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-: 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 18, 2025.

For any questions, please email or call 646-247-9458.

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Indian Diaspora Integral to Vision of Developed India: President Murmu

President of Trinidad & Tobago among 27 felicitated at the valedictory function



President Droupadi Murmu with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman recipients at the Valedictory session

JANUARY 10, 2025
BHUBANESWAR (TIP): President Droupadi Murmu addressed the valedictory session of the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention on January 10, 2025, underscoring the Indian Diaspora's pivotal role in shaping

India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047. The event also saw the presentation of the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards. In her address, President Murmu emphasized the Diaspora's contribution to India's global reputation in fields such

as technology, medicine, arts, and entrepreneurship. She commended the awardees, stating that their achievements inspire millions worldwide and bring immense pride to India.

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US President Biden awards Pope Francis the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction



US President Joe Biden on Sunday conferred Pope Francis with the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction, recognizing the Pope's significant influence and contributions, just days before leaving the White House.

JANUARY 12, 2025
WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): US President Joe Biden on Saturday, January 11, conferred Pope Francis with the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction, recognizing the Pope's significant influence and contributions, just days before leaving the White House. Taking to social media platform X (formerly Twitter), President Biden expressed his admiration for Pope Francis and called the leader of the Catholic Church the "People's Pope."

"Pope Francis, your humility and your grace are beyond words, and your love for all is unparalleled.

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Xi, Bolsanaro, Meloni Invited; Jaishankar to represent India at Trump Inauguration

JANUARY 13, 2025
WASHINGTON, DC / NEW DELHI (TIP): External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar will attend the swearing-in ceremony of US President-elect Donald Trump, the Ministry of External Affairs announced on Sunday, January 12. This comes



India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar will represent government of India at Trump's inauguration on January 20 in Washington, DC.

after Jaishankar received an invitation from the Trump-Vance inaugural committee.

"On the invitation of the Trump-Vance

Inaugural Committee, External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar will represent the Government of India at the Swearing-In Ceremony of President-Elect Donald J. Trump as the 47th President of the United States of America," said the MEA press note.

During his visit, Jaishankar is expected to meet with representatives of the incoming Trump administration, as

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Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto likely to be Chief Guest at India's Republic Day

The newly elected President of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto is likely to be the Chief Guest at the 76th Republic Day celebrations of India

JANUARY 12, 2025
NEW DELHI (TIP): The newly elected President of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto is likely to be the Chief Guest at the 76th Republic Day celebrations of India, according to information received from reliable sources. The visit by the Indonesian leader becomes significant as India and Indonesia are commemorating 75 years of diplomatic relations.

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Has PBD started losing its sheen?

By Prabhjot Singh



The Ministry of External Affairs and the Odisha Government are patting their backs for the "overwhelming success" of the just concluded biannual event for the elite of the Indian Diaspora.

The three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Divas held at a specially erected tented township at Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha, not only saw 27 eminent members of the Indian Diaspora drawn from 24 countries being honored with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards, but also witnessed concerted efforts by the NDA government in projecting "Viksit" (developed) Bharat by 2047, the centennial year of India's independence.

Overall, delegates were appreciative of the arrangements made for the smooth conduct of the convention. Odisha government put its best foot forward to attract Foreign Direct Investment in various areas, specifically in mining and tourism sectors.

"Focus was rightly more on the projection of India as an emerging economic power but at the same time, the other party in the convention, the Diaspora, was left wondering at its shrinking space in the bilateral convention," commented a number of delegates from the USA, Australia, and the UK.

They held that the reason for the decreasing participation of delegates from the West or the developed nations was the changing mandate of the convention. Instead, this time some of the Asian nations, including Mauritius, Oman, Qatar, UAE, Malaysia, and a few African nations constituted more than two-thirds strength of all delegates.

The focus was more on showcasing the progress the country has made during the present NDA regime in various fields, including technology. It also provided a platform for the Odisha government to showcase to the world the "investment opportunities" it offers in various fields in general and tourism in particular.

It was in 2002 that the then BJP-led NDA government under the stewardship of Atal Bihari Vajpayee endorsed the recommendation of the LM Singhvi

Committee report, and the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention was launched.

This mega event was originally planned to act as a bridge between the overseas community and the Union Government in making them partners in the overall development of India as a "new economic" power. It was mandated to provide a platform for the exchange of views on the issues facing the country and its Diaspora worldwide.

Of late, feel the delegates, the NDA government has been hijacking the agenda of this mega event by projecting its policies and programs. Issues and problems facing the Diaspora are gradually getting pushed to the periphery. Even individual or institutional achievements of the overseas community are getting marginalized. The only consolatory component of the biannual convention is the felicitation of the elite of the overseas community.

In the 2025 PBD 27 such personalities and institutions who have made a mark in community service; business, trade, and industry; science and technology; education and academics; politics; environment; healthcare and medicine; and art, culture and literature were celebrated by the President, Droupadi Murmu. Some areas, like sports, where members of the Indian Diaspora have made laudable singular and collective achievements, are still to get recognition through Pravasi Samman awards. Of the nearly 300 overseas Indians honored till now, not even a single sportsperson figure in the list.

Monologues have replaced dialogues. Even the participation of youth and women, too, has shown a decline. This is in spite of the fact that the first day of the convention remains committed to youth development and its connectivity to the roots.

Of late, leaders in science, technology, research, business, trade, industry, and other areas have started skipping this

convention. Even some of the political bigwigs, including the first Great Britain Prime Minister of Indian descent, Rishi Sunak, and the first woman US Presidential candidate, Kamla Harris, did not find mention in the event designed specifically for the likes of them.

Interest in the States, too, has been diminishing in the PBD. In the initial editions, the States used to celebrate their "days" by showcasing the progress they have made since independence while offering attractive investment opportunities to major industrial, business, financial, hospitality and tourist industry giants. Instead, the focus now veers on the host State only.

Odisha, too, has joined the select band of States which have named a nodal minister as a one-man authority or single window clearance procedure to facilitate investments. The earlier practice of various States putting up special stalls and making their senior officials available to participating delegates has been discontinued.

Though the chief guest at this biannual mega convention is normally a Head of a state of Indian descent, participation of other overseas politicians of Indian descent has diminished.

Many delegates held that the programme needs a revisit and redesign to meet the rapidly changing requirements of the of the nearly 36 million strong overseas Indian community. India, they say, remains the single largest source of both skilled and unskilled manpower and contagious issues related to identity and globalization need to be addressed more aggressively.

Some developed nations like the USA, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, acknowledged as top favorite destinations for Indian youth, including students, are making rapid changes to their immigration policies and programs because of which there hangs a sword of uncertainty, and their apprehensions of "deportation" from the countries of their present abode need to be taken up more seriously at the events like PBD.

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3-Day 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas at Bhubaneswar Concludes

- Over 3000 Delegates from across 70 countries attended, claim EAM Officials
- 27 Honored with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman
- Participation of Indian Diaspora from Developed Countries declines
- Youth participation Inadequate



PM in a group photograph during the inauguration of the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention at Bhubaneswar, in Odisha on January 09, 2025.

Photo/ PIB

I.S. SALUJA
JANUARY 11, 2025

BHUBANESWAR (TIP): The 3-day 18th edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas concluded here on Friday, January 10th, with the President of India Droupadi Murmu presiding over the Valedictory session during which she presented the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman to 27 distinguished persons of Indian origin.

(READ THE STORY ON THE FRONT PAGE)

More than 3000 delegates drawn from around the globe participated in the biannual event held every year from January 8 to 10 to commemorate the return of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, from his stint in South Africa. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was started in 2003 and has served as a unique platform for overseas Indians to share their achievements and issues with people and governments of the country of their original domicile.

The 18th PBD was inaugurated by

Prime Minister of India, Narendra Damodardass Modi on Thursday, January 9, 2025, at a specially erected hall in the sprawling Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar. He was accorded a rousing reception by the large gathering of NRI's, local politicians, guests and officials.



Prof. Indrajit S Saluja



Prabhjot Singh

The Indian Panorama team, which included editor Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, senior journalist Prabhjot Singh and the on-assignment photographer Jay Mandal, covered the three-day mega



Jay Mandal

event to celebrate the vibrant Indian Diaspora has filed a couple of stories which are being published.

CONTD ON PAGE 4

Take India Abroad, says PM Narendra Modi

- It is time to spread a message about India's rich and cultural heritage. As ambassadors of India, you must also look beyond some major cities and explore small towns and villages that make this country unique.
- Wherever you live in any part of the world, plant a sapling in your mother's name in the new city of your domicile. Spread a message about the philosophy, diversity and rich civilization you come from.
- Institute awards to commemorate local heroes and Indian missions overseas will extend all possible support. When you come next time for the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, bring along at least five people from your new neighborhoods.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the gathering during the inauguration of 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' convention, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha on January 9, 2025.

Photo: YouTube/@NarendraModi

BY PRABHJOT SINGH
JANUARY 8, 2025

BHUBANESWAR (TIP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his inaugural address to the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas at Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar on Thursday, January 8 was accorded a standing ovation on his arrival at the nearly packed specially erected pandal.

Though the verve and exuberance that usually accompany his addresses at such august gatherings were missing, he made up for it with his exclamations, appealing to the participating delegates to play a proactive role in projecting India abroad.

More than 3000 delegates drawn from around the globe are participating in the biannual event held every year from January 8 to 10 to commemorate the return of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, from his stint in South Africa. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was started in 2003 and has served as a unique platform for overseas Indians to share their achievements and issues with people and governments of the country of their original domicile.



A view of the gathering

Prime Minister eulogized the contribution of the Indian Diaspora in making it the number one nation in the world for remittances back home. Stressing the need for connecting the new generation with its roots in India, Narendra Modi wanted the delegates to talk about India, its history, its culture, its diversity, and its progress not only with their children but also in their neighborhoods and workplaces.



Federation of Indian Associations, NY- NJ-CT-NE (FIA) Delegates at the PBD 2025

Photo: Jay Mandal-on assignment

He exhorted them to work as ambassadors of India as the country was making rapid strides in all areas, including technology.

Prime Minister also remotely flagged off the inaugural journey of the Pravasi Bharatiya Express, a special Tourist train for the Indian diaspora, which will depart from the Nizamuddin Railway Station in Delhi and would travel to multiple destinations of tourist and religious importance in India for three weeks. The Pravasi Bharatiya Express will be conducted under the Pravasi Teertha Darshan Yojana of the Ministry of External Affairs.

He also urged the delegates to visit all places of religious and historic significance, including Prayagraj, to avail themselves of a rare opportunity of attending the "Mahakumbh."

After inaugurating the convention, PM Modi also went around various exhibitions and put up different departments of both the Union Government and the host Odisha government to showcase the progress the country has made since attaining Independence in 1947.

In 2047, when India completes its centenary of independence, it will be a superpower.



Prime Minister Modi inaugurated and went round the 4 exhibitions at the PBD

Mr. Modi inaugurated four exhibitions - Vishwaroop

Ram: The Universal Legacy of Ramayana - by ICCR; Diaspora's Contribution to Technology-- by MEA (curated by Dr Masooma Rizvi); "Bharat Bharatiya: Swadesh Pardes - Abhilekhiye Virasat - Launch of Oman collection", by National Archives of India; and exhibition on Heritage and Culture of Odisha by Odisha government.

Earlier, External Affairs Minister, Dr S. Jaishankar, and Odisha Governor, Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister, Mohan Charan Majhi, talked about the importance of the PBD and the role the Indian Diaspora has played in both rebuilding India and its image overseas.



The Chief Guest, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Christine Carla Kangaloo addressed the gathering virtually. During her address, she remembered with fondness and pride her Indian ancestry as well as the contribution of Indian diaspora in Trinidad and Tobago.

Photo: ANI

The Chief guest, the President of Trinidad and Tobago Christine Carla Kangaloo while addressing the august gathering remotely, talked about her own journey and also those of others in her country who migrated to Trinidad and Tobago more than a hundred years ago.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2025 starts with a focus on youth

"The customary conclave of our younger generation as part of the PBD celebrations is a testimony to their vital role and significant contribution in the building of a Viksit Bharat and IN's global image": EAM



India's EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar inaugurated the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Bhubaneswar on January 8, 2025



India's EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar with admiring delegates

PRABHJOT SINGH
JANUARY 8, 2025

BHUBANESWAR (TIP): States that invest in their youth and stay focused on trade, technology, and tourism are bound to succeed in the present competitive world. These inferences were drawn at the preliminary session on "Beyond Borders: Diaspora Youth Leadership in a Globalized World" and the joint business session with the host Odisha government on Wednesday, the opening day of the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, at a sprawling tented township at Janata Maidan.

India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar, who was the guest of honor on the inaugural day, focused on the transformative role the Indian youth could play in various key areas of development. "It is critical to invest in our youth in order to achieve their full potential," Jaishankar said, adding that maintaining their role is important in key areas like AI and EV, innovation and start-ups, space, drones, and sports.

More than 3000 delegates drawn from all over the world are participating in the annual three-day event dedicated to Indian Diaspora. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will formally declare the convention open in this historic city of temples on Thursday.

Odisha's government has put its best foot forward to showcase its development to the elite of the Indian Diaspora while seeking FDI in various projects, including tourism.

"We have been overwhelmed by the reception we got on our arrival here," says Professor Indrajit Saluja, a US delegate. All delegates were accorded a traditional welcome at Biju Patnaik International Airport. Bhubaneswar has been given a facelift, as most of the official and commercial buildings have been decked out and illuminated at night. from San Francisco was all praise for the organizers for taking delegates to various shrines, including famous Jagannath temple at Puri.

Ravindra Jain, who has made Myanmar as his second home, also lauded the Odisha government for holding the event. "Last year, I played a role when the PBD was held in my hometown of Indore," he said.

"The youth have an important role to play in the present-day competitive world which is fast becoming a global village," he said, revealing that his son, now settled in British Columbia, had the distinction of becoming President of the Kelowna University Students Association in 2019.

Though there are not many youth delegates attending the convention, yet their growing participation in the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is encouraging, says Naresh Chavda, a delegate from Canada.

"Efforts of the Indian government to encourage youth of Indian origin to discover their roots and stay connected with the motherland of their ancestors is a welcome sign. India leads the world with its growing and empowered youth force," he added.

A large part of the government's actions was to give the right motivation to the younger generation to accelerate their efforts, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar said holding that "while development itself is a very complex task, it becomes much easier when we are confident that nothing is beyond us," EAM Jaishankar remarked.

He also highlighted an observation by badminton star PV Sindhu, on why Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a youth icon. "She summed it up as his attitude which moved our nation from 'chalta hai' to 'badal sakta hai' to 'hoga kaise nahin'," he recalled.

Jaishankar believes this is the spirit which has driven India's achievements in recent years, from supplying vaccines and medicines to the entire world during COVID-19 to undertaking missions like the Chandrayaan landing, the Aditya L1 observatory and the proposed Gaganyaan human spaceflight endeavor.

Ambitious visions need strong foundations to be realized, EAM Jaishankar remarked, stating, "It is critical to invest in our youth in order to achieve their full potential." He also referred to transformational efforts of campaigns and programs like Swachh Bharat, Beti Padhao, Awas and Anna Yojana, Mudra, Swanidhi, Ayushman Bharat, and Jal Jeevan.

"If you were to see them in their entirety, connecting those dots will give you an appreciation of how we are securing the future of our youth. They will help bring their skills and creativity to the fore, ensuring that India's talents are fully available to the global workplace," he stated.

Later speaking at the Joint Business Session with the Government of Odisha on the side-lines of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Jaishankar highlighted the role of the 3Ts -Trade, Technology, and Tourism - for a state like Odisha.

Odisha has resources which need investments, connectivity, and value addition to increase Trade and leverage the state's location, he stated. He referred to the Bali Yatra, Odisha's historical connection with Southeast Asia. "Whether it is orthodox shipping, whether it is green shipping, whether it is power grids, whether as I say it is resources to value add on it, the potential for trade based in Odisha is enormous," he noted.

On Technology, he emphasized that it was increasingly associated with trusted talent. "The talent of Odisha, the fact that today you have young demography, you have a strong education backbone of the state. Today technology also offers a lot of possibilities for collaboration," he said.

Odisha is simply incredible in terms of what it has to offer when it comes to Tourism, EAM Jaishankar remarked, adding that tourism is the biggest employer generator and multiplier in the world. "Those who will invest in tourism in this state are actually contributing to development and inclusive growth in the state in a very powerful way," he pointed out.

The External Affairs Minister also highlighted the Modi Government's commitment to Purvodaya or the Renaissance, revival and rejuvenation of the East. He pointed out that India was historically at the greatest point when the eastern parts of India were at the height of glory. In this context, EAM Jaishankar noted that one of the earliest commitments in this third term of the Modi Government was to make the practical decisions to enable the Purvodaya to happen. "A crucial fulcrum of that in many ways is the state of Odisha," he remarked.

Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, presided over the plenary session on "Beyond Borders: Diaspora Youth Leadership in a Globalized World" which was moderated by Binny Bansal, Co-founder of Flipkart.

Y B Prabhakaran - Malaysian Politician and Member of Parliament for Batu and Member of the People's Justice Party (PKR); Eshaanee Shandilya - Business Analyst, HSBC Global Services; Don McLain Gill - Lecturer, Department of International Studies, De La Salle University (He specializes in Philippine foreign policy, India-Southeast Asian security relations, and maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, and India-Southeast Asian relations); Revathy Pillay - IT Business Analyst and Southside Radio FM Presenter and dynamic youth ambassador and radio personality dedicated to empowering youth voices;

Mohiuddin Mohamad Ali-Ali, vice-chairman of Galfar Engineering & contracting SAOG and president of the Oman chapter of the Indo-Gulf & Middle East chamber, Muscat; Mickela Panday - Daughter of former Prime Minister of T&T Basdeo Panday. The Political Leader of the newest political party in T&T- the Patriotic Front, launched in 2019 and a former MP were the panelists for the plenary session.

Punjab's disappointing token presence at PBD 2025

PRABHJOT SINGH
JANUARY 10, 2025

BHUBANESWAR (TIP) Punjab's claim as one of major contributors to Indian Diaspora notwithstanding, its near total absence at the Pravasi Bharati Divas 2025 is intriguing.

Except for a small stall by Punjab Tourism at the venue, delegates attending the bi-annual convention rue the absence of senior officials, including Minister for NRIs, at the biannual event.



Delegates from the US - Indrajit Saluja and Manjuri at the PBD 2025 Photo: Prabhjot Singh

"Punjab should have been at the forefront. Even after 18 editions, the State has yet to host a single edition of the PBD. It has been holding meets with

NRIs but never done it at the national level. Over the years, its participation, too, has been on the down slide," says New York-based journalist Prof Indrajit Saluja. Though the State government has released full page advertisements in major newspapers and other media channels, it should have sent teams of its senior officials to interact with delegates to woo them to invest in the State, he added.

Canberra (Australia)-based Ravinder Sahni says that Punjabis are a global community. "I am pleasantly surprised not to find many Punjabi delegates here. May be the State Government has other ways and means to reach out the global Punjabi Diaspora.

"There is also an urgent need to engage younger generation in the PBD events that serve as a great platform not only for the community leaders to sit together and carry the country's image forward.

"I am into politics and represent Labour party down under," says Ravinder Sahni while praising arrangements made by the Odisha government for its maiden show.

Manjuri, an IT expert, travelled all the way from Dallas in the US, for her second successive PBD.



Canberra (Australia)-based Ravinder Sahni says that Punjabis are a global community. "I am surprised not to find many Punjabi delegates here". Photo: Prabhjot Singh

"I attended the last edition at Indore also and feel that it is a great opportunity to interact with the elite of the overseas Indian community," she adds while revealing her association with a spiritual group that has its headquarters in Odisha.

Khusbhu Merchant and Shobit Prakash travelled all the way from Rajasthan, where they are associated with a rural-based university, RNB.

"We are here to explore possibilities of how we can take Indian education in general and rural education to a new and higher level with the support of Indian

Diaspora. India has the talent, and we must provide the platforms for our rural youth to be at par with their counterparts in urban areas and overseas," they said.



Kanwerdeep Singh of Punjab Tourism at PBD 2025 in Bhubaneswar Photo: Prabhjot Singh

Kanwerdeep Singh from Anandpur Sahib has been deputed by Punjab Tourism Corporation to manage a stall to woo delegates to visit Punjab, both for its religious and heritage sites besides exploring possibilities for investments in Punjab.

Safety and security of Indian nationals anywhere in the world are the top priority for the Government of India

PRABHJOT SINGH
JANUARY 10, 2025

BHUBANESWAR (TIP): The security and safety of Indian nationals anywhere in the world get top priorities of the Union Government

Senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Odisha Government held that the Union Government was fully conscious of its duties and responsibilities towards Indian nationals.

"If Indian nationals face any problems anywhere, the government of India is there to protect and assist them. We have been cautioning people against falling prey to unauthorized manpower agents,' says Arun K. Chatterjee, Secretary of the Union Ministry of External Affairs.

He said that the institution of PBD has been serving as an integral part of bonding between the Government of India and a strong overseas Indian community.

Talking to the media after the three-day Pravasi Bharati Divas 2025, Arun K. Chatterjee was joined by the Chief Secretary of Odisha, Manoj Ahuja, and other senior functionaries of both the Union Ministry of External Affairs and the Odisha government. They were unanimous in their briefing that the three-day mega event organized by the Odisha Government was a roaring success "as we have got very positive feedback from all sections, including participants."

