath as the Prime Minister of India for the third consecutive time after his BJP-led NDA alliance registered a victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The ruling party's rallies ahead of the elections were powered by the 'Modi ki Guarantee' campaign, which managed to help it win 240 seats, a lacklustre performance but strong enough to form a coalition government with the BJP as its



most powerful constituent.

Three days after the results were declared on June 4, Modi confirmed the support of 293 MPs to President Droupadi Murmu after which he was sworn-in as the Prime Minister for the third time on June 9.

As for his individual performance from the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat, PM Modi had a shocking start on the result day as Congress' Ajay Rai was seen leading in the first hour of vote counting.

PM Modi raced past in the second half defeating Rai by a margin of 1,52,513 votes. It was the second-lowest-ever victory margin (in percentage points) for a sitting prime minister and a steep fall for Modi compared to his 2019 margin of 4.5 lakh votes.

In his victory speech, Prime Minister



Modi pledged to work with all states, regardless of the party in power, to build a developed India. He also laid out his vision for the third term saying it would be a tenure of big decisions and a key emphasis would be on uprooting corruption. He thanked TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, his NDA allies for the electoral successes in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

Rahul Gandhi's Resurgence As LoP, Priyanka's Debut in Parliament

Ridiculed as 'Shehzada' and dismissed as 'Pappu', Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had the last laugh in the 2024 Lok Sabha election as he managed to gain big even though his party lost the elections.

Gandhi contested from Kerala's Wayanad and Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareli,

winning the southern seat by 3.64 lakh votes against his nearest rival Annie Raja of CPI and the northern one by 3.9 lakh votes against BJP's Dinesh Pratap Singh. Rahul retained Rae Bareli and his sister Priyanka fought and won from Wayanad by an even greater margin in the by-elections later in the year, making her Parliament debut as she took oath as Lok Sabha MP on November 28.

Congress credited its spirited performance in the general elections to Rahul Gandhi for a campaign that focussed on people's issues and welfare measures. The party lauded Gandhi for creating a new narrative through his Bharat Jodo Yatras, the on-foot marches he undertook from one end of the nation to another during which he was seen meeting people on the ground and getting to know about the real issues facing mainland India.

Even the harshest of his critics would concede that Gandhi's 2024 campaign was by far his best one as he focussed on bread-and-butter issues and the party's welfare guarantees which struck a chord with a section of the voters.

With Congress winning 99 seats in the elections (more than the requisite 55 or 10 per cent of the 543 seats), it meant that for the first time since 2014, it had the opportunity to pick a Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha. As an obvious choice, the party nominated Gandhi who was appointed the LoP on June 24, his maiden constitutional position since his entry into politics in 2004.

As LoP Gandhi was accorded a Cabinet Minister's rank, enhancing his position in the protocol list. The work of the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha is opposite to that of the Leader of the House.

TDP Wins Andhra Elections, Naidu Returns As CM

Andhra Pradesh saw a power transfer in 2024 as the ruling YSR Congress party lost the Assembly Elections to Telugu Desam party-led NDA. The elections were held in a single phase on May 13 with counting of votes on June 4. The polls were held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections.

The incumbent Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSRCP faced a crushing defeat as it won just 11 seats against 151 in 2019. In contrast, the TDP won 135 seats in the 2024 elections against just 23 in 2019.

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DR. MIKE MOHAMED GHOUSE MR. PLURALIST OF AMERICA

BY PROF. INDRAJIT S SALUJA



Prof. Saluja and Dr. Ghouse at a Thanksgiving celebration in Dallas

I was in Dallas publishing The Indian Panorama from there when I met Dr. Ghouse. It was some 13 years ago, and since then, I have been watching his consistent work on diversity and pluralism, including his articles published in The Indian Panorama-ever truthful News magazine.

During our research on individuals who have significantly impacted the lives of others, we were captivated by Dr. Mike Mohamed Ghouse. It inspired us to interview him to explore how he embodies diversity in every aspect of his life. We felt compelled to refer to him as "Mr. Pluralist of America" because of his remarkable ability to connect with people from various faiths, races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, conservatives, progressives, and different political affiliations. Pluralism runs through his veins, and he wholeheartedly embraces Lincoln's wisdom of "malice toward none," which he states, has "brought him immense happiness."

Letting go of biases toward others can help you discover the joy of connecting with every person with ease. This sense of freedom adds meaning and happiness to life. Accepting and respecting how people dress, eat, and practice their beliefs can lead to an enriching experience. Embracing diversity is a sure path to a peaceful life. With this excellent perspective, we decided to share Dr. Ghouse's experiences.

DR. GHOUSE'S EARLY LIFE IN A DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT



The most influential persons in Mike's life- his mother and father

Dr. Ghouse grew up in a diverse environment and credits his parents for this upbringing. His father served as the mayor of Yelahanka in the 1950s, one of the oldest towns in the region (over 600 years old).

Yelahanka was ruled by Kempe Gowda, the chieftain who laid the foundation of Bangalore in 1537 AD. It is said that Kempe Gowda lived in the home where Dr. Ghouse grew up.

As a child, he accompanied his father to different homes and enjoyed a variety of foods from Hindu, Christian, Jain, and Sikh families. His mother engaged weekly in conversations with the only Zoroastrian woman in the town. At the same time, his father and maternal grandfather often discussed Shia-Sunni theology, allowing Dr. Ghouse to absorb a wealth of knowledge from these diverse interactions in a civic and pluralistic framework.

He continued this tradition with his children, taking them to various places of worship, from Atheist to Zoroastrians and everyone in between in Dallas, including an LGBTQ church, Wicca, Pagan, and Native American gatherings. He said he did not want his children to espouse bigotry towards another American.

THE FLOUR MILL: A HUB FOR COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS

His father's flour mill attracted individuals from various backgrounds, including Adivasis (tribals), Gypsies (Banjara/Khandari), Hindus, Dalits, Sikhs (from Yelahanka Airforce Base), Jains, Christians, and Muslims. They all came to the mill to have their wheat, millet, and rice ground into flour and get extra polish to rice.

As a teenager working alongside his father in the mill, he learned to respect the diversity of his community by listening to and engaging with the diverse individuals who spent over two hours each visit. Fortunately, the mill was the only one for miles around.

INTERFAITH DIALOGUES AND SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION

During his teenage years, Dr. Ghouse participated in interfaith dialogues with his English professor, Dr. A. Ramachandra, and Fakhru Bhai, a Muslim weaver. Both deeply understood Hinduism and Islam, providing him with a solid foundation in interfaith learning during the late 1960s.

In college, he attended the Mosque on Fridays and joined singing bhajans (Hindu devotional songs) at the temple on Bazaar Road Saturday nights. Wednesdays were dedicated to learning Buddha's teachings at the Mahabodhi Center, and he attended church monthly. Although he did not fully subscribe to the traditional depictions of God in various religions, he cherished visiting all places of worship and thoroughly enjoyed the essence of their teachings as suited him, always reflecting on the beliefs people held.

Dr. Ghouse remained irreligious for nearly 30 years before re-embracing Islam in the late '90s. He credits this return to the wisdom he found in the Bhagavad Gita and the writings of Karen Armstrong.

CAREER AND GLOBAL EXPOSURE

After completing college, he worked at the Food Craft Institute in Bangalore, where he had the opportunity to interact with students from various communities and countries. Every year he enjoyed nearly 60 unique dishes prepared by international students as part of their culinary training. This experience was akin to practicing pluralism through cuisine-accepting and respecting diverse foods-which enriched his experience of cultural diversity.

In the late 1970s, Dr. Ghouse worked in Saudi Arabia as the deputy controller for Fluor Arabia's largest project, valued at \$5.3 billion. He managed five remote sites for a gas gathering project that was converted to

liquefied natural gas, collaborating with colleagues from 44 different nationalities across South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, and the United States.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO REAL ESTATE AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

His experience at the Food Craft Institute and Fluor Arabia enhanced his ability to understand and pronounce various names and accents, facilitating easier communication. Additionally, he developed a deep appreciation for diverse cultures, foods, clothing, and music, interacting with the given diversity, and collecting music tapes from around the world that he enjoyed listening to.

Over the years, Dr. Ghouse gained valuable experience in real estate, including homebuilding, working with major Dallas Builders like Drees Custom Homes, Gemcraft Homes, Grand Homes, and Bluffview Builders. Additionally, leasing, and property management, all while working with people from different backgrounds.

Throughout this time, he had the opportunity to build and live in six new homes in diverse neighborhoods in Dallas, before ultimately choosing to live in an all-Black community in Southeast Washington, D.C.

FOUNDING THE CENTER FOR PLURALISM

At the Center for Pluralism, he has organized and led four annual events - Unity Day USA, Thanksgiving, Holocaust & Genocides, Festival of Faiths - and numerous seminars, including on Capitol Hill. Over 40 workshops were held to understand the essence of 12 different religions, along with producing 780 hours of engaging radio programming focused on religion.

The Dallas Morning News has published around 250 of his pieces on interfaith topics, while the Huffington Post has published over 100 of his articles. His work has been featured in more than 300 newspapers worldwide, including several major publications. Dr. Ghouse aspires to encapsulate these remarkable experiences in a book. Over the past 26 years, more than 50,000 attendees at these events have left with an open heart and mind toward fellow humans.

PROMOTING INTERFAITH HARMONY THROUGH WEDDINGS



Dr. Mike-Ghouse-Officiates a Hindu-Muslim Interfaith Wedding in Mexico City.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of his life has been officiating nearly 500 interfaith weddings, uniting individuals from different faiths, races, and ethnicities. It is an immensely rewarding experience to marry people from Japan, Korea, and Vietnam in the east, to Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, and Nigeria in the middle, as well as from the UK, France, and Sweden in Europe, and of course, from Latin America and the Middle East, representing 60 ethnicities and counting.

Nearly 40,000 people have walked out of the

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ceremonies respecting other faiths. Additionally, he has worked with over 500 families to ensure seamless and joyful wedding celebrations. These experiences have allowed him to travel to over 50 cities across America and Canada, and he has officiated countless destination weddings in Mexico, with plans to officiate worldwide Muslim Virtual Nikah, Nikah+, and interfaith marriages.

VISION FOR A PLURALISTIC FUTURE

He is committed to shaping America's future. Ten years from now, it will be common to see people of different faiths, races, cultures, and ethnicities interacting, working, studying, mingling, playing, and even marrying each other. These new interactions may lead to conflicts, potentially pitting one group of Americans against another, with biases creeping into people's hearts taking away their happiness.

As responsible citizens, we must prepare ourselves to prevent such conflicts, ensuring that every American can live securely with their faith, culture, gender, race, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or ethnicity.

DR. GHOUSE'S PERSONAL LIFE AND LEGACY

Mike is approaching his 73rd birthday. Despite being on dialysis, he leads a full and active life every day of the week. Mike is grateful to God for all that he has, and he welcomes a kidney donor. His greatest joy comes from his loving and caring wife, Fatima, whom he considers a true blessing.

Together, they cherish their lives. Mylord Fatima Reyes Tosta is also a partner in interfaith marriages and officiates extensively for Latin American weddings.

To sum up, Dr. Mike Ghouse is a Social Scientist, Interfaith Wedding Officiant, Public Speaker, author, activist, and a TV Commentator. He is deeply committed to Pluralism in Religion, Politics, Societies, Human rights, and religious freedom. He is the founder and president of the Center for Pluralism and the Director at the World Muslim Congress, a think tank.

- Background of Mike Ghouse - <https://interfaithmarriages.org/muslim-background-of-dr-mike-mohamed-ghouse/>
- Abstracto f a fewVideos <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZQ-FT8GfiQ&t=8s>
- Pictures with Indrajit, African Americans, MaryAnn, Unity Day, Holocaust, Festivals, thanksgiving,
- Choosing to live in all Black neighborhood - Published in Port Harlem Magazine <https://centerforpluralism.com/black-neighborhood-is-my-residence/>
- Mike Ghouse power of engagement with Fox News - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gd-mgSFziII>
- Standing up for others - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lb_3rr8zB-g
- My name is Mike Mohamed Ghouse <https://theghousediary.com/tag/my-name-is-mike-ghouse/>
- More about him at TheGhouseDiary.com and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Mohamed_Ghouse
- His book, American Muslim Agenda, is available on Amazon, and "Standing up for Others" and "Madame President" are coming soon.



Dr. Mike Ghouse debating at the famous show with Sean Hannity -110 shows in all with success



Dr. Mike Ghouse speaking at Mega immigration rally in Dallas attended by 8000 people



Mike Ghouse at Cheyenne Nation with George



Mike Ghouse chose to live in a Black Neighborhood

FAQs About Dr. Mike Mohamed Ghouse

1. WHO IS DR. MIKE MOHAMED GHOUSE?

Dr. Mike Mohamed Ghouse is an advocate of pluralism and interfaith harmony, often referred to as "Mr. Diversity of America" due to his unwavering commitment to inclusivity.

2. WHAT IS THE CENTER FOR PLURALISM?

The Center for Pluralism, founded by Dr. Ghouse, promotes respect for all faiths and cultures through events, workshops, and outreach programs.

3. HOW MANY INTERFAITH WEDDINGS HAS DR. GHOUSE OFFICIATED?

Dr. Ghouse has officiated nearly 500 interfaith weddings, uniting couples from over 60 ethnicities and various faiths.

4. WHAT IS DR. GHOUSE'S BOOK ABOUT?

His book, American Muslim Agenda: Building a Cohesive America, discusses fostering harmony among individuals of all backgrounds.

5. HOW HAS DR. GHOUSE CONTRIBUTED TO MEDIA?

Dr. Ghouse has authored articles for publications like The Dallas Morning News and Huffington Post and has been featured in over 300 newspapers worldwide. He has further appeared on 110 Hannity shows at Fox News and other national TV and Radio syndicated programs.

6. WHAT ARE DR. GHOUSE'S FUTURE ASPIRATIONS?

He plans to author several books on pluralism, interfaith harmony, and raising interfaith children, as well as produce a movie promoting free speech and honoring what is sacred to people. His dream is to open an educational institution to teach practical pluralism in religion, culture and the workplace.

MAY EVERY DAY
OF 2025 BE AS
BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL
AS YOUR SMILE

-MIKE GHOUSE



Happy New Year



From Page 47

TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu returned as Chief Minister, taking oath on June 12. His last term as CM was from 2014 to 2019. Before the state bifurcation, he served as the CM of United Andhra Pradesh twice – 1995-99 and 1999-2004.

The other highlights of the 2024 Andhra Elections were Naidu's son Nara Lokesh and Janasena leader Pawan Kalyan entering the Assembly for the first time. The BJP got a much-needed boost with the NDA alliance winning 21 out of the total 25 Lok Sabha seats in the state. YSRCP got just four MP seats.

Analysts said strong anti-incumbency coupled with a united fight by the opposition parties routed the ruling YSRCP. Though the Reddy-led government shelled out Rs 2.60 lakh crore towards doles over the last five years, there was no perceivable development in the state.

BJP Wins Odisha, Naveen Patnaik's 24-Year Rule Ends

Odisha crossed a political milestone in the 2024 Assembly Elections as the electors voted for the BJP, ending the 24-year Biju Janata Rule (BJD) rule. Naveen Patnaik's party could manage only 54 seats in the elections, a huge dip from 113 in the previous elections.

BJP, on the other hand, secured a simple majority, winning 78 seats in the 147-seat Legislative Assembly. Held simultaneously with Lok Sabha elections, the elections were carried out in four phases with the first on May 13 and the last on June 1. The BJP also made significant gains, winning 20 out of 21 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha marking one of the strongest wins for the saffron party in the general elections.

As for Naveen Patnaik, the BJD leader contested from two seats - Hinjili and Kantabanji. He won from Hinjili with 66,459 votes, defeating BJP candidate Sisir Kumar Mishra by a narrow margin of 4,636 votes.

The election campaign by the BJP was intense, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing several rallies and holding two road shows in Bhubaneswar and Puri. The BJP's high-profile electioneering seemed to overshadow the BJD's campaign, which was largely led by Patnaik and his aide VK Pandian.

2024 Tripura Peace Accord

On September 4, India's northeast region witnessed a historic moment when the 35-year-long insurgency in Tripura came to an end following the signing of an agreement between the Centre, the Tripura government and two insurgent outfits of the state—the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF).

The agreement was signed at North Block in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Tripura Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha, and top leaders of both NLFT and ATTF. As per the agreement, the Centre sanctioned a special economic development package amounting to Rs 250 crore for a period of four years to be implemented by the state government for the overall development of tribals of Tripura.

"The Government of India and the



Government of Tripura have been making concerted efforts to engage the tribal armed groups of Tripura in order to bring peace and harmony in the state, and rehabilitate the cadres so as to enable them to lead a normal life in the society," the agreement stated.

The agreement stated that NLFT and ATTF would not extend any support to any other militant or armed groups by way of training, supply of arms, providing protection or in other manner.

Jammu And Kashmir UT Gets Maiden Elected Government

The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir flipped a page in its political history in 2024 as it witnessed its first assembly elections after the abrogation of Article 370 and downgrading of the state into two federally controlled territories in 2019.

The long-pending elections were finally carried out in three phases from September 18 to October 1 with counting of votes on October 8. They were held in the backdrop of the Supreme Court direction in December 2023 in which it had asked the Election Commission to "restore the democratic process" in the union territory by September 2024.

The opposition bloc led by the National Conference in the Union Territory won the elections bagging 49 of the 90 Assembly seats. NC emerged as the single largest party winning 41 seats followed by

BJP (29) and Congress (6). Mehbooba Mufti-led PDP was able to win only three seats, the worst performance by the party since it was founded by Late Mufti Sayeed 25 years ago.

Former CM and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah was sworn in as the first Chief Minister of the J&K UT on October 16. Interestingly, a few months before the election dates were announced, the Ministry of Home Affairs increased the powers of the L-G Manoj Sinha-led administration by amending the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.

The amendment entrusted more powers to the L-G for making decisions on police, all-India services officers and appointment of advocates and other law officers. He was also given powers for sanctioning prosecution in certain cases and taking decisions on anti-corruption bureau-related matters.

BJP's Hat-Trick In Haryana

Buoyed by its success in Odisha, BJP recorded a hat-trick win in Haryana leaving the opposition stunned while managing to overcome anti-incumbency with ease.

The single-phase elections were held on October 5 and the votes were counted on October 8. The victory in Haryana was a significant milestone for the BJP as, despite predictions of a Congress-led alliance win, the saffron secured a majority with 48 seats in the 90-member

Assembly, marking its third consecutive win in the state.

The election saw a high voter turnout of 67.90 per cent, with the BJP winning 39.94 per cent of the popular vote. The Congress, led by Bhupinder Singh Hooda, won 37 seats with 39.09 per cent of the popular vote.

Nayab Singh Saini, the 54-year-old OBC leader who was made CM in March to replace Manohar Lal Khattar in an unexpected appointment, took oath as the new Haryana Chief Minister for the second term on October 17.

The BJP's victory was attributed to its strong campaign and the popularity of its leaders. The party's decision to contest the election without a chief ministerial face also seemed to have worked in its favour.

The Congress, on the other hand, faced internal conflicts and was unable to capitalize on the anti-incumbency factor. The party's alliance with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) also failed to yield the desired results.

The Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), which had allied with the BJP in the previous election, contested the election alone but failed to win any seats. The Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) also failed to make a significant impact, winning only two seats.

Mahayuti's Landslide Victory In Maharashtra, Fadnavis Returns As CM

The BJP-led Mahayuti alliance registered a landslide victory in Maharashtra as the key western state went to polls on November 20.

In the 288-seat Legislative Assembly, the BJP won 132 and its allies Shiv Sena and NCP bagged 57 and 41 seats respectively. The opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) was handed one of the worst defeats in recent history as the three main constituents of the alliance could manage wins in just 50 seats—Congress 16, Shiv Sena (UBT) 20, and NCP (SP) 10.

The BJP was at the forefront of this spectacular performance, comprehensively managing to buck the anti-incumbency and emerge as the largest party in the state pocketing 132 of the 149 seats it contested in the politically significant western state. BJP's success was led by its senior leader and state deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, who eventually became the Chief Minister for the third time after some hiatus on the part of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

Fadnavis' name was finalised for the Maharashtra Chief Minister post at a key meeting on December 4. A day later, he took an oath as the Chief Minister for the third time. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top political figures of the country.

The results came as a fillip for the BJP after the unprecedented hat-trick in Haryana and helped the party overcome some of its setbacks in the general elections where it bagged just 240 seats.

Voters in the politically significant western state of Maharashtra, which sends 48 MPs to the Lok Sabha and gave the MVA a decisive 30 seats, clearly decided to go against the trend of that parliamentary victory just five months ago.

2024 was the year India became the talk of America

Donald Trump's 2024 presidential victory saw a surge in Indian-American support for the Republican party. Prominent Indian-Americans, including Kamala Harris and Vivek Ramaswamy, played key roles in the election. Trump's appointments reflected this influence, with figures like Kash Patel, Jay Bhattacharya, and Harmeet Dhillon taking on significant government positions.

America went to polls this year, and chose its former president and Republican Donald Trump 47th President. The election was preceded by an entire year of campaigning, and a neck-and-neck competition between the Democrats and the Republicans. As Democrat nominee and US Vice-President Kamala Harris and Trump vied for the White House, India became the talk of the election.

With 2.6 million eligible Indian-American voters — according to data from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace — the Indian diaspora's growing political significance was felt in key US swing states. These states, which were won by Trump, accounted for a significant number of Indian-American votes.

Data suggested that there was a shift in the attitude of US voters of Indian origin this year. A large number of them shifted from Democratic Party to Republican Party in this election.

Indian-Americans didn't just leave a mark by casting their votes though. They were also seen making headlines across both popular political parties in the US. From Presidential contenders of Indian origin to several top leaders with India connection, India came in the spotlight.

As this year comes to an end, we recap how politicians of Indian origin made waves in the US Presidential election.

Kamala Harris

She is no stranger to the world. Harris made global headlines in 2020 when she was chosen by Joe Biden as his running mate during his Presidential campaign. She became the first woman in America's history to sit on the Vice President's chair, and also the first person of Indian descent to occupy a top position in the US. Harris's mother, Shyamala Gopalan, was a revered Indian-American scientist who had migrated to the US from India at the age of 19. Her Jamaican-origin father, Donald Jasper Harris, is an economist and professor at Stanford University. During her Presidential campaign, Harris prominently shared her memories of her mother. Harris conceded defeat on November 4, 2024, but her Presidential bid gave prominence to India in the US.

Tulsi Gabbard

Born in Hawaii, Tulsi Gabbard is not of Indian origin but has a connection with India due to her Hindu religion. It was her name and identity as a Hindu that confused people the world over about her origin. Gabbard has been a



Kamala Harris



Tulsi Gabbard



Vivek Ramaswamy



Usha Vance



Kash Patel



Jay Bhattacharya

Congresswoman for decades, since she won her first election in 2002. It was earlier this year that she made headlines for quitting the Democratic party to back Trump. In November, Trump chose her as Director of National Intelligence. The rise of Tulsi in the American politics also brought to light her Hindu religion.

Vivek Ramaswamy

Biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy came to prominence when he challenged Trump as a Republican contender for President earlier this year. A 39-year-old politician with roots in Kerala, Ramaswamy holds a degree in Biology from Harvard University and a law degree from Yale Law School. A staunch follower of Hinduism, he is set to co-lead a new initiative aimed at reducing government bureaucracy. Alongside tech mogul Elon Musk, Ramaswamy will head the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Usha Vance

Usha Chilukuri Vance is set to make history as the first Indian-origin Second Lady of the United States. The wife of Vice President-elect JD Vance, Usha came to the global spotlight when she introduced her husband at the Republican National Convention in July this year. Born to Indian immigrant parents in San Diego, Usha married Vance in 2014 in a Hindu ceremony. She had built a career as a litigator before

leaving her job to support her husband as he transitioned to politics from the world of practising law. When Trump chose JD Vance as his running mate, Usha's life, beliefs and Indian connection were widely covered in the media.

Kash Patel

Kashyap "Kash" Patel, a former federal prosecutor and a trusted ally of Trump, has been named Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Patel, born in New York to Indian-origin immigrants from Uganda, rose to prominence for his work on intelligence reform and national security during Trump's first term. Kash as the FBI head is a very polarising choice by Trump since Kash is seen as a bold man out to reform the FBI and purge it of deep state actors. His name drills fear among top Republican leaders and deep state actors just as he is hugely popular among Trump fanbase due to his vow to dismantle the deep state.

Jay Bhattacharya

Kolkata-born Jayanta "Jay" Bhattacharya, a renowned health policy expert and Stanford University professor, has been appointed Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the US's leading medical research agency. Bhattacharya, known for his controversial stance against covid restrictions, has advocated for policies focusing on individual liberty in public



Harmeet Kaur Dhillon

health. The eminent epidemiologist was censored by social media platforms, allegedly at the behest of the Biden administration, for his contrarian stance on the pandemic restrictions. As the new NIH Director, Bhattacharya will oversee a budget of nearly \$47.3 billion.

Harmeet Kaur Dhillon

Republican lawyer Harmeet Kaur Dhillon has been nominated by Trump as the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. She became an influential figure in the Republican Party for filing lawsuits over election integrity issues and backing Trump's legal efforts to overturn Presidential election results in 2020. She also filed lawsuits against covid restrictions. She was a legal adviser on the Trump 2020 campaign. Born in Chandigarh, Dhillon found her own law firm in San Francisco.

Blockbusters to flops: India's entertainment hits and misses of 2024

2024 proved to be a roller-coaster year for Bollywood. Following the blockbuster-filled 2023, expectations soared, but the industry found itself struggling to deliver consistent hits. While some films soared to record-breaking heights, others stumbled, leaving audiences and producers disappointed. This year saw the rise of pan-India films, a trend that is starting to redefine the Indian box office and bringing audiences together like never before.

Here's an in-depth analysis of the hits, flops, and trends that defined Bollywood in 2024.

Bollywood hits of 2024: The bright spots in a dull year

While the first half of the year struggled to produce notable successes, the second half reignited Bollywood's box office fortunes. Leading the charge were crowd-pullers like *Stree 2*, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*, and *Singham Again*, which brought audiences back to theatres.

Stree 2

Releasing on Independence Day, *Stree 2* emerged as the year's biggest hit, raking in Rs 627.02 crore at the box office. The much-anticipated sequel to the 2018 horror-comedy not only shattered records but also reinforced Shraddha Kapoor and Rajkummar Rao's bankability. The movie's mix of humour and scares connected with audiences across the country, turning it into a cultural sensation.

Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3

Kartik Aaryan's return to the horror-comedy genre was met with roaring applause. With Vidya Balan reprising her iconic role and Madhuri Dixit joining the cast, the film delivered a stellar Rs 278.42 crore. Its clash with *Singham Again* didn't dent its performance, proving the popularity of the franchise.

Singham Again

Ajay Devgn returned to his most iconic role as Bajirao Singham in this Rohit Shetty-directed cop drama. Packed with star power, including Kareena Kapoor, Ranveer Singh, and Deepika Padukone, *Singham Again* held its ground during the Diwali weekend, collecting Rs 268.35 crore.

Fighter

Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone's aerial action thriller lived up to the hype, amassing Rs 205.55 crore. Directed by Siddharth Anand, the film set a new benchmark for action choreography in Bollywood.

Bollywood's biggest flops of 2024

2024 was a tough year for big-screen releases, proving that even star power and massive budgets can't guarantee



success. Films like Akshay Kumar's *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* and Alia Bhatt's *Jigra* struggled to make a mark at the box office, reminding everyone that a strong, engaging story matters more than a glittering cast or a hefty production budget.

Bade Miyan Chote Miyan

One of the year's most expensive productions, *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* brought together Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff but failed to translate the star power into box office numbers. Poor storytelling and lacklustre execution led

to its downfall.

Jigra

Alia Bhatt's much-hyped *Jigra* became a cautionary tale for filmmakers, grossing Rs 30.69 crore despite claims of box office fraud. Despite Alia's outstanding performance, the film failed to resonate with audiences due to poor plot and execution.

Sarfira

Akshay Kumar's performance in *Sarfira* was praised, but weak marketing and stiff competition from *Stree 2*



limited its earnings to just Rs 22.13 crore.

South film takes centre stage

The year 2024 was the big year for South Indian cinema, especially Telugu films. These films not only wowed audiences in their home states, but they also dominated the Hindi-speaking market, frequently exceeding Bollywood's biggest blockbusters and proving that great storytelling transcends language barriers.

Pushpa 2: The Rule

Allu Arjun's *Pushpa 2* was a juggernaut, with the movie collecting Rs 618.50 crore. Its gripping storyline, mass appeal, and chart-topping music made it an unstoppable force at the box office.

Kalki, 2898 AD

This sci-fi epic starring Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, Amitabh Bachchan, and Kamal Haasan defied expectations with its pan-India appeal. The film grossed Rs 294.25 crore, setting new standards for the genre.

What was the reason for Bollywood's struggles in 2024?

The superstar gap

Unlike 2023, which saw Shah Rukh Khan, Sunny Deol, and Ranbir Kapoor deliver enormous hits, 2024 lacked a continuous superstar-driven blockbuster.

Weak scripts

Audiences rejected films that failed to offer compelling narratives, regardless of star power.

Re-releases shine

Movies like *Rockstar* and *Tumbbad* surprisingly outshined the latest releases, proving that audiences are still craving powerful, well-told stories over flashy new titles.

Bollywood in 2025

The upcoming year holds promise with an exciting lineup, including:

- Akshay Kumar and Arshad Warsi's *Jolly LLLB 3*
- Hrithik Roshan and Jr NTR's *War 2*
- Sunny Deol's *Lahore 1947*
- Ajay Devgn's *Raid 2*
- The multi-starrer *Housefull 5*

Hollywood had a rough 2024... Here's who came out on top

There were plenty of things that went wrong for Hollywood in the year 2024. There were box office flops (sorry, “Joker: Folie à Deux” and “Kraven the Hunter”), mass layoffs, continued labor unrest and a stunning lack of employment in the production space due to a broad contraction in the media and entertainment sector.

But not everything, or everyone, failed.

Disney gets its mojo back

Bob Iger came into 2024 with a challenging hand — a low stock price, a money-losing streaming business, a renewed proxy campaign from a prominent investor and a movie slate with only one Marvel Studios film. But while Disney is not fully in the clear yet, the company has emerged much stronger than many people expected.

Iger decisively beat the onslaught from Nelson Peltz and his hard-charging allies. The movie studio, which had a wobbly track record during the post-pandemic years, scored two \$1-billion hits — “Inside Out 2” and “Deadpool and Wolverine” — and other big performers including “Moana 2” and “Alien: Romulus.” The stock is up more than 25% since the beginning of the year. Cable programmer and Hulu supplier FX dominated the TV awards season with “Shogun” and “The Bear.” And those streaming services? They’ve started turning quarterly profits, when all put together.

Yeah, sure, you might say. But serious questions remain in Disney’s comeback story. For example, how will ESPN’s upcoming flagship streaming service fare when it launches next year?

And here’s the big one: Who’s going to replace Iger when he steps down for good this time? Will it be one of the four division heads: TV chair Dana Walden, parks boss Josh D’Amaro, ESPN head Jimmy Pitaro or film czar Alan Bergman? Or an outsider? With James P. Gorman (Morgan Stanley’s outgoing executive chairman) leading the succession process, Disney is hoping this transfer of power is less dramatic than previous rounds.

We’ll see in due time, as the company has set early 2026 as its target for making its selection.

David Ellison conquers the mountain

The deal almost fell apart, but after so much wrangling, Paramount Global will soon have a new chief: David Ellison, the son of Oracle Corp. billionaire Larry Ellison.

The task of fixing all that broke at Paramount under the Redstone family won’t be easy. Years of chronic under-investment won’t be overcome immediately, no matter how much techno know-how Ellison and his team bring to the famed Paramount movie studio, CBS, a second-tier streaming



service and a collection of faltering cable networks. Cost cutting has already come and discussions about restructuring and leadership changes are underway.

Paramount has franchises like “Sonic the Hedgehog,” “Top Gun” and the Taylor Sheridan universe, but it needs more, and it needs to do more with what it has, according to Ellison and his private equity backers at RedBird. Easier said than done. But the industry is ready to give Ellison a chance. After all, he’s a movie guy.

This clearly won’t be the last of the big studio deals. Analysts expect more

consolidation as cable channels continue to lose power, especially with the Trump administration anticipated to be more favorable to mergers and acquisitions than the Biden White House.

The movie musical makes a comeback

No one mourns the wicked, and no one should fear the movie musical. Universal Pictures and Jon M. Chu’s big-screen rendering of the Broadway smash “Wicked” has made hundreds of millions of dollars at the box office (mostly in the U.S.) and instantly catapulted Ariana Grande and Cynthia

Erivo into the Oscar race. “Part Two,” now titled “Wicked: For Good,” comes out next year.

The movie musical is a tradition as old as Hollywood itself, but the genre had come on hard times in recent years, thanks to flops such as “Cats,” “Dear Evan Hansen” and “The Color Purple.” Despite the success of movies such as “Wonka” and “The Greatest Showman,” studios seemed nervous to advertise the musical elements of their song-and-dance extravaganzas. Well, no need this time. If anyone went into “Wicked” not knowing it was a musical, that’s on them.

Studios should know musicals aren’t a turn-off for audiences, especially if fans are already obsessed with the soundtrack. That level of familiarity is what helped propel the record-breaking box office opening weekend of “Moana 2.” (Animation has been a true bright spot for the movie business, with the “Inside Out” sequel, “Despicable Me 4” and “The Wild Robot”).

Funnily enough, “Wicked” isn’t the only musical in the awards conversation. Netflix’s big contender is the operatic “Emilia Pérez,” a boundary-pushing festival darling that received mostly positive reviews but a tepid response from streaming audiences.

Podcasters shake up news media

Politicians doing podcast interviews and nonpolitical media appearances is not a new phenomenon. The latter is a tradition going back to Richard Nixon going on “Laugh-In” and Bill Clinton playing the sax on “The Arsenio Hall Show.”

But for President-elect Donald Trump’s campaign, sitting for long, friendly podcast interviews wasn’t just part of the Republican presidential candidate’s media strategy. It was the strategy. Trump talked at length to Joe Rogan, Theo Von and the “Flagrant” guys Andrew Schulz and Akaash Singh, all to target their loyal audience of young men. Trump did this while avoiding traditional outlets like “60 Minutes,” which he sued over how it edited its interview with his opponent.

Vice President Kamala Harris’ failed campaign also used podcasts like Alex Cooper’s “Call Her Daddy,” while still doing more standard TV appearances. Hindsight suggests her interview on “The View,” in which she couldn’t say what she would’ve done differently from President Biden, might’ve done more harm than good.

The biggest takeaway? The declining relevance of legacy news media as a force that can shape public opinion — a consequence of declining viewership and historically low trust in mainstream institutions.

From India's T20 glory to Olympic excellence: A rewind



As 2024 comes to a close, the global sporting fraternity pauses to reflect on a year that delivered extraordinary achievements, thrilling moments, and landmark events across disciplines. From cricketing glory and Olympic excellence to the electrifying circuits of Formula One and a new world champion in chess, 2024 has been a year that celebrated resilience, passion, and sheer talent. Here's a comprehensive look at the year's most memorable sporting highlights and what lies ahead in 2025.

Cricket: India's glorious resurgence

India's cricketing narrative in 2024 was one of redemption and triumph. Under the astute leadership of Rohit Sharma, the Indian cricket team clinched their second ICC Men's T20 World Cup title, defeating South Africa by seven runs in a heart-stopping final. This victory, breaking an 11-year ICC trophy drought and a 13-year wait for a World Cup title, marked a historic resurgence for Indian cricket on the global stage.

Meanwhile, spin wizard Ravichandran Ashwin retired from international cricket, marking the end of an era for India's bowling attack. Indian women's cricket also saw commendable performances, with the team continuing their ascent in bilateral series but failing to clinch the T20 World Cup title. Globally, cricket made strides in expanding its reach, with Major League Cricket in the USA captivating new audiences in non-traditional cricketing territories.

Football: Triumphs and joy

The UEFA Euro 2024, held in Germany, was a celebration of footballing excellence. Spain claimed its fourth UEFA European Championship title in history with a 2-1 victory over England in the final. In club football, Manchester City dominated the Premier League, while Real Madrid secured their 15th UEFA Champions League title, overcoming Borussia Dortmund in a

pulsating final.

Women's football continued its rapid rise, with Barcelona securing the Women's Champions League crown. Meanwhile, Argentina claimed their second consecutive Copa América title, defeating Colombia 1-0 with a 112th-minute goal from Lautaro Martínez, despite Lionel Messi sustaining a second-half leg injury.

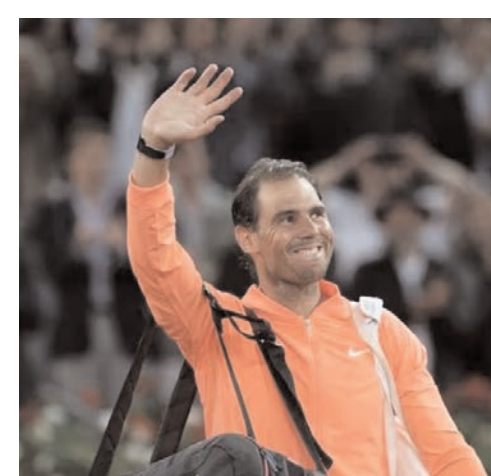
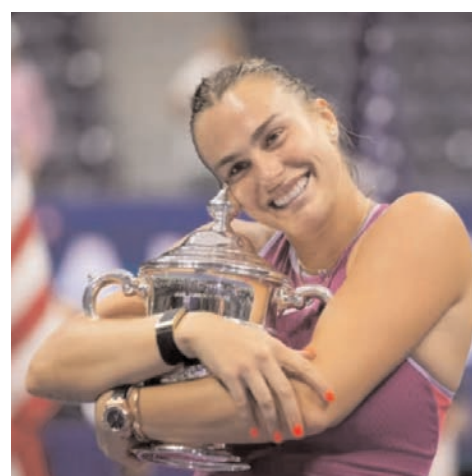
Tennis: A youthful revolution

In 2024, the torchbearers of tennis's next generation seized the spotlight. Carlos Alcaraz added the French Open and Wimbledon titles to his growing legacy, while Jannik Sinner claimed victories at the US Open and Australian Open.

Rafael Nadal announced his retirement from professional tennis during the Davis Cup in Malaga, Spain, bringing an end to his extraordinary career. At the age of 38, he retired with 22 Grand Slam singles titles and a host of other achievements. In women's tennis, Aryna Sabalenka reigned supreme with US Open and Australian Open titles, while Iga Swiatek triumphed at the French Open. At the Australian Open, Rohan Bopanna, aged 43, won his first men's doubles Grand Slam title, becoming the oldest player to achieve this feat.

Paris 2024 Olympics: A global showcase

The Paris 2024 Summer Olympics captivated the world with its blend of tradition and innovation. Featuring 329 events across 32 sports, the Games introduced breakdancing and Formula Kite while celebrating the return of crowd favorites like surfing and skateboarding. India's Paris 2024 Olympics campaign featured historic achievements and near-misses. Manu Bhaker made history with India's first Olympic shooting medal, a bronze, followed by another in the mixed team event with Sarabjot Singh. Swapnil Kusale added a third shooting medal, marking India's best-ever performance



in the sport. The men's hockey team secured bronze, and Neeraj Chopra claimed silver in javelin. Aman Sehrawat became India's youngest Olympic medallist with a wrestling bronze. However, India faced disappointment with six fourth-place finishes and Vinesh Phogat's disqualification before her final.

India also won the Women's Hockey Asian Champions Trophy 2024, defeating

China 1-0 in the final. This historic victory secured their third title, making them joint most successful with South Korea.

Paralympics 2024: India's unprecedented success

India delivered its best-ever performance at the 2024 Paralympic Games, winning 29 medals, including 17 in athletics, 5 in badminton, 4 in

Srinu Maddula: A Legacy of Resilience, Determination, and Vision

BY BIDISHA ROY



From overcoming blindness and immigrant struggles to selling Bank's Apothecary at an unprecedented valuation, Srinu Maddula's journey reflects a deep commitment to resilience, innovation, and patient-first care

focused on patients with mental health and substance use disorder in 2010. He later expanded the company to the larger Pennsylvania area and later took it regional, covering the eastern United States. "As the founder of Bank's Apothecary Specialty Pharmacy, I scaled operations from a startup to \$300 million in annual revenue, securing its position as the largest independently held behavioral health specialty pharmacy in the United States. In 2022, I successfully sold Bank's Apothecary to a private equity firm, achieving an industry-leading valuation and solidifying my place as a leader in healthcare innovation", says Srinu.

Srinu developed an unyielding work ethic, a tenacity to overcome, and a profound desire to uplift those in need - traits that would later define his professional and philanthropic pursuits.

Today, as a leading voice in the healthcare space, he channels his unique experiences to inspire, mentor, and transform. His story isn't just about personal triumph; it's about harnessing adversity, turning trials into strengths, and leveraging those strengths to make a lasting impact in pharmacy, medicine, and business practices.

In 2023 he founded 'Workshop Strategy' to deliver high-level strategic guidance to healthcare organizations, focusing on growth acceleration, operational optimization, and patient-centered innovation. Workshop Strategy symbolizes the intersection of industry expertise and a tenacious spirit borne from personal challenges and triumphs.

Using the same strategies that turned his local specialty pharmacy, Bank's Apothecary, into a \$250 million powerhouse, Workshop Strategy offers a unique approach to healthcare consulting. By merging industry-specific insights with the broader lessons learned from their founder's journey, this company ensures that every strategy is grounded in experience, innovation, and a relentless drive to bring someone's vision to life.

With diverse roles from Founder/CEO to Chief Clinical Officer, Srinu has cultivated a unique blend of skills that few can rival. Today, his mission extends beyond business-to inspire, mentor, and create lasting impact in the healthcare industry and broader society.

His mission has been to focus on human impact and create companies that can make the world a better place, be it in medicine, philanthropic organizations, emerging markets, or various other for-profit and non-profit ventures.

While his primary focus is on pharmacy, medicine, and the healthcare sector, his broad spectrum of skills makes him a valuable asset in diverse business scenarios. From philanthropy to Fortune 500 companies, to small businesses - his goal is for the betterment of humanity. While leading Bank's Apothecary to significant success, he also built a fulfilling personal life, marrying in 2017 and welcoming two daughters in 2021 and 2024.

Srinu believes in giving back, using his success as a platform to uplift and inspire. "In addition to my professional achievements, I am deeply committed to philanthropy and mentorship, founding the Maddula Foundation to support underserved

From the humble streets of a rural village in India to the pinnacle of healthcare entrepreneurship, this man's journey is a testament to resilience, determination, and vision. Born into challenging circumstances - grappling with near blindness, living as an undocumented immigrant, and facing severe economic hardships - his early life was far from easy. These challenges didn't break him; they forged him - he is Srinu (Sam) Maddula - a dynamic healthcare executive, entrepreneur, and consultant with over 15 years of experience driving transformative growth and innovation in the healthcare and specialty pharmacy sectors.

Srinu was born legally blind in rural India. Without a double corneal transplant his vision would be compromised at an early age. It was in 1979 that Maddula had corneal transplants for both eyes, at the age of 18 months. His family had travelled to Morgantown, West Virginia where Dr VK Raju, internationally renowned ophthalmologist, gave him new existence with the life-changing surgery. Immigrating with his family, they overcame significant challenges through resilience and determination, which shaped his drive for success.

Srinu earned his doctorate in pharmaceutical studies from Rutgers University in 2009. He founded Bank's Apothecary in inner-city Philadelphia, and



Maddula Foundation partnered with Temple University School of Pharmacy to provide scholarships to highly deserving students.

communities and advocating for mental health awareness and healthcare equity. I collaborate with academic institutions and healthcare organizations to shape the future of the industry", adds Srinu.

From significant contributions to the Eye Foundation of America to mentoring the next generation of pharmacists, his philanthropic endeavors showcase his commitment to creating positive societal change. He is on the board of numerous nonprofits and civic organizations. Srinu is using his personal capital to make an impact for a more just society.



As a sought-after speaker, he has shared his insights and experiences at renowned institutions and organizations throughout the U.S

As a sought-after speaker, he has shared his insights and experiences at renowned institutions and organizations throughout the U.S. Srinu was recognized for Workshop Strategy's collaboration with Temple University to empower the next generation of healthcare leaders. He was honored in the ACLU-NJ 2018 Annual Report for significant contributions to healthcare advocacy and civil liberties.



Srinu also built a fulfilling personal life, marrying in 2017 and welcoming two daughters in 2021 and 2024

His future vision is to aspire to serve on the board of a leading healthcare organization or assume a strategic leadership role to drive transformative change in the industry and continue driving advancements in the pharmacy and healthcare sectors through thought leadership, strategic consulting, and mentorship of future leaders.

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shooting, 2 in archery, and 1 in judo. Notable achievements included Avani Lekhara's double gold, Sumit Antil's javelin title defense, Mariyappan Thangavelu's historic streak, and Harvinder Singh's groundbreaking archery gold.

Formula One: Verstappen's continued reign

The 2024 Formula 1 season proved to be one of the most exciting in recent years. Max Verstappen clinched his fourth consecutive Drivers' Championship but faced strong competition from Lando Norris and Charles Leclerc. Meanwhile, McLaren triumphed in the Constructors' Championship, securing their first title since 1998. The Dutchman now equals legends Alain Prost and Sebastian Vettel with four titles, behind only Juan Manuel Fangio (5), Lewis Hamilton (7), and Michael Schumacher (7).

Chess: A new king rises

Indian chess witnessed a watershed moment in 2024 as Dommaraju Gukesh became the youngest-ever World Chess Champion at just 18, dethroning Ding Liren of China. Gukesh's achievement, breaking Garry Kasparov's decades-old record, heralded the advent of a golden era for Indian chess, with prodigies like R. Praggnanandhaa adding to the nation's growing dominance.

Badminton: On the path to revival

At the Syed Modi India International Super 300 tournament in Lucknow, India's PV Sindhu ended the title drought by defeating China's Luo Yu Wu 21-14, 21-16, securing her third win at the

event. Lakshya Sen clinched his maiden title with a dominant 21-6, 21-7 victory over Singapore's Jia Heng Jason Teh. The highlight was Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, who made history as the first Indian women's doubles pair to win the title, beating Li Jing Bao and Li Qian 21-18, 21-11. This success marked a turning point for Indian badminton in 2024.

Chirag Shetty/Satwiksairaj Rankireddy also put up decent performances, winning the French Open and Thailand Open titles.

A year to remember and a bright future ahead

As we look back on the exhilarating year of 2024, it is clear that the sporting world was filled with unforgettable moments of triumph, resilience, and history-making performances. From India's T20 glory to Gukesh's chess crowning, athletes across the globe displayed remarkable skill, determination, and passion. These milestones not only created new legacies but also set the stage for even greater achievements in the years to come.

In cricket, India's resurgence under Rohit Sharma and their long-awaited T20 World Cup victory was a testament to the country's resilience. In football, the Spanish national team's triumph at Euro 2024, along with Real Madrid's record-breaking Champions League victory, added to the drama and excitement of the season. Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner symbolized a youthful revolution in tennis, while Max Verstappen's dominance in Formula 1 and Gukesh's



rise in chess signaled the ongoing evolution of sporting dynasties.

Meanwhile, India's performance in the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics was a testament to the country's growing prominence in the global sporting arena, showcasing both breakthroughs and near-misses that fueled hope for the future. In badminton, India's rising stars like PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen took center stage, further cementing the nation's position as a powerhouse in the sport.

As we turn the page to 2025, the sporting world is full of excitement and anticipation. India's continued rise in cricket, badminton, and shooting offers great promise, especially with the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup and the 2025 World Athletics Championships on the horizon. The nation is also expected to build on its Paralympic success, with a strong focus on nurturing young talents for future global competitions.

Tennis fans will continue to witness the next generation of stars battling it out on the courts, while in Formula 1, the

competition to dethrone Max Verstappen promises thrilling rivalries. Football, too, will see the ongoing dominance of clubs like Real Madrid and Barcelona, as well as a host of emerging teams and talents looking to make their mark.

As always, the world will eagerly await the Olympics, where athletes from around the globe will push their limits to secure their places in history. With emerging nations rising in prominence, 2025 is set to be a year where sportsmanship, passion, and excellence will continue to captivate audiences worldwide.

In sum, 2025 promises to build on the foundation of 2024's successes, with a host of new stars, records, and unforgettable moments waiting to be written. Whether it's in cricket, football, tennis, Formula 1, or chess, the world of sports will remain as exciting as ever. Fans and athletes alike have much to look forward to as they set their sights on new horizons and strive for even greater feats in the year ahead.

The passing of these prominent figures in 2024 has left an indelible mark on their respective fields. Their contributions will be remembered, and their legacies will continue to influence the generations to come. While the loss of such significant personalities is always deeply felt, their work and the lives they led will continue to inspire and shape the world in meaningful ways.

Ustad Zakir Hussain



Famous Indian tabla maestro Zakir Hussain breathed his last on December 15, 2024, at the age of 73 in San Francisco, California. The cause of death was idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a chronic lung disease characterized by progressive scarring of lung tissue, leading to severe respiratory issues. Hussain has received four Grammy Awards in his career, including three at the 66th Grammy Awards earlier this year.

Ratan Tata



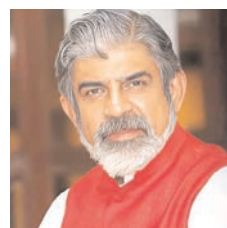
Ratan Tata, the former chairman of Tata Sons, died at the age of 86 from age-related issues on October 9, 2024. He was admitted to Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai on October 7, 2024 to treat age-related issues and control his blood pressure. High blood pressure (hypertension) at any age can be dangerous, but it can be particularly concerning for older adults, including those around 86 years old. As per experts, it can directly lead to cardiac arrest and heart attack.

Vikas Sethi



Famous television actor Vikas Sethi, famous for his role in the popular Indian soap opera Kasautii Zindagii Kay, passed away suddenly in September 2024 at the age of 48. He died following a sudden cardiac arrest. According to experts, lifestyle habits such as excessive smoking, stress, alcohol intake and poor exercise routine can lead to cardiac arrest in men who are in their 40s.

Rituraj Singh



Famous television actor Rituraj Singh who worked prominently with Bollywood breathed his last on 20th February 2024. He was 59. According to the reports, the actor suffered a massive cardiac arrest. Singh was known for his roles in Indian TV shows like Banegi Apni Baat, Diya Aur Baati Hum.

Pankaj Udhas

Renowned ghazal singer Pankaj Udhas,



best known for 'Chitthi Aye Hai' died in February 2024, following a prolonged illness. He was 72. In 2006, Pankaj Udhas was awarded Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian award

Ustad Rashid Khan

Music maestro Ustad Rashid Khan, who was undergoing treatment at a Kolkata-based hospital for prostate cancer, died on 9th January 2024. The classical singer was 55. Prostate cancer is a type of cancer that affects a man's prostate, a small walnut-sized gland that produces seminal fluid.

Suhani Bhatnagar

The youngest actor who played a key role in the movie Dangal, died on 16th February 2024. She was 19. According to the reports, the actor was battling a rare disease called Dermatomyositis. As per the official pages of Johns Hopkins Medicine, dermatomyositis is a rare disease that causes inflammation and skin rashes. In basic terms, it is only a group of muscles that results in muscle inflammation and swelling.

Sharda Sinha

Sharda Sinha, popularly known as 'Bihar Kokila' and known for her songs in Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Hindi languages, succumbed to blood poisoning complications on November 05, 2024. She was 72.

James Earl Jones

Renowned for his deep, authoritative voice, James Earl Jones left an indelible mark on theater and cinema. His portrayal of characters such as Darth Vader in Star Wars and Mufasa in The Lion King showcased his vocal prowess. Jones's career spanned over six decades, earning him accolades including Tony Awards for his stage performances in The Great White Hope and Fences. Beyond acting, he was a cultural icon who inspired countless actors.

Maggie Smith



One of Britain's most beloved actresses, Maggie Smith was known for her versatility and wit. From her Oscar-winning role in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie to her turn as Professor McGonagall in the Harry Potter series, Smith captivated audiences worldwide.

We miss them...

THE YEAR 2024 WAS MARKED BY THE LOSS OF NUMEROUS INFLUENTIAL FIGURES FROM DIVERSE FIELDS- ENTERTAINMENT, POLITICS, SCIENCE, SPORTS, AND BEYOND. THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS SHAPED THE WORLD IN PROFOUND WAYS, AND THEIR LEGACIES WILL ENDURE FOR GENERATIONS. THIS ARTICLE COMMEMORATES THEIR LIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS.

Her work on Downton Abbey as the Dowager Countess cemented her status as a television legend.

Shannen Doherty

Shannen Doherty's career, marked by iconic roles in Beverly Hills, 90210 and Charmed, captivated fans. Her courageous battle against cancer brought global awareness to the disease. A talented actress and advocate, Doherty's legacy extends far beyond her on-screen work.

Quincy Jones



A music and production legend, Quincy Jones collaborated with some of the world's greatest artists, including Michael Jackson, producing albums like Thriller. His contributions to music earned him numerous Grammy Awards, and his influence on modern pop and jazz is unparalleled.

Donald Sutherland

Donald Sutherland's remarkable career included unforgettable performances in MASH*, Don't Look Now, and The Hunger Games. The Canadian actor brought depth and authenticity to every role, leaving an indelible impact on cinema.

Phil Lesh

As the bassist of the Grateful Dead, Phil Lesh's innovative playing was central to the band's unique sound. His contributions helped blend rock, folk, and improvisational jazz, influencing countless musicians and fans.

Alexei Navalny

A fearless critic of corruption, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny inspired a global movement for transparency and justice. Despite facing immense personal challenges, including imprisonment, his activism underscored the importance of democratic values.



Ebrahim Raisi

As Iran's president from 2021, Raisi navigated a complex political landscape. His leadership during a period of economic sanctions and geopolitical challenges shaped the nation's policies and left a significant imprint on its history.

Joe Lieberman

Joe Lieberman's political career included serving as a U.S. Senator from Connecticut and running as the

Democratic vice-presidential nominee in 2000. Known for his principled approach to politics, he was a trailblazer as the first Jewish candidate on a major U.S. party ticket.

John Prescott

As the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom under Tony Blair, Prescott was a key figure in New Labour's transformative years. A staunch advocate for social justice, he played a pivotal role in modernizing Britain's political landscape.

Dr. Jane Smith

A pioneer in genetic research, Dr. Smith's groundbreaking work in CRISPR technology revolutionized medicine, enabling new treatments for genetic disorders. Her contributions transformed the field of biotechnology and opened new frontiers in scientific exploration.

Shyam Benegal



Film maker Shyam Benegal, a giant of Indian cinema and one of the guiding lights of the Parallel Cinema movement, passed away due to kidney-related ailments in Mumbai on

Monday (December 23, 2024). He was 90.

Dr Manmohan Singh



India's former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who steered the country through sweeping reforms and paved the way for its emergence as a global economic powerhouse, died on December 26 night. He was 92.

Jimmy Carter



Jimmy Carter, the longest-living president in US history, died aged 100 in Plains, Georgia, the town where he was born. Carter spent nearly two years in hospice care before his death.

Nobel Prize winners of 2024



This year's Nobel Prize laureates include trailblazers who've unlocked the secrets of life with groundbreaking discoveries in medicine, while others have harnessed the power of artificial intelligence to revolutionise technology.

Han Kang's evocative storytelling earned her the Nobel Prize in Literature, capturing the complexities of human experience. Meanwhile, a courageous grassroots movement fighting against nuclear weapons has been recognised with the Peace Prize.

Here is the full list of Nobel Prize 2024 winners along with how remarkable contributions are making waves across the globe:

NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS

Winners: John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton

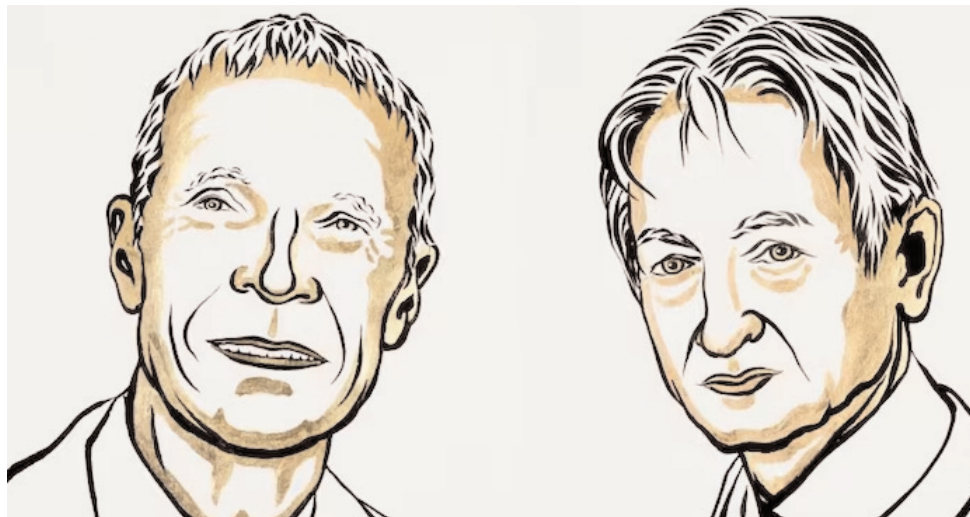
Achievement: Foundational discoveries in machine learning with artificial neural networks.

This year's Physics prize went to Hopfield and Hinton for their significant contributions to artificial intelligence. Their work laid the groundwork for today's machine-learning technologies.

Hinton, often dubbed "the godfather of AI," developed methods that allow computers to autonomously identify patterns in data.

He noted the dual nature of AI's potential: "It's going to be wonderful in many respects... but we also have to worry about a number of possible bad consequences."

NOBEL PRIZE IN CHEMISTRY



John Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton (l to r) (Photo: nobelprize.org)



Demis Hassabis, David Baker, and John Jumper (l to r) (Photo: nobelprize.org)

Winners: Demis Hassabis, John Jumper, and David Baker

Achievement: Innovations in protein structure prediction.

The Chemistry Nobel was awarded to this trio for their remarkable advancements in the understanding of proteins. Baker has successfully designed entirely new proteins that can be used as pharmaceuticals and vaccines.

Meanwhile, Hassabis and Jumper developed AlphaFold2, an AI model that predicts protein structures—a challenge that has puzzled scientists for decades.

Their combined efforts hold enormous potential for addressing health-related issues.

NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSIOLOGY OR MEDICINE

Winners: Victor Ambros and Gary

Ruvkun

Achievement: Discovery of microRNA and its role in gene regulation.

On October 7, 2024, Ambros and Ruvkun were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their pioneering work on microRNAs.

Their research began in the late 1980s with the roundworm *Caenorhabditis elegans*, where they uncovered how these tiny RNA molecules influence gene expression.

This discovery has crucial implications for understanding various health challenges, including cancer and genetic disorders.

The Nobel Assembly remarked that their work revealed "a completely new principle of gene regulation essential for multicellular organisms."

NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE



Han Kang (Photo: nobelprize.org)

Winner: Han Kang

Achievement: Intense poetic prose confronting historical traumas.

South Korean author Han Kang received the Nobel Prize in Literature for her profound writing that explores human fragility and historical traumas.

Her work resonates deeply with readers around the world, showcasing literature's power to reflect on complex societal issues.

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Winner: Nihon Hidankyo (Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations)

Achievement: Advocacy against nuclear weapons.

The 2024 Peace Prize was awarded to Nihon Hidankyo for its relentless efforts to promote a world free from nuclear weapons.

The organisation comprises survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings—known as Hibakusha—who have dedicated their lives to raising awareness about the dangers of nuclear armament.

NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMIC SCIENCES

Winners: Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A Robinson

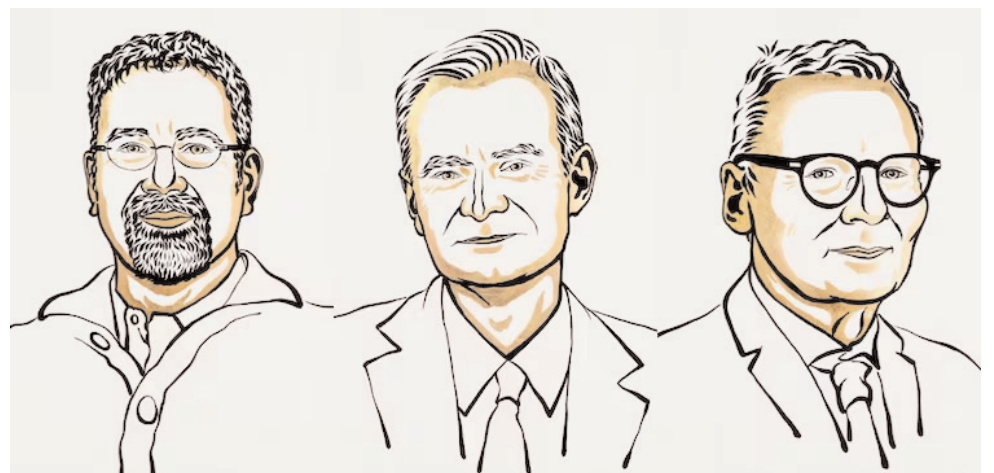
Achievement: Research on economic development and institutions.

This trio was recognised for their insightful research into how political institutions impact economic development.

Their findings contribute significantly to understanding how governance shapes economic outcomes across nations.



Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun (l to r) (Photo: nobelprize.org)



Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A Robinson (l to r) (Photo: nobelprize.org)

HAPPY

NEW YEAR

2025



BEDI FAMILY

First row (L to R): Kirpa Kaur, Ryanbir Singh Bedi, Paramjit Singh Bedi, Kuldip Kaur Bedi, Satbir Singh Bedi

Second row (L to R): Simarjit Kaur, Saachi Kaur, Japna Kaur, Asees Singh, Daya Singh

Third row (L to R): Jaswinder Singh, Bisman Singh, Tejvir Singh Raminder Singh, Ribli Kaur, Tresa Kaur, Gurpreet Singh, Supreet Kaur, Chazbir Singh Bedi

Biggest Innovations in AI, Science and Technology

IN 2024, SIGNIFICANT INNOVATIONS IN AI, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY EMERGED, INCLUDING AI-POWERED SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY, CARBON-CAPTURING MICROBES, AND ELASTOCALORICS. THESE ADVANCEMENTS ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACROSS INDUSTRIES. NOTABLE TRENDS LIKE MULTIMODAL AI AND QUANTUM COMPUTING ALSO PROMISE TO RESHAPE THE TECHNOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE, DRIVING FUTURE GROWTH.

2024 has been an exciting year for artificial intelligence, science, and technology innovations. Many new developments have changed industries and improved our daily lives.

In AI, we saw the rise of Generative AI 3.0. This advanced technology can understand and create content almost like a human. It has transformed fields like healthcare, education, and entertainment.

In science, researchers discovered several Earth-like exoplanets. These findings have sparked renewed interest in exploring space and searching for life beyond our planet.

Meanwhile, there were breakthroughs in quantum computing technology. New quantum processors can solve complex problems in seconds, opening doors to new possibilities.

In this article, we'll explore these incredible milestones in detail and highlight how they are shaping a smarter, more connected future. From smarter AI to space exploration and faster computing, 2024 truly showcased a year of innovation.

AI for Scientific Discovery

AI is revolutionising scientific research by enabling breakthroughs across various fields. One significant advancement is in protein structure prediction, where models like AlphaFold drastically reduce the time needed to determine structures from years to mere minutes.

This capability accelerates drug discovery and helps address challenges such as antibiotic resistance.

Additionally, AI aids in discovering new materials and improving battery efficiency, among other technological advancements.

The integration of AI into scientific processes not only enhances outcomes but also transforms research methodologies into more collaborative and data-driven approaches.

OpenAI's o1 Model

OpenAI's o1 Model marks a substantial leap in artificial intelligence capabilities, especially in reasoning and problem-solving tasks.

This model enhances the ability of AI to comprehend complex mathematical concepts and coding challenges effectively.

By improving reasoning skills, the o1 Model facilitates more sophisticated interactions with users, allowing it to assist in educational contexts as well as



professional environments.

Its potential applications are extensive, ranging from educational tools to advanced scientific research assistance, positioning it as a valuable resource for developers and researchers alike.

Google DeepMind's GenCast

Google DeepMind's GenCast represents a groundbreaking advancement in weather prediction technology. Utilising advanced AI algorithms, GenCast delivers more accurate forecasts essential for agriculture and disaster preparedness.

With reliable weather data at their disposal, farmers can make informed decisions that optimise crop yields while minimising losses from adverse weather conditions.

Furthermore, enhanced weather predictions play a crucial role in disaster management by allowing communities to prepare better for extreme weather events, showcasing how AI directly impacts societal well-being through improved information dissemination.

Microsoft's Copilot Vision

Microsoft's Copilot Vision is an innovative tool designed to assist users with visual tasks across various

prevalent, allowing users to concentrate on strategic activities while the AI manages routine operations effectively.

Multimodal AI

Multimodal AI is set to transform how artificial intelligence systems interact with users by integrating multiple forms of data, such as text, audio, images, and video.

This innovation allows AI to understand and process information more like humans do, leading to more intuitive and effective user experiences.

For instance, in healthcare, multimodal AI can analyse patient data from various sources to provide comprehensive insights into health conditions. In retail, it enhances customer interactions by combining visual recognition with voice commands, improving service quality.

As this technology evolves, it will foster more natural and empathetic interactions across various sectors, making AI applications more accessible and user-friendly.

Agentic AI

Agentic AI represents a significant shift towards autonomy in artificial intelligence systems. Unlike traditional models that react to user inputs, agentic AI can act independently to achieve specific goals.

This innovation enables systems to analyse their environments and make proactive decisions without direct human intervention.

For example, in environmental monitoring, an agentic AI could autonomously detect changes in ecosystems and initiate preventive actions against potential hazards.

In finance, it can manage investment portfolios adaptively based on real-time market conditions. The development of agentic AI opens new possibilities for automation across industries, enhancing efficiency and responsiveness.

Explainable AI (XAI)

Explainable AI (XAI) aims to make the decision-making processes of AI systems transparent and understandable to humans.

As AI becomes more integrated into critical areas like healthcare and finance, the need for trust in these systems grows.

XAI provides insights into how models arrive at their conclusions, allowing users to comprehend the rationale behind decisions. This transparency is crucial for regulatory compliance and ethical considerations in AI deployment.

applications.

By integrating AI into everyday software environments, this tool enhances both productivity and creativity for users. It streamlines workflows by simplifying complex tasks while understanding user intent to provide relevant suggestions effectively.

This significant advancement in human-computer interaction not only boosts individual productivity but also promotes collaboration among teams by facilitating more intuitive communication methods.

Anthropic's Claude 3.5 Sonnet

Anthropic's Claude 3.5 Sonnet introduces a new level of interaction between artificial intelligence and computer systems by mimicking human-like behaviours such as moving cursors, clicking buttons, and typing text.

This capability signifies a shift toward more versatile and user-friendly AI interactions, allowing automation of routine tasks typically performed by humans.