They were, however, confronted by some unsavory questions, especially about the denial of invitations to parents



Officials at the press conference. From L to R: Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha, Manoj Ahuja, Secretary MEA, Arun K Chatterjee, and Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Kumar Jaiswal Photo: Jay Mandal-on assignment

and other family members of overseas Indians belonging to Odisha.

They assailed the organizers for ignoring the claims of the local people as participants in the mega event.

Manoj Ahuja held that the Odisha Government had focused on promoting tourism as most of the delegates visited almost all 31 places of historic and religious interest. "They all were happy with the hospitality of Odisha and arrangements made for the smooth conduct of the mega event."

showcasing itself as a potential investment destination.

Besides looking east, it also emerged as a strong destination for "chalo India" initiative.

Manoj Ahuja also revealed that the Odisha government would soon conduct a census of blue-collar job seekers working in the Middle East and elsewhere. Arun Chatterjee, while responding to another question on blue-collar migrants from India, said that the Prime Minister during his recent visit to Kuwait, held a meeting with 200 blue-collar Indian workers there. "It was a lively interaction," he said.

Responding to a question from Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, chief editor of the New York based Indian American English weekly The Indian Panorama about the participation of youth in the PBD, Arun Chatterjee revealed that the union government was conducting almost every month a group of youth of Indian origin for a three-week Know India programme. Four hundred youths benefit from this fully funded programme of the Indian government. At the end of their visit to the country of their ancestors they feel "incredibly" connected to their roots, he said.

Arun Chatterjee and Manoj Ahuja were joined by the Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Kumar Jaiswal; and Ankan Banerjee, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, besides Sanjay Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary, Information and Public Relations of Odisha Government, at the media briefing.

FIA's 5th NRI Conclave Celebrates Indo-US Ties with Cultural Grandeur and Economic Vision



Traditional lamp lighting ceremony led by Shri Sampad Chandra Swain, Minister for Industries Skill Development and Technical Education, Government of Odisha. Seen in the picture, from L to R: Sreekanth Akkapalli, FIA Convenor 2025 and CEO of TV9 North America, FIA Chairman Ankur Vaidya, Minister Shri Sampad Chandra Swain, Saurin Parikh, FIA President; Dr. Avinash Gupta, FIA Immediate Past President.



Ganesha Vandana performed by Nupurdhwani Dance Academy of Jatani, Bhubaneswar

JANUARY 8, 2025

BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA(TIP): The Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) NY-NJ-CT-NE hosted its landmark 5th NRI Conclave at ITC Welcome, Bhubaneswar, transforming the evening of January 7, 2025, into a celebration of cultural heritage and economic collaboration between India and its diaspora. The event was graced by distinguished dignitaries including Shri Sampad Chandra Swain, Honorable Minister for Industries Skill

Development and Technical Education, Government of Odisha, and Shri Randhir Jaiswal, Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, marking a significant milestone in strengthening diaspora relations.

The evening commenced with a traditional lamp lighting ceremony, presided over by Shri Sampad Chandra Swain, in the presence of Saurin Parikh, FIA President; Dr. Avinash Gupta, FIA Immediate Past President; Sreekanth Akkapalli, FIA Convenor 2025 and CEO

of TV9 North America; and other prominent leaders.

The cultural festivities began with an enchanting Ganesha Vandana performed by Nupurdhwani Dance Academy of Jatani, Bhubaneswar, setting an auspicious tone for the evening. The academy later presented a mesmerizing Odissi dance performance, showcasing Odisha's rich cultural heritage.

In his welcome address, FIA President Saurin Parikh acknowledged the presence of distinguished international delegates, including Dr. Satheesh Kathula, AAPI USA President, Sreekanth Akkapalli, CEO of TV9 North America and Head of Onyx Realty, and Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, CEO of The Indian Panorama, highlighting the global reach of the conclave.

Shri Randhir Jaiswal, Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, delivered a compelling address drawing from his extensive experience with FIA. "My connection with FIA spans many years, dating back to my tenure as the Consul General of India in New York," he reflected. Jaiswal emphasized FIA's pioneering role, stating, "FIA has been instrumental in laying the groundwork for cultural and global initiatives like this. Their proactive approach in organizing this 5th NRI Conclave has created a vital platform for meaningful dialogue between the diaspora and their homeland, setting a precedent for enhanced government-diaspora conversations."

The keynote address by Shri Sampad Chandra Swain, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Industries, Skill Development and Technical Education, presented a vision for Odisha's future. "This NRI Conclave serves a dual purpose - not only does it facilitate crucial dialogue between the diaspora and their beloved motherland, but it also showcases Odisha as a prime destination for diaspora investment and growth," Minister Swain emphasized. He extended an invitation to the diaspora community, stating, "Our government is committed to advancing the state through robust infrastructure



FIA President Saurin Parikh welcomed the guests



Shri Randhir Jaiswal, Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs of India recalled his long association with the FIA and FIA's pioneering role, stating, "FIA has been instrumental in laying the groundwork for cultural and global initiatives".



Shri Sampad Chandra Swain, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Industries, Skill Development and Technical Education, presented a vision for Odisha's future, and invited the diaspora entrepreneurs to explore the abundant opportunities in Odisha and become partners in our remarkable growth journey."

development and technological innovation.



Minister Swain, accompanied by Mr. Jaiswal, and the FIA Executive Committee, unveiled India Day Parade theme for 2025



The FIA presented a memento to Minister Swain

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Trump's new term draws near amid skepticism

If the most important day of a person's life begins with a grievance against the institution of the Fourth Estate, he is likely to spend the rest of his public life undermining it.



---> By KP Nayar

"BUT HIS NEXT PRESIDENCY MAY BE DIFFERENT. THE SPATE OF RESIGNATIONS IN THE MAINSTREAM AMERICAN MEDIA IN RECENT WEEKS - INCLUDING THE DISSOLUTION AND RECONSTITUTION OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE WASHINGTON POST IN OCTOBER - ARE OMINOUS. PARTISAN NEW OWNERS OF LEGACY MEDIA HAVE CHOSEN TO KOW-TOW TO TRUMP EVEN BEFORE HE HAS MOVED INTO THE WHITE HOUSE. SOCIAL MEDIA WILL MOSTLY BE THE NEW PRESIDENT'S FACILITATOR INSTEAD OF AN OUTLET FOR FREE EXPRESSION. META'S LATEST DECISION TO GET RID OF INDEPENDENT, THIRD-PARTY FACT-CHECKERS IN THE US IS THE LATEST ASSAULT ON TRUTH IN THAT COUNTRY."

As the United States readies for the inauguration of Donald Trump as its 47th President, I have a sense of déjà vu. Trump's swearing-in as the 45th President is the only presidential inauguration that I skipped since I was posted to Washington as a foreign correspondent in the final full year of the Bill Clinton presidency 26 years ago.

I skipped the ceremonies on the advice of bipartisan political contacts and reliable security sources. Behind their well-meaning advice was the primary fact that I am a journalist. My badge at the inaugural ceremonies would identify me as one. Moreover, I would be in the media enclosure near the Reflecting Pool, which, on a clear day, will reflect the swearing-in of new presidents on the steps of Capitol Hill. During that poll season which saw Trump emerging victorious, the Republicans treated the media as an enemy. This was not entirely without reason. The bulk of the US media - especially the mass subscription



liberal media on the east and west coasts - was unfair to Trump throughout the campaign. He did not have a level playing field in dealings with American journalists.

I am brown in complexion. Black people are an inalienable part of the US social fabric. If they are trifled with by rednecks in a city like Washington, which is predominantly Black, there will be consequences for the perpetrators of white racism. Not so with the brown-skinned minuscule minority, who are also meek compared to African Americans. This also shows very visibly in the ongoing mudslinging against H-1B immigrants.

The underlying anger which culminated in the January 6, 2021, riot on Capitol Hill was already there when Trump was being sworn in for the first time. Trump began his presidency with a peeve that the US media had deliberately under-reported the crowds at his inauguration. If the most important day of a person's political life begins with a grievance against the institution of the Fourth Estate, he is likely to spend the rest of his public life undermining that institution. Never mind that the Fourth Estate is one of the pillars of democracy in the US. Trump did not succeed in this destructive mission as President. That was not for want of trying every day for four years from 2017.

But his next presidency may be different. The spate of resignations in the mainstream American media in recent weeks - including the dissolution and reconstitution of the Editorial Board of The Washington Post in October - are ominous. Partisan new owners of legacy media have chosen to kow-tow to Trump even before he has moved into the White House. Social media will mostly be the new President's facilitator instead of an outlet for free expression. Meta's latest decision to get rid of independent, third-party fact-

checkers in the US is the latest assault on truth in that country.

A saving grace is that institutions in the US are strong. That is why they survived the tenure of the 45th President. Officers of the Metropolitan and Capitol Police paid with their lives to save the high-domed edifice, which is emblematic of the world over, of the oldest democracy on earth. On January 20, they will once again be prepared to offer the ultimate sacrifice to protect those they may not personally like and whom they have voted against in Washington, Maryland and Virginia, the tripoints which are similar to the National Capital Territory (NCT) surrounding Delhi. In a tribute to the strength of America's institutions, law enforcement agencies are allowing demonstrations against the incoming President. A major rally in Washington in support of Trump is also planned on the day before he takes office. It is praiseworthy that in a media briefing last week, US Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi said such demonstrations are not being viewed as security threats and upheld the rights of people to protest. There are few other countries where this can happen. The Secret Service is the lead agency in charge of security at the presidential inauguration.

Unlike the run-up to Trump's first swearing-in and the start of Joe Biden's presidency soon after the violent attack on the Capitol, fate ordained that there would be a dress rehearsal of safeguards on a presidential scale during all of last week. The 39th US President, Jimmy Carter, died on December 29. Mandatory events associated with his "lying in state," and tributes before his funeral occasioned one such dress rehearsal. The other, of course, was the archaic certification by the US Congress of electoral college votes that Trump has, indeed, been elected President. It was such

certification of Biden's election four years ago that rioters tried to derail and physically harm then Vice-President Mike Pence and then Speaker of House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. Because of all this, Washington has fortuitously been protection-ready since Christmas, unlike any previous presidential inauguration in recent memory.

There is an eerie similarity between Narendra Modi's first swearing-in as Prime Minister in 2014 and Trump's second coming, as it were. Modi invited Pakistan's then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif - among other guests - and Trump has similarly invited China's President Xi Jinping. Unlike Sharif, Xi is not going to Washington. The Foreign Ministry in Beijing is keeping everyone guessing on the level of China's representation. No previous US president-elect has invited foreign leaders to his inauguration, and according to the US State Department, no Head of State has been in Washington during previous January 20 ceremonies. At the time of writing this piece, only Argentina's President Javier Milei, who is looked upon as Washington's poodle by some Latin American countries, is expected to attend.

According to books written by people who were in the inner circle of Trump's White House, the President is highly superstitious. Porn star Stormy Daniels said in a documentary released last year that Trump's weird hairdo is because he believed he would be powerless if he lost or properly combed his hair. That superstitious trait may explain the vehemence with which Trump criticized Biden for ordering a 30-day state mourning for Carter. In a historic first, flags will fly at half-mast during Trump's swearing-in as a result. Even for those who are not superstitious, it is not an auspicious way to start a new presidential tenure.

(The author is a senior journalist)

Manipur needs 'truth & reconciliation', not political apologies

Manipur needs moral leadership and genuine outreach by the highest offices, and not political and insincere apologies



---> By Lt Gen Bhopinder Singh Retd

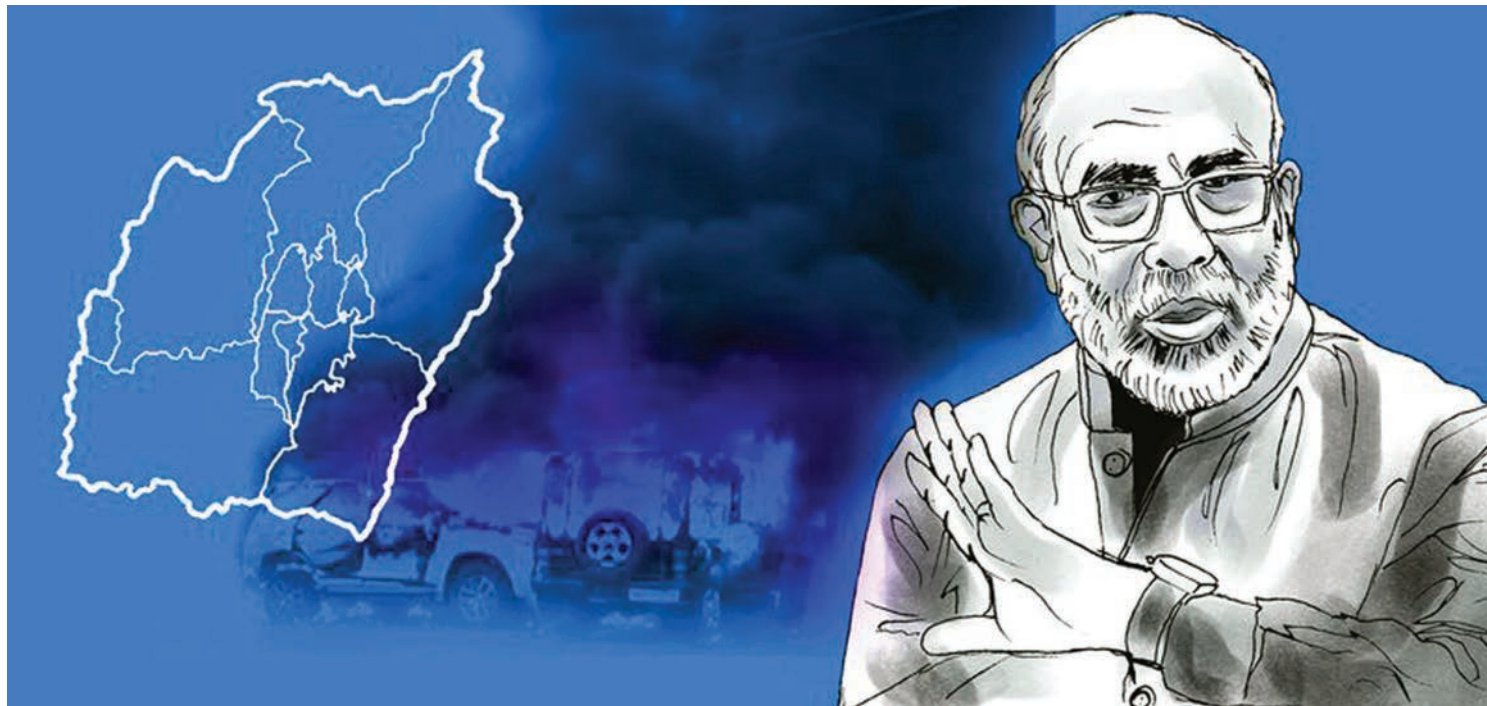
"WITH NO MAJOR RESTRUCTURING OR REIMAGINING OF THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN MANIPUR ENVISAGED, WHAT IT NEEDS DESPERATELY TO HEAL THE SOCIETAL DIVIDE (BEYOND MORE SECURITY PERSONNEL AND FENCING OF BORDERS, WHICH MUST BE DONE, IN ANY CASE) IS SOME HONEST SOUL-CLEANSING, A LA 'TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION', AS WAS DONE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ENDED APARTHEID (WHITE RULE) IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHEN PORTENTS OF BLOODY REVENGE WERE INEVITABLE."

Official apologies can be powerful instruments to heal societal wounds, rectify policies and reignite hope for future unity. They can conclusively redress and reassure the disaffected to invest in another chance to normalize. However, for an apology to work, it needs to be sincere and not political.

One of the most restorative apologies in modern history is Kniefall von Warschau or the 'Warsaw Kneel', with West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's sudden and spontaneous gesture of genuflection before a war memorial in Poland to symbolically atone for Germany's past with Poland. Brandt reflected on the poignant moment: "At the abyss of German history and under the weight of millions of murdered people, I did what people do when language fails."

The impact of the sincere apology without any unnecessary context or defensiveness was immediate. The clear courage and dignity in Brandt's apology overcame the murky past and ushered in a new era of trust.

Recently, the deeply fractured, polarized and largely unacknowledged realm of Manipur re-entered the national imagination with a supposed 'apology' by its Chief Minister, who has



presided over its slide since violence erupted in May 2023.

Questions about the sincerity of the apology abound. Did it tantamount to taking ownership and accountability? Was it unequivocal? Did it resort to rote whataboutery and blame-shifting? Did it include acknowledging missteps and, therefore, rectification of outlook? Or, was it just a mealy-mouthed political statement, essentially implying more of the same, going forward?

The CM's statement clearly lacked both personal ownership (as it pandered to generalities) and empathy, as he said perfunctorily, "Whatever happened has happened. We have to forgive and forget the past mistakes and make a new beginning." As if on cue, and seemingly oblivious to reality, he added incredulously: "The Centre provided enough security personnel and funds!"

This begs the question that if there was no shortage of support from the Centre, why has the situation deteriorated dangerously? Was it, then, a shortage of governance intent or capabilities? Either way, an unforgivable shortcoming, if any sincerity was implicit. The final straw came with the CM blaming the previous governments (from opposition parties) for the prevailing situation, thereby effectively absolving himself and his governance from the need for any remorse.

Weeks earlier, the Union Home Ministry had issued its annual report on Manipur which highlighted a laundry list of measures taken, including personnel, financial, material, and detailed an earlier visit by the Home Minister to end the strife and disaffection. The language was almost self-patting, "The central government took a series of immediate and sustained actions to handle the situation."

But what was not mentioned in the report or in the CM's purported 'apology' was the fact that the societal divide has

only worsened and the resultant violence increased.

As the face and perception of Meitei majoritarianism (against minority Kukis), the CM could have been more specific in defining who he sought to 'forgive' and what he wanted others to 'forget' in his ostensible 'apology'. After all, it was only a political 'apology'.

With no major restructuring or reimagining of the governance structure in Manipur envisaged, what it needs desperately to heal the societal divide (beyond more security personnel and fencing of borders, which must be done, in any case) is some honest soul-cleansing, a la 'Truth and Reconciliation', as was done in the aftermath of the ended Apartheid (White Rule) in South Africa, when portents of bloody revenge were inevitable.

With a complex, polarized and contested past (much like Manipur), South Africa, too, could have regressed to an explosive us-versus-them rhetoric, but for the sagacity and wisdom of the leadership under 'Africa's Gandhi', i.e., Nelson Mandela.

Like the inclusive spirit of unity-in-diversity, as enshrined in the constitutional 'Idea of India', the South African leadership had chosen to valourise and posit their own civilizational concept of 'Ubuntu,' which is predicated on the interconnectedness of humankind. This approach is especially important as it offers a fresh and real chance to come clean by seeking forgiveness over prosecution, unlike the spirit prevailing in a solely militaristic approach, as is visible in Manipur.

If one comes from a more unbiased and progressive outlook that in any conflict, excesses or wrongs are committed by all sides (as opposed to binary 'othering', as is the wont in India these days), then a sense of restorative justice prevails.

Importantly, in the South African

experiment under Truth and Reconciliation, the corrective action was not implied for 'Whites' only, but also onto ANC (African National Congress) cadres, who, too, had committed excesses. Individuals seeking amnesty came clean on human rights violations that they had perpetuated with the aim of restoring the victim's dignity and seeking forgiveness.

A natural outcome of 'bringing out the truth' has a reconciliatory and forward-moving effect that cannot be achieved with retributive justice, as there are layers after layers to 'truths' in such places. A majoritarian spirit of 'victor's justice' is avoided. In Manipur, one side definitely imagines the State to be favoring the other. Importantly, this process does not preclude justice from running its course if the magnitude and brutality (and also non-acceptance) prevails amongst parties on specific instances.

What Manipur needs is a total reconstruction of its society (and narratives). That can only emerge if the recent past is opened to inform the distraught populace on both sides about what really happened in order to accept, forgive and heal the same for a collective future.

As only a wise statesman and not just a politician, Nelson Mandela could say: "All of us, as a nation that has newly found itself, share in the shame at the capacity of human beings of any race or language group to be inhumane to other human beings. We should all share in the commitment to a South Africa in which that will never happen again."

Manipur needs such moral leadership and genuine outreach by the highest offices, and not political and insincere apologies.

(The author is a retired Lt. General of the Indian Army)

Donald Trump's imperial bullying must be nipped in the bud

Countries that cherish democratic values need to take a stand against the president-elect's throwback to unabashed American expansionism

"THE CRASS ACTIVITIES OF TRUMP'S SYCOPHANTIC OFFICE BOY, BUSINESSMAN ELON MUSK, ARE ALL OF A PIECE WITH THIS STRATEGY OF ANTI-DEMOCRATIC DISRUPTION AND DESTABILIZATION. BY BACKING FAR-RIGHT PARTIES IN GERMANY AND FRANCE, IMPOSING HIS IGNORANT OPINIONS ON BRITISH POLITICS AND PICKING GRATUITOUS FIGHTS WITH THE EU, ALL THE WHILE HIDING BEHIND THE FUZZY SCREEN OF UNACCOUNTABLE, FACT-FREE SOCIAL MEDIA, MUSK ADVANCES A TRUMP AGENDA THAT IS FUNDAMENTALLY ABOUT CONTROL. CONTROL OF POLITICIANS AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE, CONTROL OF OPEN DEBATE AND COMMUNICATION, CONTROL OF TERRITORY, TRADE AND WEALTH, TO BE ACHIEVED THROUGH TRANSACTIONAL DEAL-MAKING, CRUDE BARTER, INTIMIDATION, HUMILIATION, SUBVERSION AND THROUGH THREATS OF FORCE."