By enabling seamless interactions with software tools, Claude 3.5 Sonnet opens new possibilities for efficiency in environments where repetitive tasks are

Space missions spanned the solar system in 2024

From monitoring Mercury to launching a new adventure to an icy moon of Jupiter, spacecraft and astronauts made great strides in 2024. Here are some of the highlights of this year in space.

New lunar visitors

The moon has been a hot destination for space agencies and private companies in recent years, and 2024 was no exception.

In January, the Japanese SLIM spacecraft made a successful but lopsided precision landing on a crater's rim, marking the country's first soft landing on the moon. The solar-powered Smart Lander for Investigating the Moon was designed to collect data for one lunar day, or about two weeks on Earth, before night fell and it got too dark and cold to survive. But SLIM surprised everyone by sending signals to Earth for three months. SLIM was joined by another unintentionally sideways lander in February. Odysseus, a spacecraft built by Houston-based company Intuitive Machines, touched down and toppled over near the lunar south pole. During its six-day mission, the probe sent back data that may be instructive for NASA's Artemis mission, which aims to land humans on the moon in 2026.

Finally, China's Chang'e 6 spacecraft grabbed the first samples from the farside of the moon in June. The first look at the samples revealed soil that's fluffier than soil from the nearside. A chemical analysis of the samples, reported in *Nature*, suggests the farside was volcanically active some 2.8 billion years ago.

Meanwhile, the Chang'e 6 orbiter turned up at a spot orbiting the sun called L2, the same region of space that is occupied by the James Webb Space Telescope. It's not clear yet what the Chinese space agency plans to do with it there.

Moments on Mars

2024 opened with a farewell to a beloved Mars explorer. NASA's Ingenuity, nicknamed Ginny, was the first helicopter to operate on the Red Planet. The craft was supposed to fly a few times over the course of 30 days; instead, it took 72 flights over almost three years. The airborne explorer was finally grounded in January after its rotor blades were damaged. Ingenuity's companion, the Perseverance rover, made perhaps its most important discovery yet in July: a rock containing hints of ancient microbes. But the discovery came against a backdrop of uncertainty: The budget for NASA's planned Mars Sample Return mission is in jeopardy, which means the intriguing bit of rock might not make it back to Earth for further study.



NASA's Europa Clipper spacecraft (illustrated) took off for an icy moon of Jupiter in October, where it will search for signs that the moon's subsurface ocean might be friendly to life. NASA/JPL-CALTECH



NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore (left) and Sunita Williams (right) were scheduled to return from the International Space Station in mid-June. But a malfunction on the Starliner spacecraft has prevented the duo from making the return trip to Earth until February.



The recently retired NEOWISE infrared telescope (illustrated) observed thousands of space rocks that flew close to Earth.

Private spaceflight highs and lows

Four years after SpaceX became the first private company to launch astronauts to the International Space Station, the company supported another commercial milestone: the first all-civilian spacewalk (SN: 5/27/20). The Polaris Dawn mission launched four astronauts to the space station in September. The crew tested new SpaceX spacesuits and collected data on radiation and the astronauts' physiology. One member of the crew, Sarah Gillis,

also became the first person to play the violin in space.

Another private company had a rougher time of it. Boeing's Starliner spacecraft launched astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore to the space station in early June for an eight-day mission, but problems with the spacecraft's thrusters delayed the astronauts' return. Starliner returned to Earth in September without its crew. Williams and Wilmore will remain on the space station until February, when a

SpaceX Dragon spacecraft will bring them home.

End of an asteroid hunting era

Earth lost a planetary protector this year. In August, NASA said goodnight to the NEOWISE telescope after it spent more than a decade scanning the sky for threatening asteroids.

NEOWISE launched in 2009 on a mission to study infrared light from distant cosmic objects. When the telescope ran out of coolant, scientists repurposed it to observe asteroids that come close to Earth, which also emit infrared light thanks to heat from the sun. Over its lifetime, NEOWISE observed thousands of asteroids and hundreds of comets, giving scientists a more precise sense of the dangers these space rocks pose to Earth. The telescope's loss leaves us somewhat in the dark, but fortunately not for too long. Another asteroid hunter, NEO Surveyor, is slated to launch no earlier than 2027.

New views of Mercury

The BepiColombo spacecraft made a close flyby of Mercury on September 4, getting its first view of the planet's south pole. The joint European and Japanese probe took off for Mercury in October 2018, and it still has about two years to go until it arrives. Because Mercury is so close to the sun and its gravitational might, it's not easy to maneuver a spacecraft into orbit around the tiny planet. BepiColombo is making close passes of Mercury and using the planet's gravity to nudge it on course to enter orbit in November 2026.

One flyby this year gave the spacecraft views of Mercury it won't have even when it is in orbit. BepiColombo approached from Mercury's night side, so the planet's crater rims cast deep shadows that could reveal new details about their topography.

Europa, ahoy!

NASA's Europa Clipper spacecraft launched on October 14, bound for an icy moon of Jupiter that may have the conditions for life to exist. Because Europa hosts a liquid water ocean under a thick shell of ice, it is among the top contenders for extraterrestrial life in the solar system.

Once Clipper arrives at Jupiter in 2030, the spacecraft will make nearly 50 flybys of the moon to study its subsurface ocean. Clipper won't orbit Europa directly because of Jupiter's intense magnetic field, which traps high amounts of technology-disrupting radiation in the moon's vicinity. Instead, Clipper will dip in and out of this radiation field to avoid prolonged exposure, taking data and then backing off to recover before diving back in.

Master Mohinder Singh: A Votary of Secularism and Justice for All

BY BIDISHA ROY



Master Mohinder Singh, Founder President of Baba Makhn Shah Sikh Center, New York

Veteran Sikh community leader Master Mohinder Singh, a former president of Gurdwara Sikh Cultural Society, Richmond Hill, and a founder President of Gurdwara Baba Makhn Shah Sikh Center, was born in 1948 in Miani, a remote village in Hoshiarpur district of Punjab, India. His family members were farmers but his father was a police inspector. Elder to two brothers and one sister, Mohinder Singh aspires to be a teacher from his childhood. After completion of his B.Sc. and B.Ed. from govt college, he started his career as a school teacher in 1970. In 1974, he went back to his village after getting a job in the govt high school there.

In 1985, Mohinder Singh moved to the USA for a better life and better opportunities. He started his new journey as a construction worker and within two years established his own construction company and ran the company until 1999. His family - wife, two daughters and one son joined him in 1995.

He never got disconnected from his root and engaged himself into social and cultural activities. Master Mohinder Singh was two-time president of Gurdwara Sikh Cultural Society, Richmond Hill, New York. Later he founded Gurdwara Baba Makhn Shah Lobana Sikh Center in South Richmond Hill and was a president for the organization for three terms.



Master Mohinder Singh, a member of the Sikh Delegation at a meeting with the US President George Bush in the White House after 9/11. L to R: Master Mohinder Singh, Rajwant Singh, President George W. Bush, and Darshan Singh Dhaliwal

He became a voice for the Sikh community when it suffered significantly post-9/11 with discrimination. He was a part of Sikh delegation who met US president George Bush after 9/11 and raised many issues including the future of the Sikhs.



Master Mohinder Singh is seen receiving Bill de Blasio, the former mayor of New York at an event

"I work with so many assembly members and city council members. As a result of which Congressman Gregory Mick and speaker of the city council became my good friends. Many politicians visit our Gurdwara and most of the time, I introduce them to the audience. When mayor (NYC) Eric Adams was inaugurated, I did the prayer (Sikh) for him. I performed prayers for many other leaders along with other religious heads." Master Mohinder Singh is in close touch with NYC mayor and discusses various issues with him regularly.

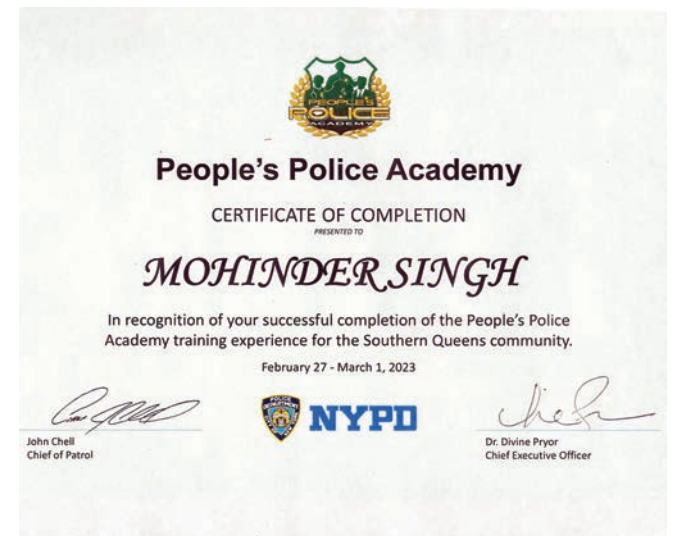
The Mayor hosts his inaugural Interfaith Breakfast
The New York Public Library, New York, New York
February 10, 2022



Master Mohinder Singh is addressing an Interfaith Breakfast meeting hosted by New York City Mayor Eric Adams

Master Mohinder Singh is also very active in Indian politics. When Prime Minister Modi came to the USA for the first time, he was invited to meet him and conveyed him about the difficulties Sikh community is going through. "I categorically told him that if every religion gets equal treatment, only then India will progress. If you give special treatment to one religion at the cost of other religion, India will never be strong."

He is also very critical about the current situation in India. "When India got independence, the only goal was secularism. The government should respect all religion. But look at India now - all the fear is created for Muslims. The central government is ignoring the difficulties of the Punjab farmers. The Prime Minister does not utter a single word (regarding the issue) in the parliament. He is the prime minister for everybody - who cast vote for him or did not - he is the prime minister for all. It's his duty to solve the issue. What is happening is not democracy. We are the largest democracy but we are not listening to the voice of people"



Master Mohinder Singh received a Certificate from People's Police Academy.

He feels that the government must talk to the farmers and fulfill not all but few demands because if the famers don't survive, India will also not survive. He also strongly advocates for creating employment opportunities for current and future generation.

"I love India, I respect India. I am talking for the betterment for all Indians - not only Sikhs - Hindus, Muslims, Christians and all other religions that make the Unified India", he signs off.



Preeti Mehta MD

Discover Exceptional Gastroenterology Care with Dr. Preeti Mehta

Dr. Preeti Mehta is a board-certified gastroenterologist at Digestive Disease Care (DDC), a leading gastroenterology practice in Queens and Long Island. She is committed to providing comprehensive, compassionate, and expert care for a wide range of gastrointestinal conditions.

Trained at the renowned Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, Dr. Mehta has

expertise in managing complex gastrointestinal disorders and is skilled in performing advanced procedures, including therapeutic endoscopy and colonoscopy using specialized diagnostic techniques. Her areas of specialization include acid reflux, irritable bowel syndrome, and liver diseases. Dr. Mehta's patient-centered approach emphasizes preventive care and early detection, ensuring tailored treatment plans that

enhance overall digestive health and quality of life.

With a stellar reputation for excellence, Dr. Mehta has earned top ratings from her patients for her compassionate care and expertise. Experience the difference in your digestive health with Dr. Preeti Mehta-dedicated to helping you achieve optimal wellness.

For more information, visit DigestiveDiseaseCare.com



SATHEESH KATHULA, MD
President, AAPI

AAPI Welcomes Delegates to

PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS

January 8 to 10, 2025

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India



www.aapiusa.org

OBJECTIVES

- Encourage Education, Patient Care Excellence
- Physician led Legislation
- Transparent Communication
- Collaboration with other Professional Organizations
- Involving Younger Generation

VISION

- To make AAPI a mainstream medical profession organization to work with legislators to reshape the healthcare Industry in the US.
- Enhancing Indo-U.S. Relations Through Health Diplomacy

AAPI'S WORK

- Fought discrimination of foreign doctors
- Opened several charitable clinics in India thru AAPI Charitable Foundation
- Raised \$5.2 million for covid relief in India
- with Adopt a Village program screened close to 10,000 people for to detect asymptomatic non communicable diseases in India such as Diabetes, Hypertension, High cholesterol, Kidney Disease and Anemia
- Helped Indian visitors stranded in the US at the time of Covid pandemic
- Share a blanket program to give free blankets to the needy in collaboration with local chapters
- Nurses Appreciation Day, with the help of local chapters
- Organized Global Healthcare Summits for the last 18 years to help India
- Doing Stem cell donor registry for Indians Americans
- Organized several blood donation camps in the US
- Organized mass CPR training camps in India
- Advocated for Emergency Medicine post graduate courses and Family Practice in India
- Collaborated with various professional organization such as American Medical Association, Education Medical Council for Foreign Medical Graduates, Federation of State Medical Boards
- Received Daniel Blumenthal Award for being one of the influential ethnic physicians' organizations
- Working on increasing the number of emergency medical technicians in India
- Mentorship Programs for young doctors and Premed students



History and origin of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

THE 18TH PBD CONVENTION WILL BE HELD FROM 8 - 10 JANUARY 2025 IN BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA. THE THEME OF THE 18TH PBD CONVENTION IS 'DIASPORA'S CONTRIBUTION TO A VIKSIT BHARAT'

The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), or Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Day, is celebrated annually on January 9th to honor the contributions of the Indian diaspora to the progress of India and to recognize their role in strengthening India's ties with the global community. This day highlights the connection between the nation and its overseas citizens, celebrating the spirit of Indian identity, culture, and development worldwide.

The origins of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas are deeply rooted in the larger context of India's relationship with its global diaspora. The history behind this celebration is tied to India's historical emigration patterns, the struggles faced by early Indian migrants, and the efforts to bring attention to their contributions to both their host countries and India. This article explores the history, significance, and origins of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, looking at how this day evolved, its relevance today, and the broader context of the Indian diaspora.

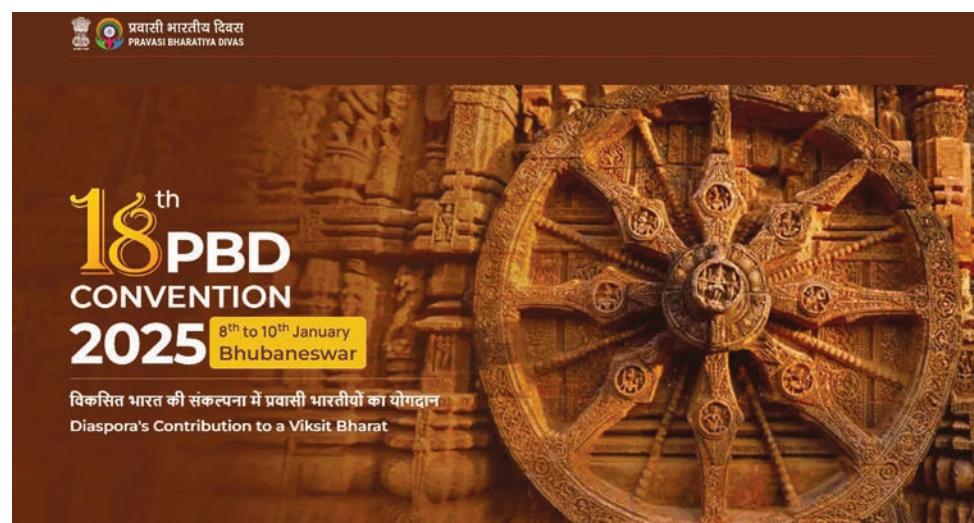
January 9 commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to India in 1915. To mark this day, the tradition of celebrating the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) started in 2003. 1st PBD Convention was organised on 9 January 2003 to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of India.

Since 2015, under a revised format, the PBD Convention has been organised once every 2 years.

The 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conventions have been organised till date. 17th PBD was held from 8 - 10 January 2023 in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The theme of the 17th PBD Convention was "Diaspora: Reliable

Partners for India's Progress in Amrit Kaal".

The 18th PBD Convention will be held from 8 - 10 January 2025 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The theme of the 18th PBD Convention is "Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat".



Historical Background of Indian Emigration

Indian migration has a long history, dating back centuries. The earliest known waves of Indian emigration can be traced to the traders, scholars, and laborers who moved across the Indian Ocean to places like Southeast Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, Africa, and beyond. However, the large-scale movement of Indians to other parts of the world began during British colonial rule.

Indentured Labor System and Colonial Migration

The most significant migration wave in the 19th and early 20th centuries was due to the British colonial administration's establishment of the indentured labor system. This system

saw millions of Indians sent abroad to work on plantations in places like the Caribbean, Fiji, Mauritius, and South Africa. As indentured laborers, these individuals faced harsh conditions but contributed significantly to the economic development of their

strong ties with its citizens abroad. The global Indian diaspora, despite being physically distant, played a key role in shaping India's political and economic landscape. They helped raise awareness about India's development and played an instrumental role in remittances, which became one of the primary sources of foreign exchange for the country.

The Indian diaspora, spread across continents, helped build strong links between India and the world. They continued to make significant contributions to the development of their host countries, excelling in various fields like business, education, politics, and technology. Notable figures in the global Indian community include Dhirubhai Ambani, Sundar Pichai, Indra Nooyi, and many others who have not only succeeded in their respective fields but have also helped foster a better understanding of Indian culture and values globally.

The Birth of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

The idea of celebrating the Indian diaspora on a national level was first proposed during the 2003 Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention. The idea to create a day to celebrate the Indian diaspora came from the efforts of the Indian government to recognize the contributions of NRIs and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs).

The First PBD in 2003

The first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was held in January 2003 in New Delhi, under the leadership of then-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It was organized by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), which was created in 2004 to specifically cater to the concerns of the Indian diaspora. The first convention aimed to provide

respective host countries.

In the early 20th century, a new wave of emigration occurred when skilled workers, professionals, and traders began to migrate to countries such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This migration, especially after India gained independence in 1947, continued and saw an increase in the number of educated professionals from India seeking better opportunities abroad. Over time, the Indian diaspora grew into a global community that contributed to their host countries' economies, cultural diversity, and political spheres.

The Role of the Indian Diaspora Post-Independence

After India's independence, the Indian government sought to establish

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a platform for members of the diaspora to interact with the Indian government, business leaders, and intellectuals. It was a way to acknowledge their contributions to India's development and global standing.

The year 2003 also marked the centenary of the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from South Africa, where he had first developed his ideas of non-violence and social justice. In 1915, Gandhi had returned to India after being part of the Indian diaspora for over two decades. His return signaled the start of a larger movement against British colonial rule and for Indian independence. As a result, January 9th was chosen as the official date to commemorate this event, making the day even more significant. Thus, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, which was initially conceptualized as a way to recognize the Indian diaspora, was also designed to mark the legacy of Indian leaders like Gandhi and their connection to the global Indian community.

The Significance of January 9th

The choice of January 9th as the date for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is deeply symbolic. This date is significant because it commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from South Africa. Gandhi's experiences in South Africa had a profound influence on his methods of resistance and his eventual leadership of the Indian freedom struggle.

Gandhi's return to India from the diaspora marked the beginning of his pivotal role in the fight for independence. His return was seen as a powerful moment in Indian history, as it symbolized the strong link between India and its diaspora. By choosing this date, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas also honors the historical connection between the Indian diaspora and the Indian independence movement.

Objectives and Purpose of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

The primary objective of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is to acknowledge the contributions of NRIs and PIOs to India's progress in various fields. The day provides a platform for the government of India to engage with the Indian diaspora, allowing them to discuss issues that affect their lives abroad and explore ways to contribute to India's growth.

Key Objectives of PBD

- Recognition of the Contributions of NRIs and PIOs: Pravasi Bharatiya Divas serves as an occasion to acknowledge the positive impact that members of the Indian diaspora have had on their host countries and on India's economy, culture, and political landscape.
- Strengthening Ties Between India and the Diaspora: It provides a venue for dialogue between the Indian government and the diaspora, discussing critical



DATE & VENUE Bhubaneswar, Odisha
8-10 January 2025

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- issues such as remittances, legal and social protections for emigrants, and the promotion of Indian culture abroad.
- Facilitating Collaboration: The event fosters collaboration between the Indian government, businesses, and overseas Indians, encouraging investment in India, promoting tourism, and strengthening the global reach of Indian companies.
- Cultural Exchange and Promotion: PBD encourages cultural exchange, making the world more aware of India's rich heritage and traditions.

Subsequent Developments and the Global Outreach

After its inception, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas became an annual event, attracting thousands of NRIs and PIOs from across the globe. The government organized a series of seminars, discussions, and networking sessions during PBD to facilitate knowledge exchange and foster collaborations. In subsequent years, the event became

increasingly inclusive, encompassing a wider range of issues important to the global Indian community, including topics related to education, healthcare, and the professional development of diaspora communities. PBD also saw the introduction of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards, which were presented to individuals and organizations that made significant contributions to India's development or to the Indian diaspora.

These awards became a key feature of PBD, as they not only celebrated individual and collective achievements but also showcased the diverse and vibrant contributions of the Indian diaspora across various domains, including science, business, and social activism.

Challenges

While Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has been a platform for celebration and recognition, there have been criticisms regarding its effectiveness in addressing the concerns of the diaspora. Some members of the Indian community have raised issues about the lack of concrete action taken by the Indian government in relation to the challenges faced by NRIs, such as immigration issues, legal matters, and the protection of their rights in host countries. Furthermore, there have been concerns about the focus on celebratory events rather than practical steps toward improving the living conditions of the diaspora.

The Future of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

As India continues to develop as a global power, the role of the diaspora becomes increasingly important. The Indian government has made substantial efforts to reach out to NRIs and PIOs, particularly in areas such as trade, investment, and diplomacy. With the Indian diaspora becoming more prominent in global politics and business, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is likely to continue evolving into a more significant event that not only honors their contributions but also acts as a catalyst for further cooperation between India and the world.

The future of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will likely see the development of new initiatives and programs that focus on strengthening the bonds between India and its diaspora. It may also serve as an opportunity to address the concerns of the global Indian community and promote a more inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous relationship.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a unique celebration that honors the global Indian community, recognizing their contributions to both India and the countries they have made their homes. From its origins in 2003, the day has evolved into a significant event that fosters dialogue, promotes cultural exchange, and celebrates the diverse achievements of Indians abroad. Through its various initiatives, PBD continues to serve as a bridge between India and its diaspora, helping to shape a stronger, more connected global Indian community.

Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award since 2003

PRAVASI BHARATIYA SAMMAN AWARD (PBSA) IS THE HIGHEST HONOR BESTOWED ON INDIANS RESIDING ABROAD. THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA BESTOWS THIS HONOR AS PART OF THE PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS (PBD) CONVENTIONS, WHICH WERE HELD IN 2003 AS DECLARED BY INDIA'S PRESIDENT.

The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) is the highest honor conferred by the Government of India upon individuals of Indian origin or Indian diaspora for their exceptional contributions in various fields. Instituted in 2003, the award recognizes achievements in the following domains:

- Philanthropy and Charitable Work
- Community Service
- Science, Technology, and Education
- Commerce and Industry
- Healthcare
- Arts and Culture
- Public Service
- Bringing Honor to India and their Countries of Residence

The award is presented during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention, held biennially since 2015 (previously annual). Awardees are selected by a committee constituted by the Government of India. Key Details: First Edition: 2003, marking the first PBD conference in New Delhi. Recipients Since Inception: Over 200 awardees from various countries. Award Components: A medallion, a citation, and a certificate. Some Notable Recipients: 2003: Sir Anerood Jugnauth (Mauritius) – Former Prime Minister of Mauritius. 2019: Dr. Rajendra Joshi (Switzerland) – Contributions in science and education. 2021: Dr. Mohan Kaul (United Kingdom) – Leadership in business and public service.

Here is a year-by-year summary of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) recipients and notable achievements since its inception in 2003. This list highlights just a few notable awardees.

2003 (First Edition)

- Sir Anerood Jugnauth (Mauritius): For public service and strengthening India-Mauritius ties.
- Basdeo Panday (Trinidad and Tobago): Former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Lakshmi Mittal (UK): For contributions to global steel production.
- Dr. Krishna Guha (USA): Contributions to science and education.

2004

- Gopalkrishna Gandhi (South Africa): Contributions to Indian diaspora welfare.
- Dr. Lenny Saith** (Trinidad and Tobago): Contributions to public



service.

2005

- Shyamala B. Cowsik (Canada): Contributions to community service and diplomacy.
- Sabeer Bhatia (USA): Co-founder of Hotmail, contributions to technology.

2006

- Dr. Ranjan Mathai** (USA): Contributions to healthcare.
- Sir Shridath Ramphal** (Caribbean): Public service and law.

2007

- Dr. Hafiz Shamsuddin** (Malaysia): Contributions to healthcare.
- Dr. Abraham Verghese** (USA): Renowned author and physician.

2008

- Sam Pitroda (USA): Technology innovation and contributions to India's telecommunications.
- Lord Bhikhu Parekh** (UK): Contributions to academia and philosophy.

2009

- Lord Karan Bilimoria (UK):

Founder of Cobra Beer, contributions to business and industry.

- Dr. Kalpana Chawla (Posthumous, USA): Astronaut and inspiration for the Indian diaspora.

2010

- Dr. Navin Nanda (USA): Eminent cardiologist, contributions to healthcare.
- Tan Sri Ravindran Menon (Malaysia): Infrastructure development and philanthropy.

2011

- Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri (USA): Contributions to climate science and sustainable development.
- Anil Agarwal (UK): Founder of Vedanta Resources, contributions to business.

2012

- Dr. Krishna Udayasankar** (Singapore): Acclaimed author and professor.
- Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar** (China): Public service and diplomacy.

2013

- Bharat Ratna Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam (India): For global contributions to science and innovation.

2014

- Satya Nadella (USA): Contributions to technology and leadership at Microsoft.
- Dr. Mahesh Mehta (USA): Community service and philanthropy.

2015

- Dr. Kamlesh Lulla (USA): NASA scientist and contributions to space research.
- Ashok Kumar Mago (USA): Contributions to India-USA relations.

2017

- Dr. Raghunath Mashelkar (India): Global contributions to science and patents.
- Dr. Bhaskar Dasgupta (UK): Community service and healthcare.

2019

- Dr. Rajendra Joshi (Switzerland): Education and healthcare.
- Dr. Prathap C. Reddy (India): Founder of Apollo Hospitals, contributions to healthcare.

2021 (Virtual Due to COVID-19)

- Dr. Mohan Kaul (UK): Business and public service.
- Joginder Singh Saluja (Mexico): Community service and cultural promotion.

2023

- Prof. Jagadish Chennupati (Australia) - Contributions to Science and Technology/Education.
- Dr. Alexander Maliakel John (Brunei Darussalam) - For his work in Medicine.
- Dr. Vaikuntam Iyer Lakshmanan (Canada) - Recognized for Community Welfare.H.E.
- Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali (Guyana) - For Politics and Community Welfare.
- Mr. Piyush Gupta (Singapore) - Contributions to Business.
- Dr. Archana Sharma (Switzerland) - For achievements in Science and Technology.
- Mr. Chandrakant Babubhai Patel (United Kingdom) - Recognized for contributions in Media.
- Mr. Rajesh Subramaniam (USA) - Contributions to Business.

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The rise and contributions of the Indian diaspora

The Indian diaspora is one of the largest and most diverse global communities, with an estimated 32 million people of Indian origin living across the world. From the shores of the Caribbean islands to the bustling cities of North America, Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and beyond, Indians have built thriving communities that are often key to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of their host nations. Over the past few centuries, the Indian diaspora has experienced remarkable growth, playing an influential role in shaping the world's geopolitical landscape, global markets, and cultural exchanges. This article aims to explore the rise of the Indian diaspora, their historical journey, the factors contributing to their migration, and their diverse and substantial contributions to their host countries and to India itself.

Historical Background of Indian Emigration

Early Waves of Migration

Indian migration has a rich history that spans centuries. The earliest recorded instances of Indian emigration occurred during the ancient and medieval periods, with Indians settling in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula. Traders, scholars, and missionaries often traveled across the Indian Ocean, leaving behind traces of Indian culture and religion.

During the British colonial period (18th–20th centuries), however, emigration from India significantly increased. The indentured labor system, implemented by the British after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, became the primary mechanism for the large-scale migration of Indians. Millions of Indians were transported to various colonies such as Mauritius, Fiji, the Caribbean islands, and South Africa to work on sugar plantations, railways, and in other industries. This wave of migration laid the foundation for the development of vibrant Indian communities in these regions, some of which still maintain strong cultural ties to their Indian roots.

Post-Independence Migration

After India's independence in 1947, migration patterns began to shift. Many Indians sought better economic opportunities abroad, especially in Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. The 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of skilled Indian professionals, including doctors, engineers, and IT specialists, migrating to meet labor shortages in these nations. By the 1980s and 1990s, the expansion of India's global



Sundar Pichai (CEO of Google), Satya Nadella (CEO of Microsoft).



Kamala Harris, the Vice President of the United States.

footprint, coupled with economic liberalization, further accelerated the migration of professionals seeking better opportunities in growing economies.

Factors Driving Indian Migration

Economic Opportunities

The most significant factor driving Indian migration has been the search for better economic prospects. As India's population grew and its economic landscape evolved, many Indians faced limited opportunities for career

advancement, education, and financial stability at home. Countries with burgeoning economies and labor shortages, such as the Gulf states, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, offered higher wages, better living standards, and improved career prospects.

In the post-1991 liberalized economy, India's economic growth allowed many to take advantage of international opportunities. The rise of the Indian information technology (IT) sector also played a crucial role in facilitating the migration of highly skilled professionals to countries like the United States and

Canada.

Educational Pursuits

The pursuit of education has also been a driving force for migration. Indian students have flocked to institutions abroad for higher education, particularly in fields like engineering, medicine, management, and the sciences. The United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada remain top destinations for Indian students, who not only benefit from quality education but also gain exposure to international networks, knowledge, and skills.

Political and Social Factors

In some cases, migration was driven by political instability, persecution, or limited opportunities in India. For example, during the period of political turmoil in India during the 1970s and 1980s, large numbers of people sought refuge or better prospects abroad. In countries like Uganda, Fiji, and Kenya, political events (such as Idi Amin's expulsion of Indians from Uganda) forced many to leave.

Additionally, factors such as religious intolerance, caste-based discrimination, and economic inequalities led to waves of migration from certain regions within India to more developed countries, where better social mobility and opportunities were available.

Indian Diaspora's Contribution to Global Economies

Economic Impact and Remittances

One of the most important contributions of the Indian diaspora has been in the form of remittances. According to the World Bank, India has been the largest recipient of remittances globally, receiving over \$87 billion in 2020 alone. Remittances sent by Indian expatriates to their families back home have been a vital source of income for millions, contributing significantly to poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, and overall economic growth.

The economic footprint of the Indian diaspora extends beyond remittances. Indian entrepreneurs and professionals have made substantial investments in their host countries, contributing to the growth of industries ranging from technology to real estate, hospitality, and retail. The Indian diaspora has played a key role in the global technology boom, especially in sectors like software development, finance, and telecommunications.

Business and Entrepreneurship

Indians have been instrumental in the development of several industries worldwide. In countries like the United

Continued on Page 70

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States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, Indian entrepreneurs have built successful businesses that employ thousands of people. In Silicon Valley, Indian-origin entrepreneurs have become some of the most prominent figures in the tech industry, with individuals like Sundar Pichai (CEO of Google), Satya Nadella (CEO of Microsoft), and Vinod Khosla (co-founder of Sun Microsystems) leading major global tech firms.

In the United States, Indian immigrants have made their mark in the healthcare sector, particularly in the fields of medicine and biotechnology. Indian-origin doctors, researchers, and health professionals are highly respected for their expertise and have contributed to the development of cutting-edge medical technologies.

Indian businesses have also flourished in the Gulf states, where large communities of Indians work in construction, retail, and hospitality. Moreover, successful Indian businesspeople, such as Lakshmi Mittal, who heads ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel producer, and Mukesh Ambani, the chairman of Reliance Industries, have become global symbols of entrepreneurship.

Contributions to Culture and Society

Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power

The Indian diaspora has been a powerful vehicle for the spread of Indian culture across the globe. Whether through Bollywood films, traditional dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak, or global cuisine, the Indian



Priti Patel, the Home Secretary of the United Kingdom.

diaspora has brought India's rich cultural heritage to the forefront of global consciousness. Cultural festivals, such as Diwali and Holi, are celebrated by communities of Indian origin in many countries, fostering a greater understanding of Indian traditions and values.

In countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, the Indian diaspora has been at the center of intercultural dialogues, promoting diversity, tolerance, and understanding. The popularity of yoga and meditation in the West is also largely attributed to the Indian diaspora's

efforts in sharing these practices with the world.

Philanthropy and Social Causes

Indian diaspora communities have also made significant contributions to charitable causes and social development, both in their host countries and in India. Many members of the Indian diaspora have been involved in philanthropy, supporting causes such as education, healthcare, and disaster relief.

The Indian diaspora has also been active in promoting educational initiatives, providing scholarships to students in need, and supporting schools and universities in India. The contributions of Indian-origin individuals to international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization further highlight the global impact of the Indian diaspora.

Political Influence and Advocacy

Engagement in Host Country Politics

The Indian diaspora's political engagement has grown significantly over the years. In countries like the

United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, Indian-origin individuals have been elected to high political offices, contributing to the political landscape of their respective nations. Notable figures include Kamala Harris, the Vice President of the United States, and Priti Patel, the Home Secretary of the United Kingdom, both of whom have Indian heritage.

Indian-origin politicians have advocated for the interests of the diaspora, building bridges between their home country, India, and their adopted nations. In the United States, for example, Indian-Americans have emerged as a significant voting bloc, influencing political campaigns, policy decisions, and international relations.

Strengthening India's Global Presence

The Indian diaspora has also played a crucial role in strengthening India's global influence. By acting as a bridge between their host countries and India, the diaspora has contributed to enhancing India's diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties with the world. Indian-origin politicians, business leaders, and community organizers have often acted as ambassadors for India, lobbying for greater trade and investment, fostering bilateral partnerships, and promoting India's interests on the global stage.

The Future of the Indian Diaspora

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the role of the Indian diaspora is expected to grow even further. In the coming decades, the Indian diaspora will continue to be a critical factor in fostering India's global standing. The rise of India as an economic powerhouse, along with its expanding influence in global politics, will provide new avenues for the diaspora to contribute to their home country's growth.

Moreover, as the Indian diaspora becomes more integrated into the societies in which they live, their contributions will likely become more visible and impactful. The focus will likely shift from simple remittances and labor to more complex forms of collaboration, such as joint ventures, innovation partnerships, and global research initiatives.



Satheesh K. Kathula - A Profile of Excellence in Medicine, Leadership, and Global Healthcare Advocacy



Dr. Satheesh Kathula: a trailblazer whose impact resonates across multiple sectors of healthcare and community service

Dr. Satheesh K. Kathula is a distinguished physician, educator, and healthcare leader whose multifaceted contributions to the field of medicine and community health have earned him recognition both in the United States and internationally. With over two decades of experience as a board-certified hematologist and oncologist, coupled with his deep commitment to medical education, public health advocacy, and community service, Dr. Kathula stands as a prominent figure in the American healthcare landscape.

Dr. Kathula has carved out a notable career as a physician. He has been a clinical professor of medicine at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, where he plays a critical role in shaping the next generation of medical professionals. His expertise in hematology and oncology, fields where he has been board-certified since 2002, is a cornerstone of his medical career. Beyond his clinical work, he is a diplomate of the American Board of Lifestyle Medicine (ABLM), a credential that underscores his holistic approach to health that blends conventional medical care with lifestyle interventions aimed at disease prevention and health optimization.



AAPI delegation meeting with India's Health Minister JP Nadra to promote Family Medicine in India, emphasize on prevention of cancer and heart attacks during AAPI Global Healthcare Summit in New Delhi

Dr. Kathula's dedication to advancing medical knowledge is reflected in his ongoing involvement in scholarship. He has authored numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals and contributed to several book chapters, making a meaningful impact on the global medical community. His deep interest in the intersection of healthcare and technology has also led him to engage in cutting-edge research on the role of artificial intelligence in healthcare through programs at Stanford University, and to earn a degree in Global Healthcare Leaders Program at Harvard University, both of which further demonstrate his commitment to staying at the forefront of medical advancements and innovation.

Dr. Kathula's leadership extends far beyond the clinic and classroom. As the President of the American Association of Physicians from Indian Origin (AAPI) for the 2024-2025 term, Dr. Kathula is at the helm of one of the most prominent professional organizations representing physicians of Indian descent in the United States. His role is a culmination of years of dedicated service to the organization, having served in various capacities such as Regional Director, Treasurer, Secretary, Vice President, and President-elect. Under his leadership, AAPI has seen significant strides in promoting health advocacy, community service, and the professional development of its members.



Dr. Satheesh Kathula is receiving Daniel Bluementhal Award on behalf of AAPI in Washington DC from American College of Preventive Medicine

Dr. Kathula's impact on the global healthcare community was underscored by his conceptualization and organization of the AAPI Global Health Summit in New Delhi, India. The summit, which focused on prevention of cancer and heart attacks, is a testament to his ability to bring together thought leaders and healthcare professionals to address pressing global health issues. He also played a pivotal role as the Chair of the Oncology Track at the Indo-US Health Summit in Hyderabad, India, from 2012 through 2019, where he facilitated discussions on cutting-edge cancer treatment and prevention strategies.

As a founding chairman of the Pathfinder Institute of Pharmacy Education and Research Center, Dr. Kathula helped establish an educational institution that has educated over 1,000 pharmacists who are now making significant contributions to the global healthcare workforce. His dedication to education and professional development within the medical community is further evidenced by his tenure as the Editor of the AAPI Newsletter, a position that allowed him to foster communication and collaboration among members.

Dr. Kathula's influence extends far beyond the walls of hospitals and universities. He has long been an advocate for community service, having held leadership roles in several organizations that serve the Indian-American community and broader society. As the President of the Miami Valley Association of Physicians from India and the Association of Indian Physicians from Ohio, he has worked tirelessly to enhance the visibility and influence of Indian-American physicians, while also creating programs to serve the broader community.

(Photo A 4 here)

His community service efforts are particularly notable in his role as the President of the Hindu Community Organization (HCO) in Dayton, Ohio, where he was instrumental in raising \$3.5 million for the construction of an Indian Community Hall. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Kathula was at the forefront of a fundraising initiative through AAPI, raising \$5.2 million to support healthcare and community services during a time of



Lifetime Achievement Award for volunteer services from US President Joe Biden, receiving from Senator Joe Manchin

unprecedented need in India.

Beyond financial contributions, Dr. Kathula has also led efforts to provide direct healthcare services through medical camps and seminars in both the U.S. and India. These initiatives have provided invaluable access to healthcare for underserved populations and demonstrated his unwavering commitment to addressing health disparities globally.

Dr. Kathula's tireless work in medicine and community service has not gone unnoticed. He is the proud recipient of several prestigious awards, including the US Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award in 2023-2024, an honor that recognizes his outstanding contributions to society. Additionally, he was named Man of the Year by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Ohio chapter, in 2018 for his outstanding contributions to cancer care and advocacy. He recently was given The Inspiration Award by RAYWA foundation for his inspiring contribution to the field of oncology and healthcare as a leader.



Dr. Kathula received The Inspiration Award from RAYWA Foundation

He has also received the Hind Rattan (Jewel of India) Award in 2010, one of the highest honors bestowed on Indians abroad, in recognition of his exceptional service to the Indian diaspora and to global healthcare. In 2010, Dr. Kathula was also honored

Indians Abroad: Icons of Remarkable Achievements

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF INDIANS ABROAD ARE A TESTAMENT TO THEIR RESILIENCE, ADAPTABILITY, AND COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE. THEY SERVE AS GLOBAL AMBASSADORS OF INDIA'S RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INTELLECTUAL PROWESS, BREAKING BARRIERS AND INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS. THEIR STORIES REFLECT NOT ONLY PERSONAL TRIUMPHS BUT ALSO THE COLLECTIVE POTENTIAL OF A NATION WHOSE DIASPORA CONTINUES TO SHINE ON THE WORLD STAGE.

India has long been a cradle of talent, producing individuals whose contributions have been transformative on the global stage. Across diverse fields such as technology, medicine, arts, politics, and business, Indians abroad have not only excelled but have also etched their names in history as symbols of ingenuity, perseverance, and excellence.

The World of Technology and Innovation

Indian-origin professionals have left an indelible mark on the technology landscape, steering some of the world's largest tech corporations.

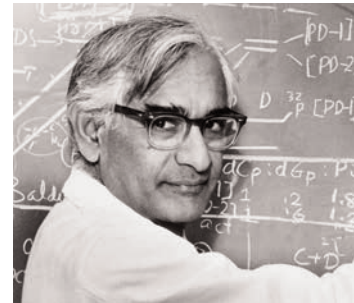
- **Sundar Pichai:** As the CEO of Alphabet Inc. and Google, Sundar Pichai has been a pivotal figure in shaping the future of technology. Born in Tamil Nadu, Pichai's rise from humble beginnings to heading one of the most influential tech companies globally is a testament to his brilliance and leadership.
- **Satya Nadella:** Hailing from Hyderabad, Satya Nadella took the reins as the CEO of Microsoft in 2014. Under his leadership, Microsoft transitioned into a cloud-first company, achieving unparalleled growth and innovation.
- **Arvind Krishna:** The CEO and Chairman of IBM, Arvind Krishna, has been instrumental in advancing artificial intelligence and quantum computing, ensuring IBM remains at the forefront of technological evolution.
- **Vinod Khosla:** A co-founder of Sun Microsystems and a renowned venture capitalist, Vinod Khosla has been a driving force behind many Silicon Valley startups, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Narinder Singh Kapany:** This Punjab-born genius is known for his contribution to the field of fibre optics. He was included in the list of seven 'Unsung Heroes' by Fortune magazine in their 'Businessmen of the Century' issue. He is considered as one of the founders of fibre optics and revolutionized the way information is transmitted today. Kapany has played many roles in his life including that of an entrepreneur, philanthropist and scholar, which won him major international acclaim.
- **S. Chandrasekhar:** Born in Lahore, British India, he is famous for his mathematical theory of black holes for which he won a Nobel Prize in 1983. The Chandrasekhar limit is



Arvind Krishna: The CEO and Chairman of IBM



Vinod Khosla: A co-founder of Sun Microsystems



Har Gobind Khorana: Indian-American biochemist



Pranav Mistry: Computer scientist



Dr. Devi Shetty: Cardiac surgeon



Dr. Siddhartha Mukherjee: Indian-American physician, biologist



Indra Nooyi: Former CEO of PepsiCo



Ajay Banga: World Bank President

- named after him. His most celebrated work concerns the radiation of energy from stars, particularly white dwarf stars, which are the dying fragments of stars. R. J. Tayler in the Biographical Memoirs of the Fellows of the Royal Society of London wrote, "Chandrasekhar was a classical applied mathematician whose research was primarily applied in astronomy and whose like will probably never be seen again."
- **Har Gobind Khorana:** This Indian American biochemist won a Nobel Prize in 1968 for Physiology or Medicine for cracking the genetic code along with Robert Holley and Marshall Nirenberg. Born in Raipur, Punjab, Khorana was the first scientist to chemically synthesize oligonucleotides. His contribution to science is tremendous and has won him immense international acclaim.
- **Venkatraman Ramakrishnan:** Born in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, this structural biologist won the 2009 Nobel Prize in Chemistry with Thomas A. Steitz and Ada E. Yonath, "for studies of the structure and function of the ribosome". He is an elite member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. He was awarded with the Louis-Jeantet Prize for his contribution to Medicine in 2007. His great contribution to science also won him India's second highest civilian award, the Padma Vibhushan, in 2010.

- **Pranav Mistry:** Hailing from Palanpur, Gujarat, this 33-year-old computer scientist and inventor is currently Vice President of Research at Samsung and is the head of Think Tank Team. He has contributed in Wearable Computing, Augmented reality, Ubiquitous computing, Gestural interaction, AI, Machine vision, Collective intelligence and Robotics. He was also honored as the Young Global Leader 2013 by World Economic Forum. His groundbreaking technology 'SixthSense' won him international acclaim. SixthSense is a device that interprets human gestures and has both a data projector and a camera.

Medicine and Healthcare

Indian-origin medical professionals have significantly impacted global healthcare, advancing research and patient care.

- **Dr. Devi Shetty:** Known as the "Henry Ford of heart surgery," Dr. Devi Shetty has revolutionized cardiac care. Although primarily based in India, his innovative healthcare models have inspired practices worldwide.
- **Dr. Siddhartha Mukherjee:** A Pulitzer Prize-winning author and oncologist, Dr. Mukherjee's book *The Emperor of All Maladies* is a seminal work on cancer. Based in the United States, his contributions to cancer research and treatment have been groundbreaking.

- **Dr. Soumya Swaminathan:** Serving as the Chief Scientist at the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Swaminathan has played a pivotal role in global public health, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Business and Entrepreneurship

Indian-origin entrepreneurs and executives have been instrumental in shaping global business landscapes.

- **Indra Nooyi:** As the former CEO of PepsiCo, Indra Nooyi redefined corporate leadership with her emphasis on sustainable growth and health-conscious product lines. Her tenure saw PepsiCo achieve new heights of success.
- **Ajay Banga:** Recently appointed as the President of the World Bank, Ajay Banga's illustrious career includes his transformative leadership at Mastercard, where he spearheaded financial inclusion initiatives.
- **Shantanu Narayen:** The CEO of Adobe, Shantanu Narayen has driven Adobe's transition to a cloud-based model, ensuring its position as a leader in digital media solutions.
- **Vivek Ramaswamy:** A biotech entrepreneur, Ramaswamy founded Roivant Sciences, focusing on drug development and innovation. His vision has reshaped the pharmaceutical industry.
- **Sabeer Bhatia:** This Indian-American entrepreneur born in Chandigarh founded the Hotmail

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email services and Jaxtr. He grew up in Bangalore and went to BITS Pilani for his bachelor's degree. Later on he was transferred to California Institute of Technology from BITS where he completed his graduation. Hotmail was the world's second largest e-mail provider with over 369 million registered users in 2011. He sold Hotmail to Microsoft in 1997 for \$400 million and it was then called MSN Hotmail. He also started a free messaging service called JaxtrSMS. The venture capital firm Draper Fisher Jurvetson named him 'Entrepreneur of the Year 1997', MIT chose him as one of 100 young innovators who are expected to have the greatest impact on technology and awarded him the 'TR100'.

- **Ajit Jain:** Having started his career as an employee with IBM who knew nothing about insurance, Orissa-born Ajit Jain is now the President of Berkshire Hathaway Insurance group. Warren Buffet had once said that Jain's mind is an "idea factory". Having worked with Buffet for around three decades, Jain is being speculated as the successor to this renowned American business magnate. The IIT Kharagpur graduate is currently leading Berkshire's Indian insurance market venture.

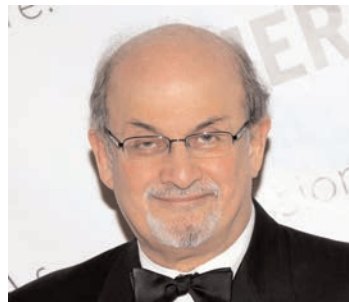
Arts, Literature, and Entertainment

Indian-origin artists, writers, and entertainers have bridged cultures and brought Indian narratives to global audiences.

- **Mindy Kaling:** An acclaimed writer, producer, and actor, Mindy Kaling has carved a niche in Hollywood, showcasing her Indian heritage with pride.
- **Priyanka Chopra Jonas:** A global icon, Priyanka Chopra has seamlessly transitioned from Bollywood to Hollywood, becoming one of the most recognized faces worldwide.
- **Jhumpa Lahiri:** A Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Lahiri's works, including *Interpreter of Maladies*, explore themes of identity and belonging, resonating with readers globally.
- **Zubin Mehta:** A world-renowned conductor, Zubin Mehta has led some of the most prestigious orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, bringing Indian artistry to classical music.
- **Salman Rushdie:** Born in Mumbai, this 67-year-old Kashmiri Indian author is best known for his contribution to English Literature. His second novel, *Midnight's Children*, won the Booker Prize in 1981. He also won the 'Booker of Bookers' prize in 1993 for the same novel. In 2008, *The Times* ranked him 13th on its list of the 50 greatest British writers since 1945. He started his career as a copywriter with the advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather. He is also known for the controversy due to his book *Satanic Verses*. He has authored eleven novels so far and written several



Priyanka Chopra Jonas,
Actor



Salman Rushdie,
Author



Sunita Williams,
astronaut



Amartya Sen,
Economist

short stories. His books have been translated in over 40 languages. He was appointed *Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* of France in January 1999 and was also knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to literature. More than one reason to be proud of this amazing scholar, right?

- **Rohinton Mistry:** This internationally acclaimed writer was born in Mumbai and did his BA from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. He later on shifted to Canada in 1975 with his wife. He published his first book, 11 connected short stories titled *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories* from the *Firozsha Bag* in 1987. His second book *Such a Long Journey*, was published in 1991 and achieved huge national and international acclaim. His other works received similar popularity. His third book *A Fine Balance* is considered to be one of his finest works and was a finalist for the Booker Prize.
- **Pan Nalin:** This award winning film director, screenwriter and documentary maker was born in Gujarat and is best known for his amazing and award winning films like *Samsara*, *Valley of Flowers* and *Ayurveda: Art of Being*. He received international acclaim just after the release of his first film *Samsara* which made him win over 30 international awards. His other feature film *Valley of Flowers* was pre-sold in 35 countries and is considered a major underground hit. He was invited to be on the panel for the France-India Co-production forum at Salon du Cinema in Paris along with the delegation headed by Mr. Amitabh Bachchan. Nalin says that Indians are "hungry for good documentaries". And we think his amazing work is satiating that hunger.
- **Mira Nair:** This amazing film maker was born in Rourkela, Orissa and started her career as an independent short-film maker, going on to win the Best Documentary prize at the American Film Festival for *India Cabaret*, an investigative documentary of Bombay's strippers. She runs a production company called *Mirabai*. Her debut feature film *Salaam Bombay!* (1988), won the Golden Camera award at the Cannes Film Festival and was also a nominee for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Her most popular works include *The Namesake* and *Monsoon Wedding*.

She was also awarded India's third highest civilian award, the *Padma Bhushan*, in 2012. Her work is globally acclaimed and she even got an offer to direct *Harry Potter* and the *Order of Phoenix*, which she rejected.

Politics and Public Service

- Indians abroad have made significant strides in politics, breaking barriers and becoming voices for their communities.
- **Kamala Harris:** As the Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris, whose mother hailed from Tamil Nadu, is a trailblazer. She represents a confluence of African-American and Indian heritage, inspiring millions worldwide.
- **Rishi Sunak:** Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Rishi Sunak, of Indian descent, has risen to one of the most powerful political positions globally, exemplifying the Indian diaspora's influence.
- **Nikki Haley:** The former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and Governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley has been a prominent political figure, advocating for diversity and inclusion.

Science and Space Exploration

- Indian-origin scientists have expanded the boundaries of human knowledge, contributing to space exploration and scientific discovery.
- **Kalpna Chawla:** An astronaut who lost her life in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster, Kalpna Chawla remains a symbol of courage and dedication, inspiring countless young women to pursue careers in STEM.
- **Sunita Williams:** Another NASA astronaut, Sunita Williams has spent over 300 days in space, contributing significantly to international space missions.
- **Dr. Venkatraman Ramakrishnan:** A Nobel Prize-winning biologist, Dr. Ramakrishnan's work on the ribosome has been fundamental to molecular biology.

Sports and Athletics

- Indian athletes abroad have excelled, bringing glory to their heritage.
- **Anirban Lahiri:** A professional golfer, Lahiri has represented India on international circuits, earning accolades and inspiring young golfers.
- **Santhi Soundarajan:** An athlete who has faced challenges, Santhi's story is one of resilience and

perseverance, highlighting issues of gender and identity in sports.

Philanthropy and Social Impact

Indian-origin philanthropists have contributed generously to global causes, championing education, healthcare, and social justice.

- **Rohini Nilekani:** Though primarily active in India, Nilekani's philanthropic initiatives have inspired diaspora communities to engage in impactful giving.
- **Romesh Wadhvani:** A billionaire entrepreneur, Wadhvani has dedicated significant resources to education and job creation through his foundation, focusing on uplifting underprivileged communities worldwide.

Economy

- **Amartya Sen:** Born in Santiniketan, West Bengal, this Indian economist and philosopher is best known for his amazing contributions to welfare economics, social choice theory, economic and social justice, economic theories of famines, and indices of the measure of well-being of citizens of developing countries. His extraordinary work in welfare economics won him the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998. He is the chancellor at Nalanda University and also a Fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows. He is also internationally acclaimed for his writing. *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* is one of his best works.
- **C.K.Prahlad:** Renowned as one of the most influential business thinkers in the world, he was the distinguished professor of Corporate Strategy at University of Michigan. Born in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, he became established as a business guru when he helped Philips in reconstruction as it was on the verge of collapse. He was also a prominent writer until his death in 2010 and had authored many books like *The Future of Competition* (with Venkat Ramaswamy, 2004), and *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty through Profits*. He was a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission of the United Nations on Private Sector and Development. He was also the first recipient of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Award for contributions to Management and Public Administration in India in 1999.

A glimpse into history and culture of Odisha



BY PRASANTA
KUMAR TRIPATHY

Odisha, located on the eastern coast of India, has a rich and diverse history and culture that spans thousands of years. Known for its ancient temples, vibrant art forms, classical dances, and unique festivals, Odisha is a land of deep cultural significance and historical importance. Since time immemorial, Odisha has been the most sacred soil for the Hindus in the whole of India. This holy land has been variously known throughout Indian history, as well as in tradition, as Kalinga, Utkal, and latterly as Odisha, in accordance to the eponymous tribe's predominance at particular time. The earliest to inhabit the land were the Kalingas.

At the dawn of Indian history Kalinga was already a famous and formidable political power. The Kalingas have known all over India for their personal bravery, their elephants, and their maritime trade colonies. In 260 BC, the Mauryan Emperor, Ashoka invaded Kalinga and fought one of the greatest wars of ancient history. History narrates how the bravery of the Kalingas, resulting in unspeakable carnage turned Ashoka, the terrible (Chandasoka) into Ashoka, the pious (Dharmasoka). Ashoka then renounced war, became Buddhist, and preached peace and non-violence in and outside India.

In the first century BC the Kalinga Emperor, Kharavela conquered vast territories that collectively came to be called the Kalinga Empire. By the 5th-6th Centuries AD this land was inhabited by a new tribe called Odras. It is these Odras who gave a new individuality to the eastern State, endowing her not only with a language but a pattern of life distinct in all respects from those of neighbours all around. Thus, the ancient



Utkal and still more ancient Kalinga came to be known at last as only Odisha or Odra-desa, the land of Odras. Whether called Kalinga, Utkal, or Odisha, the traditional boundaries of this land of the Odias, were always taken to be the river Ganga in the north and river Godavari in the south. Odisha was ruled by the powerful Bhauma-Kar dynasty during the 8-10th centuries followed by the Soma Kings until 11th century. Construction of the 11th century Grand temple at Lingaraj at Bhubaneswar, the greatest Shaiva Monument of India, was begun by the Soma king Yayati.

The most significant medieval rulers of Odisha were from the Ganga dynasty. During this period Odisha's culture particularly its art and architecture, flourished. The Ganga ruler Anantavarman Chodagangadeva (1078-1140) began the construction of the magnificent Jagannath temple at Puri which was finished by his son



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Anangabhimadeva.

His son Narasinghadeva I (1238-64) built the Sun temple of Konark which is one of the finest specimens of Hindu architecture, and is declared as UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In the 13th & 14th centuries when much of India came under the Muslim powers, independent Odisha remained a citadel of Hindu Religion, Philosophy, Art, and Architecture. The Gangas were succeeded by the Surya Dynasty. Its founder Emperor, King Kapilendradeva (1435-66) built a vast empire spanning from 'Ganga' River in the North to the 'Cauvery' River in the South, Gulbarga (Karnataka) in the West. After the death of last Surya King Prataprudradeva in 1540, the Odisha's power declined and in 1568 when King Mukunda Harichandan was killed by the treachery of his own general, Odisha lost its independence to the Afghan Rulers.

Odisha was annexed by the Mughals in the late 16th century, but the region retained its cultural identity despite external influences. Odisha came under British Rule in the early 19th century and like much of India faced social, political, and economic upheavals. The region participated actively in Indian freedom movements leading resistance against British Rule. Only few years after British Occupation, the Odiyas raised into rebellion against the British under the leadership of Jaya Krishna Rajguru. This is the earliest Indian freedom struggle against the British Rule popularly known as 'Paika Bidroha'.

Under British Rule the Odisha was vivisected into three parts and faced major political upheavals. It was on April, 1st on 1936 under the able leadership of Madhusudan Das and Maharaja Sreeram Chandra Bhanja Deo of Mayurbhanj, Odisha was unified on a linguistic basis and constituted into a separate province. Odisha became a State of India in 1950.

Odisha has become, through ages, an extremely interesting melting-pot of races, languages and cultures and regarded as excellent example of cultural integration. The centre and the very fountainhead of Odia culture has all along been Lord Jagannath of Puri. The cult of Jagannath inspired Odisha's own native systems of Dance, Music and Songs.

Right from the rough and simple caves on the twin hills of Khandagiri and Udayagiri to the World-famous Sun Temple of Konark including famous Lord Jagannath Temple at Puri, Odisha's various gigantic architectural and sculptural enterprises speak the eternal language of beauty, endurance, and devotion. The distinctive Kalinga style of architectures are characterized by intricately carved sculptures, high spires, and vast courtyards. The Konark Temple built as a chariot for the Sun God with wheels and horses is an architectural marvel.

The famous shrine of Jagannath at Puri was the very Home of what is now known as the Odishi Dance. It is one of the classical dance forms of India. It is known for its graceful movements, intricate footwork and expressive gesture. It is through Odishi Dance that



classical Odia Songs known as Odishi Sangeet originated. The Odisha Sangeet is associated with the traditional temple rituals and famous for its melodic and rhythmic beauty. Odisha is also a home to a variety of Folk Dances and Music Forms. The Gotipua Dance is a traditional dance performed by the Young Boys and Chhau Dance is a Martial Art form performed during festivals particularly in Mayurbhanj.

Straddling the road between North and South India, on the east coast Odisha has naturally evolved an eclectic culture. The very symbol of this synthesis is Lord Jagannath of Puri. His annual sojourn with his brother Balabhadra and sister, Subhadra on massive chariots known as Rath Yatra (Car Festival) is one of the most famous and grand festivals in India. Held annually it attracts millions of devotees from all over the World.

Culturally Odisha is the seat of Indo-Aryan style in its purest form. There is least vestige of foreign influence. It has maintained its native purity marvellously, being nurtured and reared on the very soil where it grew, without any extraneous aid. The Pattachitra painting, a traditional style of painting on cloth or dried palm leaves, depicting mythological themes. This reflects Odisha's World Famous architectural and sculptural glory.

The silver filigree works of fine silver jewellery made using intricate wire work and the unique style of Handloom weaving where both the warp and weft threads are dyed before weaving to create intricate patterns, showcase the super works of art symbolising the creative power of the Odia people.

The Temple of Jagannath also sets the standard of Orissa cuisine and is known for its simplicity and staple diet like the Holy Mahaprasad (Great Blessing) of



Jagannath. It was simple wholesome and tasty.

Odisha, with its vibrant cultural heritage, ancient Temples, classical Dance and Unique Art Forms is a place where the past and the present coexist harmoniously. Its history, shaped by dynasties, invaders, and local

traditions, is reflected in its architecture, customs and festivals. Today, Odisha continues to maintain its rich cultural identity while contributing to India's diversity.

(Mr. Prasanta Kumar Tripathy is the Chief Executive Officer, State Bank of India, New York Branch)

Mohan Charan Majhi: The Chief Minister of Odisha

Mohan Charan Majhi, a prominent leader in Odisha's political landscape, has emerged as a significant figure in regional and national politics. As the Chief Minister of Odisha, his journey reflects a story of perseverance, leadership, and commitment to serving the people of the state.

Early Life and Background

Mohan Charan Majhi was born into a humble family in the tribal-dominated regions of Odisha. Growing up in a household rooted in traditional values and surrounded by the challenges faced by rural and marginalized communities, Majhi developed a deep understanding of the struggles of ordinary people. His upbringing in a remote village instilled in him a sense of empathy and responsibility that would later define his political career.

Majhi pursued his education in Odisha, excelling academically despite financial and infrastructural hardships.

During his formative years, he showed a keen interest in social work, participating in various initiatives aimed at improving education and healthcare facilities in his village.

Entry into politics

Mohan Charan Majhi's entry into politics was driven by his desire to bring about tangible change in the lives of Odisha's people, especially the underserved and tribal communities. His initial involvement in grassroots politics allowed him to interact directly with citizens, listen to their grievances, and work on solutions.

Majhi quickly rose through the ranks of the party (BJP) due to his dedication, humility, and ability to connect with diverse sections of the population. His leadership in various local political campaigns and developmental initiatives earned him a strong reputation. Recognizing his potential, the party entrusted him with responsibilities at the district and state levels.

Legislative career

Mohan Charan Majhi's first significant breakthrough came when he was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Keonjhar. His tenure as an MLA showcased his ability to address critical issues, including poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, and rural development. As a representative of a tribal constituency, he prioritized the empowerment of indigenous communities, advocating for their rights, land security, and access to government services.

During his time in the Odisha Legislative Assembly, Majhi actively participated in debates, raising pertinent issues concerning his region and the



Mohan Charan Majhi, the Chief Minister of Odisha.

state as a whole. He was instrumental in pushing forward initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure, implementing welfare schemes, and promoting economic growth in backward areas. His practical, solutions-oriented approach earned him respect from both his colleagues and constituents.

Leadership and Rise as Chief Minister

Mohan Charan Majhi's rise to the position of Chief Minister of Odisha marks a significant shift in the political dynamics of the state. Majhi was unanimously chosen to lead the government. His appointment as Chief Minister symbolized a new era of leadership, characterized by a focus on inclusive growth, transparency, and governance.

As Chief Minister, Majhi's leadership style reflects his grassroots roots and pragmatic approach to governance. His policies prioritize the development of marginalized sections of society, particularly tribal communities, women, and youth. He has often emphasized the importance of bridging the urban-rural divide, promoting employment opportunities, and improving essential services like healthcare and education.

Key Achievements and Policy Initiatives

Since assuming office, Mohan Charan Majhi has introduced several key policies and initiatives aimed at addressing Odisha's long-standing challenges and unlocking its growth potential. Some of his notable achievements include:

Empowerment of Tribal Communities

Majhi has championed the cause of tribal welfare, introducing targeted programs to improve education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities in tribal regions. His government has worked towards securing land rights for indigenous populations and promoting

sustainable development in forested areas.

Infrastructure Development

Under Majhi's leadership, significant investments have been made in improving infrastructure across Odisha, including road connectivity, irrigation facilities, and rural electrification. His vision for a well-connected Odisha has facilitated economic growth and improved the quality of life for citizens.

Education and Skill Development

Recognizing the role of education in socio-economic development, Majhi's government has focused on strengthening the education system, particularly in rural and tribal areas. Initiatives such as scholarships, new schools, and skill development programs have empowered youth to pursue careers and contribute to the state's economy.

Healthcare Reforms

Majhi has prioritized strengthening the healthcare infrastructure in Odisha, particularly in underserved regions. His administration has launched initiatives to improve primary healthcare facilities, reduce maternal and child mortality rates, and provide access to affordable medical treatment.

Economic Growth and Employment Generation

Majhi's government has focused on attracting investments and promoting industries that can generate employment for the state's youth. Efforts to develop MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises), encourage entrepreneurship, and boost tourism have contributed to Odisha's economic growth.

Agricultural Reforms and Farmer Welfare

As agriculture remains a cornerstone of Odisha's economy, Majhi has implemented policies to support farmers through loan waivers, crop insurance, and improved irrigation systems. His government has promoted sustainable farming practices and ensured fair prices for agricultural produce.

Women Empowerment

Majhi has been a strong advocate for women's empowerment, launching welfare schemes aimed at improving women's education, healthcare, and financial independence. His government has promoted self-help groups (SHGs) and initiatives that empower women to become active participants in the economy.

Vision for Odisha's Future

Mohan Charan Majhi's vision for Odisha is rooted in sustainable development, inclusive growth, and

equitable access to opportunities. He envisions a future where Odisha emerges as a model state in terms of economic progress, social justice, and environmental sustainability. His roadmap for the state's development focuses on the following key areas:

Harnessing Odisha's Natural Resources

Majhi's government aims to leverage Odisha's rich natural resources, including minerals, forests, and water bodies, to drive economic growth while ensuring environmental conservation and the welfare of local communities.

Digital Transformation

Majhi has emphasized the importance of digital infrastructure in modernizing governance and improving service delivery. His administration has initiated e-governance projects to enhance transparency, efficiency, and citizen engagement.

Sustainable Development

Recognizing the need for climate resilience and sustainable development, Majhi's policies focus on promoting renewable energy, conserving forests, and mitigating the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities.

Youth and Skill Development

Majhi believes in empowering Odisha's youth through skill development programs, quality education, and employment opportunities. His vision includes creating a skilled workforce that can compete on a national and global scale.

Promoting Tourism and Culture

Odisha, with its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, has immense potential for tourism. Majhi's government has prioritized developing infrastructure to promote tourism, preserve cultural heritage, and create livelihoods for local communities.

Leadership Style and Public Image

Mohan Charan Majhi's leadership style is marked by simplicity, accessibility, and a strong connect with the people. He is known for his hands-on approach, frequently visiting remote regions to engage with citizens directly and assess the implementation of government programs. His ability to listen to people's concerns and take swift action has earned him a reputation as a compassionate and effective leader. Majhi's humility, rooted in his modest upbringing, resonates with the masses, particularly in rural and tribal areas. He has successfully positioned himself as a leader who represents the aspirations of Odisha's common people while steering the state towards growth and progress.

CELEBRATING INDIA'S 76th REPUBLIC DAY



THE FEDERATION OF INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS-NY-NJ-CT-NE

DANCE PE CHANCE 2025



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SCAN FOR TICKET BOOKING



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20,600+ PARTICIPATIONS IN 41 YEARS

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CERTIFICATE TO ALL PARTICIPANTS



POPULAR VOTES PRIZES



STATE OF THE ART AUDITORIUM



FREE PARKING

SCAN FOR REGISTRATION



Dance Participant Age Category



Minor 11 & under

Junior 15 & under

Senior 20 & under

Adult 21 & above

Bhubaneswar: The Temple City and venue of 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

Bhubaneswar, famously known as the Temple City of India, is a harmonious blend of ancient heritage and modern urbanization. Located in Odisha, Bhubaneswar's unique identity stems from its status as a repository of Indian temple architecture, cultural traditions, and its rapid transformation into a smart city. As the chosen venue for the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) in January 2025, the city will once again be in the global spotlight, showcasing its historical, cultural, and economic vibrancy. This article explores Bhubaneswar's rich legacy, its evolution into a modern city, and its significance as the host of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, a global event that celebrates the Indian diaspora's contributions.