Watching politicians promise one thing, then do another, is a common experience in all democratic countries. Situations in which voters do not expect a politician to keep his word, and in many instances fervently hope and pray he will not, are rarer. Donald Trump, the US president-elect, fits this latter category. When Trump threatens to subjugate Canada, a Nato ally, by force, unilaterally annex Greenland, the autonomous territory of a friendly EU state, and override Panama's sovereignty for bogus security reasons, most people assume he is not serious and his remarks carry little real significance. This response, while comforting, is a mistake.

It's entirely possible that Trump, pumped with hype, hot air and testosterone in the lead-up to his 20 January inauguration, is being gratuitously disruptive. He likes to shake things up. It amuses his Make America Great Again (Maga) hyper-nationalist fan club. It may be that this former property developer and convicted felon, who counts himself a shrewd negotiator, is deliberately raising the stakes before more reasoned discussions about security and trade. But it is also possible Trump means what he says.

If so, Trump will be following a well-trodden, discredited path. These days it is somehow considered impolite, especially if you are British, to remind Americans that their republic was also once an unapologetically imperial power. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, US administrations aggressively pursued their own version of the colonial empires of contemporary Britain, Germany, and France. In 1893, the sovereign state of Hawaii (whose royal family enjoyed close ties to Queen Victoria) fell victim to an



US President-elect Donald Trump

American-assisted coup. In 1898, the US annexed Hawaii. Guam, Samoa and Puerto Rico followed. America's loosely interpreted "manifest destiny" demanded ever more. The Philippines, Cuba and even China were all on the receiving end of US political-military, commercial and territorial ambitions.

Far from being abandoned, neocolonialist American thinking persisted well into the latter half of the 20th century, operating under various guises. Newly-independent countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, liberated from collapsing European empires, were invited to join the "free world," as defined and dominated by Washington. America promised protection and prosperity within the US-policed, post-1945 cold war order in return for fealty (plus military bases, trade concessions and access to resources). States that declined the invitation, such as Iran, Vietnam, and Nicaragua, paid a high price.

Trump's half-baked neo-imperialist tendencies are but one aspect of a deliberately disruptive modus operandi

Viewed from this perspective, Trump's territorial ambitions are not so much an aberration as a throwback or regression to periods of unabashed American expansionism. And his motives are not dissimilar. As in the past, it's all about security, cash and control. Greenland has valuable mineral wealth. It also has growing strategic importance, vis-a-vis China and Russia, as the Arctic Sea ice melts and new trade routes open up. The US already maintains a military base there. Trump sees a lucrative opportunity - and by absorbing Greenland's vast territory, a chance to make America even greater, again. Trump claims the protectionist, high-tariff America First policies he espouses were the reason why the US, at the height of the Gilded Age in the 1890s, was, in his words, "probably the wealthiest it ever was because it was a system of tariffs". Like Denmark and Panama (where Trump would like to get his hands on the canal), Canada has robustly rejected his turgid annexation fantasies. But mercantilist ideas dating from that period plainly influence his thinking, such as it is. Justin Trudeau, Canada's prime minister, says Trump's menacing talk is a tactic designed to distract attention from the damaging inflationary impact of his threatened 25% increase in taxes on Canadian

imports such as oil, electricity, timber and steel. "Everything American consumers buy from Canada [is] suddenly going to get a lot more expensive if he moves forward on these tariffs," Trudeau warned.

The broader, significant point is that Trump's half-baked neo-imperialist tendencies are but one aspect of an overall, deliberately disruptive modus operandi designed to suborn, co-opt and disadvantage friend and foe alike. His intervention helped spur pre-existing turbulence in Canadian politics, resulting in Trudeau's resignation. He has stirred up the longstanding independence debate in Greenland, where most people would probably prefer to be free of both Copenhagen and Washington. In Mexico, another target of his geopolitical wrecking ball, Trump's antics grimly recall decades of Yanqui bullying and meddling in Latin America.

The crass activities of Trump's sycophantic office boy, businessman Elon Musk, are all of a piece with this strategy of anti-democratic disruption and destabilization. By backing far-right parties in Germany and France, imposing his ignorant opinions on British politics and picking gratuitous fights with the EU, all the while hiding behind the fuzzy screen of unaccountable, fact-free social media, Musk advances a Trump agenda that is fundamentally about control. Control of politicians and political discourse, control of open debate and communication, control of territory, trade and wealth, to be achieved through transactional deal-making, crude barter, intimidation, humiliation, subversion and, ultimately, through threats of force.

This is how Trump operates. For him, this is "strongman" leadership. For others, it resembles mafioso-style extortion. It is this imperious, domineering, unscrupulous, manipulative and unprincipled, self-serving behavior that the world's leaders must face up to once again over the coming four years. Britain and like-minded countries that cherish democratic values and free societies should not duck the challenge. Better to take a stand and draw a line now, as Greenland's leaders have bravely done, than risk being steamrolled into subservience and satrapy.

(Observer Editorial)

CELEBRATING INDIA'S 76th REPUBLIC DAY



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Dance
Participant
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Minor 11 & under

Junior 15 & under

Senior 20 & under

Adult 21 & above

NIJJAR MURDER ACCUSED STILL IN MANDATORY DETENTION: CANADA



Four Indian nationals accused in the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar are currently subject to mandatory detention orders issued by a British Columbia court.

JANUARY 11, 2025

VANCOUVER (TIP): Four Indian nationals accused in the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar are currently subject to mandatory detention orders issued by a British Columbia court.

"The court imposed mandatory detention orders on all four accused. They remain in custody and no bail hearings are scheduled," confirmed Ann Seymour, Acting Communications Counsel for the BC Prosecution Service, which operates under the Ministry of Attorney General.

In response to some online reports suggesting that four Indian nationals had been released, Seymour clarified on Thursday, January 9, that they remain in custody.

Though court records marked the custody status of the accused as 'N', indicating they were not detained and sparking reports of their release, the official, Seymour, confirmed that they remain in custody under detention orders.

The accused in the case have been identified as Karan Brar, Kamalpreet Singh, Karanpreet Singh, and Amandeep Singh.

The detention orders mean that they will stay in custody until their trial begins. However, a judge may review a bail application at a later date, though bail is unlikely due to the serious charges they face, including first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

Nijjar was killed on June 18, 2023, in Surrey, British Columbia. Three months later, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated in the House of Commons that there was "credible evidence" suggesting a potential link between Indian agents and Nijjar's murder. India had dismissed these charges as "absurd" and "motivated."

Karan, Kamalpreet and Karanpreet were arrested in and around Edmonton in May 2023. Amandeep was charged shortly after, while in the custody of Peel Regional Police (PRP), and was arrested in November 2023 on nine charges, including unauthorized possession of a firearm and possession of a controlled substance. (Source: TNS)

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun's 'Sikhs for Justice' banned for another 5 years

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal upholds ban on the pro-Khalistani group

JANUARY 8, 2025

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal has confirmed a notification issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) banning pro-Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun-led 'Sikhs for Justice' (SFJ) for a period of five years.

The UAPA Tribunal of Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta, a sitting judge of the Delhi High Court, ruled that the evidence given by the Centre established SFJ's connections with Khalistani terror groups such as Babbar Khalsa International and Khalistan Tiger Force, as well as its collaboration with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to revive militancy in the Punjab.

It added that the evidence highlighted SFJ's involvement in recruiting and radicalizing youth using social media platforms, financing terrorism through smuggling networks to procure weapons and explosives, and issuing death threats to political figures, including the Prime



Gurpatwant Singh Pannun
Minister and the Home Minister.

In a notification issued on July 9, 2024, the MHA extended the declaration of SFJ as an unlawful association for another five years, saying that Pannun-led SFJ's activities have the "potential of disrupting peace, unity, and integrity of the country".

Thereafter, a reference was made to the UAPA Tribunal for the purpose of adjudicating whether or not there was sufficient cause for declaring the association unlawful.

According to the MHA, SFJ is involved in anti-national and subversive activities in Punjab, with the intention to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India.

The MHA also said that SFJ is in "close touch with militant outfits and activists, and is supporting violent forms of extremism and militancy in Punjab and elsewhere to carve out a sovereign Khalistan out of the territory of Union of India".

The pro-Khalistani outfit "can escalate its subversive activities including attempts to carve out Khalistan Nation out of the territory of Union of India by destabilizing the Government established by law", it added.

(Source: IANS)

British Sikh brother-sister duo jailed for charity fraud in UK



Rajbinder Kaur and Kaldip Singh were convicted for money laundering and six counts of theft amounting to GBP 50,000 and one count under Section 60 of UK's charities act 2011

Photo for representational purposes only

JANUARY 11, 2025

LONDON (TIP): A Birmingham-based brother and sister duo associated with the Sikh Youth UK group have been sentenced by a UK court after being found guilty of fraud offences relating to charitable donations.

Rajbinder Kaur, 55, was convicted for money laundering and six counts of theft amounting to GBP 50,000 and one count under Section 60 of the UK's Charities Act 2011, which covers knowingly or recklessly providing false or misleading information to the Charity Commission.

Her brother Kaldip Singh Lehal, 43, was also convicted for the same charge under the Charities Act.

Kaur and Lehal ran the Sikh Youth UK (SYUK) group.

While Kaur was sentenced to two years and eight months, by Birmingham Crown Court on Thursday, Lehal was given a four months' sentence suspended for 18 months and 80 hours of community service.

"Kaur tried to portray herself as someone naive about financial matters despite having worked in a bank," Superintendent Annie Miller from West Midlands Police said in a statement following the sentencing this week.

"SYUK was clearly a means to fund her lifestyle and pay her debts off, but in the simplest of terms Kaur was stealing large amounts of money that had been donated by local people for good causes," she said.

The pair were initially arrested in July 2019 and subsequently charged in September 2019.

"This has been a very long and complex investigation into fraud, and we have worked closely with the Charity Commission to bring this pair to justice," Miller added.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

5 Indian-origin men charged with murder



Five Indian-origin men have been charged with murder in connection with the death of a 35-year-old man from India.

Photo for representation only

JANUARY 7, 2025

NEW JERSEY (TIP): Five Indian-origin men have been charged with murder in the US in connection with the death of a 35-year-old man from India.

Sandeep Kumar, 34, of South Ozone Park, New York, was charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder in connection with the death of Kuldeep Kumar in Manchester Township around October 22, 2024, according to a statement by Ocean County prosecutor Bradley Billhimer and Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police Colonel Patrick Callahan.

Investigation into Kuldeep's death revealed that Sandeep acted in concert with other defendants in carrying out Kuldeep Kumar's murder. Other defendants in the case are Sourav Kumar, 23, Gaurav Singh 27, Nirmal Singh 30, and Gurdeep Singh 22, all from Greenwood, Indiana.

On December 14, 2024, the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office Major Crime Unit was contacted for a report of a deceased located in the Greenwood Wildlife Management Area of Manchester Township. According to a postmortem examination, the cause of the individual's death was multiple gunshot wounds to the chest, and the manner of death was homicide. The individual was identified as Kuldeep Kumar.

Following an investigation, it was revealed Kuldeep had been reported missing by family members on October 26, 2024, and Sourav, Gaurav, Nirmal and Gurdeep acted together and in support of one another in carrying out his murder. They all were charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder. They were transported to Johnson County Jail in Franklin, Indiana, where they will remain lodged pending their extradition to New Jersey.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Six Indian Americans sworn-in as members of US House of Representatives

JANUARY 6, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): In a momentous occasion for Indian Americans, six of their leaders on Friday, January 3, 2025 were sworn-in as the members of the US House of Representatives, the largest so far for this minority ethnic community in the United States.

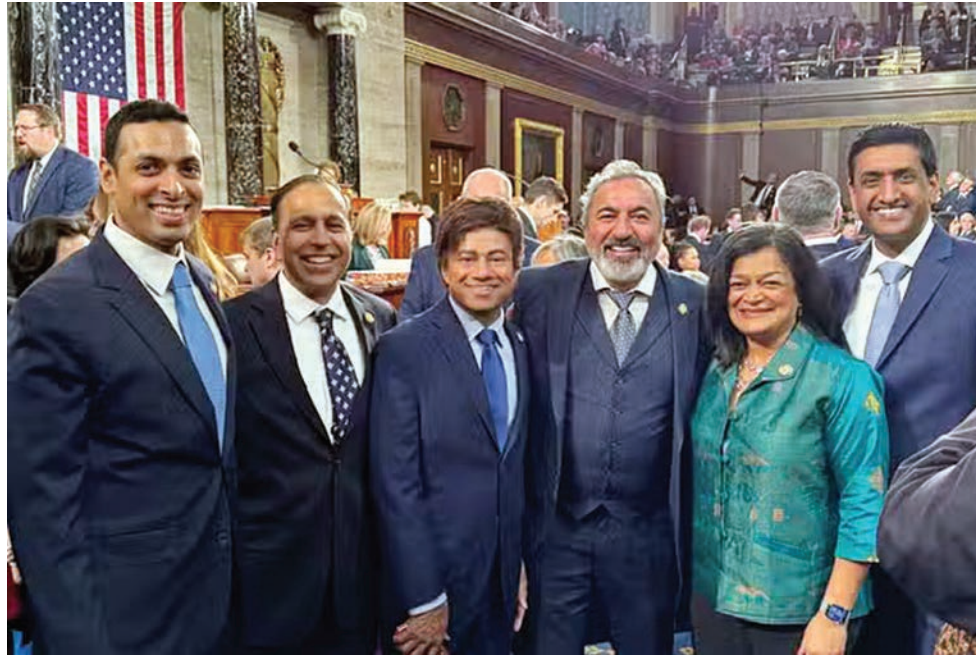
"When I was first sworn in twelve years ago, I was the sole Indian American Member of Congress and only the third in US history. Now, our coalition is six strong! I am excited to welcome even more Indian Americans to the halls of Congress in the years to come!" Congressman Dr Ami Bera said in a post on X.

Bera, the senior most of them, who has been sworn-in for the seventh consecutive term as a representative of the seventh Congressional District of California, also posted a picture of all the six Indian American Congressman from the floor of the House.

Suhash Subramanian, who represents the 10th Congressional District of Virginia is the newest Indian American to be a member of the House of Representatives.

"First day of work! Honored to be sworn into the #119th Congress, and excited to get to work to deliver results for VA10," he said as he posted a picture of him along with his family and House Speaker Mike Johnson.

"Ready to Serve," said Congressman Shri Thanedar who represents the 13th Congressional District of Michigan as he



Dr Ami Bera, Ro Khanna, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Pramila Jayapal, Shri Thanedar, and Suhash Subramanian were sworn in as the members of US House of Representatives on Friday, January 3, 2025.

posted a selfie of his from the House floor. All the six Indian American lawmakers are from the Democratic Party and voted for House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries in the election for House Speakership. Republican Mike Johnson was elected as the House Speaker.

Congressman Ro Khanna represents the 17th Congressional District of California and Raja Krishnamoorthi represents the eighth Congressional District of Illinois. Congresswoman

Pramila Jayapal, representing the seventh Congressional District of Washington state, is the first ever Indian American woman to be elected to the House of Representatives.

All the three - Khanna, Krishnamoorthi and Jayapal - have been sworn-in for a fifth consecutive term, during which they have emerged as powerful lawmakers in their own way.

Krishnamoorthi is a Ranking Member of the powerful China Committee and also a member of the House Intelligence

Committee. Jayapal is leader of the highly powerful progressive group of lawmakers. Khanna is not only a member of several powerful House committees but also is seen as a potential presidential candidate in the years to come.

All the six Indian Americans constitute an informal Samosa Caucus, a term coined by Krishnamoorthi. When sworn in for the first term in 2012, Dr Bera had then wished to have 10 Indian Americans in the House of Representatives.

Several Indian Americans aspiring to be elected to the House lost elections either during the primaries or in the November 5 general elections. At least three of them were women: Sushila Jaipal, Bhavani Patel and Krystal Kaul.

Dalip Singh Saund was the first Indian-American to be elected to the House of Representatives in 1957. Also, the first Sikh, he was elected for three consecutive terms. He was from the Democratic Party.

It took nearly five decades for a second Indian-American to enter the US House of Representatives. Bobby Jindal represented the First Congressional District of Louisiana from 2005 to 2008. He later went on to become the two-term Governor of Louisiana, making him the first Indian American to be elected as the governor of a US State. Jindal is the only Indian American to be elected to the House on a Republican ticket.

(Source: PTI)

Indian national pleads guilty to possession of child sexual abuse material



Abdul Rouvoof Shaik faces a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment, a fine of up to USD 250,000, and a period of supervised release of up to life
Photo for representation only

JANUARY 11, 2025

WASHINGTON, DC (TIP): A 30-year-old Indian national who was previously employed with a cruise line, has pleaded guilty to possession of child sexual abuse material, a US attorney said on Friday.

Abdul Rouvoof Shaik faces a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment, a fine of up to USD 250,000, and a period of supervised release of up to life.

According to court documents, Shaik was previously employed by Carnival Cruise Lines and was arrested in July 2024 after special agents with the US Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations, found he was in possession of child pornography at the Erato Street Cruise Terminal in New Orleans.

Sikh man among two Indian Americans elected to Virginia state legislatures



J.J. Singh was elected to State House of Delegates on Wednesday, January 8, 2025 along with Kannan Srinivasan, who was elected to State Senate

JANUARY 10, 2025

RICHMOND, VA (TIP): Two Indian Americans were elected in special elections to Virginia's legislatures, ensuring the Democratic Party keeps its slender majority despite the national Trump wave in last year's election.

Kannan Srinivasan was elected to the State Senate and J.J. Singh to the State House of Delegates on Wednesday, January 8.

In what seems like a round of musical chairs, Singh takes the seat held in the House by Srinivasan, who in turn succeeds Suhas Subramanyam, who resigned the State Senate seat and was elected to Congress in November.

The races featured another Indian American, Republican Ram Venkatachalam, who lost to Singh. Srinivasan will join another Indian American, the Hyderabad-born Ghazala Hashmi, in the State Senate. He grew up in Tamil Nadu and was a chartered accountant in India before emigrating to the US, where he built a 30-year career in business and finance. Srinivasan was elected to the Virginia House in 2023.

J.J. Singh, who was born in Virginia, will probably be the first legislator in the US to wear a turban, although other Sikhs have been elected. Singh worked in the White House Office of Management and Budget under former President Barack Obama. He had earlier served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia and as a senior US Senate advisor.

The elections were crucial to the Democrats, who had only a one-seat majority in both chambers in a state where the governor is a Republican.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian-origin tech firms corner 1/5th of H1B visas issued by US

Elon Musk is a former H-1B visa holder whose company Tesla utilizes this program



Photo for representation only

JANUARY 8, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): Indian-origin tech companies cornered a fifth of all H1B visas issued by the US with Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services leading the pack, an analysis of data from the US immigration department showed.

According to data from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, in April-September 2024 period, out of the total 1.3 lakh H1B visas issued to different employers, about 24,766 visas were issued to Indian-origin companies.

Out of these, Infosys took the lead with 8,140 beneficiaries, followed by TCS (5,274), and HCL America (2,953).

Infosys came second to only Amazon.com Services LLC, which topped with 9,265 visas.

Cognizant, which was founded in Chennai but now has headquarters in New Jersey, ranked third in the list with 6,321 visas. (Source: PTI)

CONTD FROM PAGE 7

I warmly invite diaspora entrepreneurs to explore the abundant opportunities in Odisha and become partners in our remarkable growth journey."

A powerful highlight of the evening was the unveiling of the India Day Parade theme for 2025 by Minister Swain, accompanied by the FIA Executive Committee. The theme "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah" (May all be happy) carries a profound message of universal well-being and peace: "May all be happy, may all be free from illness, may all see what is auspicious, may no-one suffer." In these times of global challenges and



They also spoke. L to R: Ms Nupur Ray-Patel, Ms Srishti Kaul, Ankur Vaidya, Dr. Avinash Gupta

conflicts, this ancient Sanskrit prayer serves as a timely reminder of humanity's shared aspirations for peace and harmony. The theme reflects FIA's

commitment to fostering unity across cultures and borders, standing as a universal prayer for global peace and understanding. This initiative

discussions focused on Odisha's development opportunities, particularly in the tourism and MSME sectors, positioning the state as an emerging hub



The FIA presented a memento to Shri Randhir Jaiswal. From L to R: Dr. Avinash Gupta, Srujal Parikh, Shri Jaiswal, Ankur Vaidya, Prof. Indrajit Saluja, and Saurin Parikh



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A view of the gathering. Minister Swain and FIA Chairman Ankur Vaidya are seen in the front

particularly resonates in today's world, where the need for cross-cultural harmony and mutual understanding has never been more crucial.

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Tom Suozzi, Laura Gillen among Democrats open to deportation of criminal immigrants

JANUARY 12, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): In 2007, then-Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi barred federal immigration agents from the county after their raids seeking gang members here illegally - conducted without local police - also barged into homes of innocent U.S. citizens.

As President-elect Donald Trump calls for mass deportations of criminals without legal U.S. immigration status, now-U. S. Rep. Suozzi (D-Glen Cove) has offered support for those raids - but also advice.

"It's really important that this is coordinated at the local level," Suozzi told Newsday. "I think that corrections, jails, maybe even probation and parole should play a very heavy role in coordinating with the federal government."