The Temple City's Heritage

Bhubaneswar derives its name from "Tribhubaneswar," meaning "Lord of the Three Worlds," referring to Lord Shiva. The city is home to over 700 temples, many of which date back to the 7th and 13th centuries, exemplifying the Kalinga architectural style. Lingaraj Temple: A masterpiece of Kalinga architecture, the Lingaraj Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is a prominent pilgrimage site.

The city's temples are not just religious centers but also repositories of art, culture, and history. They attract historians, architects, and tourists from across the globe.

Cultural Significance

Bhubaneswar is more than just its temples. It is a cultural hub where traditional art forms like Odissi dance, Pattachitra painting, and stone carving thrive. The city also serves as a gateway to Odisha's vibrant festivals such as Rath Yatra, Durga Puja, and Ekamra Utsav, which celebrate the region's spiritual and artistic traditions.

Bhubaneswar: The Cultural and Architectural Marvel of India

Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha, is a treasure trove of culture, architecture, and heritage. Known as the "City of Temples," it boasts a history that spans over 3,000 years. From its ancient temples to modern urban planning, Bhubaneswar is a city that seamlessly blends its glorious past with a progressive present.

Historical Significance of Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar derives its name from the Sanskrit words "Bhubaneswar", meaning "Lord of the Universe." It is believed to have been the seat of the powerful Kalinga kingdom, which played a crucial role in shaping the history of ancient India.

The city's historical roots can be traced to the 2nd century BCE, as



evidenced by the archaeological remains at Sisupalgarh, one of the oldest known fortified urban centers in India. The turning point in Bhubaneswar's history was the Kalinga War (261 BCE), fought near the city's vicinity. This transformative event led to Emperor Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism and the spread of Buddhist teachings across Asia.

Bhubaneswar's historical narrative is deeply intertwined with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, making it a confluence of diverse religious traditions.

Cultural Vibrance

Bhubaneswar is not just a city but a living museum of Odisha's vibrant culture. The city is renowned for its festivals, dance forms, music, and crafts, which reflect the ethos and spirit of Odisha. The festivals of Bhubaneswar are a testament to its cultural richness.

The city comes alive during Rath Yatra, a grand chariot festival dedicated to Lord Jagannath. Though the primary celebrations occur in Puri, Bhubaneswar's temples also partake in the festivities. Durga Puja, Makar Sankranti, and Diwali are celebrated with great enthusiasm, showcasing the city's communal harmony. The Ekamra Utsav, a cultural festival named after Bhubaneswar's ancient name, Ekamra Kshetra, highlights the city's artistic heritage. It features traditional music, dance performances, and exhibitions of local crafts, drawing visitors from across the globe.

Dance and Music

Odissi, one of India's classical dance



forms, originated in Odisha and finds its soul in Bhubaneswar. The city is home to iconic institutions like the Odissi Research Centre, where the dance form is preserved and propagated. The fluid movements, intricate gestures, and emotive expressions of Odissi are a visual delight, embodying the spiritual essence of the city.

Music in Bhubaneswar ranges from classical Odissi music to contemporary forms. The city's musicians have preserved traditional instruments like the mardala and the gini, which add a unique rhythm to its musical heritage.

Handicrafts and Textiles

Bhubaneswar is a hub for Odisha's famous handicrafts and textiles. The city markets, such as Ekamra Haat, showcase exquisite handwoven Sambalpuri sarees,

Pipli appliqué work, and silver filigree jewelry. The intricate patterns and vibrant colors reflect the artisans' skill and creativity, keeping traditional crafts alive in the modern era.

Architectural Marvels

Bhubaneswar is often referred to as a "living museum of architectural excellence." The city's temples, built over centuries, are exemplary of the Kalinga architectural style, characterized by ornate carvings, towering spires, and intricate sculptures.

The Temples of Bhubaneswar

Lingaraj Temple

The crown jewel of Bhubaneswar's temple architecture, the Lingaraj Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Built in the 11th century, it is a masterpiece of

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Kalinga architecture, with a towering 180-foot spire and exquisite carvings. The temple complex also houses smaller shrines, each narrating a story of devotion and craftsmanship.

Mukteshwar Temple

Known as the "Gem of Odisha," the Mukteshwar Temple is a 10th-century marvel. Its intricately carved torana (arched gateway) and latticed windows are among the finest examples of temple art in India. The temple's sculptures depict scenes from the Panchatantra, showcasing the interplay of religion and folklore.

Rajarani Temple

Unlike most temples in Bhubaneswar, the Rajarani Temple is not dedicated to any deity. Its name is derived from the red and yellow sandstone used in its construction. The temple is adorned with elaborate carvings of celestial nymphs, dancers, and musicians, reflecting the artistry of the bygone era.

Ananta Vasudeva Temple

Dedicated to Lord Krishna, this temple stands out for its Vaishnavite influence in a city predominantly associated with Shaivism. The temple's sculptures and carvings depict scenes from the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana.

Parasurameswara Temple

One of the oldest temples in Bhubaneswar, it dates back to the 7th century. The temple's intricate carvings and compact structure mark the early stages of Kalinga architecture.

Jain and Buddhist Heritage

Bhubaneswar's architectural heritage is not limited to Hindu temples. The city and its surroundings are home to significant Jain and Buddhist sites.

Khandagiri and Udayagiri Caves

These twin hills house ancient Jain rock-cut caves, dating back to the 2nd century BCE. The caves, such as the Hathigumpha and Rani Gumpha, are adorned with inscriptions and carvings that narrate tales of royal patronage and asceticism.

Dhuli Shanti Stupa

Located a short drive from Bhubaneswar, the Dhuli hill is believed to be the site of the Kalinga War. The Shanti Stupa (Peace Pagoda), built by the Japanese Buddhist community, stands as a symbol of peace and Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism.

Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, and Udayagiri

These Buddhist sites, collectively known as the Diamond Triangle, are located near Bhubaneswar. They feature ancient stupas, monasteries, and sculptures, offering a glimpse into Odisha's Buddhist past.

Heritage Conservation

Efforts to preserve Bhubaneswar's heritage have gained momentum in recent years. The Ekamra Kshetra Heritage Project aims to restore and rejuvenate the old city area, showcasing its historical and cultural landmarks.



Initiatives like guided heritage walks and digital documentation of monuments are helping to connect the younger generation with the city's legacy.

Modern Bhubaneswar

A Smart City

While steeped in history, Bhubaneswar is also a city of the future. Recognized as one of India's first Smart Cities, it has embraced technology and sustainable urban development. The city's well-planned infrastructure, green spaces, and efficient public transport make it a model for urban living. The Info Valley IT Park and Start-Up Odisha Initiative have positioned Bhubaneswar as an emerging hub for technology and innovation. Its educational institutions, such as the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar and KIIT University, attract students from across the country, fostering a dynamic academic environment.

Culinary Delights

No exploration of Bhubaneswar is complete without savoring its delectable cuisine. The city's food culture is a reflection of its rich heritage and diversity. Pakhala Bhata: A staple dish of fermented rice served with fried fish, vegetables, and curd, pakhala is a must-try.

Chhena Poda

Known as Odisha's cheesecake, this dessert made of caramelized cheese is a local favorite. Dalma: A wholesome dish made of lentils and vegetables, seasoned with aromatic spices.

Street Food

From dahi vada-aloo dum to ghugni chaat, the city's street food scene is vibrant and flavorful. Bhubaneswar's Role in Tourism Bhubaneswar serves as the gateway to Odisha's rich cultural and natural attractions. The city's proximity to Puri (home to the Jagannath Temple and beaches) and Konark (famous for the Sun Temple) makes it a crucial stop on the Golden Triangle of Odisha tourism.



The Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, and the Similipal National Park are other nearby attractions that draw nature enthusiasts.

Bhubaneswar is a city where the ancient and the modern coexist harmoniously. Its rich culture, stunning architecture, and historical significance

make it a living testament to India's diverse heritage. As it strides into the future as a Smart City, Bhubaneswar continues to honor its past, offering visitors an unforgettable journey through time. Whether you are a history buff, a culture enthusiast, or a seeker of spiritual solace, Bhubaneswar promises an experience like no other.



Odisha: A journey through history, culture, tradition and architecture

Odisha's history, culture, tradition, and architecture are intertwined in a rich tapestry that reflects its ancient glory and resilience. From the grandeur of the Kalinga Empire to the magnificence of the Jagannath Temple and the artistic finesse of Odissi dance, the state stands as a testament to India's diverse heritage. Odisha's political history, marked by conquests, colonial rule, and modern progress, adds depth to its narrative. As a land of spirituality, art, and history, Odisha continues to inspire and captivate people from all over the world, earning its rightful place as the cultural soul of India.

Odisha, located on the eastern coast of India, is a land of timeless heritage, magnificent architecture, rich cultural traditions, and a fascinating political history. Known as the "soul of India," Odisha has been a cradle of civilization, art, and spirituality. With its ancient temples, vibrant festivals, and storied past, the state beckons travelers, historians, and cultural enthusiasts alike. This article explores Odisha's glorious history, cultural riches, architectural marvels, and political evolution over the centuries.

Ancient History of Odisha

Early Human Settlements

The history of Odisha dates back to prehistoric times, with evidence of human settlements as early as the Stone Age. Excavations at sites like Kuliana and Mayurbhanj indicate that the region was inhabited by early human societies practicing rudimentary agriculture and crafting tools.

Kalinga: The Ancient Name of Odisha

In ancient history, Odisha was known as Kalinga. It gained prominence as a powerful kingdom that played a significant role in Indian politics, trade, and culture.

The Kalinga region stretched across modern Odisha and parts of Andhra Pradesh. The first recorded mention of Kalinga appears in Mahabharata and



Jain texts.

The Kalinga War (261 BCE)

One of the most defining moments in Odisha's history was the Kalinga War fought between the Mauryan emperor Ashoka and the Kalinga kingdom in 261 BCE. The war was brutal, with massive casualties. However, its aftermath marked a turning point in Indian history. The devastation of the war led Ashoka to embrace Buddhism, promoting peace, compassion, and non-violence. The war's

significance is captured in Ashoka's inscriptions at Dhauili and Jaugada.

Maritime Trade and Cultural Exchange

During ancient times, Odisha's coastline facilitated extensive maritime trade with Southeast Asian countries like Java, Sumatra, Bali, and Sri Lanka. Traders and sailors from Kalinga established cultural and commercial ties, leading to the spread of Indian art, architecture, and religion, especially Buddhism and Hinduism.

Rich Cultural Heritage

Odisha's culture is a harmonious blend of tradition, spirituality, art, and festivals, which have been preserved for thousands of years.

Performing Arts

Odissi Dance

Odisha is the birthplace of Odissi, one of the eight classical dance forms of India. With its roots in ancient temple rituals, Odissi is characterized by graceful movements, expressive gestures, and intricate footwork. Dancers use mudras (hand gestures) to convey stories from Hindu mythology.

Folk Dances

Odisha boasts a variety of folk dances like Chhau, Sambalpuri, and Ghumura, each reflecting local traditions and cultural vibrancy. The Chhau dance, particularly from Mayurbhanj, combines martial arts and folk elements.

Music

Odisha has a rich musical tradition rooted in Odissi Sangeet, which is a form of classical music. The music, often accompanied by instruments like the veena, mardala, and bansuri, complements Odissi dance performances and devotional songs.

Festivals

Odisha's festivals are colorful and deeply rooted in spirituality:

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Rath Yatra

The annual chariot festival at the Jagannath Temple in Puri is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world.

Durga Puja

Celebrated with grandeur across the state, Durga Puja marks the victory of good over evil.

Bali Yatra

This festival commemorates Odisha's ancient maritime connections and is celebrated on the banks of the Mahanadi River.

Makar Sankranti and Nuakhai

These harvest festivals celebrate agrarian traditions and community bonding.

Handicrafts and Textiles

Odisha's artisans are renowned for their craftsmanship:

Pattachitra

Traditional scroll paintings depicting mythological themes and intricate designs.

Applique Work

Pipili appliqué craft, often seen during temple festivals, involves colorful fabric cutouts stitched onto cloth.

Ikat Weaving

Odisha's handwoven Ikat sarees from Sambalpur and Sonapur are globally acclaimed.

Stone Carving

The art of stone carving, seen in Odisha's temples, continues to thrive.

Architectural Marvels

Odisha is home to some of India's most impressive architectural treasures. The state's architecture reflects its religious and cultural history, particularly influenced by Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist traditions.

Temples of Odisha

The temples of Odisha are a testament to the state's rich architectural heritage. Built primarily during the Kalinga period, these temples follow the Kalinga style of architecture, characterized by curvilinear spires, intricate carvings, and spacious courtyards.

Lingaraj Temple (Bhubaneswar)

Built in the 11th century, this temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and represents the zenith of Kalinga architecture. The sanctum, tower, and carvings display exceptional craftsmanship.

Jagannath Temple (Puri)

One of the Char Dhams of Hindu pilgrimage, the Jagannath Temple is dedicated to Lord Jagannath (a form of Vishnu). Its massive structure and annual Rath Yatra attract millions of devotees.

Konark Sun Temple

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Konark Sun Temple is shaped like a colossal chariot with intricately carved stone wheels, pillars, and sculptures.



Built in the 13th century by King Narasimhadeva I, it remains a masterpiece of Kalinga architecture.

Mukteshwar Temple

Known as the "Gem of Odisha Architecture," this 10th-century temple is renowned for its exquisite carvings and arched gateway.

Buddhist Monasteries and Stupas

Odisha has a rich Buddhist heritage reflected in its ancient stupas and monasteries:

Ratnagiri, Udayagiri, and Lalitgiri

Known as the Diamond Triangle of Odisha, these sites contain remains of stupas, monasteries, and sculptures from the Buddhist era (7th-12th centuries CE).

Dhuli

The site where Ashoka embraced Buddhism after the Kalinga War, Dhuli houses the Shanti Stupa (Peace Pagoda).

Forts and Palaces**Barabati Fort**

Located in Cuttack, this 14th-century fort was a prominent military stronghold during the medieval period.

Chilika Lake and Kalijai Temple

Though not an architectural site, the Kalijai Temple on Chilika Lake is a significant cultural landmark.

Political History of Odisha

Odisha's political history is marked by the rise and fall of powerful dynasties, colonial domination, and post-independence development.

Ancient Dynasties**Mauryas and Ashoka**

The Mauryan conquest of Kalinga marked a significant chapter in Odisha's history.

Mahameghavahana Dynasty

Under King Kharavela (1st century BCE), Odisha witnessed a resurgence of Jainism and territorial expansion. Kharavela's Hathigumpha inscription at Udayagiri provides insights into his reign.

Medieval Period**Somavamshi Dynasty**

Between the 9th and 12th centuries, the Somavamshis established their rule in Odisha, contributing to temple construction.

Ganga Dynasty

The Ganga rulers, particularly King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva, ushered in a golden era of Odisha's art and architecture. The Jagannath Temple was built during this period.

Eastern Ganga Dynasty

The Ganga rulers continued their legacy, with the construction of the Konark Sun Temple marking the pinnacle of their achievements.

Surya Vamsi Gajapati Dynasty

In the 15th century, the Gajapati kings ruled Odisha with great prowess, expanding their influence to neighboring regions.

Colonial Rule

In the 16th century, Odisha came under Mughal rule and later the Marathas in the 18th century. In 1803, the British East India Company annexed Odisha, marking the beginning of colonial exploitation. The region became part of the Bengal Presidency until it gained separate identity as Odisha Province in 1936.

Modern Odisha

Post-independence, Odisha became a state of the Indian Union on April 1, 1936, celebrated as Utkal Divas. Since then, Odisha has made significant strides in socio-economic development

while preserving its cultural heritage.

BJP term in Odisha

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) assumed power in Odisha on June 12, 2024, marking a significant shift after five consecutive terms under the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

Since 1946, Odisha has had 14 chief ministers. Serving from 2000 till 2024, Naveen Patnaik of the Biju Janata Dal was the longest-serving chief minister in Odisha's history. The current Chief Minister of Odisha since 12 June 2024 is Mohan Charan Majhi of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

In collaboration with the state government, the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention is scheduled to take place in Bhubaneswar from January 8 to 10, 2025. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate the event, which will focus on the theme "Diaspora's contribution to a Viksit Bharat." The convention aims to engage the Indian diaspora in India's development journey.

The BJP government in Odisha has been proactive in implementing policies to enhance the state's growth trajectory. Prime Minister Modi has acknowledged these efforts, emphasizing the government's commitment to development.

Additionally, the new administration has initiated investigations into alleged corruption during the previous BJD regime. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has pledged to probe all corruption cases from the BJD's tenure, aiming to ensure transparency and accountability in governance.

The BJP's rise to power in Odisha signifies a transformative period, with the government focusing on development, anti-corruption measures, and strengthening ties with the Indian diaspora through events like the upcoming PBD Convention.

Slim down your face with hair contouring

Think of perfect hairstyles and the likes of Jennifer Aniston and Sarah Jessica Parker come to mind. Their hairstyles are among the most duplicated looks across the globe, but not many know that these stylish ladies have been sporting hair contouring, much before it became such a hot beauty trend.

What is it about?

A senior hair professional says, "Hair contouring a process of high-lighting and low-lighting certain parts of your mane to either enhance or subdue certain features. Similar to how face and body contouring works, one may use colour techniques to create the hair contouring effect." Highlighting and shading certain parts of the hair can create an illusion of a different face shape, depending on what you want to accentuate.

Another hair professional explains, "Like with any art form, light shades are for highlighting and darker shades are for creating a shadow effect, similarly to adopt this technique in hair contouring with colours, one might follow these simple guidelines."

Be Aware

Using healthier, natural hair-safe products are essential to avoid side effects. It is also advisable that every individual reads the ingredients list to be sure of the products being used on themselves.

Your hair colour and cut can define your face

The way you cut and color your hair can really change your personality. The right colour and cut can make you look not just younger but also slimmer than you are. Here are a few helpful tips...

- A very short haircut will make you face appear wider.
- A mid-length, layered haircut can make it look slimmer.



- A side fringe can make your face appear thinner, even if you have a short haircut or bob.
- Long hair that covers your cheekbones looks stylish and gives your face a lean look.
- Light coloured hair falling on your cheeks can make your face look wide..
- Get low lights or darker shades in the front hair that covers your cheeks and keep highlights or lighter colours for the crown.
- Colouring can enhance your face colour too, and can really add a lot of character to your face.

How does it work

Hair contouring is about applying highlights and lowlights in certain parts of your hair, to create an illusion of a different face shape.

This technique of colouring the hair can give your cheekbones a visual depth.

Hair contouring suits everyone because it is customised to your face shape and your hair colour tone.

FOOD CORNER

Mozzarella Sticks

INGREDIENTS

- 300 gm mozzarella
- 1/2 cup chickpeas flour
- 1 cup sunflower oil
- 1/2 cup all purpose flour
- 1/2 cup crushed breadcrumbs

Method

- Cut the cheese into 1/2-1 inch sticks and keep aside.
- Mix the maida and besan flour in a bowl. Add enough water and mix to a thick batter.
- Spread the breadcrumbs on a plate. Dip the cheese sticks in the batter and roll them in the breadcrumbs.
- Place them on a parchment paper and keep it in the fridge for 2 to 3 hours or overnight.
- This is to ensure the cheese does not melt while frying and it has a crispy coating.
- Heat oil in a deep frying pan. Fry the mozzarella sticks until light golden brown.
- Remove and drain excess oil. Serve with a dipping sauce of choice.



This is how karela juice can accelerate weight loss

Bitter melon, also known as karela, is known to be one of the most bitter vegetables available in the market but it's also known for all its health benefits as well.

Karela is a source of numerous vitamins and minerals like folate, zinc, iron and magnesium and vitamin B1, B2, B3 and vitamin C and other such things.

It's also rich in calcium and potassium and proteins.

This is the main reason why people have been consuming this bitter karela juice.

A glass of fresh karela juice once a day, is known to be very beneficial for our health.

It's packed with nutrients and is worth the trouble that we end up going through but how does karela juice help with weight loss?

Does it really have an impact on your body and weight? Knowing the answer to these questions may help you decide if you want to make karela a part of your weight loss regime or not.

Karela is known to regulate insulin and helps in maintaining blood sugar levels. It activates your insulin and prevents sugar from turning into fat which means that your body will create less fat leading to fat loss in your body.

Karela has very few calories and fat and



carbohydrates. This reduces your fat, calories and carbs intake and you don't have to worry about gaining extra weight. 100 grams of karela only has about 34 calories.

Bitter melon has a lot of fibers which are good for your body. A high fiber diet also helps you in feeling full for a longer time which in turn reduces cravings and prevents you from binge eating or overeating. It also has high water content which makes it a very healthy vegetable to include in your diet.

Karela is known to prevent the formation and growth of fat cells which helps reduce the fat in your body and helps you lose weight and stay in shape.

Egg Fried Rice

Ingredients

Basmati Rice - 2 cups, Eggs - 10, Onions - 2, Spring Onions - 1 bunch, Beans - 10, Carrot - 2, Capsicum - 2, Cabbage - 100 gms, Pepper Powder - 1/2 tbslp, Green Chillies - 2, Tomato Puree - 2 to 3 tbslp (or as required), Ajinomoto - 3 tsp (optional), Soy Sauce - 4 tbslp, Salt as per taste, Oil - 3 tbslp, Coriander Leaves - few, chopped

Method

- Pressure cook the rice until 1 whistle and remove.
- Chop all the vegetables finely and keep aside.
- Grind together the green chillies and mix well 2 tbslp water.
- Heat oil in a pan.
- Saute the onions for a minute.
- Add the chopped vegetables one by one and cook for a minute or two.
- Add the green chilli paste and tomato puree. Add salt and ajinomoto.
- Mix well and add soy sauce.
- Break the eggs into the pan and stir-fry for 3 to 4 minutes.
- Add the cooked rice and mix until all ingredients are combined.
- Garnish with coriander leaves. Serve.

Snack smart: Healthy bites to fuel weight loss

Love to snack but worried about staying on track with your weight-loss journey? Healthy snacking is all about choosing nutrient-dense options that are rich in vitamins, minerals, fibre, and healthy fats while being low in added sugars and unhealthy fats.

Crisps or rice flakes (Poha)

A light, versatile snack that can be spiced up with vegetables and seasoning for added nutrients.

Roasted nuts and seeds

A mix of nuts and roasted seeds offers a healthy dose of protein, fibre, and essential fats. Pair them with fresh fruits for a wholesome snack.

Makhana or roasted chana salad

Easily available in the market, this is a rich source of protein and fibre. "Mix it with vegetables and lemon. It will keep you full as it contains a lot of fibre that will help control hunger," said Veena.

Greek yoghurt with berries

Greek yogurt with berries and vegetables offer a powerful punch that is rich in proteins and fibre along with antioxidants. It will help us keep our tummy full and control our hunger levels. The combination is also rich in probiotics which can help maintain our gut health.

Apple slices with peanut butter

Apple offers fibre while peanut or almond butter contains healthy fats and protein. This makes for a delicious option that helps control our cravings.

Boiled eggs

A source of high protein, it contains a whole lot of nutrients and is surprisingly low in calories. It helps reduce appetite.

Chia pudding



High in fiber and omega-3 fatty acids, chia seeds expand in the stomach to keep you hydrated and satisfied.

Sweet potato

Sweet potatoes are rich in complex carbs that deliver sustained energy for a longer duration. This helps prevent our energy levels from dipping, making them the perfect snack to consume before an active workout session.

Bananas

Rich in carbohydrates and potassium, bananas are great for energy and muscle health, reducing cramps and supporting nerve function.

Oats

Containing soluble fiber like beta-glucan, oats ensure steady energy release and keep you full for longer.



Health of blood vessels can reveal health of brain: Study

Brain imaging of 70-year-olds has shown that factors risking the health of blood vessels, such as inflammation and high glucose levels, are related to an older-looking brain, whereas healthy lifestyles to a younger one.

As population around the world ages, dementia cases are projected to rise.

However, researchers from Karolinska Institutet, Sweden, said that the speed at which one's brain ages is affected by various risk and health factors.

"Despite the recent introduction of new Alzheimer's drugs, they will not work for everyone with dementia. So, we want to study what can boost the brain's resilience against pathological ageing processes," Anna Marseglia, a researcher at Karolinska Institutet and lead author of the study published in the *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*, said.

The researchers took 739 MRI scans of cognitively healthy individuals, 389 of whom were women, and estimated the brain age, using their own AI-based algorithm. Blood samples were taken for measuring lipids, glucose, and inflammation. Cognitive test scores, along with lifestyle, were also analysed.

On average, the brain age for both sexes was found to be 71 years by the AI-based tool.

The researchers also looked at the "brain age gap" by subtracting the participants' estimated biological brain age from their chronological age.

The team found that diabetes, stroke, cerebral small vessel disease, and inflammation were linked to brains with an older appearance, whereas a healthy lifestyle involving regular exercise could be linked to brains of a younger appearance. "A take-home from the study is that factors that adversely affect the blood vessels can also be related to older-looking brains, which shows how important it is to keep your blood vessels healthy, to protect your brain, by making sure, for instance, that your blood glucose level is kept stable," Marseglia said. *Source: PTI*

Artificial hearts found to regenerate muscle tissue in heart failure patients

A new study co-led by a physician-scientist at the University of Arizona's Sarver Heart Center has unveiled that a subset of patients with artificial hearts can regenerate heart muscle tissue.

This discovery, published in the journal *Circulation*, could pave the way for innovative treatments and potentially a cure for heart failure, a condition affecting nearly 7 million adults in the U.S. and responsible for 14% of annual deaths.

Heart failure currently has no cure, with treatment options primarily limited to medications that slow its progression or advanced interventions like heart transplants and left ventricular assist devices (LVADs), which help pump blood.

Dr. Hesham Sadek, director of the Sarver Heart Center, noted that while skeletal muscles can



regenerate after injury, heart muscle has long been thought incapable of such recovery.

The research team, funded by a grant from the Leducq Foundation Transatlantic Networks of Excellence Program, examined tissue samples from artificial heart patients provided by colleagues at the University of Utah Health.

They collaborated with international experts who utilized innovative carbon dating techniques to identify newly

generated heart cells.

Remarkably, the findings revealed that patients with artificial hearts regenerated muscle cells at over six times the rate of healthy hearts. "This is the strongest evidence we have so far that human heart muscle cells can actually regenerate," said Sadek.

He emphasised that this study supports the hypothesis that the inability of heart muscle to "rest" contributes to its loss of regenerative capacity shortly after birth.

The study suggests that artificial hearts may provide a form of "bed rest" for cardiac muscles, allowing them to heal similarly to how skeletal muscles recover after injury. Dr. Sadek aims to investigate why only about 25% of artificial heart patients exhibit this regenerative response and how to enhance this ability across all patients.

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ISRO to study how crops grow in space on PSLV-C60 mission

Demonstration of seed germination in outer space, a robotic arm to catch a tethered debris there, and testing of green propulsion systems are some of the experiments planned on the POEM-4 -- the fourth stage of ISRO's PSLV rocket that remains in orbit after launching a satellite. The PSLV-C60 mission, slated for a yearend launch, is scheduled to place the twin satellites 'Chaser and Target' to demonstrate the space docking technologies that are crucial for building India's space station.

The PSLV Orbital Experiment Module (POEM) will carry 24 experiments -- 14 from various ISRO labs and 10 from private universities and start-ups -- to demonstrate various technologies in space.

ISRO plans to grow eight cowpea seeds from seed germination and plant sustenance until the two-leaf stage in a closed-box environment with active thermal control as part of the Compact Research Module for Orbital Plant Studies (CROPS) developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre.

The Amity Plant Experimental Module in Space (APEMS), developed by Amity University, Mumbai, plans to study the growth of spinach in a microgravity environment.

Two parallel experiments will be carried out simultaneously -- one on POEM-4 in space and one on the ground at the university. The experiment's outcome will provide insights into how higher plants sense the direction of gravity and light. The Debris Capture Robotic Manipulator, developed by VSSC, will demonstrate the capturing of tethered debris by a robotic manipulator using visual servoing and object motion prediction in the space environment.

AI models now create text-to-video clips, promise a new future

Imagine a vivid dream filled with mythical characters, and vast landscapes, and you as the protagonist in futuristic armour. Now, imagine describing that dream and watching it transform into a high-definition video. Sounds impossible? Not anymore.

Enter Veo2, Google DeepMind's latest text-to-video platform, which creates realistic 4K videos from simple text prompts. Its capabilities have stunned the internet with mesmerising demo videos, leaving many in awe -- and some video creators worried about their jobs.

But Veo2 isn't alone. OpenAI's Sora is another challenger in the fray, bringing its approach to this exciting new age of AI-generated video creation. So, how do these platforms compare? Which one is better? And what does this mean for the future of video creation?

Veo 2 vs Sora

Sora, launched in early December this year, is available to ChatGPT Plus users globally. While the OpenAI video maker has gained a headstart with general users being able to use the platform, Google's Veo2 is still in its beta testing.

Seemingly, Google's Veo2 has an advantage over Sora thanks to multiple reasons:

4K video resolution: Veo2 offers users video resolution up to 4K which means better quality videos. In contrast, Sora offers a maximum resolution of 1080p which isn't bad but still 4K is 4K.

Video duration: Veo2 renders videos up to 2 minutes in length. Compared to this, Sora creates shorter videos of up to 20 seconds.

■ **Cinematic control:** Veo2 offers virtual camera control with options for adding cinematic movements like pan, tilts, etc. Its accuracy has stunned many users online. You can



even play around with the lighting for a particular scene. This helps enhance storytelling. Sora focuses more on style presets and storyboarding. It's similar to editing photos on your phone. You can choose between each adjustment manually or use the presets that phones offer.

This video demonstrates the cinematic difference between the two. This tracking shot along a busy city street captured on Veo2 illustrates better results in terms of the camera angles and lighting as compared to Sora.

Or like how in this post, you can see the slow zoom-in shot or how the camera rotates around a stack of TV. Despite the prompt telling the camera to rotate, the output in Sora has rendered a static camera shot. This stifles a creator's vision in many ways.

■ **Realism:** Some Veo2 renders online

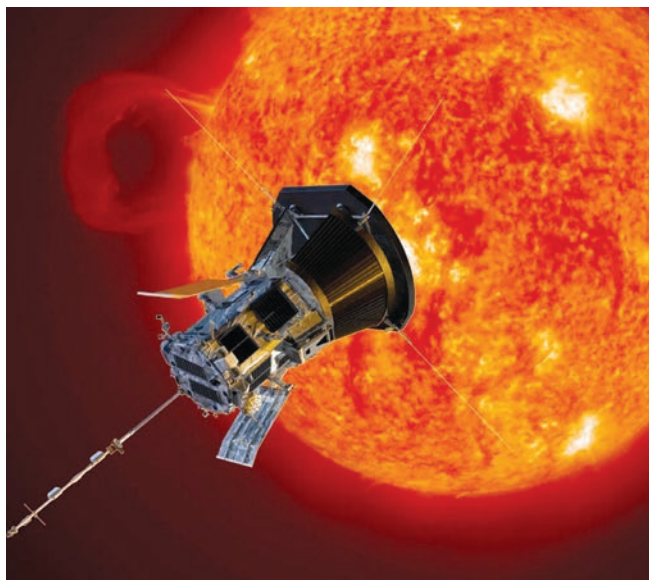
show its true ability to output photorealistic videos. This is also true in the case of physics-based motion accuracy which makes animations look more natural. This is an area where Sora struggles.

The following video by X user Ruben Hassid shows the differences between the two video engines. There are several inconsistencies in the results Sora has generated whereas Veo2 has been able to render more lifelike results.

Ideally, Veo2 is a comprehensive choice for video creators, but sadly it's not available to general users. Google's DeepMind has made the tool available only to a select few users, with no clarity on when the final version will be rolled out.

Sora, on the other hand, is available for commercial use with a ChatGPT Plus subscription that costs around Rs 1676 in India.

NASA's Parker Solar probe to make historic closest approach to the Sun



A NASA spacecraft aims to fly closer to the sun than any object sent before. The Parker Solar Probe was launched in 2018 to get a close-up look at the sun. Since then, it has flown straight through the sun's corona: the outer atmosphere visible during a total solar eclipse.

The next milestone: closest approach to the sun. Plans call for Parker on Tuesday to hurtle through the sizzling solar atmosphere and pass within a record-breaking 3.8 million miles (6 million kilometers) of the sun's surface. At that moment, if the sun and Earth were at opposite ends of a football field, Parker "would be on the 4-yard line," said NASA's Joe Westlake.

Mission managers won't know how Parker fared until days after the flyby since the spacecraft will be out of communication range.

Parker planned to get more than seven times closer to the sun than previous spacecraft, hitting 430,000 mph

(690,000 kph) at closest approach. It's the fastest spacecraft ever built and is outfitted with a heat shield that can withstand scorching temperatures up to 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit (1,371 degrees Celsius).

It'll continue circling the sun at this distance until at least September. Scientists hope to better understand why the corona is hundreds of times hotter than the sun's surface and what drives the solar wind, the supersonic stream of charged particles constantly blasting away from the sun.

The sun's warming rays make life possible on Earth. But severe solar storms can temporarily scramble radio communications and disrupt power.

The sun is currently at the maximum phase of its 11-year cycle, triggering colorful auroras in unexpected places.

"It both is our closest, friendliest neighbor," Westlake said, "but also at times is a little angry."

Exporters seek Rs 750 cr to target US amid tariff threats

Exporters on Thursday, December 26, sought a fund of Rs 750 crore for three years to tap \$25 billion export potential in the US, aiming to seize potential opportunities that may arise as the US President-elect, Donald Trump, has threatened to impose high tariffs on Chinese goods.

In its pre-Budget meeting with the finance ministry, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Ashwani Kumar has also demanded extension of the five per cent Interest Equalisation Scheme (IES).

"A marketing scheme to focus on the US with a corpus of Rs 250 crore per year (Rs 750 crore overall) for three years may be launched to generate additional exports of \$25 billion," Kumar said.

He said that higher tariffs on China can create a significant opportunity for Indian exports, particularly in sectors where China has previously been a dominant supplier.

Based on a study undertaken by FIEO, India can replace China in sectors like electronics and electrical equipment (\$10 billion additional export potential), textiles and garments, toys, chemicals, auto components, footwear, furniture and home decor.

He added that India's marketing strategy for exporting products to the US should focus on several key areas, particularly on marketing and forming strategic partnership.

India's share in global trade doubled since 2005

India's contribution to global trade has seen significant growth over the last two decades, with its share in both exports and imports doubling during this period, according to a report by the National Stock Exchange (NSE). The report revealed that India's share in global merchandise exports rose from 0.9 per cent in 2005 to 1.8 per cent in 2023, while its share in services exports more than doubled from 2 per cent to 4.3 per cent.

Overall, India's export share grew from 1.2 per cent in 2005 to 2.4 per cent in 2023. This growth has been driven by factors such as robust trade agreements, a diversified export portfolio, improved logistics infrastructure, and government initiatives like the Make in India campaign and the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

It also said "India's performance in services exports better than goods: India ranks 16th globally in merchandise exports and the seventh in services exports.

Banks sue US Fed over stress tests, seek transparency

NEW YORK (TIP)

Major banks and business groups sued the Federal Reserve on Tuesday, alleging the U.S. central bank's annual "stress tests" of Wall Street firms violate the law.

The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Columbus, Ohio, claims the Fed's practice of determining how big banks perform against hypothetical economic turmoil, and assigning capital requirements accordingly, do not follow proper administrative procedure. Plaintiffs included the Bank Policy Institute, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Bank Association.

The lawsuit marks the latest example of the banking industry growing bolder and challenging in court their regulators' powers, particularly in the wake of recent Supreme Court rulings placing fresh restrictions on administrative authority.

In June, the Supreme Court dealt a major blow to such power by overturning a 1984 precedent that granted deference to government agencies in interpreting laws they administer. The so-called "Chevron doctrine" had called for judges to defer to reasonable federal agency interpretations of U.S. laws deemed to be ambiguous.

While the 2010 Dodd-Frank law passed following the global financial crisis broadly requires the Fed to test banks' balance sheets, the capital adequacy analysis the Fed performs as part of tests, or the resulting capital it directs lenders to set aside, are not mandated by law.

Specifically, the groups are calling for the Fed to make public and subject to feedback the now-confidential models they regulators use to gauge bank performance, as well as details of the annual scenarios they create to test for weaknesses. The groups said they did not want to kill the stress testing program, which provides an annual bill of health to the nation's biggest firms, but argue the process needs to be more transparent and responsive to public feedback.

On Monday, the Fed announced plans to pursue similar changes ahead of the 2025 exams, citing recent legal developments, but the industry opted to proceed with its lawsuit. A Fed spokesperson declined to comment on the



lawsuit on Tuesday.

"The opaque nature of these tests undermines their value for providing meaningful insights into bank resilience," Rob Nichols, president and CEO of the American Bankers Association, said in a statement.

"We remain hopeful the Fed will address long-standing issues with the stress tests, but this litigation preserves our ability to seek legal remedies if the Fed falls short."

These tests, which banks have complained for years are opaque and subjective, are a central piece of the U.S. regulatory bank-capital structure. The Fed has long resisted calls to completely open up the testing process, due to concerns that it could make it easier for banks to clear the exams.

How banks perform on the test informs how much capital they must set aside to meet their obligations and also dictate the scope of dividend payouts and stock buybacks. *Source: Reuters*

Oil prices steady as weekly rise expected amid China's economic recovery hopes

NEW YORK (TIP)

Oil prices were little changed on Friday, December 27, but were set for a weekly rise amid optimism economic stimulus efforts will prompt a recovery in China, the world's biggest oil importer.

Brent crude futures fell 1 cent to \$73.25 a barrel by 0145 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$69.60, down 2 cents, from Thursday's (Dec 26) close. However, on a weekly basis, Brent was up 0.4% while WTI rose 0.2%.

The World Bank on Thursday raised its forecast for China's economic growth in 2024 and 2025, but warned that subdued household and business confidence, along with headwinds in the property sector, would keep weighing it down next year.

China on Thursday, Dec 26, revised upwards the size of its economy by 2.7%, but said the change would have little impact on growth this year, as policymakers pledged more stimulus to spur expansion in 2025.

Chinese authorities have agreed to issue 3 trillion yuan (\$411 billion) worth of special treasury bonds next year, as Beijing ramps up fiscal stimulus to revive a faltering economy.

The latest weekly report on U.S. inventories, from the American Petroleum Institute industry group, showed crude stocks fell last week by 3.2 million barrels, market sources said on Tuesday.

Traders will be waiting to see if the official inventory report



from the Energy Information Administration confirms the decline. The EIA data is due at 1 p.m. EST (1800 GMT) on Friday, later than normal because of the Christmas holiday.

Analysts in a Reuters poll expect crude inventories fell by about 1.9 million barrels in the week to Dec. 20, while gasoline and distillate inventories are seen falling by 1.1 million barrels and 0.3 million barrels respectively.

Sikh History This Week

DECEMBER 27 TO JANUARY 2

27th December

1953 The Sikhs refused Jawahar Lal Nehru permission to speak from a religious shrine.

28th December

1711 Bhai Mani Singh's grandchildren accept shahadat in the war of Bilaspur, Himachal.



1844 A regency of ten Sardars was formed under Jawahar Singh as Wajir and Lal Singh as Commander-in-Chief of Sikh forces.

1849 Bhai Maharaj Singh was arrested from sugarcane fields of Pandori Nijjar and Jalbhe. This area is located between Adampur Doaba and Sham Chaurasi in Jalandhar district.

1929 All Parties Convention held at Calcutta where the Hindus refused to accept the rights of the Sikhs.

29th December



1705 Battle of Muktsar. The Battle of Khidrane Dee Dhab took place in 1705, following the siege of Anandpur. In 1704, Anandpur was under an extended siege by the allied forces of the Mughals and the hill chiefs. The forty deserters from Anandpur lived in the Majha region in Punjab. A woman, Bhag Kaur (also known as Mai Bhago) who also lived in the village, convinced the deserters to fight with her at Khidrane Dee Dhab, where they fought and died under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, who blessed them for their service and the place, later, was renamed as Muktsar, literally meaning The Pool of Liberation.

1923 Sadha Singh of Pandoori Nijjaran dies during the trail.

30th December

1734 Mata Sahib Kaur sent a Hukamnama for Bhai Mann Singh Ji.

1922 Second meeting of Babbars at Jassowal, Dec. 20-31, to decide the reformation of the Jholichuks.

31st December



1612 Guru Hargobind left Amritsar for Delhi where he was taken into and sent to Gwalior.

1925 Haji Mohamad Maskeen offered a "Chor" for Sri Darbar Sahib.

1929 Congress Convention at Amritsar ignored by the Sikhs.

1958 Gurudwara Amendment Bill passed.

1st January



1806 Maharaja Ranjit Singh, under the advise of Kapurthala's Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, signed a friendship treaty with the British. The signatories to this treaty were Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Fateh Singh, and Lord Lake. Under the treaty Maharaja Ranjit Singh accepted not to help Holkar and British agreed to respect territories of Lahore Darbar. Jaswant Rao Holkar left Amritsar disappointed.

1806 The Marathas and the Sikhs were the only people who offered stiff resistance to the British and the Afghans. While the Maharaja Ranjeet Singh was consolidating his powers, many political events were taking place around him. On the one hand he had to mediate a quarrel between the chiefs of Patiala and Nabha and on the other hand he had to save the face of Jawant Rao Holkar, the Maratha (Marhatta) chief, who had set his sights on whole India. The British had clashed with the Marathas and had inflicted heavy defeats upon them. They had first taken over Delhi and Agra, defeated Scindia (a Marhatta chief), and driven out the remaining Marhatta chief Jaswant Rao Holkar. Holkar and his Rohilla ally, Amir Khan, after having failed to obtain any support from the Malwa chiefs, moved to Amritsar. They were

being followed by the British commandar, Lord Lake. He had been persuing Holkar and encamped himself on the banks of Beas. While Holkar appealed to Maharaja Ranjeet Singh for help in driving the British back, the British commander made it known to the Maharaja that doing so would extend the Anglo-Marathan hostilities to his domain (Punjab). It created a big problem for the Maharaja. The Sikh Maharaja could not afford to make his state the theatre of war between the Marhattas and the British. That is why he offered to mediate in this treaty. The Sikh signatories guaranteed that the Holkar's army would leave and they will have nothing to do with them. They allowed Holkar to take whatever possessions he had and recross the Sutlej without being harrassed. This was a smart political move on the part of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. It saved his kingdom from unnecessary bloodshed. It also saved the British face. They really did not want to fight the Sikh ruler.

2nd January

1741 Sukha Singh of Mari Kambo and Mehtab Singh of Mirankot entered Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar. They were disguised as Muslims. While Sukha Singh kept guard, Mehtab Singh beheaded Massa Raangadh and escaped together. Massa Rangadh had committed the heinous crime of converting Harimandir Sahib into a dancing hall where he smoked and wined. He was the garrison commander of Madiyala. He took control of Sri Harmandir Sahib as the land was prior property of Rangadhs. Mehtab Singh was later arrested and crushed to death after unspeakable torture on wheels.

SRI DARBAR SAHIB also known as Harminder Sahib and Golden Temple was constructed by Guru Arjun in the middle of an sacred water tank (sarowar).

In sunmat 1621, with Guru Amar Das's permission, Guru Ram Das started the digging of a tank (Taal) near villages Tugh, Gumtala, and Sultanwind. This digging was completed by Guru Arjun Dev in sunmat 1645 and named "Santoksar".

Simultaneously, with Guru Amar Das's permission, a village was established nearby and named "Guru Ka Chaak". Guru Sahib's residence in this village were popularly known as "Guru Kae Mahal". To the west of these residences, next to the tree known as "DukhBhanjani Baeri", the digging of a tank was started in 1634. However, this digging remained incomplete and was eventually completed by Guru Arjun Dev after he ascended to the Gur Gadhi. Guru Arjun Dev vigorously pushed all of the projects initiated by Guru Ram Das. He invited business people, scholars, and skilled people from all over, to come and settle around this area and establish new markets. As a result this area came to known as "Ramdas Pur". Bhai Sallo is especially noted for his hard work in establishing and populating this area. His contributions are extremely noteworthy.

In sunmat 1643, the construction of permanent sarowar began and its name changed to "Amritsar". As a result the surrounding city also adopted the "Amritsar" name. On magh 1, sunmat 1645, Guru Arjun Dev Patshah asked Sain Mian Meer to lay the foundation stone of Harminder Sahib. The foundation stone was laid right in the middle of the sarowar and upon completion of its construction, Sri Guru Granth Sahib's prakash was established in sunmat 1661.

Dr. Tushar B. Patel: A Distinguished Persona in Public Service and Community Leadership

BY BIDISHA ROY



Dr. Tushar B. Patel retired from the United States Department of Justice in 2020 after 27 years of exemplary service

The values his parents emphasized on him were 'Simple life, serving others and devoting time to make a difference in society.' He exactly did so and carved a niche not only for himself but became a role model for many Indian Americans - Dr. Tushar B. Patel.

Dr. Patel retired from the United States Department of Justice in 2020 after 27 years of

exemplary service. In his role as the Chief of Health Care Quality and Risk Management at the Federal Bureau of Prisons headquarters in Washington, DC, Dr. Patel oversaw 122 Health Care Quality and Risk Management programs, including seven major Federal Medical Centers. His responsibilities extended to serving as the Program Manager for the Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders for the agency and as a long-standing member of the Department of Justice PAN Asia Board for more than a decade.

Born in Vadodara in 1963, Tushar's childhood was spent in Nadiad, a small town in mid Gujarat where he completed his education until 12th Grade. Community service and giving back to the community was part of his life due to his father Bhupendrabhai Patel who was a Master in Education and teacher by profession. His mother was a housewife who sacrificed her life in serving the large family and took care of his elder brother for more than five decades who was physically challenged.

Education was part of his family as both Grand Father and Father were a lifelong teacher, so education was very valuable in his upbringing. After medical graduation, he did Masters in Public Health.

Romantic fling happened in his life after medical college in Nadiad during his internship. After marrying Sangeeta, he moved to the US in 1989.



Family time

Dr Patel has a clear view about upbringing of children. "Very simple with giving them autonomy and trusting them to be a better independent decision maker and a genuine person. Education is very important but do not get crazy about IVY league

education but make them street smart than book smart and have them normal and humble human being and expect them to be a super genius. Also, it is very important to pass on our heritage to next generation, otherwise we will lose our values and culture."

Dr Patel strongly believes that all Indian Americans 'Need to learn and adopt from both countries and cultures. Both have some valuable traits and culture with unique traditions which can make them a better person.'

Besides, his Federal position, Dr. Patel provides leadership and oversight to various non-profit organizations in New Jersey. He serves as the President of Health Camp of NJ (HCNJ) since 2006, and provides his vision, expertise and dedicated services to lead a team of volunteers to conduct free Health Screening and Disease Prevention and Awareness Fairs in New Jersey.

Since 1999, the organization provided more than 12,500 free screenings for needy people in South Asian communities for various chronic diseases screening to individuals who are uninsured or underinsured. Dr. Patel provides his service to Indo-American Cultural Foundation of Central Jersey (IACFNJ) since 2005 and currently serving as the President. He also serving as the Chairperson of Global Organization of People of Indian origin (GOPIO) International Health Council since 2018. He is serving as the President of SGML Eye Hospital

USA, Inc. a non-profit to support an eye hospital in rural area near Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh. Dr. Patel is also involved in Sai Temple Board of Trustees and serve as the Vice-President of Sai Pariwar, Sai Temple in North Brunswick, New Jersey. Lastly, Dr. Patel is a Board Member of Ritesh Shah Charitable Pharmacy, a first charitable pharmacy in New Jersey.

Dr. Patel received numerous awards including the United States Department of Justice Community Service Award from the United States Attorney General in 2012, Community Leadership Award from Indian American Community and Indo-American Independent Pharmacy Owners in December 2013, Humanitarian Award from Rotary Club of Plainsboro in March 2014 and Community Service

Leadership Award from Rotary International District 71510 in March 2014. Dr. Patel received NJ State Governor's Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Services in Health Care Professional of the Year category in June 2015. Dr. Patel was the one of the



International Gujarati Film Festival in NJ . Tushar Patel is with prominent artists and community leaders

finalists in Volunteer of the Year Award category for NJ BIZ Health Care Heroes in June 2015 and Public Health Hero category in June 2016. Dr. Patel received NJBIZ Healthcare Heroes Award in Public Health Hero



Dr. Tushar Patel received DOJ Attorney General award from Assistant Attorney General

category. In November 2022, he received NJ State Senate Citation and Commendation for his community service in South Asian community for more than two decades.

As a community leader, Dr Patel has a valuable advice for people - "Some jealous and self-centered people in your life can change your thinking process and gives



With New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy at Governor's Diwali event in 2023

you challenges to make you a stronger person. Always avoid and stay away from selfish and negative people. I have learned so much in last 30 years from my community work and involvement. No matter what you do and how good you serve, the leaders always get criticism and negativity and you should never bother from negativity and move on with your work."

Finally, the most important thing in his life is 'Honesty, integrity, loyalty and good down to earth nature.'



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



ARIES : Ganesha says this week is a great time for you to focus on various aspects. With hard work and dedication, you will be able to achieve your goals.

In your personal life, spending time with your loved ones will keep your mind light and energetic. Talk and share your feelings, this will strengthen relationships. Focus on new projects at work. Collaboration will be important for you, so try to work together with your colleagues. Your hard work will be rewarded soon. Be cautious from a financial point of view. Avoid unnecessary expenses and focus on your savings. You can move towards a good financial position. In terms of health, take regular exercise and a balanced diet. Meditation and yoga can help you with mental health. There is a possibility of change and improvement this week. Adopt positive thinking and an active attitude, so that you can attract positivity in your life.



TAURUS : Ganesha says some important events may happen for you this week, which will affect your personal and professional life. Your colleagues and friends will prove to be helpful to you, so increase communication with them and share ideas. From an economic point of view, this is the time to be careful. Control expenses and avoid unnecessary purchases. This week is not favorable for investment, so take steps wisely. Family members will support you. A solution to a family problem can be found, which will keep the atmosphere at home pleasant. If you are in a relationship, then spending more time with your partner will prove beneficial for you. It is important to rest and maintain mental balance in terms of health. Yoga and meditation will give you peace. Think positive this week and keep moving towards your goals. Maintain patience and stability for good results.

GEMINI : Ganesha says this week is a time of increasing excitement in his personal and social life. Your communication skills and curiosity can lead you to new opportunities. Conversation with colleagues and friends at the workplace will give positive results. New ideas and plans may come to your mind, which you can implement effectively. Spending time with family will give you happiness, but keep in mind that sometimes it is also important to respect the feelings of others. In terms of health, you may need to add a little exercise and meditation to your routine. Taking a little break and taking time for yourself will give you mental peace. Finally, this week



can also inspire you to build new relationships. Try to strengthen your friendships. Remember, a lot can be achieved by communicating with an open mind.

CANCER : Ganesha says this week will bring some new opportunities for Cancerians. Harmony and love will increase in your relationships, which is great for your mental health. Spending time with family members will make you feel satisfied and happy. In the field of career, you will get the fruits of your hard work. If you are working on a productive meeting or project, you may get positive results. Expressing your ideas clearly will increase your influence on others. In this session, you can make new plans to increase your income. There is a need to be careful in matters of investment, so proceed only after thinking. In terms of health, it will be beneficial to adopt regular exercise and measures for mental peace. These will keep you fresh and energetic. Meditating in your moments of solitude will increase your inner strength. This week is a time of balance and dedication for you, which you can use to bring positive changes into your life.



LEO : Ganesha says a new wave of energy and enthusiasm is going to come this week for Leo natives. You will feel more confident in your actions and it is time for you to express your ideas clearly. Despite facing challenges in work life, your colleagues will appreciate your hard work. Your creativity will be at its peak this week, making it a great time to bring in a new project. Do not hesitate to nurture your passion; it will help increase your satisfaction. In personal life, you will get an opportunity to spend time with family. Planning a short trip with family or cooking something good together will strengthen your relationships. Health-wise, meditation and yoga can help improve your mental health this week. Also, take care of the right diet so that your energy levels are maintained. Try to turn the energy around you into positivity this week. Your confidence and charm will attract everyone.



VIRGO : Ganesha says this week, Virgos will have many opportunities. Your systematic and clear approach will help you succeed in your tasks. Your efforts will be appreciated at the workplace and you may get a chance to work on some new projects for your work. Your tendency to pay attention to your health will keep you strong mentally and physically as well. Focusing on meditation and yoga will give you relief from stress. Spending time with family members will boost your morale and strengthen your emotional stability. This week, there is a need to be cautious in financial matters. Control expenses and avoid unnecessary purchases. Apart from this, your



friendships and social connections can open new doors for you. Your communication skills will increase, allowing you to express your thoughts more clearly. Ultimately, this week will provide you with a good chance to establish a balance in your personal and professional life. Focus on your goals and move forward with positivity.

LIBRA : Ganesha says this week will bring new possibilities and opportunities for you. Your social life will be bright and you will get a chance to reconnect with old friends and relations. This is also a great time to express your art and creativity. Do not hesitate to share your thoughts and feelings, it will bring freshness to your thoughts. You may get some new responsibilities in your professional life, but you do not need to be afraid of them. Your efficiency and strength will help you face all these challenges. Maintain positive and healthy relationships with colleagues at your workplace, this will help you achieve your goals. You will experience satisfaction and happiness in the time spent with your family. Maintain harmony and harmony at home, it will be beneficial for your mental health. Sweetness will remain in love and relationships, spending time with each other will strengthen your relationship. Take some time for meditation and peace this week. Doing yoga or meditation will give you mental clarity and you will be able to understand your feelings better. This week is the time for you to establish balance and harmony, so pay attention to your inner voice and do what is right for you.



SCORPIO : Ganesha says this week, a lot of positive energy is spreading for Scorpios. The flow of communication will improve in your personal and professional life. Mutual understanding in relationships will increase, which will help you resolve mutual disputes. During this time, you will feel your intuition strong, which will help you make important decisions. Your efforts will be recognized at the workplace and seniors will appreciate your hard work. However, pay attention to your health. You may feel the need to rest for a few days, so take proper rest and take care of a balanced diet. This week can be a time of introspection for you. It will be beneficial for you to consider old issues and move forward after understanding them. Be cautious in family matters and give priority to communication so that harmony is maintained. Inclination towards spirituality will increase, and you will get mental peace through meditation. The key to this week is to maintain balance and take care of your abilities by going deep within yourself.



SAGITTARIUS : Ganesha says this week is the time for you to welcome new possibilities. You may find some new friends in your social life, who will become a source of inspiration for you. Your hard work at work will pay off and you may be successful in an important project. In terms of health, try to do meditation and yoga this week. This will not only improve your mental health but will also increase physical fitness. Try to spend time with your loved ones on family matters. Sharing your thoughts and feelings will make the relationship even stronger. Be careful in financial matters. There may be some sudden expenses, so take care of your budget. This week is also a time of personal growth for you. Identify the things that are right for you and implement them in your life. Confidence will remain your companion, so do not miss adopting it.



CAPRICORN : Ganesha says this week is a time of change and growth for Capricorn natives. Some new opportunities may emerge in your work area, which are coming as a result of your hard work. Although you are working hard to achieve your goals, some kind of restraint is required. Be patient and focus on your plans, as some difficulties may be faced. In personal relationships, you will value the time spent with your friends and family. This week it will be important for you to increase communication with your loved ones and listen to them. This will increase mutual understanding and strengthen the relationship. In terms of health, you need to be a little calm. Resort to meditation and yoga to avoid mental stress. Regular exercise and a balanced diet will help keep your body and mind healthy. In short, this week you need dedication, restraint, and communication. Move forward with positive thinking, so that you can move faster towards your goals.

AQUARIUS : Ganesha says this week a new energy seems to be flowing for Aquarius people. At this time you can give a new direction to your creativity and imagination. If you have thought of starting a new project or hobby, then this is the right time. Your ideas will not only be unique, but you will also be successful in them. You will also experience warmth in personal relationships. Spending more time with family or friends will not only strengthen mutual relationships but will also spread happiness. Expressing your thoughts openly will increase mutual understanding and you will get support. In terms of health, there is a need to be a little cautious this week. Focus on regular exercise and a balanced diet. Incorporating meditation or yoga will be beneficial for mental health. Be careful in the financial aspect. It is not good to take risks in big investments or financial transactions. Take decisions wisely and maintain balance in your expenses. Overall, this week is to focus



CONTD ON PAGE 89



BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : DECEMBER 30 2024 TO JANUARY 4 2025 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

DECEMBER 30

Ganesha says as dawn breaks on the 11th, the universe seems to hold its breath, waiting for you to tune into its frequency. In their infinite wisdom, the celestial bodies suggest a profound day of introspection. This isn't just about surface-level reflection; it's about diving into the very core of your being. Perhaps there's a memory you've suppressed or an ambition you've shelved, thinking it's too grandiose. Today is the day to confront these hidden aspects of yourself. The stars hint at revelations that could reshape your understanding of your journey and purpose.

DECEMBER 31

Ganesha says the last day of the month comes charged with electrifying energy that's palpable in every gust of wind and every rustling leaf. The universe seems to be playing a game of chance, and you're at the center of it. While the day might seem like any other, there's a whirlwind of opportunities swirling around you. A conversation with a stranger, a book left on a park bench, or even a song on the radio could be the key that unlocks a new dimension of possibilities. The cosmos

encourages you to be receptive, to be curious, and most importantly, to be fearless in the face of the unknown.

JANUARY 1

Ganesha says as a new month unfolds, the stars realign, emphasizing the importance of grounding. In the relentless hustle of life, it's easy to lose oneself. But today, the universe gently reminds you of the power of stillness. It's in these moments of quiet contemplation that you'll find clarity. Whether it's meditating by a serene lake, revisiting old journals, or simply sitting in silence, today is about reconnecting with your essence. The celestial energies hint at profound insights that can only be accessed when you're truly present.

JANUARY 2

Ganesha says the second day brings with it a symphony of collaboration. The universe isn't just suggesting teamwork; it's emphasizing the magic that arises when diverse minds converge. Today, seek out those who challenge you, who offer a fresh perspective, who see the world through a different lens. It's in these intersections of thought that innovation is born. The stars

hint at a project or endeavor that, when approached collectively, has the potential to be groundbreaking.

JANUARY 3

Ganesha says transformation is the theme of the day. The cosmos, in its infinite expanse, witnesses countless cycles of birth, death, and rebirth. Today, you're at the cusp of such a transformative phase. While change can be unsettling, it's also the universe's way of propelling you forward, of telling you that you're ready to shed old skins and embrace a new avatar. This isn't just about external changes; it's about internal evolution. Embrace this metamorphosis with grace and courage.

JANUARY 4

Ganesha says on the fourth day, the celestial tapestry weaves a narrative of introspection. This isn't the passive contemplation of days gone by; it's an active engagement with your deepest self. The universe prompts you to ask the tough questions, to challenge your beliefs, to confront your fears. Today, let your soul be your guide. Dive deep, explore the uncharted territories of your psyche, and emerge with a renewed sense of purpose.



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR
BEJAN DARUWALLA

JANUARY 4

Ganesha says as this period draws to a close, the stars shimmer with a special brilliance. They speak of realizations, of moments of crystal-clear clarity, of epiphanies that have the power to redefine your path. Today, the universe seems to be in perfect harmony, singing a song of hope, resilience, and destiny. Trust in this cosmic dance, lean into the rhythm of life and know that every twist and turn is leading you to your true north.

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on growth, relationships, and health. Take advantage of opportunities and move forward with positive thoughts.

PISCES : Ganesha says your week will be full of positive energy and opportunities.



Your creativity is going to touch new heights at this time. Your ideas will be appreciated at the workplace and your colleagues will be ready to adopt your point of view. In your personal life, focus on communicating with your loved ones, it is important to understand their feelings and needs. In terms of health, you will need to maintain mental and physical balance. Yoga and meditation can prove to be highly beneficial for you. If you focus, you will be able to overcome your worries and fill yourself with more positivity. In financial matters, this week is suitable for realizing financial planning. However, make financial decisions wisely so that there is no inconvenience in the future. The biggest learning of this week will be that you can make your dreams come true by paying attention to your insights and feelings. Be confident and keep your intentions clear.

Author Bio : Chirag Daruwalla is the best astrologer and one of the most famous names in the astrology world. He has more than 18 years of experience. Readers may seek his advice related to career, health, finance, business, money, love and marriage. He has complete knowledge, solutions, and guidance to all the problems related to life. Visit his website chiragdaruwalla.com. He is available for consultations on WhatsApp number +91 8141566266 or by email: info@chiragdaruwalla.com

|| SHREE GANESHAY NAMAH ||



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Nastur Bejan Daruwalla

Somvati Amavasya

Somvati Amavasya, a unique and significant day in Hinduism, occurs when Amavasya (the new moon) falls on a Monday. This day holds immense spiritual and cultural importance. Observing fasts, performing rituals, and offering donations are key activities. Worshipping ancestors on this day is believed to bring blessings and alleviate planetary and ancestral afflictions. Lighting lamps at specific locations also pleases ancestors and invites Goddess Lakshmi's grace.

Somvati Amavasya falls only once or twice in a year. This fast is observed by married women. Somvati Amavasya fast is observed by married women for the long life of their husbands.

The last Somvati Amavasya of the year 2024 falls on December 30. The Paush Amavasya starts on December 30 at 4:01 AM and ends on December 31 at 3:56 AM. Mark this date to plan your observances and rituals effectively.

Somvati Amavasya Vrat is also known as 'Ashwath Pradakshina Vrat' in the scriptures. 'Ashwath' means Peepal tree. Lord Vishnu resides on the Peepal tree. Therefore Lord Vishnu is also worshiped on the day of Somvati Amavasya. On this day, bathing and charity are considered to be the best of all. According to the words of sage Vyasa, on this day, by meditating, fasting, fasting, one gets the virtuous fruit of thousands of cows.

It is believed that in the Mahabharata, Bhishma, explaining the importance of this day to Yudhishtira, said that a person who bathes in the holy rivers on this day will be prosperous, healthy and free from all miseries. It is also believed that taking a bath gives peace to the souls of the ancestors.

Somvati Amavasya Worship (Puja)

On this day, there is a rule to worship Peepal by wrapping the thread 108 times and doing circumambulation. There is also a law to worship Lord Vishnu on this day. Paddy, betel and standing turmeric are mixed and offered ritually on the Tulsi plant. At the time of Pradakshina, 108 fruits should be kept aside and donated to Vedapathi Brahmins at the time of completion.

Fruits and Significance of Somvati Amavasya Puja

This is the main fast of women. Women observe this fast for the longevity of their husbands. On the day of Somvati Amavasya, charity should be given according to one's ability. Women who cannot observe fast on every new moon should observe fast on Somvati Amavasya and circumambulate the Peepal tree 108 times by wrapping it in a thread. Peepal tree should be worshiped lawfully. By observing this fast one gets eternal good fortune. Monday is the day of the moon. On this day the Sun and the Moon remain in a straight line. Therefore, this festival is considered to be of special merit.

Somvati Amavasya Katha

There are many stories related to Somvati Amavasya. Tradition has it that these stories are recited ritually on the day of Somvati Amavasya. There was a poor Brahmin family, which had a husband, wife and a daughter. The daughter slowly started growing up. With time, all the feminine qualities were developing in that girl. The girl was also beautiful, cultured and virtuous, but due to being poor, she could not get married. One day a monk came to the Brahmin's house, who was very pleased with the service of the girl. Blessing the girl for a long life, the sage said that there is no marriageable line in the girl's palm. The Brahmin couple asked the sadhu the remedy that what should the girl do in such a way that marriage becomes a yoga in her hands. After contemplating for some time, the sage meditated with his insight and told that in a village at some distance, a woman of Dhubi caste named Sona lives with her son and daughter-in-law, who is very well-mannered and well-mannered and husband. is paranoid. If this girl serves him and that woman puts vermilion on her demand in her marriage, after that this girl is married,



Important information

Somvati Amavasya 2024

Monday, 30 December 2024

Amavasya Start : 30 December 2024 at 04:01 am

Amavasya Ends : 31 December 2024 at 03:36 am

then the Vaidya yoga of this girl can be erased. The monk also told that that woman does not go anywhere. Hearing this, Brahmani asked his daughter to serve the washerman.

The girl would wake up early in the morning and go back to her home after going to the washerman's house, cleaning and doing everything else. Sona Dhobin asks her daughter-in-law that you wake up early and do all the work and do not even know. The daughter-in-law said that mother, I thought that you wake up in the morning and finish all the work yourself. I get up late. On this, both the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law started monitoring who is the one who leaves early in the morning after doing all the household chores. After several days, the washerman saw that one girl came face to face in the dark house and left after doing all the work. When she started leaving, the Sona washerman fell at her feet, asking

"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 humanRs "

-- Arish K Sahani

who are you and why do you hide like this in my house. Then the girl told everything that was said by the sage. Sona was a washerwoman husband, she had brilliance. She got ready. Sona Dhobin's husband was a little unwell. He asked his daughter-in-law to stay at home till his return. As soon as Sona Dhobin applied vermilion to the girl's demand, her husband went. He came to know about this. She had left the house without water, thinking that if she finds a peepal tree somewhere on the way, she will take water only after giving her a whirlpool and circumambulating it. That day was Somvati Amavasya. Instead of the poo-dish found at the Brahmin's house, he circumambulated the peepal tree 108 times by giving bhavri 108 times with pieces of brick and after that took water. As soon as she did this, the dead body of her husband started vibrating.

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"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard itRs "

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."



The Best of Lotus Blooming in 2024

Sadhguru decodes spirituality,
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*Exclusive interview with
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Sophie Gregoire Trudeau
shares insights on wellness,
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Happy New Year!

Canadian MPs of Indian descent condole the death of Dr Manmohan Singh



BY PRABHJOT SINGH

(Prabhjot Singh is a Toronto based award-winning senior journalist.

He can be reached at prabhjot416@gmail.com)

Herb Dhaliwal, the first MP of Indian descent to become a federal minister in Canada, was joined by some of his contemporaries in eulogizing India's one of tallest Prime Ministers, Dr Manmohan Singh, who left for his heavenly abode early this week.

Herb Dhaliwal, who lives in Vancouver, says that among various things he shared with Dr Singh was "our retirement from politics".

"I am personally feeling very saddened by the loss of my good friend, Dr Manmohan Singh. Beginning in the late 1990s I had the distinct privilege of becoming acquainted with this wonderful gentleman. I met him several times during his terms of office, first as Finance Minister and then as Prime Minister, as well as since he and I both left politics.

"India has lost an icon, a distinguished past Prime Minister highly respected by his world leader peers. He was a humble, long-standing career official who rose to make an indelible mark as an inspirational economic visionary. His dynamic policies on deregulation changed many sectors, opening India to foreign investment and the prosperity resulting.

"Manmohan Singh was the first Sikh in history to occupy the Lok Kalyan Marg (Prime Minister's official residence). He also was a man whose legacy includes, although with his characteristic soft voice, being outspoken on behalf of India's less fortunate.

"May he rest in peace, remembered for having been a kind human being, one who



Herb Dhaliwal (left) with Dr. Manmohan Singh

brought India forward to becoming a modern economic marvel among the community of nations," Dhaliwal said in his message.