Just days before Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration, many Democrats last week backed a Republican bill that would expand the required deportation of people living in the country illegally who are accused of lesser theft crimes like shoplifting, and would give states the right to sue the Homeland Security secretary for immigration enforcement failures.

WHAT NEWSDAY FOUND

Over the past year, Democrats have backed tougher border and immigration policies promoted by U.S. Rep. Tom Suozzi of Glen Cove, who won a special election in February after talking about the need for a secure border.

Just days before President-elect Donald Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration, many Democrats last week backed a Republican bill that would expand the required deportation of migrants accused of lesser theft crimes like shoplifting.

Trump has said that after his inauguration he will declare a national emergency and issue executive orders to shut down the border and begin deportations.

Suozzi and first-term Rep. Laura Gillen (D-Rockville Centre) joined 46 other House Democrats - as well as Long Island Republican Reps. Andrew Garbarino of Bayport and Nick LaLota of Amityville - in voting for the Laken Riley Act, and 32 Senate Democrats voted with Republicans to take that bill up for debate.

'GET THE CRIMINALS OUT'

Trump has said that after his inauguration he will declare a national emergency and issue executive orders to shut down the border and begin deportations. At a rally at Madison Square Garden in the closing days of the presidential race, he declared, "On Day One, I will launch the largest deportation program in American history to get the criminals out."

But he has not said exactly what those orders will entail, other than an initial focus on public safety and national security threats.

Republicans successfully made a



U.S. Rep Tom Suozzi said he is "100% supportive" of deporting undocumented immigrants with criminal backgrounds.

crackdown on the flow of noncitizens across the border a winning political issue for Trump and Republicans in Congress. Garbarino and LaLota, like most Republicans, declined to discuss Trump's deportation plans.

Suozzi and Gillen both told Newsday last month that they back efforts to remove criminal noncitizens, but have concerns about how it will happen.

Over the past year, Democrats have backed tougher border and immigration policies promoted by Suozzi, who won a special election in February after talking about the need for a secure border and tough immigration enforcement while treating migrants humanely.

"Democrats have consistently supported robust border security and the enforcement of our laws - including immigration enforcement," said Debu Gandhi, senior director at the Center for American Progress Action Fund, a Democratic-linked advocacy group.

"We keep on hearing over and over again that their focus is going to be on deporting criminals first, right?" Suozzi said. "And I'm 100% supportive of that, OK? And I will work with the administration to accomplish that and to work on keeping our community safe."

NEED FOR TRAINING

But Suozzi's experience with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids nearly two decades ago shapes his advice to the incoming Trump administration.

"I've been in government long enough to know that government doesn't always do things well. Sometimes they make mistakes," Suozzi told Newsday recently in an interview.

"If untrained federal officials come knock down the door of a house where a criminal used to live and now a family

that has nothing to do with criminality is living there, well, that's going to hurt their reputation tremendously," he said.

He urged proper training of new immigration agents and close coordination between them and local law enforcement to make sure that the deportation raids hit the right targets.

Gillen also said she supports tougher enforcement.

"We need to reform our immigration system. We need to reform our asylum system. We need to secure our border," Gillen said. "We need to make sure that

people who come here illegally and commit crimes are not permitted to stay here."

But she said she also is concerned about her constituents who are here on temporary protected status, known as TPS - many of them Haitians, whose TPS status ends in 2026.

"We have a large Haitian community in my district," she said. "The situation in Haiti is extraordinarily dangerous and violent. And I want to make sure that the people who have come here lawfully are able to stay here." (Source: Newsday)

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Anita Anand and Melanie Joly say they are not in the federal Liberal leadership race



----> By Prabhjot Singh

JANUARY 12, 2025

OTTAWA (TIP): Two senior ministers - Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and Transport Minister Anita Anand - have opted out of the federal Liberal leadership race, the election process of which was formally made public last week.

Of the four senior women members of the Liberal caucus, only two-former Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland and leader of the House Karina Gould-initially tipped as strong contenders are still considered in the running after both Anita Anand and Melanie Joly clarified that they are not in contention for the Prime Ministerial post. Another woman candidate in the running is the former Premier of British Columbia, Christie Clark.

After Justin Trudeau announced his decision to step down as leader of the ruling Liberal Party, the Liberal Party has now set in motion the process to choose a replacement for him. The new leader would be named on March 9.

Chandra Arya, MP from Nepean, was the first to declare his candidature for the top political post even before the details of the election process were made public.

The new election procedure shows many changes from the process when the last election process to name the party leader was held in 2013.

After a frenzy of formal and informal meetings last week, the Liberal Party's national council decided to complete the process by March 9, ahead of March 24, the date on which the House of Commons, now prorogued, would resume its sitting.

In the election programme announced, the party has increased the entry fee for potential candidates from \$ 75,000 it had set in 2013 to \$350,000 - a significant jump. Candidates will have to declare their intention to run and pay the entry fee by January 23. Party followers can register to vote in the leadership race until January 27.

The party has also formalized the eligibility criteria for who can vote in the leadership contest. Canadian citizens and permanent residents, above the age of 14 shall be eligible to vote, contrary to the eligibility criteria for the general elections where the voting age is 18. In Canada, parties can set their age restrictions. The Conservatives allowed people 16 years or older to vote during their last leadership contest in 2022.

Previously, non-Canadian residents were allowed to vote in Liberal Party riding nomination and leadership contests. This was called a "gateway" for foreign interference, an issue that dominated the proceedings of the current session that was adjourned for holiday



Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and Transport Minister Anita Anand - have opted out of the federal Liberal leadership race

break on January 18. A growing number of Liberal MPs have urged the party executives to heed those warnings.

A number of cabinet insiders - including Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne, Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson and Employment Minister Steven MacKinnon - have said they are considering running for the top job, but said they want to see the rules first.

Former central banker Mark Carney has also said he is interested. Former finance minister Chrystia Freeland, former B.C. premier Christy Clark and House Leader Karina Gould are said to be gathering supporters, too.

Besides Chandra Arya, a former Montreal MP, Frank Baylis, is also in the running.

Whoever is chosen to take over for Trudeau, will have a tight timeline before the House of Commons returns. The possibility of the new Prime Minister running into a no-confidence motion immediately after the House resumes its sitting looks imminent as two of the main parties, including the official Opposition party, the Conservatives and the New Democrats, who had been bailing out the Trudeau government throughout, have declared the intent to bring down the government at the first possible opportunity.



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Los Angeles wildfires: Death toll rises to 24, winds may fuel blaze

JANUARY 13, 2025

LOS ANGELES (TIP): The wind-fed wildfires have killed at least 24 people and swept through 40,000 acres in the Greater Los Angeles area, destroying entire communities and more than 12,300 structures. Evacuation orders for the largest blaze, the Palisades Fire, expanded. It is 14% contained and threatens Brentwood, Encino and Westwood.

Aircraft dropped water and fire retardant on steep hills to stem the eastward spread of the Palisades wildfire in Los Angeles on Saturday as on-the-ground firefighting intensified amid warnings of wind gusts of up to 70 mph (110 kph) that could make matters worse.

Over the past 24 hours, the Palisades Fire spread over an additional 1,000 acres (400 hectares), consuming more homes, officials reported.

Six simultaneous blazes that have ripped across Los Angeles County neighborhoods since Tuesday have killed at least 16 people as of late Saturday, the Washington Post and other media reported, citing the Los Angeles County medical examiner's office. Reuters could not immediately reach the coroner.

The blazes have damaged or destroyed 12,000 structures, fire officials said. At least 13 people are estimated to be missing.

The death toll is expected to mount when firefighters are able to conduct house-to-house searches.

Cal Fire official Todd Hopkins told a press conference that while 11% of the Palisades Fire was now contained, it has burned over 22,000 acres.

Hopkins said the Palisades Fire had spread into the Mandeville Canyon neighborhood and threatened to jump into Brentwood, an upscale neighborhood where celebrities live and play, and the San Fernando Valley. It also inched towards the north-south 405 freeway.

The National Weather Service warned of worsening Santa Ana winds that it predicted would pick up Saturday night into Sunday morning in Los Angeles and Ventura counties, and again on late Monday through Tuesday morning, bringing sustained winds up to 30 mph and wind gusts up to 70 mph.

"We're in a continued period of critical fire weather through Wednesday," said NWS meteorologist Rose Schoenfeld.

Conditions were expected to moderate by Thursday.

Evacuation orders throughout the Los Angeles area now cover 153,000 residents, putting 57,000 structures at risk. Another 166,000 residents have been warned that they may have to evacuate, said Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna.

But significant progress was reported in bringing electrical power back to Los Angeles neighborhoods. Southern California Edison CEO Steven Powell told reporters there are now about 50,000 customers without power, "down from



over half a million just a couple days ago."

Powell said there was no evidence that any of Edison's equipment caused the Hurst fire but that the investigation was continuing.

As state and local officials grappled with the worst cluster of fires in Los Angeles history, President Joe Biden spoke by phone with some of them to get an update on their efforts. He was also briefed by senior aides on federal resources that were being dispatched.

Biden's major disaster declaration unlocked federal assistance for those affected by the wildfires, clearing the way for FEMA to provide support. Federal Emergency Management Agency officials were at the Pasadena Convention Center helping residents navigate FEMA aid applications.

Support can range from funding for home repairs to money to replace lost food or medication, said FEMA spokesperson Michael Hart, adding that assistance can be provided within days.

Los Angeles Board of Supervisors Chair Kathryn Barger told reporters she had invited President-elect Donald Trump to visit the county to get a firsthand look at the destruction.

Luna said the sheriff's office has dispatched 40 search and rescue team workers to work jointly with other agencies, including the use of cadaver dogs to search for remains of victims and help reunite separated families.

"LA County had another night of unimaginable terror and heartbreak," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath.

The fierce Santa Ana winds that fanned the infernos eased on Friday night. But the Palisades Fire on the city's western edge was heading in a new direction as winds came off the Pacific Ocean.

The fire has razed whole neighborhoods, leaving the smoldering ruins of what had been people's homes

and possessions.

Before the latest flare-up, firefighters had reported progress in subduing the Palisades Fire and the Eaton Fire in the foothills east of the metropolis after it burned out of control for days.

In Altadena, official Don Fregulia said managing the Eaton Fire and its impact will be a "huge, herculean task" that he said will take "many weeks of work."

The two big fires combined have consumed over 36,000 acres (14,500 hectares), or 56 square miles (145 square km) - 2-1/2 times the land area of Manhattan.

Seven neighboring states, the federal government and Canada and Mexico have rushed aid and firefighters to California, bolstering aerial teams dropping water and fire retardant on the flaming hills and crews on the ground attacking fire lines with hand tools and hoses.

Officials have declared a public health emergency due to the thick, toxic smoke.

HOMES REDUCED TO ASH

Pacific Palisades residents who ventured back to their devastated neighborhoods on Friday were shocked to find brick chimneys looming over charred waste and burnt-out vehicles as acrid smoke lingered in the air.

"This was a house that was loved," Kelly Foster, 44, said while combing through the rubble where her house once stood.

Foster's 16-year-old daughter, Ada, said she tried to get inside but "I just became sick. I just couldn't even... Yeah, it's hard."

In Rick McGeagh's Palisades neighborhood, only six of 60 homes survived, and all that remained standing at his ranch house was a statue of the Virgin Mary.

"Everything else is ash and rubble," said McGeagh, 61, a commercial real estate broker who, along with his wife, raised three children at their home.

On Friday morning, hundreds of people streamed into a parking lot near the Rose Bowl stadium in Pasadena for donated clothing, diapers and bottled water.

Denise Doss, 63, said she was anxious to return to her destroyed home in Altadena to see if anything was salvageable, but officials stopped her due to safety concerns.

"At least to say goodbye until we can rebuild. I will let God lead me," Doss said.

BILLIONS IN LOSSES

Many Altadena residents said they were worried government resources would go to wealthier areas and that insurers might short-change those who cannot afford to contest denials of fire claims.

Beyond those who lost their homes, tens of thousands remained without power, and millions of people were exposed to poorer air quality, as the fires lofted traces of metals, plastics and other synthetic materials.

Private forecaster AccuWeather estimated the damage and economic loss at \$135 billion to \$150 billion, portending an arduous recovery and soaring homeowners' insurance costs.

California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara called on insurers on Friday to suspend pending non-renewals and cancellations that homeowners received before the fires began and to extend the grace period for payments.

President Joe Biden has declared the fires a major disaster and said the US government would reimburse 100% of the recovery for the next six months.

Law enforcement officials were warning residents to adhere to curfews, amid arrests with charges of burglary, looting and the possession of concealed firearms.

"You go out there and you violate this curfew, you are going to spend time in jail," Luna warned.

(Source: Reuters)

Rahul gets bail in defamation case over remarks against Savarkar

A special court in Pune on Friday, January 10, granted bail to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a defamation case related to his remarks on Hindutva ideologue VD Savarkar.

The MP/MLA court granted bail to the LoP in the Lok Sabha on a surety bond of Rs 25,000 after he appeared before it through video conferencing, his lawyer said. Congress leader Mohan Joshi stood as surety for Gandhi before the court presided over by Amol Shinde, judicial magistrate (first class) and special judge for MP/MLA cases. Advocate Milind Pawar, representing Gandhi, said soon after his client appeared before the court, they moved a bail application.

The judge allowed the plea and granted bail on a surety bond of Rs 25,000. The advocate said the court also granted permanent exemption to the Lok Sabha MP from Rae Bareilly from appearing before it.

The case was filed on a complaint by VD Savarkar's grandnephew Satyaki, who alleged Gandhi had made defamatory remarks against the Hindutva icon at a programme he attended in London in March 2023.

Parties woo women voters with cash promises ahead of Delhi polls

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, all major parties seem to be wooing women voters with direct cash transfers.

Major political contenders, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Aam Aadmi Party and the Indian National Congress, have each promised financial assistance schemes for women, a demographic that constitutes 46.2 per cent of Delhi's electorate.

According to the final electoral roll published by the Office of the Delhi Chief Electoral Officer on January 6, the national capital has a total of 1,55,24,858 registered voters, comprising 83,49,645 male voters and 71,73,952 female voters.

In a bid to woo the female voters and as a countermeasure to A's welfare-centric campaign, BJP has proposed a monthly aid of Rs 2,500 for women. A, under the Mahila Samman Yojana, has pledged Rs 2,100 per month to women, continuing its strategy of offering direct benefits to secure electoral support.

Not to be left behind, the Congress has introduced the 'Pyari Didi Yojana,' promising Rs2,500 monthly to women if elected, mirroring similar initiatives it has implemented in other states.

Sukhbir no longer SAD chief; 1st time a Badal not at helm of Punjab's oldest party in 30 yrs

CHANDIGARH (TIP)

More than a month after the Akal Takht, the highest temporal body of the Sikhs, "ordered" the removal of Sukhbir Singh Badal as president of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the working committee of the party Friday, January 10, accepted his resignation.

Badal has been the party's president since 2008, taking over the reins from his father Parkash Singh Badal who was chief minister of Punjab multiple times.

The SAD was created in 1920 during the gurdwara reform movement, a protest movement undertaken by the Sikhs to take over gurdwaras from the private control of mahants. The elder Badal had become the SAD president in 1995 and the party's presidency has since remained with the Badal family.

"A new president will be elected by the party on 1 March," said senior SAD leader Daljit Singh Cheema, addressing a press conference Friday following a two-hour meeting of the party's working committee in Chandigarh under the chairmanship of Balwinder Singh Bhunder.

Badal, who was also present at the meeting, told mediapersons that he had requested the working committee with folded hands to accept his resignation.

"When I had presented myself before the Akal Takht, I had done so as a humble Sikh and had already given my resignation to the party. Five years ago, the party had handed me this responsibility which I fulfilled to the best of my abilities. The workers of the



party and leaders have given me complete support during the period. It is for the party to admit new members and choose a new president," he said after the meeting.

After months of being under attack from within the SAD, Badal had offered to resign as party chief on 16 November last year but his resignation was not accepted by the working committee then. However, the day-to-day working of the party was being overseen by Bhunder.

Cheema said Bhunder would continue

as SAD working president till a new party chief was elected. He said the parliamentary board of the SAD, which is also headed by Bhunder, will oversee the process of fresh membership (part of the process to elect the SAD president), and he himself would help as secretary.

According to Cheema, a fresh membership drive of the party will begin on 28 January and continue till 20 February. He also announced a list of almost two dozen senior leaders who would supervise the membership drive in their assigned areas.

The possibility of Badal being chosen again as president cannot be ruled out in case the delegates chosen from among the entire membership of the party pick him as their leader.

Reacting to Jan 10 development, leaders of the rebel group of the SAD led by Gurpartap Singh Wadala issued a statement alleging that the working committee of the party had taken the Sikh community for a ride and acted in a manner that would ensure that Badal was chosen again as president.

Prem Singh Chandumajra, one of the leaders of the rebel faction of the SAD, told mediapersons that the fact that the working committee had accepted the resignation of Badal was in accordance with the orders of the Akal Takht.

"However, there were certain other leaders who had also given their resignations and which also had to be accepted. Working committee has not done that so far," he said.

Source: The Print

Parents can be legally forced to offer education money to daughter, rules apex court

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Maintaining that a daughter has an indefeasible, legally enforceable and legitimate right to secure educational expenses from her parents, the Supreme has said her father or mother can be compelled to provide necessary funds to her within their means.

The court was dealing with a matrimonial dispute in which the daughter (of an estranged couple) studying in Ireland had refused to accept Rs 43 lakh given by her father towards her studies as a part of the total alimony paid to her mother.

"She, being the daughter, has an indefeasible, legally enforceable, lawful, and legitimate right to secure educational expenses from her parents. All that we observe is that the daughter has a fundamental right to pursue her education, for which the parents could be compelled to provide necessary funds within the limit of their financial resources," a Bench of Justice Surya Kant and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan said.



The daughter had refused to retain the amount to maintain her own dignity and asked him to take the money back but he refused, it said, adding, the daughter was legally entitled to the amount.

The father had spent the money without any compelling reasons, indicating he was financially sound to provide her with the financial assistance towards her academic pursuits.

"Respondent number 2 (daughter) has, thus, got a right to retain that amount. She need not, therefore, return that amount either to the appellant (mother) or to respondent number 1 (father), and may suitably appropriate it as she may deem fit," said the court.

The Bench referred to the settlement agreement entered into by the estranged couple on November 28, 2024 which was also signed by the daughter.

The court said the husband had agreed to pay a total sum of Rs 73 lakh to his estranged wife and daughter, of which Rs 43 lakh was meant for his daughter's academic goals, and the rest for his wife.

It observed that since the wife had received her Rs 30 lakh share, and the parties were admittedly living separately for the last 26 years, the court dissolved the marriage and granted a decree of divorce by mutual consent, by invoking its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and asked them to end all litigation.

Status quo at Sambhal mosque, SC bars puja & holy bath at shrine well

NEW DELHI (TIP)

No puja or holy bath can take place at a well located near the disputed Mughal-era Shahi Jama Masjid at Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh, which Hindus claim to be Harihar Temple, as the Supreme Court on Friday, January 10, ordered the status quo at the disputed site.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, which also stayed the execution of a notice said to have been issued by the Sambhal municipal authorities with regard to the well, said it was keeping a close watch on the issue to ensure that peace and harmony were maintained.

Acting on a plea filed by the Committee of Management of Shahi Jama Masjid, Sambhal, the top court asked the UP authorities, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and others not to take any steps over a "private well" near the disputed mosque in Sambhal.

The Bench, which also included Justice PV Sanjay Kumar, sought a status report from the authorities in two weeks and posted the matter for hearing on February 25.

While dealing with rival petitions on the Places of Worship Act, 1991, the top court had on December 12 last year restrained trial courts across India from registering fresh suits and ordering surveys or passing any effective and final orders with regard to the religious character of the existing structures in pending suits. The Bench had, however, refused to stay the proceedings in 18 suits pending with regard to 10 places of worship.

The Committee of Management of Shahi Jama Masjid, Sambhal, has challenged a Sambhal civil court's November 19, 2024, order appointing an



advocate to survey the mosque. "We have been drawing water from the well since time immemorial," senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi submitted on behalf of the committee. "Let others use the well also," the CJI told Ahmadi.

As Ahmadi said, "They are calling it a Hari mandir and that puja will be started now... they will dig it," the CJI said, "We are not permitting that... No you (Hindu side) cannot do that... Please do not do that."

On behalf of the Hindu side, advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain said, "The well is outside the purview of the mosque and worship has been happening."

"It's half inside and half outside," Ahmadi said. The court pointed out that as per Google Maps, the well seemed to be situated outside the mosque.

Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj, representing the UP Government, said the situation was peaceful and "they want to create an

issue".

In their suit filed in a civil court at Sambhal, advocate Hari Shankar Jain and others have claimed that the mosque was constructed over a demolished temple during the Mughal era.

However, the mosque committee contended that the Sambhal district administration was conducting a purported drive to revive old temples and wells in the city with reports indicating that at least 32 old unused temples were revived and 19 wells identified for public use and prayers.

"In the list of wells being sought to be revived by the district administration is also a water well situated in the precincts of the mosque itself," it said, seeking a direction to the Sambhal District Magistrate to ensure the status quo over the private well located near the mosque entrance and future action without the top court's permission.

Setback to INDIA as Sena (UBT) to go solo in Maha local body poll

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Saturday, January 11, announced that his party will contest the upcoming elections to various local bodies on its own.