Gurbaksh Malhi, who was also elected to the House of Commons along with Herb Dhaliwal in 1993, condoled the death of Dr Manmohan Singh.

He was the second Indian Prime Minister after Mrs Indira Gandhi to visit Canada.

When Dr Manmohan Singh came to attend the 2010 G 20 Summit in Toronto, said Mr Gurbaksh Malhi, recalling his meeting with him. At that time, all Canadian MPs of Indian descent called on him and submitted a memorandum to him highlighting the problems members of Indian Diaspora faced back home.

"He was a thorough gentleman, soft-spoken, with an open mind. He evinced

keen interest in the issues we raised with him. He promised to look into all those demands mentioned in our memorandum. "

"I also had a few other opportunities to meet him. During my visits to India, both as a part of the Canadian delegations and my personal or private visits, I would make sure to call on Dr Manmohan Singh. And he was always warm and receptive. He would enquire about the strong Indo-Canadian community in general and the Canadian Punjabis in particular.

"He was not only an upright politician but also a great human being. He lived a simple and inspirational life. I remained a great admirer of Dr Manmohan Singh," Gurbaksh Malhi said.

"I had several opportunities to meet and interact with Dr Manmohan Singh, says Gurmant Grewal, also a former

Canadian MP of Indian descent.

"I accompanied a delegation of Canadian Parliamentarians to India with Preston Manning, the then Chief of Reform Party. We wanted the sanctions Canada had Imposed on India following its nuclear explosion under the BJP regime to be lifted. We met him. And he was very open. Friendly and receptive to our suggestions. He was a giant. He was not only a world-class economist but also a wonderful human being, known for his integrity and simplicity. His connectivity to people at the grassroots level made him a most revered politician not only in India but worldwide.

"He ushered in several people welfare programs, the word appreciated. I always looked forward to meeting him for exchanging Ideas on issues facing the world. He was not only well aware but also very clear in his ideas," says Gurmant Grewal, who frequented India mostly as part of Canadian delegations, more so when Stephen Harper was the Prime Minister.

Gurmant Grewal also says that Dr Manmohan Singh had a soft corner for Canada. "He was always ready to do anything to promote bilateral relations between India and Canada as the two nations enjoy a very strong people-to-people bonding," he added.

All MPs of Indian descent who had a chance to meet or interact with him were infatuated by his warmth, simplicity and clarity. They all have been full of praise for Dr Manmohan Singh. They have joined the global Indian community in paying rich tributes to him.

Dr Manmohan Singh, a down-to-earth man of principles

It was in July 2009. Dr Manmohan Singh, the then Prime Minister of India, had come to Jalalabad in Ferozepur district, on an electioneering campaign. I was assigned to cover his rally.

Since I had been interacting with him for a long time, I had requested the organizers for an interview with him. The request was granted. Before he went to address the rally, I was escorted to a makeshift tent on a side of the main dais where a couple of chairs and a table were organized to facilitate the interview.

I was already seated in the tent when Dr Manmohan Singh came. "Hello Prabhjot, how are you?"

I was pleasantly surprised by the way he greeted me. I was overwhelmed to hear my name from Dr Singh as he still remembered my name as I had not met him after he became the Prime Minister in 2004. A down-to-earth man, his simplicity and his respect for others always impressed me.

"Sir, I am fine. How about you? You just had a heart procedure," I asked him.

"It went very well. I am fine. How is Mr Dua? How is The Tribune doing?" were

his next questions before the start of the interview. Mr H K Dua was at that time Editor-in-Chief of The Tribune group of newspapers.

Dr Manmohan Singh had the best of relations with all Editors of The Tribune, including Mr H.K. Dua and his predecessor, Mr Hari Jaisingh.

After covering the rally when I returned to Chandigarh, the first thing Mr Dua asked me was whether I was able to talk to him.

"Yes, sir, I did. I had a brief interview with him as he had to address a couple of other election rallies also," I told him before I got busy with my copy. I was conscious that Dr Singh would look for The Tribune and my interview with him the next morning.

Dr Manmohan Singh was often quoted saying that the first thing he wanted with his morning cup of tea was the latest edition of The Tribune. Besides The Tribune, he was in love with Chandigarh where he worked as a Professor of Economics at Panjab University and had a house close to the Panjab University campus.

Besides Panjab University, he loved to

be at CRRID to participate in various programs related to rural development. He was close to the then Director of CRRID, Dr Racchpal Malhotra, who also had served Panjab University earlier.

Dr Singh visited the Sector 19 Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID) in Chandigarh. Invariably, I was assigned to cover his events and interview him.

In 2004 he became the Prime Minister. But our interactions continued. Though he did not belong to the typical genre of politicians, he was an academician, a world class economist, who led the country for 10 long years or two consecutive terms. He demonstrated his political acumen by heading a coalition government and survived a no-confidence motion, thanks to a dissident Akali MP SS Libra from historic Sri Fatehgarh Sahib.

After assuming office as Prime Minister, my interactions were considerably reduced. Besides Jalalabad, I got another chance to interact with him when he came to Paonta Sahib in Himachal Pradesh. Again, he was on an electioneering campaign.



Prabhjot Singh with Dr. Manmohan Singh

Though Dr Manmohan Singh could never become a member of Lok Sabha, the lower House of Parliament, he represented the Upper House, Rajya Sabha, till he retired as a Parliamentarian in April this year after a stint that lasted more than three decades.

WILL CANADIAN WOES END BY THE YEAR 2024?



BY
PRABHJOT SINGH

December 28, 2024

2024 turned out to be a tumultuous year for Canada. Nothing went right. Acknowledged as one of the best countries to live in, Canada slid into one of the worst years in recent history. Its bilateral relations with India touched a new low. Before the end of the year, its long-time ally and biggest trade partner and neighbor, the USA, threatened a 25 per cent import tariff on anything Canadian.

To top it all, the minority Liberal government was rocked by internal strife and external pressure to quit and pave the way for an advanced federal election.

Who could better describe the country's situation than its own Prime Minister?

In his Christmas message Justin Trudeau gave vent to his spleen saying "For you, the holidays may be a time of big family gatherings and feasts, of gifts and celebrations. But maybe it is a very hard time. If you are grieving, worried, or alone, this can be the toughest time of the year. It can be the loneliest. So let us all check in on the people in our lives who have not had an easy time this year, and who may need us more than we know."

"As we reflect on the past year and look to the future, let us continue to show love and kindness - to ourselves and to those in need. Let us also take a moment to thank those who give so much of themselves to make Canada the place we are proud to call home, including the brave members of our Canadian Armed Forces, the dedicated first responders and essential workers, and the countless volunteers. Thank you, to all of you."

How true? How precisely did he put his inner feelings in a message that normally is delivered to join festivities on the sacred occasion as he said at the beginning of his message "This is such a special time of year. It is a time to gather with loved ones, to celebrate the spirit of the season, and to give thanks for all that is good in the world."

"For Christians, it's a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and think about his story of kindness, forgiveness, and faith. The lessons of his life are universal, and they inspire and comfort people every time they're told - and retold."

It was not at the far end of the year. Troubles for Justin Trudeau and his minority Liberal government started much earlier. He survived three no-confidence motions, thanks to unrelenting support from the fourth-largest party in the House of Commons, the New Democrats.

Chaos in immigration, growing inflation, unemployment, rising bank rates, homelessness, longer queues outside foodbanks, an alarming increase in gun violence and continuous loss in popularity as revealed by by-elections held during the year virtually cornered Justin Trudeau and his government midway in the year. The situation was further aggravated by the accompanying political turmoil, more so after ally New Democrats Party led by Jagmeet Singh tore down its Supply and Confidence Agreement (SACA) putting the minority government in limbo.

Things started turning sour for Justin Trudeau after the killing of a Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside a Gurdwara in Surrey. Since the Liberals led by Justin Trudeau never had good times with India ever since coming to power in 2015, the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, which saw Justin Trudeau raising accusation fingers at India, brought to thaw the bilateral relations.

India and Canada have enjoyed for more than a century strong people-to-people relations. These relations did not match the bilateral relations the two countries always aspired to have over the years, including good times. Instead, this unfortunate development, the killing of a Canadian on Canadian soil, suspected at the instance of a foreign hand, led to a



Justin Trudeau is the bete noire of US President-elect Donald Trump who misses no opportunity to make fun of him. Trudeau recently visited Trump at Mar-a-Lago to plead with him to not implement his threats to impose tariffs on Canadian goods entering the US. -File photo

diplomatic spat. Sizes of the diplomatic corps were shrunk leading to the temporary suspension of the counsellor and other services. Accusations and counter-accusations flew high.

Though Prime Ministers of Canada and India met on the sidelines during various international summits, their conduct was more remorse than friendly sending wrong signals to people back home. As the issue snowballed into a controversy, Canada's Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) came out with startling revelations suggesting the involvement of the government of India agents in the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Better sense prevailed after an initial flare-up as both sides took to caution than aggression to gradually push the issue to the side-lines.

As relations with India receded to the background, Canada had yet another nightmare unfold. The election of the US President, which was watched with considerable interest the world over, put the Canadians under stress. President-elect Donald Trump got into offensive mode, and his first promulgations made Canadians scurry under cover. Donald Trump accused Canada as a source of both Fentanyl and human smuggling. How serious are these problems?

Donald Trump spared no opportunity to bash Canada for its porous borders that paved the way for the smuggling of synthetic Fentanyl. He wanted his immediate neighbors - Mexico and Canada - to act fast and stop smuggling, both Fentanyl and illegal aliens.

Gauging the gravity of the Fentanyl accusations by the US, the leader of the Opposition in the Canadian House of Commons, Pierre Poilievre, moved a resolution urging Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to "protect our people from dangers of drugs". Though the motion was defeated 210-121, it did evoke an animated debate before it was put to vote.

The Conservative Leader held that after nine years, the NDP-Liberal Government's radical hard drug liberalization has spread death and disorder across Canada. Since Justin Trudeau became Prime Minister, 47,000 Canadians have died of drug overdoses, representing a 200 per cent increase since 2016.

The Common Sense Conservatives had put forward a motion in the House of Commons, calling on Trudeau to protect people from dangerous drugs. The motion also wanted to reverse the catch-and-release Bill C-5, which eliminated mandatory jail time for certain violent offenders. It also advocated for longer jail sentences for drug kingpins, besides demanding a ban on the importation of fentanyl precursors. The government should stop buying dangerous opioids which were diverted to teenagers and other vulnerable Canadians, the motion said, demanding that Canadian ports be secured against fentanyl by buying high-powered scanners and putting more boots on the ground there to stop fentanyl and its ingredients from coming into our

country.

In the 12 months ending September this year, Pierre Poilievre said, US border agents seized about 11,600 pounds of drugs entering the United States from Canada. Seizures of fentanyl doses more than tripled between 2023 and 2024, rising from 239,000 doses to 839,000. A year ago, CSIS told Trudeau that they had identified more than 350 organized crime groups actively involved in the domestic illegal fentanyl market. And just last month, the RCMP uncovered a "super lab" operating in rural British Columbia that was capable of producing 95 million lethal doses of fentanyl. Incidentally, the kingpin of this lab has been a person of South Asian descent.

The tirade of opposition campaigns apart, attacks from within the Liberal party started mounting on the Prime Minister. A section of the Liberal caucus revolted against him asking him to go. Trudeau, however, managed to put aside the dissensions on the plea that in spite of tough resistance from the Opposition that wanted cuts on all programs, including dental care for seniors, saying he and his party were committed to working for Canadians.

His pleas did not cut ice with many of the party dissenters. Some announced that they would not contest the ensuing election to the House of Commons, and a few others quit even their Cabinet positions to express their resentment.

Internal strife climaxed when the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, in her stunning resignation letter hours before she was to present her Fall Financial Report, shook the shaky Trudeau Government to its bones. The report was tabled. Left with no choice, the Prime Minister named a new Finance Minister and ordered a reshuffle of his Cabinet.

Since Liberal MPs of South Asian descent stood by Justin Trudeau throughout his tough times, he inducted Brampton MP Ruby Sahota, to raise the number of South Asians in the 38-member Cabinet to six. She was named Minister for Democratic Institutions and Minister Responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

Within a few hours of the reshuffling of the federal Cabinet, Chandra Arya, Liberal MP from Nepean, fired a salvo asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to quit. He is the first Liberal MP of South Asian descent to express his dissent in the leadership of Justin Trudeau.

Besides, four Conservative MPs of Indian descent, including Tim Uppal, Jasraj Singh Hallan, Arpan Khanna, and Shuvaloy Majumdar, who have been part of three no-confidence motions, Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democrats, became the first MP of South Asian descent to ask Justin Trudeau to quit. And for the ruling Liberals, Chandra Arya is the first South Asian from the Liberal caucus to revolt against Trudeau's leadership.

While time and fate will decide the future of Justin Trudeau and his Liberal Government in 2025, it is the 2-million-strong South Asian community continues to await difficult and uncertain times ahead.

Will the turn of the year bring back cheers to members of the community who proudly acclaim themselves to be "Canadians"? only time will tell.

Meanwhile, I wish all Canadians a Happy New Year.

(Prabhjot Singh, is a Toronto-based award-winning independent journalist, He was celebrated by AIPS, the international body of sports journalists, for covering ten Olympics at its centennial celebrations held at UNESCO Centre in Paris during the 2024 Olympic Games. Besides, he has written extensively about business and the financial markets, the health industry, the public and private sectors, and aviation. He has worked as a political reporter besides covering Sikh and Punjab politics. He is particularly interested in Indian Diaspora and Sikh Diaspora in particular. His work has also appeared in various international and national newspapers, magazines and journals.)

Dr. Yash Paul Chhabra: Creating Cross-Cultural Exchange and Understanding, the Culinary Way



Dr Paul Chhabra is known as Culinary Icon across different nations

BY BIDISHA ROY

Since his childhood, he was different from others. While other kids were busy playing outside, he used to learn cooking from his mother Suman Chhabra. Nobody could imagine that passion will make him one of the biggest names in the Indian culinary world in the USA. Dr. Yash Paul Chhabra, the founder of Rajput Indian Cuisine and President & CEO of Rajput Group of Companies, built a strong foundation for success in the Indian restaurant industry with a combination of hands-on experience and formal education. By continuously refining culinary, managerial, and leadership skills, he elevated Indian restaurant business in fine dining, casual dining, fast

casual to new heights while offering a memorable dining experience to the customers.

Born in Jalandhar, Punjab, Paul Chhabra completed degree of business at Doaba College, Jalandhar. After that, he did internship at Hans & Co. (CPA), C-1 Dilkusha Market, Punjab. After coming to the USA, he did lodge and food service Management course from Norfolk State University, Norfolk, VA. Chhabra first gained experience in the Indian Restaurant business while living in Long Island, New York. When Chhabra moved to Virginia in 1992, he opened Nawab Indian Cuisine in Norfolk, VA with a partner. After a few years he decided to go back to India to stay with his family and gain more experience in restaurant industry and branch out his own. So, came back in 1999 and opened Rajput Indian Cuisine in Hampton, Virginia with the motto of providing a comfortable, Indian heritage inspired atmosphere and authentic home-style cooking. Mr. Chhabra has managed several restaurants and worked with renowned chefs from the USA as well from India. He wishes to spread Indian Cuisine awareness to the areas where people still are not much aware of Indian healthy culinary and are in impression that Indian Food is hot& spicy.

"The Indian restaurant profession in the United States is a significant and growing part of the country's culinary landscape. It has evolved over time, contributing to the diversity of American cuisine while also representing Indian culture and heritage. Here are some key aspects of the Indian restaurant profession. The Indian restaurant profession in the U.S. is vibrant, diverse, and essential in the growing global culinary scene. Indian Americans in the restaurant business not only bring authentic Indian flavors to a wide audience but also create a space for cross-cultural exchange and understanding. The profession continues to evolve, reflecting both the deep-rooted traditions of Indian cuisine and the ever-changing tastes of American diners", explains Dr Chhabra.

"By owning and running an Indian restaurant, I have contributed to the cultural richness of Indian community. My restaurant likely serves as a place for people to experience authentic Indian cuisine, offering an opportunity to explore flavors, traditions, and culinary techniques that might not be widely available otherwise. The restaurant not only provides unique dining experience but also creates jobs and supports the local economy. My mentorship of chef's ability to integrate culinary culture goes beyond food service. I feel like an ambassador of Indian culture, a business leader, and a mentor, helping to shape the future of the culinary industry", he further added.

Paul Chhabra always believes in giving back and supported local charities or others by participating in fundraising events organized by Peninsula Foodbank of the Virginia, March Of Dimes, Foodbank of Southern Virginia, Easter Virginia Medical Centre, Virginia Zoo To Do, World Affairs Council, Norfolk Botanical Garden, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Norfolk City Public Schools, Norfolk Christian Schools, Suffolk City Public Schools, Tidewater Nutrition Council, Virginia Air & Space Center, SPCA Norfolk, Elizabeth City State University, United Nations International Day of Peace(Hampton Roads), Annual Norfolk Teen Cultural Fest, Norfolk Chamber Consor, Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, Temple Beth El and so on. Chhabra is



He was invited to meet President Joe Biden on his visit to Virginia Beach on 28th Feb., 2023

supporting local community since 2001, averaging 4 to 5 fundraising event participations every year. He has participated in around 100 fundraising events since 2000.

Dr Chhabra is politically active too as he believes that "Politics refers to the processes and activities associated with governance, decision-making, and the exercise of power within societies. It influences how resources are distributed, laws are created and enforced, and societal goals are pursued. Power is vested in the



Dr Chhabra with Rep Bobby Scott



Dr Chhabra is politically active too and supported political fundraising for many leaders

people, typically through elected representatives. Politics is increasingly interconnected, with decisions in one nation affecting others worldwide."

He supported political fundraising for Mark Warner @ Philipino Community Center Virginia Beach, Tim Kaine @Sidhu Home Richmond, VA, Dr. Ralph Northam (Governor) @Rajput Indian Cuisine Suffolk in 2017, Stephen Heretick (Delegate) @ Rajput Indian Cuisine Suffolk in 2018, Lynwood Lewis (Senator) at Ramin Fatehi Home in 2019.

Yash P Chhabra was also awarded an honorary doctorate by American East Coast University New York in 2023. Dr. Chhabra's long-awaited Indo-Vegan 100 Recipes Book was launched by Celebrity Chefs Manjit Gill & Harpal Sokhi in Indian

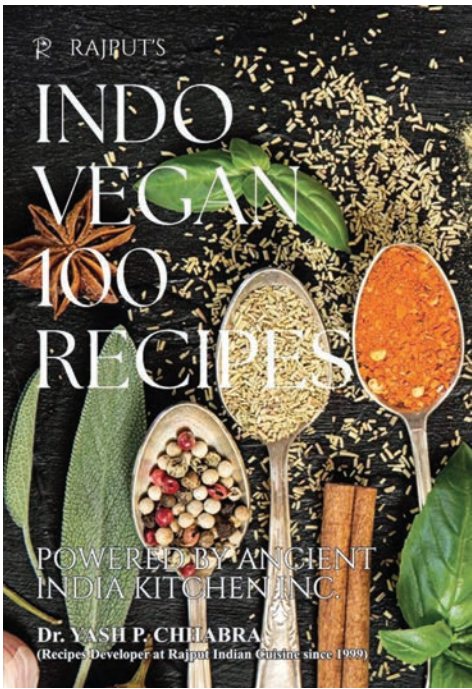


Dr. Chhabra's long-awaited Indo-Vegan 100 Recipes Book was launched by Celebrity Chefs Manjit Gill & Harpal Sokhi in Indian International Centre, New Delhi

International Centre, New Delhi the 23rd July in 2023.

Dr Chhabra is Executive Founder & Business Secretary of NRI Sabha Punjab (NGO). He was invited to Prime Minister House in 1997 for helping NRIs through that NGO by then Prime Minister of India I. K. Gujral. He also received Appreciation Letter from Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's office for celebrating India's First Independence Day on August 2000 in the history of City of Hampton, VA in 2000. He was invited to meet President Joe Biden on his visit to Virginia Beach on 28th Feb., 2023.

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In this book, dedicated to the author's father, the late Sh. Harkesh Chhabra, there are 100 plant-based recipes engineering, branding, Start-Ups, Turnaround & Profit improvement.

Dr Chhabra received numerous awards including prestigious 'Shiksha Sewa Sanman Award 2024' as an Indo-Vegan Culinary Teacher to explore plant-based cooking while celebrating the rich flavors of Indian Cuisine through cooking classes & TV cooking shows in Hampton Roads, Virginia and through cookbook to the culinary World, 'Wallis Annenberg Public Service Award' on October 17, 2024' by Kathy Magee President & CEO of Operation Smile. He has been named Business Person of the Year by AIHR (Asian Indian of Hampton Roads) on October 5, 2024.

Dr. Paul Chhabra is also President of Consulting firm H&S Restaurants firm based in Hampton Roads, Virginia that specializes in Fine Dining, Casual Dining, Fast Casual, and Fast Food restaurants services. They have teamed up with Andro cloud solutions for E-commerce & marketing experts and GRABKNOCK for Web & App online ordering. H&S also provides Licensing requirements, location scouting, kitchen & front staffing, vendor negotiations, menu



Family time



Dr Chhabra was recognized with 'Wallis Annenberg Public Service Award' on October 17, 2024

His future plans are to support the upcoming chefs & entrepreneurs in the industry including the vegan trend and cloud kitchen trend with his experience. He plans to build a supportive ecosystem for ambitious professionals providing them with A to Z services for opening and running a 21st-century food outlet and taking benefits from his experience. In celebration of their 25th Anniversary, they are going to launch their First Franchise Model on January 25th, 2025!

"This milestone marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter, as we offer aspiring entrepreneurs the opportunity to join our growing family. Our proven business model, coupled with decades of culinary expertise, ensures that each franchise will serve the highest-quality, mouthwatering Indian cuisine with exceptional service", he signs off.

"CHEERS TO ANOTHER YEAR OF FUN AND LAUGHTER!"
"HAPPY NEW YEAR, LET'S MAKE THIS ONE EVEN BETTER."



-DR. YASH PAUL CHHABRA

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

'A true friend': World leaders pay...

country to fuel its domestic nuclear power plants and gain access to critical technologies, cementing its status as a responsible nuclear weapon state.

The two-time Prime Minister left a strong imprint on India's external ties, which was recalled by several heads of state in their condolence messages. In a post on X, French President Emmanuel Macron expressed his condolences and said: "India has lost a great man, and France a true friend, in the person of Manmohan Singh. He had devoted his life to his country. Our thoughts are with his family and the people of India."

From Pakistan, where Singh was born in undivided India, Deputy PM Ishaq Dar expressed his condolences: "Saddened by the passing of Dr. Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India. Born in a village in Pakistan's Chakwal district, Dr. Singh was a distinguished economist and political leader. He will be remembered for his wisdom and gentle demeanor."

Beyond his remarkable achievements in the field of economics, Dr. Singh demonstrated a commitment to promoting regional peace, Dar said, adding that Singh's approach to regional issues reflected his belief that mutual understanding, dialogue and cooperation were essential for collective progress.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim wrote a moving tribute to Manmohan Singh Friday, recalling how the latter even offered scholarships for his children while he was in prison. On X, he described the former prime minister, who died Thursday, as "the midwife of India's emergence as one of the world's economic giants".

During Anwar's jail term between 1999 and 2004, Singh was Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha. "Dr Manmohan Singh, slightly awkward as a politician but undeniably upright, steadfast and resolute as a statesman, leaves behind a legacy that will inspire generations to come," he posted, signing it off with "my mitra, my bhai, Manmohan".

Singh also oversaw India's ties with Bangladesh improve, as Sheikh Hasina came to power in Dhaka in 2008. In a Facebook post on Friday, the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry said Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus has conveyed his profound grief and deep condolences to PM Narendra Modi and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge.

In his messages, Yunus described Manmohan Singh "as a person of great humility, a visionary leader, a statesman, who was known for his unwavering commitment to ensuring the welfare of the people of India". He said that Singh's leadership not only shaped the future of India but also contributed to strengthening the bond of friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation between Bangladesh and India.

Chinese Ambassador Xu Feihong posted on X: "Deeply saddened by the passing of former Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, an outstanding leader who is widely revered by the Indian people. Heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones."

As per Kremlin, Russian President Putin sent condolences to President Droupadi Murmu and PM Modi, in which he wrote: "Manmohan Singh was an outstanding statesman. As Prime Minister and when serving in other high-ranking positions, he accomplished a lot in promoting India's economic development and asserting its interests on the world stage. He also made a major personal contribution to strengthening friendly ties between our two countries by elevating them to the level of a special privileged strategic partnership."

The European Union also conveyed its condolences, through Ambassador of the EU to India, Hervé Delphin. "On the passing of Manmohan Singh, the EU extends its deepest condolences to his family & the people of India. A genuine friend of the EU, his legacy will endure as a key architect of economic " miracle " & rise on the global stage and as a man of dialogue & compassion," he said in a post on X.

Singh's former colleagues, who worked with him

during his two terms, also recalled his contributions. Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, in a post on X, expressed deep sorrow over Manmohan Singh's passing, describing him as "one of India's most illustrious sons." Karzai hailed Singh as an "unwavering ally and friend to the people of Afghanistan" and extended his heartfelt condolences. Former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper expressed deep sorrow, calling Singh an individual of "exceptional intelligence, integrity, and wisdom".

Former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed described Singh as a benevolent and dependable figure. "I always found him a delight to work with, and like a benevolent father figure. He was a good friend of the Maldives," Nasheed said in his tribute.

Trump says he's 'believer in H-1B'...

"I have many H-1B visas on my properties. I've been a believer in H-1B. I have used it many times," he told the newspaper that is a part of the Rupert Murdoch-controlled News Corp.

Trump has supported reforming the immigration system to make it merit-based, adopting a points system like Canada's or Australia's that gives weight to academic and employable qualifications.

He has said that he wanted foreign students graduating from US universities to get green cards with their diplomas.

He reiterated it during his campaign this year: "What I want to do, and what I will do, is -- you graduate from a college, I think you should get automatically, as part of your diploma, a green card to be able to stay in this country."

The differences over H1-B visas and the immigration of highly qualified persons boiled over among Trump's loyalists after he appointed Sriram Krishnan, an Indian immigrant, as his artificial intelligence adviser.

One of the first salvos was fired by Laura Loomer, a far-right Trump supporter in the base of his loyalists known as the MAGA, an acronym for Trump's rallying cry of "Make America Great Again".

She posted on Musk's X, "Deeply disturbing to see the appointment of Sriram Krishnan" and accused him of wanting to remove all restrictions on the number of green cards, which give permanent resident immigration status.

Diljit Dosanjh dedicates Guwahati...

The singer-actor on Instagram shared a video from Sunday's concert in which he spoke about the lessons he believes people should learn from Singh.

"Today's Concert is dedicated to Dr Manmohan Singh Ji. DIL-LUMINATI TOUR Year 24," he captioned the post.

In the clip, Dosanjh recalled how Singh would never speak ill about anyone even if someone did so towards him.

"He lived a very simple life. If I look at the journey of his life, it was so simple. Even if someone talked ill about him, he never reverted in the same manner," he is heard saying in the video.

"Have you ever seen those Lok Sabha sessions? Our politicians fight as if they are nursery kids... But something that we should learn from Dr Manmohan Singh ji is that he never responded in the same manner," he added.

Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms and who served as the 13th Prime Minister of India between 2004 and 2014, died last week at the age of 92.

Dosanjh, 40, further mentioned the words which Singh would speak and said everyone including him should learn from him.

"He would often say 'Hazaaron jawabon se meri khamoshi achhi, na jaane kitne sawalon ki aabroo dhak leti hai' ('My silence is better than a thousand answers, it has saved the grace of many questions') and it is something the youth needs to learn from him, even I do. We should focus on our goals even if people speak bad about us and try to distract us," he said.

"Today, I bow my head in front of a man who loved his country and spent his life serving it," he added.

The singer will next perform in Ludhiana on December 31 as part of his 'Dil-Luminati India Tour'.

Biden and Trump lead tributes to...

After leaving the White House with low approval ratings, his reputation was restored through humanitarian work which earned him the Nobel Peace Prize.

"Today, America and the world lost an extraordinary leader, statesman and humanitarian," President Biden and First Lady Jill Biden said in a statement.

"To all of the young people in this nation and for anyone in search of what it means to live a life of purpose and meaning - the good life - study Jimmy Carter, a man of principle, faith, and humility," they added.

"He showed that we are great nation because we are a good people - decent and honorable, courageous and compassionate, humble and strong."

Biden announced that a national day of mourning would take place on 9 January, with Americans encouraged to visit places of worship to "pay homage" to the late president.

He also ordered flags to be flown at half-mast at all public and military buildings for 30 days, a period which includes the inauguration of president-elect Trump.

Trump posted on Truth Social: "The challenges Jimmy faced as president came at a pivotal time for our country and he did everything in his power to improve the lives of all Americans.

"For that, we all owe him a debt of gratitude."

Trump previously mocked Carter's single term on the campaign trail ahead of his victory in this year's presidential election, and said in 2019: "He's a nice man. He was a terrible president."

This came after Carter called Trump an "illegitimate president", claiming he was helped into the White House by Russian interference in the 2016 election, something Moscow and Trump deny.

King Charles III said "his dedication and humility served as an inspiration to many, and I remember with great fondness his visit to the United Kingdom in 1977".

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Carter was "motivated by his strong faith and values" and that he "redefined the post-presidency with a remarkable commitment to social justice and human rights at home and abroad".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Carter "was a leader who served during a time when Ukraine was not yet independent, yet his heart stood firmly with us in our ongoing fight for freedom".

French President Emmanuel Macron said he had been a "steadfast advocate for the rights of the most vulnerable and has tirelessly fought for peace".

Before becoming president in 1977, Democrat Carter was governor of Georgia, a lieutenant in the US navy and a farmer.

Carter's presidency will be remembered for his struggles in dealing with acute economic problems and several foreign policy challenges, including the Iran hostage crisis, which ended with the deaths of eight Americans.

There was, however, a notable foreign policy triumph in the Middle East when he helped broker an accord between Egypt and Israel, signed at Camp David in the US in 1978.

But that seemed a distant memory two years later, when voters overwhelmingly chose Republican Ronald Reagan, who had portrayed the president as a weak leader unable to deal with inflation and interest rates at near record highs.

Carter lost the 1980 election by a landslide, winning only six US states plus Washington DC.

After leaving the White House, he became the first and only president to return full-time to the house he lived in before politics - a humble, two-bedroom ranch-style home.

*(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)*

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- Language** - Hindi
- Subject** - Category 1: Essay (choose one of the following topic)
१) भारतीय संस्कृति और परंपराएँ
२) अमेरिका में रहने वाले युवा हिन्दी क्यों सीखें?
- Category 2: Short Story
Based on own personal experience, anecdote, memoir

IMPORTANT DATES

Registration Deadline	January 03 rd , 2025
Last Date of Essay/Story Submission	January 08 th , 2025
Winner Announcement	January 10 th , 2025

Media: All submissions should be in MP4 video format (maximum 3 minutes in Hindi)

Prize:

Three winners in each category will be awarded by The Embassy Of India, Washington, DC

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MTA Announces Winter Weekend Discounts for LIRR and Metro-North Monthly Ticketholders

- Monthly Ticket Holders' Family and Friends Ride For \$1
- Discounts on Saturdays and Sundays
- Discounts Start Saturday, Jan. 4

DECEMBER 27, 2024

NEW YORK CITY (TIP) : The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and Metro-North Railroad "Winter Weekend" discount program. This program expands on the popular "Summer Saturday" discount program that enables monthly ticketholders to travel anywhere the railroads go and bring friends of family for just \$1 each.

Beginning on Saturday, Jan. 4, both railroads will honor all monthly tickets for travel to and from all stations within the LIRR or Metro-North territories regardless of which stations are printed on the ticket. Monthly ticket holders traveling on Saturdays and Sundays will be able to bring up to two additional travelers for only \$1 per person each way. Promotional \$1 tickets can be purchased via the Train Time app



under Family Fares or on board without incurring an extra charge.

The program begins as the Authority implements the Congestion Relief Zone on Sunday, Jan. 5, and is one of the many ways the MTA is encouraging customers to take public transit. On Tuesday, Dec. 17, Governor Hochul announced the MTA will enhance service on 24 bus routes across New York City. This follows systemwide service increases on 11 subway lines that took effect between July 2023 and July 2024.

"Taking the train is the fastest and most convenient

way to get to the city this winter and with record-levels of on-time performance and more service than ever before, you can count on the LIRR to get you where you need to go, said Long Island Rail Road President Rob Free. "Skip winter traffic and enjoy the trip at great prices."

"Monthly Metro-North riders know that the railroad is the most reliable, fastest and safest way to travel," said Metro-North President Catherine Rinaldi. "Whether it's a winter excursion upstate or a trip into the iconic Grand Central, we've made your experience even more affordable with steep discounts for family and friends."

In 2024, the LIRR achieved a higher year-to-date on-time performance of 95.7%, compared to the same time period in 2019, and recorded the best November in the railroad's history with an on-time performance of 96.2%, all while running 40% more service. Metro-North continues to deliver on-time performance levels of 98% and is breaking weekend ridership records, surpassing pre-COVID ridership on multiple occasions this fall.

There will be no cross-honoring of these discounted tickets between the railroads, meaning LIRR customers cannot use their monthly tickets to travel on Metro-North, and vice versa. The program is expected to run through the end of March.

TRIBUTE

IOC Condoles Dr Manmohan Singh's Death



George Abraham, IOC USA Vice Chairman with Dr. Manmohan Singh in New Delhi

India has lost a great statesman, a man of immense intellect with incredible humility,' said George Abraham, Vice-Chair of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA, condoling the passing away of the former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. "He will be fondly remembered for his outstanding contributions to India's economic and social development."

Dr. Manmohan Singh was the Chief Architect of India's new economy. He has taken a centrally planned, inward-looking, public sector-centered economy and reversed its direction. What he has accomplished is just phenomenal. This dramatic change paints a picture of a man who is some sort of a revolutionary. If India has entered the 21st century, Dr. Manmohan Singh has much to do with it.

In addition, during his tenure as the Prime Minister of India, he was instrumental in establishing policies that lifted more than 20 crores of people above the poverty level, as per the World Bank report. IOCUSA expresses our sincere condolences to the family and the nation.

George Abraham, New York

Dr. Manmohan Singh is no more

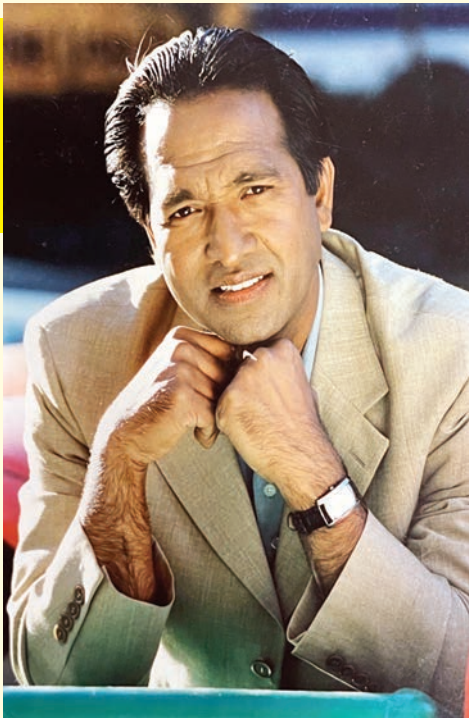


Dr. Zafar Iqbal with Dr. Manmohan Singh in Washington, D.C. in 2005

Dr. Manmohan Singh, India's revered economist and former Prime Minister, passed away today at AIIMS, leaving an unparalleled legacy of wisdom, integrity, and transformative economic reforms. Renowned for his humility, intellect, and quiet determination, Dr. Singh was a guiding force behind India's economic resurgence, particularly during his tenure as Finance Minister and later as Prime Minister.

I feel deeply honored to have met this extraordinary leader during his time as Prime Minister—a memory I will always cherish. Dr. Singh's vision and unwavering commitment to the nation will forever inspire generations to come. He will be remembered for his contributions to India's progress and for his profound humanity.

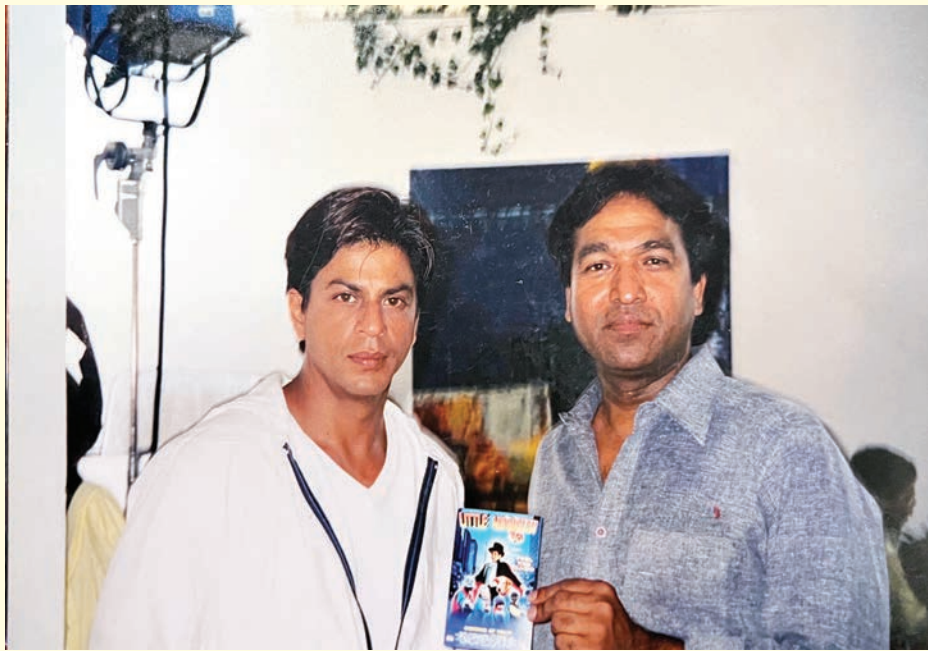
*Zafar Iqbal
Washington, D.C.*



The Young Tirllok Malik whose journey began with "Lonely in America," a light-hearted romantic comedy that explored the nuances of love and cultural identity

feature films to documentaries and television specials. Over the years, Malik's company has cultivated a reputation for storytelling that resonates with a wide audience, bringing together a blend of romance, drama, mystery, comedy, and educational content.

Tirllok Malik is the founder/speaker of "happy life yoga" workshops based on Ayurveda, Indian philosophy, yoga and laughter therapy. Tirllok Malik is a speaker on the topic of how to create balance in your life so that you are in the zone of health and wellness no matter what is going on with your life.



The Bollywood connection- with Shahrukh Khan

Malik's journey began with "Lonely in America," a light-hearted romantic

Tirllok Malik- A Passionate Teller of Immigrant Stories

Tirllok Malik is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker who describes himself as "a student of cinema" and "a student of happy life yoga" who is driven by a passion for storytelling. "I hope to continue telling immigrant stories," he shared during a recent conversation. His work delves deeply into the challenges and conflicts of the immigrant experience. Malik believes, "Movies, especially those that are thought-provoking, can sometimes provide a healing experience for the audience."

Tirllok Malik is the founder and CEO of Apple Productions Inc. Apple Productions is an accomplished and diverse film production company, renowned for its versatility across genres and formats, spanning from

comedy that explored the nuances of love and cultural identity. This was followed by "Love, Lust & Marriage," starring Deepti Naval, an emotionally charged drama that delved into the intricacies of human relationships. Continuing to diversify, Malik has co-produced "Little Magician 3D," a delightful and visually enchanting children's film that captivated audiences of all ages.

Malik's other films like "Arya," a mystery thriller, keep viewers on the edge of their seats. His film "Khushiyaan," a heartwarming tale filmed across India and New York. Additionally, "On Golden Years," another romantic comedy of retirement of the American dream, Malik's portfolio also includes the short film "To New India with Love," further displaying his commitment to meaningful storytelling.



Malik was particularly fond of Dharmendra and his sons.
L to R: Dharmendra, Tirllok Malik, and Sunny Deol

In collaboration with iconic South Indian stars, Malik Line Produced "Sivaji - The Boss," starring Rajinikanth and directed by Shankar, as well as "Vettayadu Villayadu," starring Kamal Haasan and directed by Gautham Menon. Other line producing credits include "Vaaranam Aayiram," directed by Gautham Menon and starring Surya, and "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar," featuring Mammooty. The company also Line-Produced "Mehbooba," starring Sanjay Dutt and Manisha Koirala, as well as the television series "Des Pardes," directed by Harish Shah and produced by Albert Jasani.

Apple Productions Inc stands as a beacon of creativity and cross-cultural storytelling. Whether producing light-hearted romantic comedies, immersive children's films, gripping mysteries, or thought-provoking documentaries, the company's portfolio showcases a wide range of successful projects.

Malik's dedication to the craft and ability to collaborate with a diverse array of talents have made Apple Production Inc. grow. Malik wishes to continue telling more immigrant stories and bringing happiness through Happy Life Yoga workshops.

(Photos : courtesy Apple Productions Inc)

CONTD FROM PAGE 71

Satheesh K. Kathula - A Profile of Excellence in Medicine, Leadership, and Global Healthcare Advocacy

with the Community Service Award from the India Club of Dayton, reflecting his enduring commitment to giving back to the community.

In addition to his clinical and academic work, Dr. Kathula has explored the intersection of technology and healthcare through his involvement in the development of medical software applications. As a designer of healthcare technology solutions, he is dedicated to improving healthcare delivery and

efficiency through the use of innovative digital tools.

His role as Advisor to Pfizer's Multicultural Center for Excellence underscores his thought leadership in healthcare diversity and equity, and his contributions to expanding access to care for diverse populations. Moreover, Dr. Kathula's involvement with the Indo-American Eye Organization and other global health initiatives has made him a key figure in the advancement of global healthcare collaboration.

Dr. Kathula is a well-known figure in the media, regularly participating in radio and TV interviews to raise awareness about health issues affecting both the Indian-American community and the broader population. His appearances on platforms such as the BBC and various U.S. media outlets have allowed him to

advocate for the importance of preventive healthcare, cancer research, and community health programs.

Dr. Satheesh K. Kathula is a trailblazer whose impact resonates across multiple sectors of healthcare and community service. Whether as a physician, educator, leader, philanthropist, or innovator, his contributions continue to shape the future of medicine and public health on a global scale. With his visionary leadership, commitment to healthcare excellence, and dedication to improving lives, Dr. Kathula exemplifies the ideals of service, compassion, and professional integrity. His legacy of service, both within the medical community and the wider world, stands as an inspiration to future generations of healthcare leaders.



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Jodhpur: A royal heritage city

A popular travel destination in Rajasthan, Jodhpur is a sunny city set against the bright blue sky and is called the 'Blue city' since a number of houses and walls of the city are painted blue in color. The city of Jodhpur was founded in the year 1459 by Rao Jodha, the chief of the Rathore clan at the time.

After being driven out by the Afghans from their homeland in Kannauj, The Rathore clan fled to Pali, where they established marital ties with the local kingdom which increased their strength. Following which they drove out the Pratiharas from Mandore and established the town as their capital. Later as the need for a more secure capital arose, the Rathores decided to settle in the beautiful city of Jodhpur.

Jodhpur's sublime architecture is what catches the eyes of the tourists while sightseeing. Jodhpur offers its visitors an unbeatable blend of modern and ancient that divides the city neatly into two parts, Old and New.

The Old Jodhpur is crammed with the famous blue painted houses, consistently mushrooming hotels catering to hippie culture, and those interested in witnessing the rustic side of this one of the favorite getaways in Rajasthan. On the other side, the New Jodhpur area teems with malls, high end accommodations, amusement parks, cafes and lounges.

However, one cannot overlook the gorgeous suburb of Jodhpur that is adorned with lakes like Kaylana, and the places nearby such as the Osian village, dotted with beautiful ancient Hindu and Jain temples with a desert area for camel safari. Indeed, Jodhpur is an enriching and fulfilling experience for family vacations, honeymoon, history lovers, students, and for that matter, even for solo travelers.

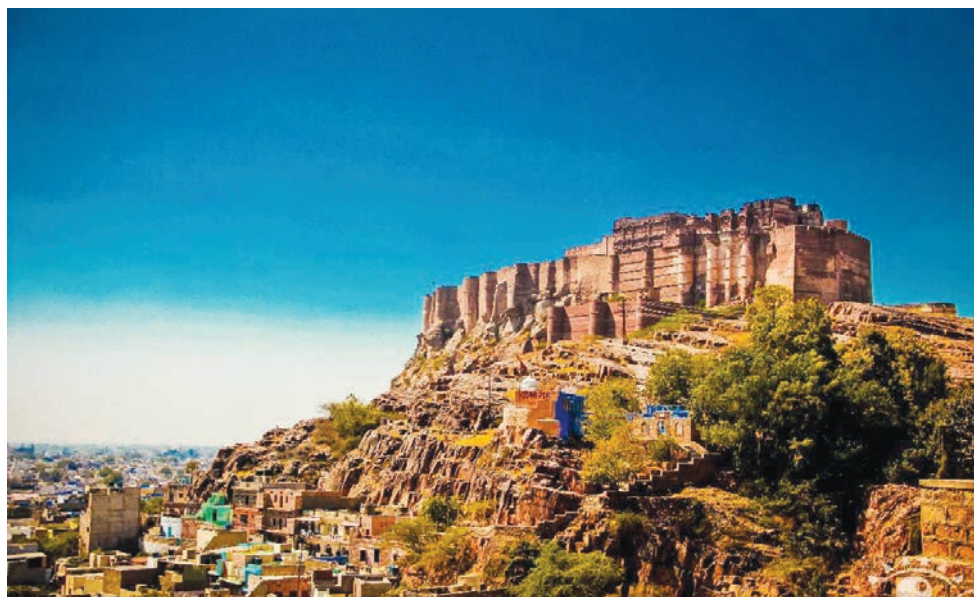
Apart from Mehrangarh and Umaid Bhawan Palace, the top places to visit in Jodhpur include the white marbled Jaswant Thada, Mandore Garden, and the Masuria Hills, popular for offering panoramic views of the city. There are also a large number of Hindu temples in Jodhpur, beckoning an ideal destination for pilgrimage tours. Another must see place is the Sardar Government Museum that displays ancient inscriptions, coins, sculptures, etc.

While Jodhpur is famous for its palaces and architecture, it is equally known for its Pyaaz Kachori, Mirchi Bada and Mawa Kachori, among other delicacies.

Read along to find out the top tourist destinations in Jodhpur as we bring to you a travel guide on Jodhpur tourism.

Forts and Palaces

Perched on top of a hill at a height of 410 feet above the city of Jodhpur is the most beautiful structure of the city, the Mehrangarh Fort. Built in the year 1459 by Rao Jodha of the Rathore clan, the fort is an architectural marvel and is steeped in history.



The fort has 7 huge gates which were built by different rulers at different points of time and were made as a reminder of their victory in battles. The fort houses a number of magnificent palaces namely, the Phool Mahal, Moti Mahal, Sheesh Mahal, Jhanki Mahal, Takhat Vilas and Zenana Mahal, and now functions as a museum.

The Phool Mahal is the most elaborate palace in the fort. As the name suggests, Phool Mahal was designed to look like the most beautiful flower, and it does. The palace was made by Maharaja Abhaya Singh and was intended to be a pleasure chamber for the King

The interior of the palace is laden with gold, uses a colorful palette, and is adorned with paintings and intricate carvings on its walls and ceilings. The built and design of the palace are a fine testament to the extravagant taste of the royals.

Moti Mahal translates to 'Palace of pearls' is considered to be the biggest palace at Mehrangarh and was made by Raja Sur Singh as a darbar or the court where he would listen to the concerns of his subjects.

The palace earns the name due to its surface being covered with a mixture of finely crushed seashells and lime plaster

which gives it a shiny look. The intricacies of its interior with the beautiful mirror work, religious paintings and stained glass windows make the palace a sight to behold.

The Sheesh Mahal or the Palace of Mirrors is another exquisite palace in Mehrangarh Fort. The palace is known for the marvelous interior with its walls and ceilings covered in mirrors of different sizes and the walls adorning painted panels of various Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Sheesh Mahal was built by Maharaja Ajit Singh and was one of his private chambers.

Built by Maharaja Takhat Singh, the Takhat Vilas served as his residence during his reign and displays a blend of Rajput and British architecture. The walls and ceiling of the palace are decorated with paintings which showcase stories from Hindu mythology.

The Jhanki Mahal was built for the women of the royal family to observe the royal ceremonies since they were barred from coming into public view, and so they observed the ceremonies through the windows of the palace.

This palace at Mehrangarh Fort called the Zenana Mahal was built for the royal women and was kept separated from the men's quarters. The royal women lived at the palace and spent a lot of their time here. The noticeable architecture of the palace includes structures made of sandstones and intricate carvings.

Another marvel at Jodhpur by the Rathore dynasty is the Umaid Bhawan Palace. Built by Maharaja Umaid Singh, it is another place for tourists to explore. The Palace is divided into three parts, a luxury stay hotel, museum and the private residence of the royal family of Jodhpur.

Temples of Jodhpur- Carved for the Gods

Apart from the majestic palaces and forts, Jodhpur also has some mesmerizing temples as well. Take a look at them while on your trip to the city.

The Chamunda Mata Temple was built by Rao Jodha of the Rathore dynasty, and is situated at the Mehrangarh Fort.

The Rathore King brought the deity of Goddess Chamunda from the previous capital of Mandore to Jodhpur and established it at the temple. The story of the temple revolves around the making of the Mehrangarh Fort.

Apparently before the King decided to build his capital at this hilltop, it used to be a residing place of a certain Sage, who did not wish to move even after multiple requests by the King. As a result, he was forced to leave the hilltop by the King's troop. He left, but cursed the kingdom will forever face water scarcity and drought. To avert this curse, the Chamunda Mata Temple was set up. Another marvelous temple at Jodhpur is the Mahamandir Temple. The beautiful temple is a Shaivite temple and is supported by 84 intricately carved pillars. The temple is a popular site for tourists when they visit Jodhpur due to its exquisite architecture and is a place you must visit on your trip to the city.

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History This Week DEC 27- JAN 02

DECEMBER 27

December 27, 1927 - Josef Stalin consolidated his power in Soviet Russia by expelling rival Leon Trotsky from the Soviet Communist Party.

December 27, 1945 - The International Monetary Fund was established in Washington, D.C.

December 27, 1949 - The Dutch transferred sovereignty of Indonesia to the new United States of Indonesia. The new nation retained a formal association with the Netherlands until 1954, when an independent Republic of Indonesia was formed. Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia. It consists of 13,677 islands along the equator between the Indian and Pacific oceans, and a population of over 150 million.

December 27, 1996 - A genocide trial began concerning the killing of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis in Rwanda. In 1994, a bloody civil war had broken out between the two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. After the Hutu army seized power it had waged a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against the Tutsi population.



Birthdays - Actress Marlene Dietrich (1901-1992) was born in Berlin, Germany. She starred in *The Blue Angel*, the first 'talkie' made in Germany. She then moved to Hollywood and starred in films including; *Destry Rides Again*, *Touch of Evil*, *Judgment at Nuremberg* and *Witness for the Prosecution*. In the 1950's she toured the world as a cabaret singer in a stage revue.

DECEMBER 28



December 28, 1947 - Victor Emmanuel III, the last King of Italy, died while in exile in Alexandria, Egypt. He had become king upon the assassination of his father in 1900. Following World War I, he named Benito Mussolini to form a cabinet and then failed to prevent Mussolini's Fascists from seizing power. In 1946, he abdicated and went into exile.

Birthdays - Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) the 28th U.S. President was born in Staunton, Virginia (as Thomas Woodrow

Wilson). He served two terms from 1912 through 1921. Best remembered for stating, "The world must be made safe for democracy," while asking Congress for a declaration of war against Germany in 1917. Following the death of his first, he married Edith Bolling Galt in 1915. He had suffered a paralytic stroke in 1919 and never regained his health, leading to speculation that his wife was actually running the White House during his illness.

DECEMBER 29

December 29, 1940 - During the Blitz, German aircraft dropped thousands of incendiary bombs on the center of London, causing the worst fire damage since the great fire of 1666. St. Paul's Cathedral survived but eight other Wren churches along with the Guildhall and Old Bailey were badly damaged.

December 29, 1965 - During the Vietnam War, North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh rejected unconditional peace talks offered by the U.S.

December 29, 1989 - Playwright and human rights activist Vaclav Havel was sworn in as president of Czechoslovakia. He had formerly been denounced by Czech Communists as an enemy of the state and had spent five years in jail for his beliefs.



Birthdays - Cellist Pablo Casals (1876-1973) was born in Venrdell, Spain. He was one of the most influential musicians of the 20th Century whose superb ability in playing the cello set new performance standards.

DECEMBER 30



December 30, 1947 - King Michael of Romania was forced to abdicate after the Communists seized power.

December 30, 1988 - President Ronald Reagan and President-elect George Bush were subpoenaed to testify in the trial of Oliver North, a former White House aide implicated in the Iran-Contra affair in which arms were secretly sold to Iran while profits from the sale were diverted to guerrillas trying to topple the Nicaraguan government in South America.

December 30, 1993 - Israel and the Vatican signed an agreement on mutual

recognition, seeking to end 2,000 years of unfriendly Christian-Jewish relations.

Birthdays - Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was born in Bombay, India. He was a British poet, novelist, short story writer, best known for his children's stories such as *The Jungle Book*.

Birthdays - Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo (1884-1948) was born in Tokyo. He led Japan during World War II and was arrested in August 1945 as a war criminal, tried, then hanged in 1948.

DECEMBER 31



December 31, 1971 - Austrian Kurt Waldheim became U.N. Secretary-General following the retirement of U Thant. Waldheim served until 1981 then resumed his career in Austrian politics. In 1986, he ran for the presidency. During the campaign, it was revealed he had likely given false information concerning his military service in the German Army during World War II. He claimed he left the army in 1942 after being wounded on the Russian Front, but allegations arose that he was actually lieutenant in 1943-44 stationed in the Balkans when Greek Jews were rounded up and sent to Nazi death camps and when atrocities were committed against Yugoslav resistance fighters.

Birthdays - George C. Marshall (1880-1959) was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He had genius for organization and served as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army throughout World War II, expanding the Army from 130,000 to 8,300,000 men. He then served as Secretary of State under President Truman and designed the Marshall Plan for the relief of war torn Europe and to halt the spread of Communism.

JANUARY 1

New Year's Day - The most celebrated holiday around the world.

January 1, 1942 - Twenty six countries signed the Declaration of the United Nations, in Washington, D.C., reaffirming their opposition to the Axis powers and confirming that no single nation would make a separate peace.

January 1, 1958 - The EEC (European Economic Community) known as the Common Market was formed by Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and The Netherlands in order to remove trade barriers and coordinate trade policies.



January 1, 1959 - Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba after leading a revolution that drove out Dictator Fulgencio Batista. Castro then established a Communist dictatorship.

January 1, 1973 - Britain, Ireland and Denmark became members of the Common Market (EEC).

January 1, 1975 - During the Watergate scandal, former top aides to President Nixon including former Attorney General John Mitchell, Domestic Affairs Advisor John Ehrlichman and Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, were found guilty of obstruction of justice.

January 1, 1979 - China and the U.S. established diplomatic relations, 30 years after the foundation of the People's Republic.

January 1, 1993 - Czechoslovakia broke into separate Czech and Slovak republics.

January 1, 1999 - Eleven European nations began using a new single European currency, the Euro, for electronic financial and business transactions. Participating countries included; Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.



Birthdays - American Patriot Paul Revere (1735-1818) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Best known for his ride on the night of April 18, 1775, warning Americans of British plans to raid Lexington and Concord.

Birthdays - Betsy Ross (1752-1836) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was a seamstress credited with helping to originate and sew the Stars and Stripes flag of America in 1776.

JANUARY 2

January 2, 1942 - During World War II in the Pacific, the Japanese captured the Philippines capital of Manila and the nearby air base at Cavite.



January 2, 1960 - In Washington, D.C., Senator John F. Kennedy announced his intention to seek the Democratic presidential nomination.

School and College Going Students Enlightened at GOPIO-CT's 'College and Beyond' Event



GOPIO-CT Youth Meeting Panelists developing a strategy for a successful panel discussion

DECEMBER 26, 2024

STAMFORD, CT (TIP): The Global Organization of People of Indian Origin - Connecticut Chapter (GOPIO-CT) hosted a highly engaging and insightful event designed to empower high school students as they navigate the critical transitions to college and professional life. The event, held on Tues, Dec 24th at Hamilton Inn and Suites, Stamford. It featured an impressive panel of speakers, including college students, recent graduates, early-career professionals, and a distinguished professor, who shared their real-world experiences and actionable advice.

The program aimed to demystify the college application process, shed light on the realities of college life, and offer valuable strategies for academic and personal success. It also provided insights into the transition from college to the professional world, equipping attendees with practical tips to build a strong foundation for their future careers.

The panel was moderated by Nandu Kuppuswamy, Head of Investor Relations, MCR Investors. The panelists were: Sraavani Akarapu - UPenn Graduate, Megha Gupta - Alum Purdue University, Dhruv Hill - Freshman, San Diego State University, Arnav Jhangiani - Junior, Finance Major, Arizona State University, Himani Narayan, Junior, Pace University, Amrutha Nandakumar - 1st Year, Oxford University, Brian Thomas - Sophomore at NYU Stern School of Business, Curren Iyer - Senior Product Operations Manager, Ramp (Harvard and HBS alum) and Cecil Nazareth, Faculty at Fordham University Business School, CPA, Author, Motivational Speaker

SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EVENT WERE AS FOLLOWS:

DYNAMIC PANEL DISCUSSIONS: Each panelist brought unique perspectives and expertise, creating a rich tapestry of advice tailored to students at different stages of their educational journeys. Topics ranged from crafting compelling college applications to managing priorities in college and establishing a successful professional path.

INTERACTIVE Q&A SESSIONS: Attendees had the opportunity to engage directly with the panelists, asking questions about challenges and opportunities in higher education and beyond. This fostered a lively and interactive exchange of ideas.

REAL-WORLD INSIGHTS: College students discussed balancing academics with extracurricular activities and building meaningful connections on campus. Recent graduates highlighted strategies for adapting to new environments, while early professionals shared advice on leveraging internships and networking to launch their careers.

EXPERT ACADEMIC GUIDANCE: The professor on the panel provided a comprehensive overview of how students can make the most of their college experience, emphasizing the importance of skills, purpose, and lifelong learning.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR ATTENDEES:

START EARLY: Begin college applications and research well in advance to identify institutions and programs that align with personal goals. Choose Early Decision & Early Action when clear about the choice of schools.

PRIORITIZE SELF-DISCOVERY: Use college as a time to explore interests, build skills, and develop a growth mindset.

FOCUS ON BALANCE: Manage academics, extracurricular activities, social connections, and time effectively to create a holistic and fulfilling college experience.

PREPARE FOR PROFESSIONAL LIFE: Gain real-world experience through internships, mentorship, alumni network, and active participation in industry-related activities.

MEMORABLE QUOTES FROM THE PANELISTS:

SRAAVANI: 'Don't do something just for how it will look on college applications. Do something you are genuinely interested in, and that which shows your authentic self - e.g. gardening.'

DHRUV: 'As you receive responses to your college applications, remember that rejection is redirection. It is an opportunity to look at options you might not have considered and may turn out better for you.'

HIMANI: 'In the first year, get involved, but focus on losing FOMO as some event is happening every night. Go to events that matter.'

BRIAN: 'For your college application, create a unique and compelling story that differentiates you. Turn any negative energy to positive energy.'

AMRUTHA: 'When transitioning to college life, saying NO is important. Don't say YES to everything. It is okay to say NO.'



GOPIO-CT Youth Panel Audience and students interacting

PROFESSOR NAZARETH: 'Focus on 1) skills (what can you do?) and not just getting a degree, and 2) purpose (something that is bigger than yourself).'

The event was graced by GOPIO officials including GOPIO International Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham. After the panel discussion, Dr. Abraham briefly spoke on GOPIO International and the roles the various chapters are playing in community service and activities of wider interest to the local society.

ABOUT GOPIO

The Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the well-being and advancement of people of Indian origin worldwide. Over the last 18 years, GOPIO-CT, a chapter of GOPIO International has become an active and dynamic organization hosting interactive sessions with policy makers and academicians, community events, youth mentoring and networking workshops, and working with other area organizations to help create a better future. GOPIO-CT serves as a non-partisan, secular, civic and community service organization - promoting awareness of Indian culture, customs and contributions of people of Indian origin through community programs, forums, events and youth activities. It seeks to strengthen partnerships and create an ongoing dialogue with local communities.

For more information about this event or to learn about upcoming GOPIO initiatives, please contact GOPIO-CT Board Member Nandu Kuppuswamy at 617-938-3639, email; nkuppuswamy@gmail.com



SA qualify for WTC final after thrilling victory against Pak

Fast bowlers Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen turned batting heroes as South Africa edged Pakistan by two wickets to win a thrilling first Test and book themselves a place in next year's World Test Championship final. Rabada scored 31 and Jansen 16 in an unbeaten partnership of 51 off 50 balls to see South Africa over the line and deny Pakistan a dramatic comeback win after Mohammed Abbas took six wickets as he shredded through the home batting order.

The Test had a finish more like that of a T20 match as the tailenders delivered success after South Africa had slumped dramatically before lunch and offered Pakistan the chance to win a Test in South Africa for the first time in 18 years. Rabada, who is ranked second best Test bowler, emerged, however, as an unlikely batting hero while Jansen delivered the winning runs with a classy drive to the boundary, amid scenes of delirious celebration.

"Quite an emotional one and a good advert for Test cricket. A lot of joy and happiness for us but a bit of a rollercoaster. We did it the hard way but we're glad to be able to get the result," said home captain Temba Bavuma.

It was heartbreaking for Pakistan as Abbas had brought them close with four wickets in a marathon spell of 13 successive overs before lunch as South Africa made heavy work of chasing a modest target of 148.

Workhorse Jasprit Bumrah picks 13th 5-wicket haul after hardest toil in MCG Test

MELBOURNE (TIP)

Jasprit Bumrah delivered another bowling masterclass, securing his 13th five-wicket haul in Test cricket as India bowled out Australia for 228 on Day 5 of the Boxing Day Test at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). Starting the day with the challenging task of breaking Australia's stubborn resistance, Bumrah wasted no time. In just four deliveries, he dismissed Nathan Lyon, ending Australia's second innings at 234. This left the hosts setting India a target of 340 runs for victory.

Bumrah returned with impressive figures of 5 for 57 from 24.4 overs, delivering an exhausting yet immensely rewarding performance. This effort marked a career-high workload, as he bowled an incredible 53.2 overs in the ongoing Boxing Day Test at the MCG, the most he has bowled in his career.

Bumrah's dominance at the MCG is nothing short of phenomenal. With 24 wickets across six matches at a staggering average of 14.66 and a strike rate of 32.7, he has been the backbone of India's success at the MCG. His latest five-wicket haul adds to a glittering resume that includes standout figures such as 6/33, 3/53, 4/56, 2/54, 4/99, and 5/57. This sustained brilliance not only underscores his mastery of the craft but also establishes him as one of the finest modern-day performers on cricket's biggest stage.

Australia's innings began without fireworks as debutant Sam Konstas (8)



fell early to Bumrah. Marnus Labuschagne stood firm with a gritty 70, but his dismissal triggered a dramatic collapse. From a steady 80/2, Australia slumped to 91/6, undone by India's relentless pace attack. Pat Cummins fought valiantly with a defiant 41, supported by a frustrating final-wicket stand between Scott Boland and Nathan Lyon, which extended Australia's lead to over 325. However, Bumrah's precision ensured there was no escape for Australia.

It has become crystal clear over the last few years that Jasprit Bumrah would end up as one of the best fast bowlers the game has ever seen. On Sunday, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, he firmed up the general perception further with a tangible statistical milestone — the Indian pacer became the first bowler ever in Test cricket to claim 200 wickets at an

average of under 20. He has picked up 200 Test scalps giving just 19.38 runs per wicket. If that doesn't sound impressive enough, just look at the names that follow him on the list of fast bowlers having the lowest Test averages — the great Malcolm Marshall (20.94), Joel Garner (20.97) and Curtly Ambrose (20.99).

Ahead of the Australia series, Bumrah had done enough to establish himself as a modern day great. With his breathtaking performance in this series, he has taken giant strides towards cementing his place in the league of all-time great fast bowlers. Out of the total 56 Australian wickets that have fallen so far in four Test matches, Bumrah has picked up 29, more than 50 per cent, at a strike rate of 29.10 and an average of 13.24. Bumrah has single-handedly kept India alive in the series, as far as bowling is concerned.

World Championships Rapid and Blitz: Koneru Humpy becomes world rapid champion for second time

NEW YORK (TIP)

Grandmaster Koneru Humpy capped a wonderful year for Indian chess, defeating Irene Sukandar of Indonesia to emerge the women's world rapid chess champion here on Sunday.

India No. 1 Humpy, who had first won the event back in 2019, is only the second player after China's Ju Wenjun to clinch the title more than once. Humpy's achievement laced a sensational year for the chess fraternity after D Gukesh defeated China's Ding Liren to emerge champion in the classical format World Championship recently. In September, India had also won its first-ever gold medals in the open and women's categories in the Chess Olympiad.

The Indian, who started the tournament here with a first-round defeat, was the lone winner in the 11th and final round. She topped the table with 8.5 points, half a point clear of six others including compatriot D Harika.

"I'm very excited and happy. In fact, I expected it to be a very tough day, like some sort of tiebreak. But when I



Volodar Murzin and Koneru Humpy after winning the titles in the open and women's categories, respectively, in New York. PTI

finished the game, the arbitrator told me (about winning), and it was a tense moment for me," said Humpy. "So, this is quite unexpected because the whole year I have been struggling and I had very bad tournaments where I just ended up in last place. So, this came as a surprise," she added.

Wenjun finished second as the tiebreak was resolved while Kateryna Lagno of Russia ended third. Harika, who had eight points, had to be content with a fifth-

place finish.

Humpy credited her family for the success. "I think it was possible because of the support from my family. My husband and my parents... they support me a lot. My parents look after my daughter when I travel. It's not easy to become a world champion at 37. It's quite difficult when you get older to keep that motivation and stay sharp when required. I'm glad that I made it," she said.

The seasoned player said she was motivated to do well after her first round defeat, which saw her eventually slipping to 2.5 points after four rounds. Humpy said her victory will now prompt other Indians to take up chess.

"I think it's high time for India. We also have Gukesh as world champion and now I got the second world title in the rapid event. So, I think this will motivate a lot of youngsters to take up chess professionally," she said.

Meanwhile, in the open section, 18-year-old Russian Grandmaster Volodar Murzin won the gold medal ahead of a star-studded field showing tremendous nerves.

A glimpse into 2024: Eye Foundation of America



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



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

Guatemala Eye Camp

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



Ghana Eye Camp



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

Rajahmundry, AP at Goutami Eye Institute

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



It's not too late to join. Finish the year strong by joining a new community. **Become a Vision Ambassador and deliver the gift of sight to children in need.**

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