Talking to reporters at Nagpur, the Rajya Sabha MP said the INDIA bloc and Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliances were for the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls. He further said party chief Uddhav Thackeray gave the party indications that it should go alone.

"In an alliance, workers of individual parties don't get opportunities, and it hampers organisational growth. We will contest polls to the Mumbai, Thane, Nagpur and other municipal corporations, zilla parishads and panchayats on our own strength," he stated.

Hitting out at Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar for 'indulging in a blame game over the MVA's defeat in the Assembly poll', Raut said those who did not believe in consensus and compromise had no right to be in an alliance. He went on to say that the INDIA bloc did not hold a single meeting after the Lok Sabha elections.

"We were not able to appoint even a convenor for INDIA bloc. As the largest party of the alliance, it was the Congress' responsibility to convene a meeting," the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader said.

Reacting to Deputy CM Ajit Pawar's remark that he had never mentioned farm loan waivers in his speeches, Raut said, "Even if he hasn't spoken about it; farm loan waiver and Rs 2,100 for Laadki Bahin beneficiaries are mentioned in the BJP's manifesto. These two promises have to be implemented. He is the Finance Minister in the BJP government, and will have to do it."

The Uddhav-led Shiv Sena has also announced its support for AAP in the Delhi elections, rather than the Congress. NCP (SP) leader Jitendra Awhad, said they couldn't stop the Shiv Sena (UBT) if it's keen to contest alone. However, he added that he didn't think this was the right decision as it would impact the poll prospects of all three MVA parties.

On the other hand, Supriya Sule, working president of the NCP (SP), said the parties always contested local bodies polls solo as these were for the party workers. "If we contest these polls as per our convenience, what should the cadre do?" she asked.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said earlier, Uddhav Thackeray was a friend, and now Raj Thackeray is a friend. He also added that the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief, however, was not a "shatru".

Source: TNS

PM recalls 'centuries of sacrifice' on 1st anniversary of Ram Mandir consecration

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his greetings to the nation on Saturday, marking the first anniversary of the consecration of the Ram Lalla idol at the Ayodhya temple. Recalling the "centuries of sacrifice, penance, and struggle" that culminated in the construction of the temple, PM Modi emphasised its significance as a symbol of India's cultural and spiritual heritage.

In a post on X, he wrote, "Best wishes to all the countrymen on the first anniversary of the consecration of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. This temple, built after centuries of sacrifice, penance, and struggle, is a great heritage of our culture and spirituality. I am confident that this divine and magnificent Ram



temple will become a great inspiration in the accomplishment of the resolution of a developed India."

The Prime Minister also shared a video along with the post on X.

A grand three-day celebration, organised by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, began in Ayodhya to commemorate the

occasion. The festivities, running from January 11 to 13, include cultural programs featuring music and art luminaries.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will inaugurate the event with the ceremonial 'abhishek' (ritual bath) of the Ram Lalla idol. Following the ceremony, he will address a public gathering at Angad Teela. Large crowds of devotees, including saints and spiritual leaders, have gathered for the event.

The entire Ayodhya Dham has been transformed into a spectacle of devotion and festivity, adorned with lights and decorations. District administration and trust officials have ensured meticulous preparations to accommodate the influx of pilgrims and visitors.

India in history this Week

JANUARY 10 TO JANUARY 16

10 JANUARY

1916 British Ambassador Sir Thomas Roe meets Jahangir in Ajmer.

11 JANUARY

1922 The first insulin was given to patients with diabetes.

1954 Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi was born who raised a voice against child labor.

12 JANUARY



1863 Swami Vivekananda, who brought Gyan Prakash to India, was born.

1948 Mahatma Gandhi gave his last speech and decided to go on a hunger strike against communal violence. He was deeply saddened by the partition of India in 1947.

13 JANUARY

1709 Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah I defeated his brother Kambakhsh in Hyderabad in a power struggle.

1849 The famous Battle of Chillianwala started during the Second Anglo Sikh War.

1910 Radio was broadcast for the first time. The broadcast could also be heard on a ship 20 km away in the sea.



1923 Famous film producer and director Shakti Samanta was born.

1938 Renowned santoor player Pandit Shivkumar was born.

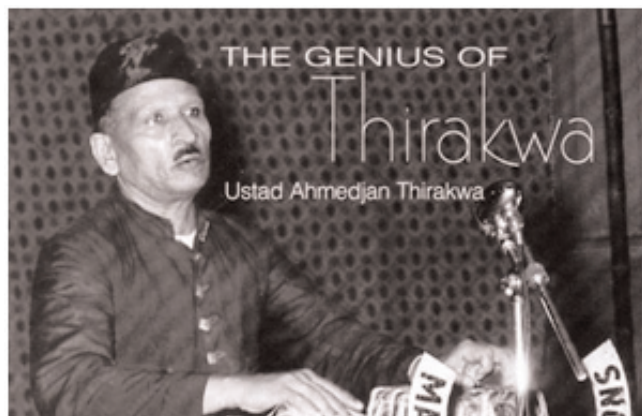


1948 Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi started a fast unto death in Kolkata to maintain Hindu-Muslim unity.



1949 India's first astronaut Rakesh Sharma is born.

1976 Death of the famous tabla player of India Ahmed Jan Thirkwa.



14 JANUARY

1741 Third war of Panipat started between Marathas and Afghans.

1742 Edmund Haley, who introduced the world to Haley Comet, breathed his last on this day. Edmund Haley is one of England's best known astronomers.

1964 Test bowler Rameshchandra Gangaram Nadkarni set a record for throwing 21 maiden overs.

1977 Narayan Karthikeyan, the first Indian to fill the Formula One race, was born on this day.



1994 For the first time in 300 years, a member of Britain's royal family adopted Catholicism. The Duchess of Kent became a member of the Catholic Church in a private service.

2002 The British government announced that the foot and mouth disease that has been spreading in the country for nearly 11 months will be considered to end at midnight.

2016 Social activist and famous litterateur Mahashweta Devi was born.

15 JANUARY

1784 Establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

1934 An earthquake measuring 8.7 struck India and Nepal. About 11,000 lives were lost in this earthquake.

1975 Portugal signs agreement for independence of Angola.



1988 Former India bowler Narendra Hirwani, taking historic feat, took 16 wickets in his debut Test match against West Indies.

2012 India's first female photo journalist Homi Vairala died.

16 JANUARY



2009 On this day, Kalpana Chawla filled the space shuttle Columbia, spent 372 hours in space

1761 Pondicherry was annexed by the British from the French.

1769 Pondicherry was annexed by the British from the French.

1681 The grand coronation of Sambhaji, son of Kshatrapati Shivaji, took place at Raigad Fort in Maharashtra.

1938 Death of noted Bengali litterateur Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay.

Swami Vivekananda: A Visionary Leader and Spiritual Luminary

Swami Vivekananda, born Narendranath Datta, was a towering figure in the world of spirituality, philosophy, and Indian nationalism. A disciple of the revered mystic Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda played a pivotal role in introducing Indian philosophies such as Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world. His eloquence, charisma, and vision of a united humanity have left an indelible mark on both the East and the West.

Early Life and Education

Swami Vivekananda was born on January 12, 1863, in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, to Vishwanath Datta, an attorney, and Bhuvaneshwari Devi, a devout homemaker. Narendranath was the couple's sixth child, and from an early age, he displayed prodigious intelligence and a deep spiritual inclination.

Education and Early Influences

Narendranath attended Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Metropolitan Institution and later pursued a bachelor's degree in arts from the General Assembly's Institution (now known as Scottish Church College). He excelled in various subjects, including philosophy, history, and literature. His academic brilliance was complemented by a keen interest in music, gymnastics, and debating.

During his formative years, he was deeply influenced by the spiritual texts of Hinduism, particularly the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. However, he harbored a skeptical mind and sought logical explanations for religious beliefs, often questioning traditional practices.

Meeting Sri Ramakrishna

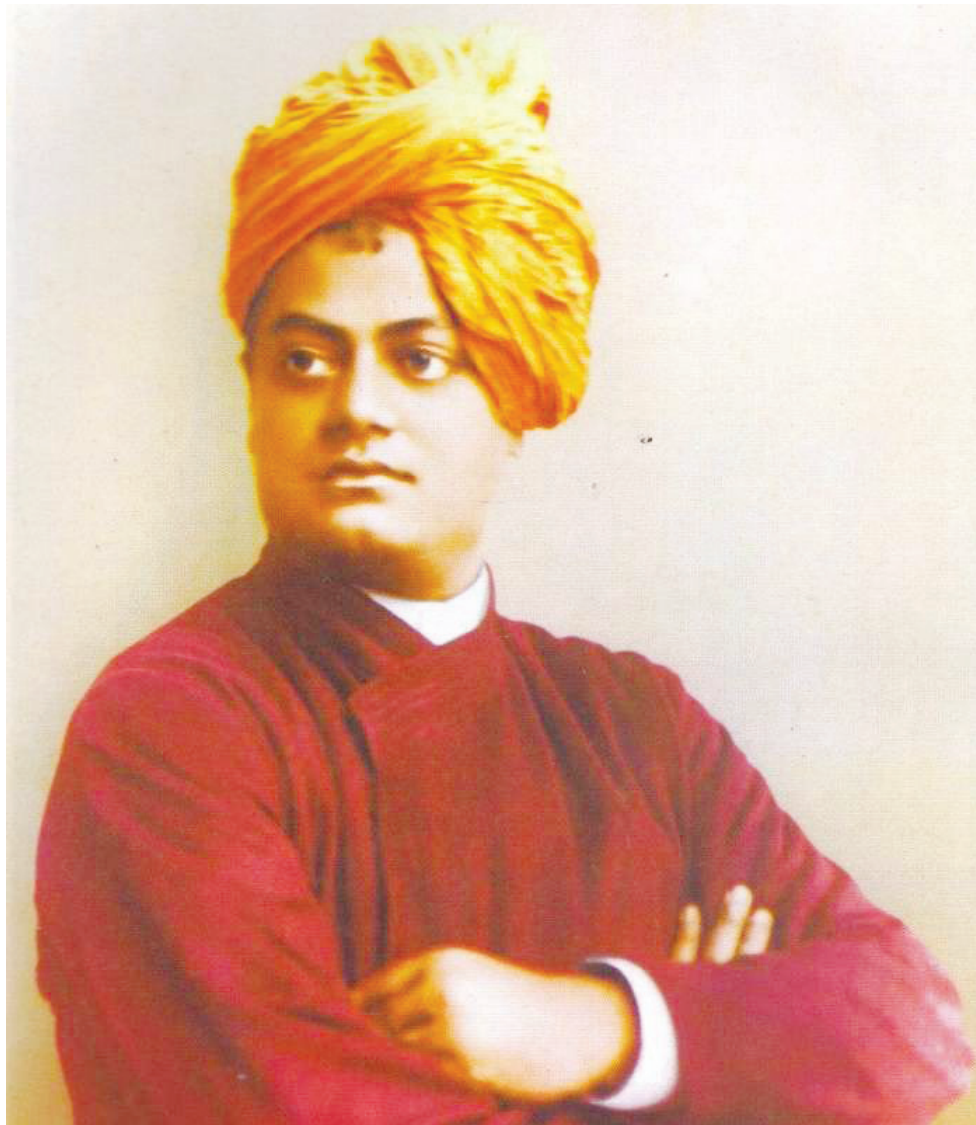
Narendranath's life took a profound turn when he met Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar Kali Temple in 1881. The young seeker was initially skeptical of Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences and teachings. Nevertheless, he was drawn to the mystic's simplicity, profound love, and unwavering devotion to the Divine Mother.

Sri Ramakrishna recognized Narendranath's potential and saw in him the future leader of his spiritual mission. Under Ramakrishna's guidance, Narendranath experienced states of deep meditation and spiritual ecstasy. Ramakrishna's teachings of universal love, harmony among religions, and selfless service became the bedrock of Vivekananda's philosophy.

Transformation into Swami Vivekananda

After Ramakrishna's passing in 1886, Narendranath renounced worldly life and took the vows of a sannyasi,

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S BIRTHDAY FALLS ON JANUARY 12 AND IS CELEBRATED AS NATIONAL YOUTH DAY ACROSS INDIA



assuming the name Swami Vivekananda. Along with a group of dedicated disciples, he established a monastic order in Baranagar, near Calcutta. The order became the nucleus of the Ramakrishna Math, dedicated to spiritual practice and the propagation of Ramakrishna's teachings.

Journey to the West

In 1893, Swami Vivekananda traveled to the United States to participate in the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. His address on September 11, 1893, began with the iconic words, "Sisters and Brothers of America," which drew a standing ovation from the audience. Vivekananda spoke passionately about the universality of religion, the need for interfaith harmony, and the spiritual wisdom of India.

Impact of the Chicago Address

Vivekananda's speech catapulted him to international fame. He became a sought-after speaker, delivering lectures on Vedanta, Yoga, and the synthesis of science and spirituality. His presence in the West marked the beginning of a cultural exchange that introduced

Indian spirituality to a global audience.

Founding the Ramakrishna Mission

In 1897, Swami Vivekananda returned to India and founded the Ramakrishna Mission, an organization dedicated to social welfare and spiritual upliftment. The mission's work encompassed education, healthcare, disaster relief, and the promotion of interfaith harmony.

Core Ideals

The Ramakrishna Mission is guided by the principles of selfless service, spiritual practice, and the teachings of Vedanta. Vivekananda emphasized the importance of "service to man as service to God," advocating for the upliftment of the poor and marginalized.

Teachings and Philosophy

Swami Vivekananda's teachings are a harmonious blend of spirituality, rationality, and practicality. Key aspects of his philosophy include:

- **Universal Religion:** Vivekananda believed in the underlying unity of all religions and promoted interfaith dialogue.
- **Vedantic Philosophy:** He

emphasized the teachings of Advaita Vedanta, which proclaim the oneness of the individual soul (Atman) and the universal soul (Brahman).

- **Karma Yoga:** Vivekananda advocated for selfless action as a means of spiritual realization.
- **Education:** He stressed the need for holistic education that fosters character development and self-reliance.
- **Empowerment of Women:** Vivekananda championed the empowerment of women, viewing them as the cornerstone of a strong society.

Legacy

Swami Vivekananda passed away on July 4, 1902, at the young age of 39. Despite his short lifespan, his impact on spirituality, education, and social reform has been immense.

Influence on Indian Nationalism

Vivekananda's call for spiritual awakening and national pride inspired several leaders of the Indian independence movement, including Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

Global Recognition

Today, Swami Vivekananda is revered as a global spiritual icon. His teachings continue to inspire millions, and his birthday is celebrated as National Youth Day in India.

The young monk and his teachings have been an inspiration to many, and his words have become goals of self-improvement especially for the youth of the country.

National Youth Day (Yuva Diwas or Swami Vivekananda Birthday) is celebrated with the great joy and enthusiasm in India every year on 12th of January. It is celebrated to commemorate the birthday of Swami Vivekananda, maker of the modern India. It was first declared by the Government of India in the year 1984 to celebrate the birthday of Swami Vivekananda as the National Youth Day. Since then (1985), it is started celebrating as the National Youth Day all over the country.

Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings transcend the boundaries of time, culture, and geography. He envisioned a world where humanity could rise above narrow divisions and work collectively toward the realization of its highest potential. Through his profound spirituality, unwavering commitment to service, and visionary leadership, Swami Vivekananda has left an indelible legacy that continues to illuminate the path for generations to come.

Relevance of Swami Vivekananda as Youth Icon in Modern Time

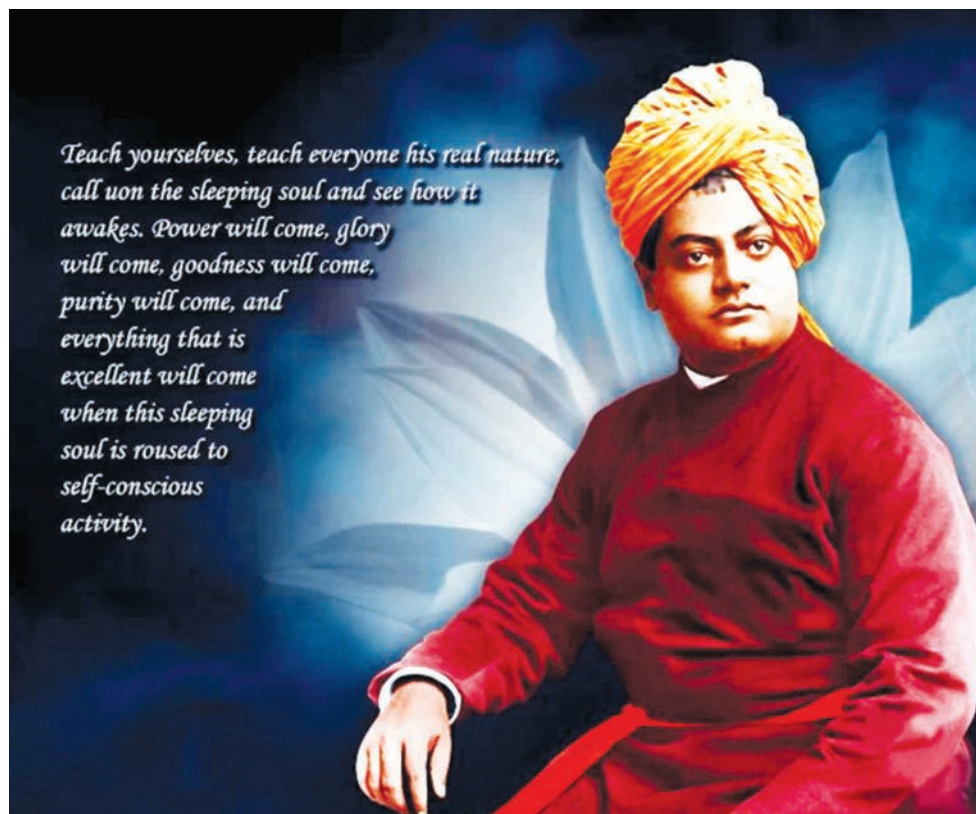
Swami Vivekananda, a spiritual leader, had a deep insight into modern education and spiritual learning; in simple words, he emphasized the blending of modern education with Indian spirituality.

Vivekananda was a firm believer in education as a tool for human advancement. His speeches and writings are replete with references to the plight of the masses as a result of the denial of literacy and education to them. He was particularly shocked by the degree of ignorance and superstition prevalent in rural regions due to a lack of literacy and education. He was also harshly critical of the educational system, citing its western slant and a lack of focus on the development of mental capacity and moral character in its students. In addition, he advocated for the universalization of literacy, development, and mass education. He desired a comprehensive reorientation of the educational system to make it an integrated man-making and character-building system, with a focus on national pride, love for the masses, self-confidence, strength, and will power, and cultivation of the intellect rather than simple recollection.

Swami Vivekananda's scheme of youth education is comprehensive education that aims to develop body, mind and soul from a socio-economic perspective, which destroys inequality between men and women, casteism and communalism, ethnic and sub-national, regionalism and national differences. When he speaks of 'body', he lays stress on physical training, good living conditions, a balanced diet, in a word, complete satisfaction of all physical hunger. All of this is possible only when the youth are employed and earning a stable income. For this, youth need to develop agriculture with the help of Western technology, and the promotion of small-scale and cottage industries with the use of financial assistance from the state to become "Atmanirbhar".

Youth must have sound mental health, "Be strong my young friends, that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita". This line reflects a story when a young lad visited Swamiji and asked him to teach meditation. He says, go and play, do some physical exercise, and then I will teach you. He always promotes the physical well-being of youth, as it's a focus proverb – healthy mind stays in a healthy body. He wants youth to be as soft as Krishna playing the flute and as masculine as Hanuman.

Vivekananda believes in the dispersion of positive thoughts and values among the youths; he says: "If you can give them positive thoughts, then people will grow up to be a man and learn to stand on their own legs".



That's why in the present time, it is necessary to empower the weakest, most neglected and degraded societies' youth so that they can contribute to nation-building. Only positive education can do that; however, if seen in the name of empowerment, youths are divided into all sorts of instruments that promote negative thought processes (hatred and enmity between different groups) that are baked inside the universities and schools. As a result, it creates disharmony and conflict, so youth must try to believe in solidarity and cohesion.

Swamiji says, "Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry, and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world". Youth should try to read and learn basics from "The book of Nature", i.e. Chemistry and Physics. In modern times youth are often ignorant of technological sciences too as they are busy reading the wrong book, i.e. 'The book of passing marks'. At the same time, techno-geek youth are often ignorant of religion and its dimensions. They too read the wrong books, i.e. 'The book without interior knowledge'. The book from which religiosity can be learned is the youth's mind and heart.

While speaking of 'mind', Swamiji laid stress on discipline, fearlessness, passion for helping others, commitment to human and social values and a continuous effort to realise oneself through social service and meditation. The final stage of education lies in the elevation of the body and mind up to the 'soul' when there is the realization of 'Universal Unity'. So physical and mental stages of the educational curriculum end in the spiritual step. This spiritualism is the final identity of

a layman and woman and not that of a monk and seer only. So it is 'Practical Vedanta'. We notice a two-way dynamic process here: One, is essentially inward, and the other is entirely social. This blending of the two in a harmonious fashion has been possible through a synthesis of religion and philosophy.

Character Education

Education is a building block of character. It is not gathering or absorbing knowledge; it is the encapsulation of good values. Character imparts wisdom which results in attaining enlightenment. And the goal of life should be unselfishness and living for others. Life is all about sacrifice. He always connects to youths by: "This life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but they alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive". Our life is merely a collection of good or bad habits; these habits enterprise characters as a personality that societies continuously monitor and reflect an impression of oneself. In the 21st century, the modern economic and education system has created an environment of stress, so inculcating one good thought and habit, rather than having dozens of thoughts, and trying to implement it in one's own life is the best method of achieving enlightenment.

Right Education

Right education is critical for youths, as we have been colonised for more than 200 years, creating a mindset of slavery. Swamiji says during his interaction: "Getting by heart the thoughts of others in a foreign language and stuffing your brain with them and taking some universities degree, you consider

yourself educated". As rote learning and sluggish thinking do not produce the mind that a developing nation requires. Such educated youth are a burden on society. They even cannot earn a decent living for themselves and their family. Unskilled youth start depending on the government dole, and the process of man-making gets hampered.

Science and Religion

Swami Vivekananda always mentions that: "Science is nothing but the finding of unity". Once science reaches the state of unity, further progress would stop as it would have reached its goal. 'Chemistry' would not progress further when it has discovered a single element out of which others can be made. Progress of 'Physics' stops when it finds a single source of energy out of which all the others are made; the manifestation of science and religion becomes unity when the manifestation of unity will discover the 'God'; who is the only 'divine', living in the universe of mortals. The one who is constant in a mortal and ever-changing world is only "Him". The One "Him" who is the only soul out of which all souls are made the concept of universal religion takes place. Any mischievous manifestations of "Him" will be disastrous for youth and the nation.

After accumulating the above-mentioned qualities comes a part of religion. Once a youth is physically strong and emotionally intense, then they can preserve the realisation of universal religion where Vedanta and the evolution of peaceful religion can be promoted. This religion is distinct from dogmas, rituals and misconceptions of knowledge. Swamiji believes in religious pluralism with scientific temperament, where Western understanding of science is taught in college and religion at home, society and religious institutions. However, he never wants youth to convert to another religion, and practice the path of Dharma from the eyes of Vedanta.

Thus, education is a man-making process rather than a life-destroying enterprise; with the right education, characters are built, which help to counter bad habits. For youth, education is not only the development of character but also develops leadership qualities and personalities.

The youth must advocate for the entire development of physical, mental, emotional, leadership qualities and religiosity which was once the idea of the education system of Vishwaguru. The principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', with the blending of modern technology and man-making, must be focused on youth to contribute to nation-building.

Source: Indica Today

CELEBRATING HIS LEGACY - 'A BURNING HOUSE': MLK AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

By Mabel Pais

WNYC Radio (NYC Public Radio) in collaboration with The Apollo Theater of Harlem will host the annual MLK event at The Apollo (as it's popularly called), honoring Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday while exploring Dr. King's enduring legacy through the lens of belonging, reflecting on his vision for a just and inclusive society. This takes place on Sunday, January 19, 2025 at 2 pm. Doors open at 1 pm.

PROGRAM

WHEN: Sunday, January 19, 2025 @ 2:00 PM

WHERE: The Apollo, 253 West 125th Street New York, NY

DURATION: 1 hour 30 minutes

Through powerful conversations with prominent public intellectuals, community and faith leaders, authors and artists the organizers will ponder democracy and civil rights under a second Trump administration.

Featuring appearances from organizers Michael Hill, Janae Pierre, Brian Lehrer and Terrance McKnight.

Join the team for this inspiring tribute as we honor Dr. King's dream and engage in a timely dialogue on the ongoing project of forging an equitable society.

RSVP & TICKETS

This event is free with RSVP. RSVP @ ticketmaster.com/wnyc-the-apollo-present-apollo-uptown-new-york-new-york-01-19-2025/event/00006179B91A182C.

Free tickets will be available starting Tuesday, Jan. 7.

For the schedule updates, visit apollotheater.org/event/uptown-hall-25.

For those unable to attend in person, the event will air on WNYC on Monday, January 20 at 2 pm and 8 pm.

THE APOLLO



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. (MLK)

Credit: apollotheater.org

The Apollo is an American cultural treasure. It is a vibrant non-profit organization rooted in the Harlem community that engages people from around New York, the nation, and the world. Since 1934, The Apollo has celebrated, created, and presented work that centers Black artists and voices from across the African Diaspora. It has also been a catalyst for social and civic advocacy. Today, The Apollo is the largest performing arts institution committed to Black culture and creativity.

The Apollo is a commissioner and presenter; catalyst for new artists, audiences, and creative workforce; and partner in the projection of the African American narrative and its role in the development of American and global culture.

WNYC

On July 8th, 1924, WNYC began broadcasting at 570 AM. In battle with other stations and the FCC, the frequency shifted over the years to 810 AM, 830 AM and finally to its present location at 820 AM.

The station added an FM antenna and transmitter on top of the Municipal



Audience at an MLK Celebration Event.

Credit: apollotheater.org

Building and on March 13, 1943 began full operation on the "static-less" FM band. During the WWII and into the 1950s, WNYC was the city's primary clearing house for civil defense information.

It also expanded its child-oriented programming while continuing to be a leader in classical and American music programming. In March 1995, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani agreed to sell WNYC AM and FM to the WNYC Foundation for \$20 million. On January 7, 1997 the City transferred ownership of the licenses to the WNYC Foundation and on March 11, 1997, the licenses were assigned by the Foundation to WNYC Radio. The station strives to continue a legacy of innovative programs under the distinguished leadership of President and CEO Laura Walker, the first non-mayoral appointee in WNYC's history. With the launch of wnyc.org in 1998, the station extended its virtual community internationally.

In October 2009 WQXR joined WNYC as part of the New York Public Radio family followed two years later by WNJT FM-Trenton, WNJB FM-Sussex, WNJY FM-

Netcong, and WNJO FM-Toms River comprising New Jersey Public Radio and WQXQ in 2013. WNYC Studios were launched in 2015 as a major new multi-million-dollar investment to incubate talent and double down on podcasts.

Today, WNYC Radio (93.9 FM and 820 AM) is the most listened-to public radio station in the United States. With extraordinary support from listeners, corporations and foundations WNYC Radio is now independent of city government having paid for its broadcast licenses. WNYC is a member station of National Public Radio (NPR) and Public Radio International (PRI). Since 1940 WNYC and WQXR have been honored with 22 Peabody Awards and citations.

WNYC's history of providing innovative and award-winning news, educational, cultural and public affairs programming reflects the enormous diversity and cultural depth of the New York metropolitan area.

To learn more about WNYC's rich broadcast legacy go to Archives and Preservation.

MLK'S LEGACY CONTINUES WITH MLK YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS

By Mabel Pais

As a follow up to the 'A Burning House: MLK and the American Experience' hosted jointly by WNYC and The Apollo, MLK Young Changemakers host their event - 'MLK YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS: FEEDING OUR FUTURE' on January 20 at 3 pm. Doors open at 2:30 pm.

TICKETS

To reserve your pair of tickets, RSVP at apollo.formstack.com/forms/mlk_ycm_25 by 5pm on Friday, January 17th.

Please note: This is a limited complimentary offer for you and one guest, and is non-transferrable.

PROGRAM

WHEN: January 20, 2025 @ 3 PM; Doors open at 2:30



MLK Sketch, Poster.
Credit: apollotheater.org

WHERE: The Apollo Stages at the Victoria

Apollo Education invites the community to join this year's 'MLK

Young Changemakers' event, honoring Dr. King's powerful legacy in a modern context. MLK Young Changemakers is a series of conversations in recognition of

Dr. King's impact and the National Day of Service where local and national youth leaders will explore how environmental and food justice impact our lives and communities.

This year's 'MLK Young Changemakers: Feeding Our Future' focuses on Dr. King's lasting impact on modern environmental advocacy as young advocates honor Dr. King's legacy that matters now: by tackling food and environmental justice head-on. Come to The Apollo Stages at The Victoria to support a new generation passionate about a better future. This is your chance to connect, speak up, and drive change.

This event is curated by The Apollo's Apprentices.

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

LITERARY FEST: 'BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE' ARRIVES ONCE MORE AT THE JCC MANHATTAN

By Mabel Pais



JCC Book Gallery, Banner

Credit : mmjccm.org

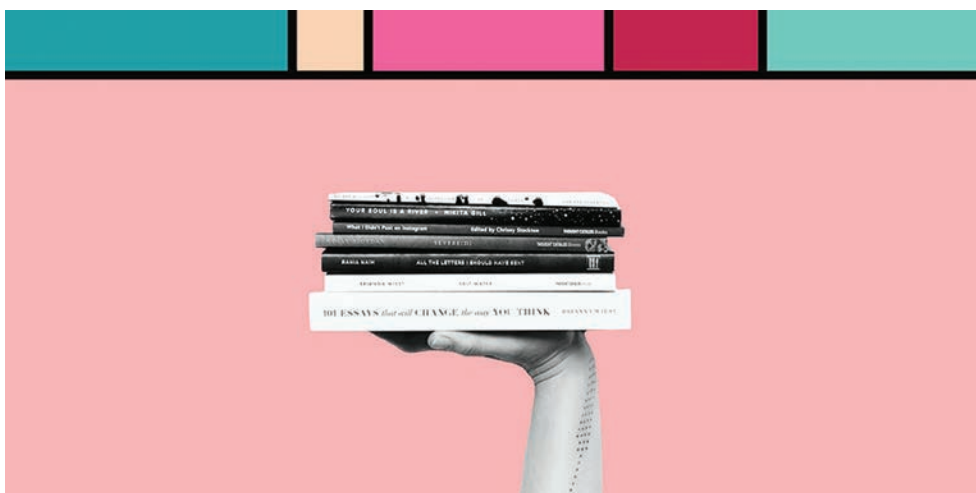
For the third year in winter 2025 the Literary Festival - 'BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE' is presented at the MMJCCM - January 10 - February 27 - a two month celebration of the power and impact of books. The event is located at the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan (Books That Changed My Life Festival - (mmjccm.org), 334 Amsterdam Avenue New York, NY 10023.

Dive into the enchanting world of the 'Books That Changed My Life' Festival, hosted by the JCC's Lambert Center for Arts + Ideas at the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan on the Upper West Side. This 3rd annual celebration of programs takes place over two months and embraces the magical power of books to transform our lives.

Cozy up with a captivating read from the Center's pop-up library in The Laurie M. Tisch Gallery in the lobby, and join thought-provoking conversations and programs with notable minds as they share the books that have left an indelible mark on their journeys. Make some friends at the monstrous exhibit, and engage in lively discussions with fellow book lovers. This festival hopes to bring joy, inspiration, and a deeper connection to the stories that shape us all.

The Jewish people are often called the "people of the book," and for good reason. In this lively presentation of diverse reading materials, the Center honors the power of stories to shape our lives. Through storytelling, documentation, and the exploration of alternate worlds, we enrich our lives, forge deeper connections, and find greater meaning. Join the organizers as together we dive into the boundless worlds within books, celebrating the magic that binds us together and the wisdom that enlightens our journey.

WHY IT MATTERS



Books, Banner.

Credit : mmjccm.org

This festival is more than an event - it's a call to action for communities to reconnect with the timeless power of storytelling. In an era of digital overwhelm, the Books That Changed My Life Festival serves as a reminder that books still have the power to shape our minds, foster empathy, and bring us together.

OVERVIEW: SOME FEATURED GUESTS & EVENTS

This year's roster of literary luminaries and creative experiences includes:

Ann Napolitano, New York Times bestselling author and Oprah's 100 Book Club selection. Ann will be in conversation with Noa Manheim, acclaimed Israeli editor and author.

Gregg Hurwitz, New York Times bestselling thriller author.

Yael Van Der Wouden, Man Booker Award finalist.

The Outsiders Broadway team, with an insider look at adapting this classic story for the stage.

Chloe Sorvino, in conversation with Marguerite Zabar Mariscal, CEO of Momofuku.

Ruth Franklin, discussing 'The Many Lives of Anne Frank.'

FAMILY-FRIENDLY MAGIC

Families and young readers won't want to miss:

Opening Party: A Monstrous Book Celebration, featuring hands-on activities and surprise appearances.

The Paper Bag Players: We Start to Sing!

Sunset Circus, back by popular demand after four sold-out shows last year.

Pop-up story times, puppet shows, and live music at the lobby library.

SPECIAL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Story Bites (and Sweet Treats):

A fusion of culinary arts, fiction, and cupcakes AIMIE RUNYAN, author of 'A Bakery in Paris'; SUSAN JANE GILMAN, who penned 'The Ice Cream Queen of Orchard Street'; and AMY REICHERT, with her mouthwatering novel 'The Coincidence of Coconut Cake'. Moderated by Sonya Sanford, a writer, chef, and co-host of the popular podcast, 'Food Friends: Home Cooking Made Easy'

'Shalom Japan' with AARON ISRAEL and SAWAKO OKOCHI, authors of 'Love Japan', and James Beard-nominated writer GABRIELLA GERSHENSON. Moderated by Marilyn Ong is a supervising editor for The New York Times Wirecutter's food team.

'A Mark in Time': A unique Lower East Side Jewish literature walking tour.

Exclusive engagements with the festival's author-in-residence, MAYA ARAD.

OPENING DAY

An Opening Party commences the Festival, 5-7 pm on January 9.

SCHEDULE

For a complete schedule of events in January and February, visit mmjccm.org/arts-film/conversations/book-festival.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Jan 9 | Opening Party: A Monstrous Book Party for Families

Jan 14 | Storytime in the Lobby: WonderSpark Puppets Presents the Case of the Missing Creature

Jan 26 | We Start to Sing! The Paper Bag Players: A Performance for Kids and Families (Morning Show)

Jan 26 | We Start to Sing! The Paper Bag Players: A Performance for Kids and Families (Afternoon Show)

Jan 26 | Children's Book Fair

Feb 2 | Room for Rent Family Concert (English)

Feb 2 | Room for Rent Family Concert (Hebrew)

Feb 4 | Storytime in the Lobby: Ben Romano

Feb 9 | Family Art Day

Feb 9 | Sunset Circus (Morning Show)

Feb 9 | Sunset Circus (Afternoon Show)

Feb 11 | Storytime in the Lobby: Oscar's Blue Bandana with Wendy C. Goldstein

CONVERSATIONS

Schedule of conversations with authors -

Jan 16 | Story Bites (and Sweet Treats): An Evening of Culinary Arts, Fiction, and Cupcakes

Jan 23 | Bound by Stories: Ann Napolitano in Conversation with Noa Manheim

Jan 27 | Ruth Franklin: The Many Lives of Anne Frank

Special Screening of Chen Drachman Short Film 'The Book of Ruth'

Feb 3 | Shalom Japan: A Culinary Journey

Feb 5 | Happy Hour Cocktails + the Best Book for NYC Moms with Sophie Brickman

Feb 10 | The Hall of Fame of The Great Monsters with Jackie Hoffman

Feb 13 | Yael Van Der Wouden (Booker Prize Nominee) in Conversation with Lauren Wein

Feb 19 | Author Chloe Sorvino in Conversation with Marguerite Zabar Mariscal, CEO of Momofuku

Feb 23 | The Outsiders

Feb 24 | In Conversation with Gregg Hurwitz

Feb 27 | A Conversation with Tod Lending: 'The Umbrella Maker's Son'

SPECIAL EVENTS

Jan 9 | Opening Party: A Monstrous Book Party for Families

Jan 10 | Shabbat Shabbang

Jan 15 | Book Tour: A Mark in Time: Lower East Side Jewish Literature

Jan 20-24 | Children's Book Drive

Feb 5 | Book Bites Club with Liat Sheerit

Feb 12 | Book Tour: A Mark in Time: Lower East Side Jewish Literature

Feb 23 | The Outsiders

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AUTHOR IN RESIDENCE | MAYA ARAD

The 'Books That Changed My Life' festival is thrilled to announce its first-ever Author in Residence. For an entire week in February, Maya will be in the lobby of the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, ready to meet with community members and listen to their life stories. This is your chance to share your unique experiences with a celebrated author-who knows, you might even inspire a character in her next book!

Maya Arad is the author of 11 works of Hebrew fiction, as well as acclaimed studies in literary criticism and linguistics. Born in Israel and now based in California, she serves as Writer in Residence at Stanford University's Taube Center for Jewish Studies. Her latest novel, 'The Hebrew Teacher', has just been translated into English.

Don't miss this exciting opportunity to connect with a remarkable storyteller!

Dates + Times:

Mon, Feb 10, 4-7 pm

Tue, Feb 11, 8-11 am

Wed, Feb 12, noon-3 pm

Thu, Feb 13, 3-6 pm

Sun, Feb 16, 4-7 pm - Special Residency Closing Event

PERFORMANCES

Jan 14 | Storytime in the Lobby: WonderSpark Puppets Presents the Case of the Missing Creature

Jan 26 | We Start to Sing! The Paper Bag Players: A Performance for Kids and

Families (Morning Show)

Jan 26 | We Start to Sing! The Paper Bag Players: A Performance for Kids and Families (Afternoon Show)

Jan 29 | Once Upon a Time: A Musical Storybook

Feb 2 | Room for Rent Family Concert (English)

Feb 2 | Room for Rent Family Concert (Hebrew)

Feb 4 | Storytime in the Lobby: Ben Romano

Feb 9 | Sunset Circus (Morning Show)

Feb 9 | Sunset Circus (Afternoon Show)

Feb 11 | Storytime in the Lobby: Oscar's Blue Bandana with Wendy C. Goldstein

Feb 23 | The Outsiders

TICKETS

For tickets and a full lineup of events, visit: mmjccm.org/book-festival

For group rates or VIP access, contact Liel Ben David, Program Director, at ldavid@mmjccm.org

Official Bookseller: Shakespeare & Co.

THE MARLENE MEYERSON JCC MANHATTAN

The Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, located on 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, is a vibrant nonprofit community center serving over 30,000 people annually. Through more than 1,200 programs each season, the JCC creates opportunities to connect, grow, and learn while embracing the ever-changing cultural landscape. To learn more, visit mmjccm.org.

FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE NIGHT OF SOULFUL R&B WITH BOYZ II MEN

By Mabel Pais

Their smooth harmonies and romantic ballads have captivated audiences far and wide.

Get ready for an unforgettable night of soulful R&B (Rhythm and Blues) music with Boyz II Men at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) on Wednesday, January 15 at 8 PM.

Experience the timeless classics like 'End of the Road,' 'I'll Make Love to You,' 'One Sweet Day,' and 'Motownphilly' performed by the legendary trio, NATHAN MORRIS, WANYA MORRIS, and SHAWN STOCKMAN.

Over three decades have earned them multiple GRAMMY® Awards, Soul Train Awards, and Billboard Awards. Don't miss this opportunity to be serenaded by the iconic voices that have defined an entire generation of love songs and slow jams. Learn more at boyziimen.com.

TICKETS

Tickets to see Boyz II Men can be purchased by visiting NJPAC.org or the NJPAC Box Office or by calling 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

NJPAC, located in downtown Newark, N.J., is America's most diverse performing arts center, and the artistic, cultural, educational and civic center of New Jersey - where great performances and events enhance and transform lives every day. NJPAC brings diverse communities together, providing access to all and showcasing the state's and the world's best artists while acting as a leading catalyst in the revitalization of its home city. Through its extensive Arts Education programs, which have reached almost 2 million children, NJPAC is shaping the next generation of artists and arts enthusiasts. NJPAC has attracted more than 10 million visitors since opening its doors in 1997, and nurtures meaningful and lasting relationships with each of its constituents.

FOLLOW NJPAC ONLINE:

Website: njpac.org

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Boyz II Men team.

Credit: boyziimen.com

Facebook: facebook.com/NJPAC

YouTube: NJPACTv

FOLLOW NJPAC'S STANDING IN SOLIDARITY SERIES ONLINE:

Website: njpac.org/takeastand

Hashtag: #NJPACTakeAStand

Youtube: Standing in Solidarity playlist

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

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Celebrating Lohri: A night of bonfires, joy and togetherness

Lohri, one of the most cherished festivals in Northern India, marks the culmination of winter and the onset of the harvest season. Celebrated predominantly in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and parts of Jammu and Kashmir, this vibrant festival holds immense cultural, social, and spiritual significance. With roots tracing back to agrarian traditions and ancient folklore, Lohri is a joyous occasion that unites communities, honors nature, and celebrates life.

The Historical and Mythological Roots of Lohri

The origins of Lohri are steeped in history, mythology, and folklore. While the precise genesis of the festival is debated, several narratives offer insights into its rich heritage.

Agrarian Significance

Lohri is primarily a harvest festival, celebrated to mark the end of the winter solstice and the beginning of longer days. The festival coincides with the harvesting of rabi crops, particularly sugarcane, wheat, and mustard. Farmers rejoice in the bounty of nature and express gratitude to the Sun God for blessing their fields with abundance.

Dulla Bhatti's Heroic Legacy:

A prominent legend associated with Lohri is that of Dulla Bhatti, a 16th-century folk hero who symbolized resistance against Mughal oppression. Known as the "Robin Hood of Punjab," Dulla Bhatti was celebrated for his bravery and acts of kindness. He stood up against the injustices of the Mughal empire, particularly the abduction and exploitation of young women.

Dulla Bhatti is most famously remembered for rescuing girls from being forcibly taken and arranging their marriages. He provided dowries for these girls, ensuring their dignity and safety. Songs sung during Lohri celebrations often honor his deeds. A popular Punjabi Lohri song goes as follows:

*"Sunder mundriye ho!
Tera kaun vichara ho!
Dulla Bhatti wala ho!
Dulle di dheer vyahi ho!
Ser shakkar payi ho!"*

This song narrates the tale of Dulla Bhatti, highlighting his role in saving young women and arranging their marriages. His legacy is a reminder of the importance of justice, compassion, and community support.

Mythological Connections

Some believe that Lohri is linked to tales from Hindu mythology, including the story of Prahlada and Holika. Though primarily associated with Holi, this tale underscores the triumph of devotion and



righteousness over evil-values that resonate with Lohri's spirit.

The Significance of Fire in Lohri Celebrations

Central to Lohri is the communal bonfire, symbolizing warmth, light, and togetherness. As families and friends gather around the crackling flames, they perform rituals steeped in meaning:

Gratitude to the Sun God:

The bonfire is a tribute to Agni (the fire deity) and Surya (the sun deity). Offerings of til (sesame seeds), gur (jaggery), popcorn, and peanuts are made to express gratitude and seek blessings for prosperity.

Burning Away Negativity

The fire represents purification, burning away past hardships and negativity while welcoming new beginnings.

Community Bonding

Singing traditional songs, dancing, and sharing stories around the bonfire foster a sense of unity and belonging. The ambiance radiates warmth, much like the values Lohri celebrates.

The Joyful Customs and Traditions of Lohri

Lohri is not merely a festival but an experience that encapsulates the essence of Punjabi culture. From vibrant attire to foot-tapping music, every aspect of the celebration is steeped in tradition.

Traditional Attire

Men don kurta-pajamas paired with



colorful turbans, while women wear vibrant salwar suits or lehengas adorned with traditional Phulkari embroidery. The attire reflects the colorful spirit of the festival.

Folk Music and Dance

The rhythmic beats of the dhol (drum) set the stage for exuberant performances of Bhangra and Gidda. These dances, characterized by energetic movements and synchronized steps, are expressions of joy and gratitude.

Singing Lohri Songs

Children and adults alike sing traditional Lohri songs, many of which pay homage to Dulla Bhatti. Groups visit homes, singing and receiving sweets,

grains, and money in return—a practice akin to caroling.

Festive Delicacies

A Lohri feast is incomplete without its iconic dishes. Sarson ka saag (mustard greens) and makki di roti (cornbread) take center stage, accompanied by sweets like rewri, gajak, and pinnis. These delicacies celebrate the harvest and the culinary heritage of Punjab.

Lohri and the Celebration of New Beginnings

Lohri holds special significance for families celebrating new milestones. For newlyweds, the festival marks their first major celebration together, symbolizing the beginning of a prosperous life.

Similarly, the birth of a child is celebrated with grandeur, as Lohri embodies fertility, growth, and abundance.

Regional Variations and Similar Festivals

While Lohri is predominantly celebrated in Punjab and its neighboring regions, its essence transcends geographical boundaries. Similar festivals are observed across India, each with unique customs and names:

- Makar Sankranti (celebrated in most parts of India) marks the transition of the sun into Capricorn.
- Pongal in Tamil Nadu honors the Sun God and includes the boiling of freshly harvested rice.
- Bihu in Assam celebrates the harvest with dance and music.
- Uttarayan in Gujarat is marked by kite flying.

Despite regional differences, these festivals share a common theme of gratitude, renewal, and community.

The First Lohri

Lohri, the bonfire harvest festival of Punjab celebrated in the month of Magh, is symbolic of new beginnings. The first time Lohris are especially celebrated with pomp and grandeur. Friends and relatives gather around the fire and perform Gidda and Bhangra to the beat of Dhol, the drums of Punjab.

The First Lohri of a Bride

The celebration takes place in the in-law's house with a grand feast for family and friends. The bride dresses in traditional attire with solah sringar, 16 things that a bride generally wears. The new bride and groom sit in a central place together as people approach them with wishes and gifts. The parents-in-law present the bride with new clothes and jewellery.

The First Lohri of a New-born

The first Lohri of a new-born is of immense significance where the family and friends participate to bless the child with a prosperous and a healthy future.

Many conduct an elaborate get-together at the paternal home, where invitation cards are sent in advance. Family and friends bring along gifts for the child as well as the new mother. The maternal and paternal grandparents shower the child with gifts.

Lohri Rituals

Lohri is primarily the harvest festival of the Punjabis. This festival denotes the harvesting of the Rabi crops and hence all the farmers get together in order to thank god for giving them such a wonderful harvest.

The rituals related to Lohri symbolize the attachment of the people with Mother Nature. A few days before the festival, youngsters get together in groups and go round their localities singing folk songs.

Doing this they also collect firewood and money for the bonfire that is scheduled on the night of Lohri. On the special day, offerings of phulley (popcorn), moongphali (peanuts) and rewri (a sweet delicacy made out of jaggery and sesame seed) are offered to the fire.

The men and women go round the fire and bow before it in reverence. Lohri



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Lohri Legends

Like all Indian festivals, Lohri also has some legends and lore attached to it.

One of the many interesting legends has it that in a place that lies between Gujranwala and Sialkot, there was a

thick forest known as Rakh.

The forest was the home of Dulla Bhatti, a dacoit who was considered as the Robin Hood of Punjab. This brave and generous man was always helpful to the needy.

During the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir, a jealous Hindu spread a rumour that his niece was very beautiful and would do credit to the Muslim harem.

On hearing this, the Mughal officers wanted to carry her off forcibly. The girl's father was extremely worried and sought the protection of Dulla Bhatti.

Dulla at once got her married to a young Hindu boy at a simple ceremony in the forest. He lit the sacred fire in keeping with the Hindu custom. Since there was no priest to chant the holy mantras, he broke into a hilarious song composed extempore to add cheer to the occasion. This song is sung even today on the occasion.

The best way of celebrations in this chilly whether could be to sit around a bonfire and enjoy. Well, Lohri Celebrations would be the best festival to celebrate and spread the warmth of love and happiness among all your near and dear ones in this chilly weather. Lohri is majorly celebrated in Punjab and north Indian states on 13th January and is considered to be the harvesting festival of Punjab. Lohri is not just a festival for people of Punjab but it is a symbol of life. Several hopes of farmers are associated with this festival of Lohri as the fields

promise a golden yield to the farmers.

Newly wed couples and all those couples who have a newborn baby celebrate Lohri but nowadays it is seen that most of the people celebrate this festival of Lohri as an occasion of get together; to spend some time with their near and dear ones and enjoy the celebrations.

Children start collecting firewoods and wooden twigs one week before the festival that are used for burning Lohri.

On the Lohri day all the firewoods are arranged in a circular manner in such a way that it makes a huge bonfire.

Children visit each and every house of their locality inviting all the people for the Lohri celebrations and asking for their contributions. While visiting every house children sing a Lohri song, making everyone feel that the festival of Lohri is around the corner. The traditional food cooked on the Lohri day is sarson ka saag and makki ki roti and rau di kheer is served as a dessert.

People dress themselves in new clothes and in the night they gather around the bonfire to light it. People pray in front of the burning bonfire and put til (gingelly), moongphali (peanuts), popcorns and chirwa (beaten rice) in it, as all these eatables are considered as the Lohri prasad. People greet each other wishing a very happy Lohri and spread the feeling of love and happiness all around.

Lohri in Modern Times

In today's fast-paced world, Lohri has evolved while retaining its traditional essence. Urban celebrations often include elaborate parties with a mix of traditional and contemporary elements. The festival has also gained recognition on a global scale, with Punjabi communities around the world celebrating Lohri with zeal, bringing a slice of their culture to international shores.

Environmental Consciousness and Lohri

As awareness about environmental conservation grows, many communities are rethinking traditional practices associated with Lohri. Eco-friendly celebrations include using sustainable materials for bonfires, reducing waste, and promoting tree planting to counter deforestation.

The Universal Message of Lohri

Beyond its cultural and regional significance, Lohri embodies values that resonate universally. It reminds us to cherish our roots, embrace community, and express gratitude for the blessings of life. In a world often divided by differences, Lohri's message of unity and togetherness serves as a beacon of hope.

Lohri is more than a festival; it is a celebration of life, heritage, and the eternal bond between humanity and nature. Its customs and traditions are a testament to the resilience and vibrancy of Punjabi culture. Whether through the warmth of the bonfire, the joyous beats of the dhol, or the shared laughter of loved ones, Lohri captures the spirit of a community that knows how to celebrate with heart and soul. As we light the bonfires and sing traditional songs, we honor the past, celebrate the present, and look forward to a future filled with hope, prosperity, and joy.

Makar Sankranti: A celebration of harvest and renewal

Makar Sankranti, one of the most celebrated festivals in India, marks the transition of the Sun into the zodiac sign of Capricorn ("Makara" in Sanskrit). This celestial event signifies the end of the winter solstice and the beginning of longer days. Observed annually on January 14th or 15th, depending on the solar calendar, Makar Sankranti is deeply rooted in agricultural traditions, astronomical significance, and cultural diversity. Across the country, this festival is celebrated with varied customs, rituals, and regional names, reflecting the rich tapestry of India's heritage.

The Astronomical and Agricultural Significance of Makar Sankranti

Makar Sankranti is an astronomically significant day as it marks the Sun's northward journey, known as "Uttarayana." This transition heralds the end of the darkest nights and the arrival of longer days, symbolizing enlightenment, prosperity, and new beginnings. Uttarayana is considered highly auspicious in Hinduism, and many believe it to be a time when divine interventions are more accessible.

Agriculturally, Makar Sankranti is a harvest festival. It is a time to thank nature and the Sun for a bountiful harvest and pray for future prosperity. This festival is particularly important in agrarian societies where the rabi crop (winter crop) is ready for harvesting. Farmers celebrate the fruits of their labor with joy and gratitude, making it a period of communal festivity.

Regional Variations in Celebration

Makar Sankranti is celebrated under various names and with unique customs across India. Despite the differences, the underlying themes of gratitude, renewal, and community bonding remain consistent.

Pongal in Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu, Makar Sankranti coincides with the four-day harvest festival of Pongal. Each day has a unique significance:

- **Bhogi:** The first day is dedicated to cleaning and discarding old belongings, symbolizing a fresh start.
- **Thai Pongal:** The second day, Thai Pongal, involves boiling freshly harvested rice with milk and jaggery in clay pots. This dish, also called Pongal, is offered to the Sun God as a gesture of gratitude.
- **Mattu Pongal:** On the third day, cows and bulls, which play a vital role in agriculture, are honored and decorated.
- **Kaanum Pongal:** The final day is dedicated to family reunions and social gatherings.



Lohri in Punjab

In Punjab, Makar Sankranti is celebrated as Lohri, a festival primarily associated with the harvesting of sugarcane. The evening before Makar Sankranti, people light bonfires, sing traditional songs, and dance to the beats of dhol. The bonfire symbolizes the burning of negativity, and offerings of sesame seeds, jaggery, and popcorn are made to the fire as a gesture of gratitude.

Uttarayan in Gujarat

Gujarat celebrates Makar Sankranti as Uttarayan, a festival known for its vibrant kite-flying tradition. The skies are filled with colorful kites, symbolizing freedom and joy. The International Kite Festival, held in Ahmedabad, attracts participants from around the globe. Special dishes like "undhiyu" (a mixed vegetable dish) and "jalebi" are prepared to mark the occasion.

Sankranti in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Makar Sankranti is a three-day festival:

- **Bhogi:** Similar to Tamil Nadu, Bhogi marks the cleaning of homes and the burning of unwanted items.
- **Sankranti:** The main day involves offering prayers, preparing special dishes like "ellu-bella" (a mixture of sesame seeds, jaggery, coconut, and peanuts), and exchanging these with friends and family.
- **Kanuma:** On the third day, cattle are honored, and agricultural tools are worshipped.

Magh Bihu in Assam

In Assam, Makar Sankranti is celebrated as Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu. It is a harvest festival marked by feasting, bonfires, and traditional games. People build temporary huts called "meji" and "bhelaghar" using bamboo and straw, where community feasts are held. The meji is later burned as a ritual

(Surya) and express gratitude for life-sustaining energy. Special offerings include sesame seeds, jaggery, sugarcane, and rice.

Charity (Daan)

Charitable acts are considered highly meritorious during Makar Sankranti. People donate food, clothes, and money to the needy, embodying the spirit of sharing and compassion.

Kite Flying

Kite flying, a prominent activity during Makar Sankranti, is a metaphor for soaring aspirations and freedom. It's also a way to enjoy the outdoors and bask in the Sun's energy.

Bonfires

Lighting bonfires is a tradition observed in northern India. It symbolizes the destruction of evil and the warmth of community bonding.

Culinary Delights

Food plays a central role in Makar Sankranti celebrations. Traditional dishes vary by region but often feature sesame seeds, jaggery, and rice. These ingredients are not only nutritious but also hold symbolic significance:

- **Sesame Seeds (Til):** Represent warmth and togetherness.
- **Jaggery (Gur):** Symbolizes sweetness and prosperity.
- **Rice:** Represents fertility and abundance.

Popular dishes

- **Tilgul Ladoo (Maharashtra):** Sweet balls made from sesame seeds and jaggery.
- **Pongal (Tamil Nadu):** A sweet or savory rice dish.
- **Pithe (Bengal):** Rice flour pancakes stuffed with coconut and jaggery.
- **Undhiyu (Gujarat):** A mixed vegetable dish cooked with spices.

The Global Appeal of Makar Sankranti

While deeply rooted in Indian traditions, Makar Sankranti's themes of gratitude, renewal, and community resonate universally. The festival is celebrated by Indian diaspora communities worldwide, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds to share in the joy of the harvest. Makar Sankranti is more than just a festival; it is a celebration of life, nature, and the cosmic order. It bridges the gap between the physical and spiritual, the individual and the community, and the past and the future. As the Sun begins its northward journey, Makar Sankranti serves as a reminder to embrace change, express gratitude, and spread joy. In its myriad forms, this festival captures the essence of India's unity in diversity, offering a timeless message of hope and renewal.

to mark the end of the celebrations.

Poush Sankranti in Bengal

In West Bengal, Makar Sankranti is known as Poush Sankranti. Devotees take holy dips in the Ganges and other rivers to purify their souls. The famous Ganga Sagar Mela, held at the confluence of the Ganges and the Bay of Bengal, attracts millions of pilgrims. Traditional sweets made from date palm jaggery and coconut, such as "pithe" and "patishapta," are integral to the celebrations.

Other Regional Variations

- **Maharashtra:** People exchange sweets made of sesame seeds and jaggery, saying, "Tilgul ghya, god god bola" (Take sesame and jaggery, and speak sweetly).
- **Odisha:** Makar Sankranti is observed with offerings of rice, jaggery, and sugarcane to deities, and kite flying is a popular activity.
- **Bihar and Jharkhand:** People prepare "dahi-chura" (flattened rice with yogurt) and "tilkut" (sesame sweet) to celebrate.
- **Himachal Pradesh:** Known as Magha Saaji, this day is marked by community feasts and traditional dances.

Rituals and Symbolism

The rituals of Makar Sankranti are steeped in symbolism, reflecting the spiritual and cultural ethos of Indian society.

Holy Baths and Pilgrimages

Taking a holy dip in rivers like the Ganges, Yamuna, Godavari, or Krishna is believed to cleanse sins and purify the soul. Pilgrimages to sacred sites such as Ganga Sagar and Prayagraj hold special significance.

Worship and Offerings

Devotees offer prayers to the Sun God



Akshay Kumar to return in Stree 3 as supervillain

Bollywood star Akshay Kumar is set to return to the world of Stree, alongside Rajkummar Rao and Shraddha Kapoor, in the third installment of the popular horror-comedy series.

Dinesh Vijan, the producer, has likened Akshay to 'Thanos' of the Maddock horror-comedy universe, indicating his significant role in the franchise. Maddock Films recently announced that Stree 3 is scheduled for a theatrical release on August 13, 2027.

The revelation was made during the recently held trailer launch of Skyforce, which has been co-produced by Dinesh Vijan. When asked if he would be a part of the horror-comedy universe, Akshay playfully remarked that the decision lies with producers Dinesh Vijan and Jyoti Deshpande. He hinted at his return by stating that Amar Kaushik, who directed Stree 2, would be directing the next installment as well.

Dinesh Vijan confirmed Akshay's involvement, describing him as a crucial part of the universe.

Last year's Stree 2 was a major blockbuster, largely due to its numerous cameo appearances. Akshay Kumar's surprise cameo as the descendent of Chandra Bhan, a notorious character in the series, was a highlight. The film concluded with a hint that Akshay's character would have a more prominent role as a supervillain in Stree 3.

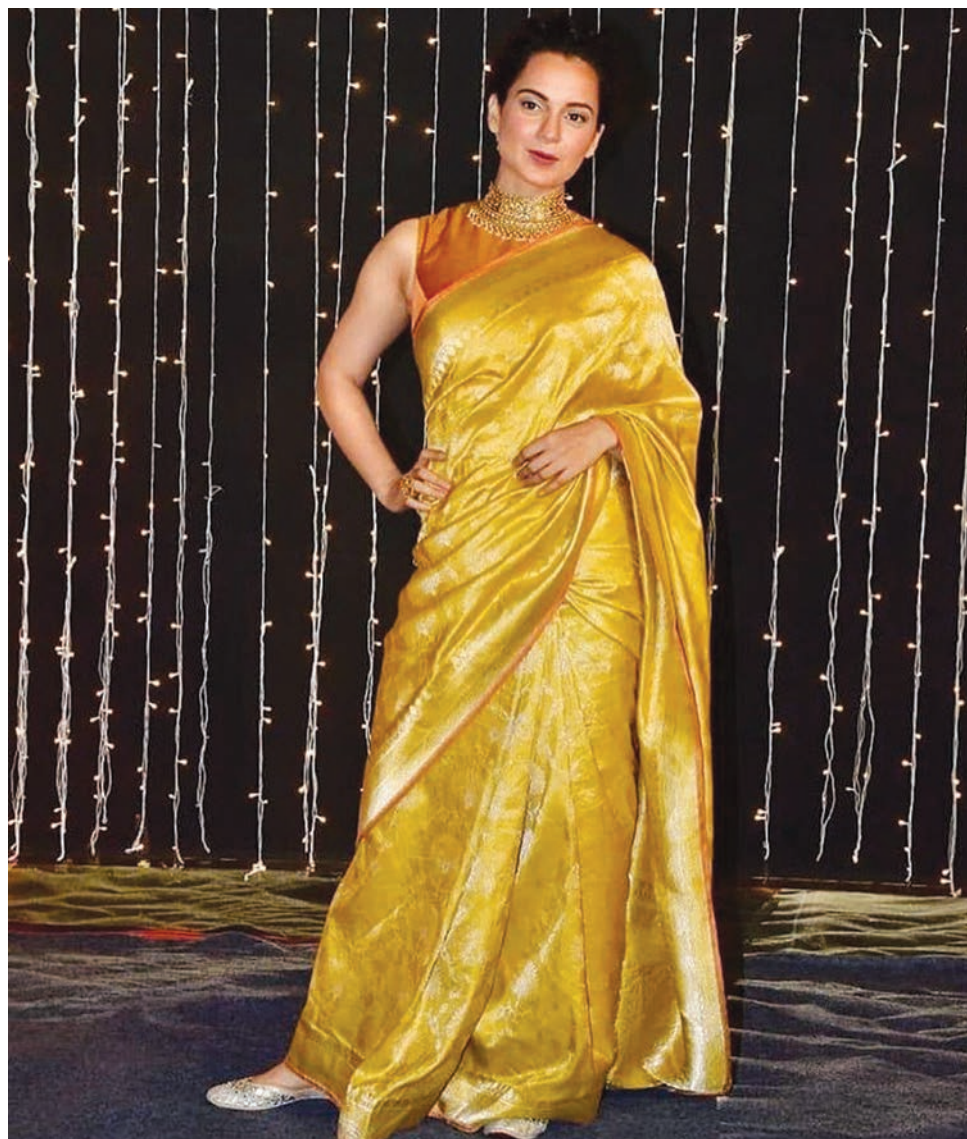
Kangana Ranaut says it was a mistake directing Emergency, choosing theatrical release

Kangana Ranaut has opened up about the controversies plaguing her first solo directorial venture, Emergency. In a new interview, the actor has listed the many 'wrong choices' she made while making this film, including choosing to direct it herself and opting for a theatrical release instead of going straight to streaming.

In a conversation with News18, Kangana said she was 'scared' by the delay in the film's release when the CBFC refused to certify it for months. "I felt that it was a wrong decision to release it in theatres. I thought I could have gotten a better deal on OTT. I also wouldn't have had to go through censorship then and my film wouldn't have been dissected. I didn't know what all they (the CBFC) would remove and let us keep," she said.

The Central Board for Film Certification (CBFC) is a body that certifies all films releasing in India, deeming them fit for public consumption. It reports to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.

The actor-turned-filmmaker added that she made many other 'wrong choices' during the film's production. She explained, "I felt that I made the wrong choices on many levels: firstly, wanting to direct this film. I took it for granted that even though we don't have a Congress government... I previously talked about the movie Kissa Kursi Ka. Nobody has seen that film to date and back then, they burnt all the prints. Also, nobody made films about Mrs Gandhi. Upon watching Emergency, today's generation will be surprised to think how she became like that; after all, she became PM three times. I

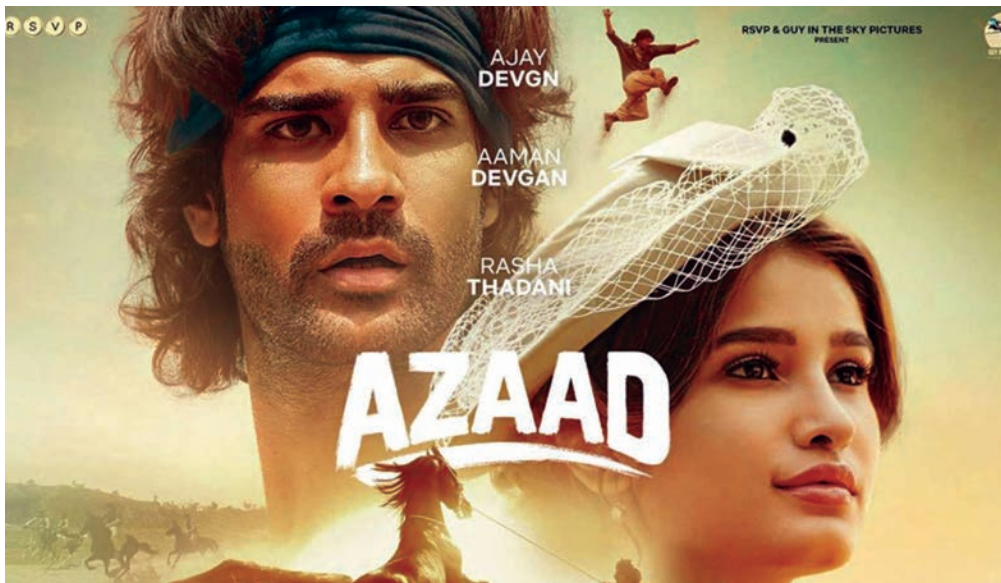


underestimated things and thought that I would be able to get away by making a film on Emergency."

Emergency stars Kangana as PM Indira Gandhi and details the final few years of her tenure, showing the Emergency and Operation Bluestar.

The film also stars Anupam Kher, Shreyas Talpade, Ashok Chhabra, Mahima Chaudhry, Milind Soman, Vishak Nair and Satish Kaushik in key roles. After a long delay, Emergency will be releasing in cinemas on January 17.

Aaman Devgan-Rasha Thadani promise to gallop into audience's hearts



The trailer for the upcoming film Azaad, featuring debutants Aaman Devgan and Rasha Thadani, was released on January 6. Also starring Ajay Devgn and Diana Penty, this period drama highlights the courage and loyalty of a majestic horse named Azaad, devoted to his master, portrayed by Ajay Devgn.

The two-minute-forty-three-second trailer showcases Azaad's unwavering loyalty, first to Ajay Devgn's character, a rebel, and later to Govind, played by Aaman Devgan, Ajay's nephew. Rasha Thadani portrays a royal family member who forms a bond with Govind.

The film revolves around a fight for

independence, driven by Azaad's bravery and loyalty. The trailer hints at potential romantic storylines between Aaman and Rasha's characters, as well as Ajay and Diana's characters.

Additionally, it sheds light on various aspects of life during the British Raj, including the Zamindari system and the circumstances that led people to become rebels or "baaghis."

Directed by Abhishek Kapoor and produced by Ronnie Screwvala and Pragya Kapoor, the film promises an intense journey of love and loyalty. Azaad is set to release in theatres on January 17, 2025.

Zendaya, Tom Holland engaged, say family sources

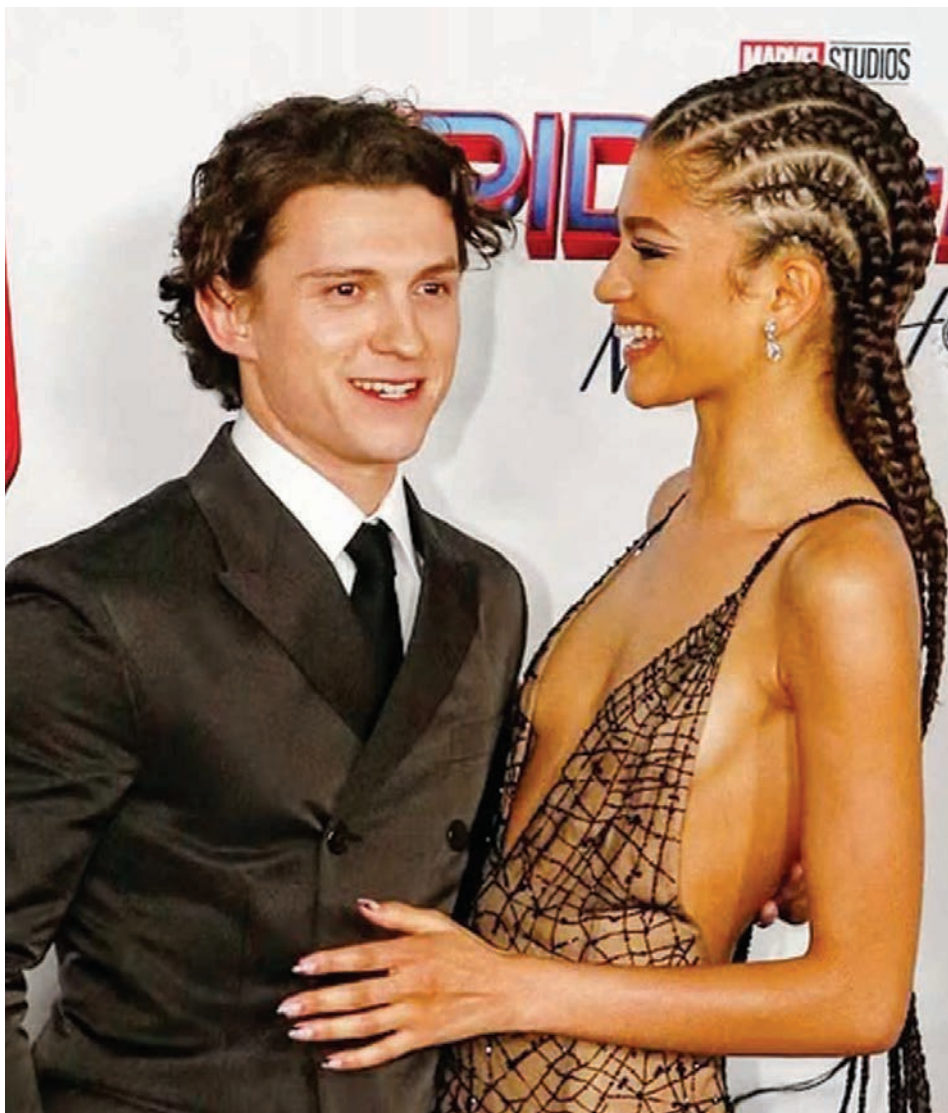
Zendaya and Tom Holland are reportedly engaged. A source close to the couple told TMZ that Tom proposed at one of Zendaya's family homes during the holiday season. The source said, "Tom went down on one knee in a very intimate setting in one of Zendaya's family homes in the United States. We're told Tom didn't make a huge show of the engagement - it wasn't a big, over-the-top proposal - instead, it was very romantic and intimate."

Another source told PEOPLE that everyone close to the couple was aware an engagement was imminent, but no one knew exactly when it would happen. According to the source, Tom Holland had been eager to propose for some time. "He's always been crazy about her. He always knew she was the one. They have something very special," the source said, adding that the actor shared the exciting news with friends around New Year.

As for their wedding plans, the couple intends to take their time. "They will just enjoy things for now and won't rush a wedding," the source shared. "They are both busy with work projects. Tom has always had this sweet way of letting the world know that Zendaya is his. Now, it's official - she really is!" the source concluded.

ICYDK, Zendaya sparked engagement rumours at the 82nd edition of the Golden Globe Awards, after appearing on the red carpet with a diamond ring on her left hand. The actress, nominated for Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Motion Picture Musical or Comedy for *Challengers*, stunned in a custom burnt orange satin gown by Louis Vuitton paired with matching pointed-toe pumps.

Styled by her longtime collaborator



Law Roach, Zendaya accessorised the ensemble with a choker necklace and high-end Bulgari jewellery, including a platinum High Jewelry necklace featuring an oval paraiba tourmaline and over 48 carats of diamonds, a matching ring and diamond stud earrings. But it wasn't the Bulgari pieces that had fans talking - many noticed a potential engagement ring on her left ring finger.

Zendaya and Tom Holland have been romantically linked since 2021. The couple first worked together on *Spider-Man: Homecoming* in 2017 and *Spider-Man: No Way Home* in 2021.

On the work front, the couple is set to star together in Christopher Nolan's upcoming film, an adaptation of Homer's *The Odyssey*, slated for release in 2026, alongside Anne Hathaway and Matt Damon.



Selena Gomez wins hearts with graceful reaction to Golden Globes loss to Zoe Saldana

Selena Gomez is garnering widespread praise for her graceful response to losing at the 2025 Golden Globes to her *Only Murders in the Building* co-star, Zoe Saldana. Despite being nominated in two categories—Best Supporting Actress for her role in the Netflix musical *Emilia Pérez* and Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series – Musical or Comedy for *Only Murders*—Gomez handled the loss with poise, winning admiration from fans and fellow industry figures alike.

Gomez lost in the category of Best Supporting Actress to Saldana who was also defeated by the category favourite Ariana Grande, nominated for her performance in *Wicked*. While many would have expected the *Same Old Love* singer to be upset or annoyed over not winning, Gomez proved them wrong as she was overjoyed with Saldana winning, as reported by *The Independent*.

She stood up and jumped up and down with happiness for her co-star as Saldana graced the stage to receive her award. The viewers of the award show could not get enough of Gomez's adorable reaction to see her co-star win instead of her.

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck finalise divorce after two years of marriage

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck have officially settled the terms of their divorce, bringing an end to their brief two-year marriage.

The announcement, confirmed through court documents obtained by E! News on January 6, reveals that both parties have agreed on the terms of the divorce, and the split appears to be amicable.

The divorce filing, which was submitted by Lopez in August 2024, marks the culmination of their marriage, which began in a Las Vegas ceremony in 2022.

According to the settlement, both Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck will retain the earnings they individually acquired during their time together.

Neither party will be required to pay spousal

support, and Lopez will revert to using her maiden name, "Lopez," after having changed it to "Affleck" following their wedding, as per E! News.

Lopez had filed for divorce on August 20, 2024, citing the couple's separation as having occurred on April 26, 2024.

Speculation about their relationship had been mounting in the months leading up to the filing.

Lopez's solo appearance at the 2024 Met Gala and various promotional events added fuel to the fire.

As per E! News, in a candid interview with comedian Nikki Glaser, Lopez opened up about the emotional toll the breakup took on her, describing how her "whole f-king world exploded" after the separation, adding, "You have to be complete if you want something that's more complete."



'Our country is not for sale': Former ally of Trudeau and NDP leader Jagmeet Singh warns Trump

13 JAN 2025

TORONTO (TIP): Leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP), and an earlier ally of former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Jagmeet Singh, issued a warning to US President-elect Donald Trump on January 13, regarding his proposed plans to annex Canada.

"I have a message for Donald Trump. Our country (Canada) is not for sale. Not now, not ever," Jagmeet Singh said in a video posted on X (formerly Twitter).

Singh added that Canadians are proud people who are ready to "fight like hell to defend" their country.

The NDP leader however also mentioned about supporting the US amid the Los Angeles fire that resulted in the death of at least 24 people, saying it is "who we are... we show up and support our neighbours."

"If Donald Trump thinks he can pick a fight with us, there will be a price to pay. I have committed that if Donald Trump imposes tariffs on us, we should respond with retaliatory tariffs in kind. I think that anyone running as Prime Minister should do the same," he said in the video.

Donald Trump has been vocal about his intentions to incorporate Canada as



the 51st state of the United States. In a December post on his social media platform, 'Truth Social,' Trump claimed, "Many Canadians want Canada to become the 51st State."

On Christmas Day, he outlined the potential advantages of such a move, stating, "Their taxes would be cut by more than 60 per cent, their businesses would immediately double in size, and they would be militarily protected like no other country anywhere in the World."

Earlier in the month, following Justin Trudeau's resignation, Trump revisited the idea of a merger, saying, "If Canada merged with the US, there would be no Tariffs, taxes would go way down, and they would be TOTALLY SECURE from the threat of the Russian and Chinese Ships that are constantly surrounding them. Together, what a great Nation it would be!!!"

Justin Trudeau swiftly dismissed the proposal, stating, "There isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada

would become part of the United States."

He further emphasised, "Workers and communities in both our countries benefit from being each other's biggest trading and security partner."

In a letter shared on X, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly said that she consulted with colleagues and advisors, many urging her to seek the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. However, she recognised that addressing pressing international challenges, including tariff threats from the US President-elect, must take priority.

"This is happening now. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, I must dedicate every minute of my time and all my energy to defending the interests of Canadians. Which is exactly what I am doing and will continue to do," it read.

Sources stated that Canada is ready to respond with a comprehensive list of tariffs on American goods if President-elect Donald Trump moves forward with his plan to impose a 25 per cent import tax on Canadian goods.

In 2023, the United States imported goods worth USD 419 billion from Canada, which is also the largest source of foreign oil for the US. (Agencies)

Global temperatures passed critical 1.5 degree celsius milestone for the first time in 2024: EU report

13 JAN 2025

PARIS (TIP): The earth's climate experienced its hottest year in 2024. Extreme flooding in April killed hundreds of people in Pakistan and Afghanistan. A year-long drought has left Amazon river levels at an all-time low. And in Athens, Greece, the ancient Acropolis was closed in the afternoons to protect tourists from dangerous heat.

A new report from the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service confirms that 2024 was the first year on record with a global average temperature exceeding 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. All continents except Australasia and Antarctica experienced their hottest year on record, with 11 months of the year exceeding the 1.5°C level.

Global temperatures have been at record levels – and still rising – for several years now. The previous hottest year on record was 2023. All ten of the hottest years on record have fallen within the last decade. But this is the first time a calendar year has exceeded the 1.5°C threshold.

Scientists at Copernicus used reanalysis to calculate the temperature rises and estimate changes to extreme events. Reanalysis is produced in real-time, combining observations from as

many sources as possible – including satellites, weather stations and ships – with a state-of-the-art weather forecasting model, to build up a complete picture of the weather across the globe across the past year. The resulting dataset is one of the key tools used by scientists globally to study weather and climate.

Limiting sustained global warming to 1.5°C is a key target of the Paris agreement, the 2015 international treaty which aims to mitigate climate change. The 195 signatory nations pledged to "pursue efforts" to keep long-term average warming below 1.5°C.

While reaching 1.5°C in 2024 is a milestone, surpassing 1.5°C for a single year does not constitute crossing the Paris threshold. Year-to-year fluctuations in the weather mean that even if a single year surpasses 1.5°C, the long-term average may still lie below that. It is this long-term average temperature that the Paris agreement refers to. The current long-term average is around 1.3°C.

This new report shows that 44% of the globe experienced strong or higher heat stress on July 10 2024, 5% more than the average annual maximum. Especially in low-income countries, this can lead to worse health outcomes and excess deaths. (Agencies)

Russia claims capture of new villages in eastern Ukraine

12 JAN 2025

MOSCOW (TIP): Russia on January 12 claimed the capture of two villages in eastern Ukraine where its forces have been steadily advancing for months.

The defence ministry said forces had captured the village of Yantarne in the eastern Donetsk region, around 10 kilometres (six miles) southwest of Kurakhove, a key logistics hub that Moscow claimed to have seized last week.

On Saturday, Russia's army said it had also taken new territory northwest of Kurakhove. The defence ministry said Sunday that Russian troops had also captured the village of Kalinove in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

The village is on the western bank of the Oskil River, which for a long time formed the front line between the two armies in the region. But a Ukrainian official said Thursday that Russian forces had managed to establish a bridgehead on the western bank after crossing the river. Russia's army has attempted for months to cross the river, which also cuts through Kupiansk, a city recaptured by Ukraine in its 2022 counteroffensive.

A local woman died Sunday in the Ukraine-controlled part of Russia's Kursk region after Russian strikes damaged a state boarding school where local people were sheltering, a Ukrainian official said.

On Saturday evening, "Russian aviation carried out two air strikes on

the area of the boarding school in Sudzha, as a result of which one woman suffered a laceration wound to her arm, and died in the morning," Ukrainian army spokesman Oleksiy Dmytrashkivsky said on television news.

"The premises of the school were heavily damaged, all the windows and doors were smashed," he said.

"Today we have a big question - where to move people, how to keep them warm."

The spokesman said over 80 people were staying in the school, who "are all elderly" and many "have disabilities or Parkinson's disease or have had strokes".

There are about 2,000 Russian civilians still in Ukraine-controlled Kursk region, the spokesman said.

In Ukraine's southern Kherson region, drone attacks injured eight people Sunday in the main city of Kherson and a nearby village, regional authorities said. In the Russian-controlled section of the Kherson region, a Ukrainian drone killed a 76-year-old woman, Russian-installed Governor Vladimir Saldo said on Telegram.

In the Russian city of Engels on the Volga River, a fire caused by a Ukrainian drone strike Wednesday on an oil depot continued to burn out, Saratov Governor Roman Busargin said on Telegram.

Firefighters are working "24 hours a day" to extinguish the fire, Busargin said, and the "amount of smoke and the total area of the fire is decreasing." (AFP)

AT LEAST 10 KILLED AS MULTIPLE LANDSLIDES, TORRENTIAL RAINS WREAK HAVOC IN BRAZIL

13 JAN 2025

RIO DE JANEIRO (TIP): Landslides caused by torrential rains in southeast Brazil have left at least 10 people dead, rescue services in Minas Gerais state said January 12.

Nine people died in the city of Ipatinga, where 80 millimetres (3.1 inches) of rain fell in the space of one hour on Saturday night, the mayor's office said.

Firefighters pulled the body of an eight-year-old boy from the rubble of a house destroyed by a landslide.

Another landslide swept away everything in its path along a street on the side of a hill in the city's Bethania neighbourhood.

AFP images from the scene showed rubble from the houses poking up from the mud.

As of Sunday evening, one person from the area remained missing, though four members of the person's family were rescued.

A body was also found in the nearby town of Santana do Paraiso.

Minas Gerais state Governor Romeu Zema sent a message of "solidarity with the victims" in a statement on social media.

Latin America's biggest country has been rocked by several extreme weather events over the past year.

Massive floods caused by days of record-breaking rain killed more than 180 people in the south of the country in last April and May.

Brazil also suffered a historic drought linked to climate change, laying the ground for the worst wildfires in 17 years, which consumed vast chunks of the Amazon rainforest. (AFP)

CHINA'S EXPORTS IN DECEMBER UP 10.7 PER CENT, BEATING ESTIMATES AS HIGHER US TARIFFS LOOM

13 JAN 2025

HONG KONG (TIP): China's exports in December grew at a faster-than-expected pace as factories rushed to fill orders in anticipation of higher tariffs threatened by U.S. President-elect Donald Trump once he takes office. Exports rose by 10.7% compared to the same month last year, surpassing economists' expectations of a 7% increase. Imports, on the other hand, rose by 1% year-on-year, defying analysts' forecasts of a 1.5% decline. As exports outpaced imports, China's trade surplus surged to 104.84 billion dollars. Trump has pledged to raise tariffs on Chinese goods and close loopholes that exporters currently use to sell products more cheaply in the U.S. If these plans are enacted, they are expected to increase prices in the U.S. and squeeze sales and profit margins for Chinese exporters. However, Zichun Huang of Capital Economics believes China's exports will remain strong in the near term as businesses rush to front-run the anticipated tariff hikes. (AFP)

Israel's Netanyahu sends Mossad director to Gaza ceasefire talks in Qatar in sign of progress

11 JAN 2025

NAHARIYA (TIP): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has approved sending the director of the Mossad foreign intelligence agency to ceasefire negotiations in Qatar in a sign of progress in talks on the war in Gaza.

Netanyahu's office announced the decision January 11 evening. It was not immediately clear when David Barnea would travel to Qatar's capital, Doha, for the latest round of indirect talks between Israel and the Hamas militant group.

His presence means high-level Israeli officials who would need to sign off on any agreement are now involved.

Just one brief ceasefire has been achieved in 15 months of war, and that was in the earliest weeks of fighting. The talks mediated by the United States, Egypt and Qatar have repeatedly stalled since then.

Netanyahu has insisted on destroying Hamas' ability to fight in Gaza. Hamas has insisted on a full Israeli troop withdrawal from the largely devastated territory. On Thursday, Gaza's Health Ministry said over 46,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war.

Also being sent to Qatar are the head of Israel's Shin Bet internal security agency and military and political advisers. Netanyahu's office said the decision followed a meeting with his defense minister, security chiefs and



negotiators "on behalf of the outgoing and incoming U.S. administrations."

The office also released a photo showing Netanyahu with President-elect Donald Trump's incoming special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, who was in Qatar this week.

INSIDE GAZA : On Saturday, an Israeli airstrike killed at least eight Palestinians including two children and two women in a school-turned-shelter in northern Gaza, according to the Civil Defense, first responders affiliated with the Hamas-run government. It said the strike on the Halawa school that shelters thousands of displaced people in the Jabaliya area also wounded 30 others,

including 19 children.

Israel's military said it struck a Hamas command center at a former school in Jabaliya, without giving evidence.

Another strike killed four people on a street in Gaza City, said Civil Defense spokesperson Mahmoud Basal. Gaza's Health Ministry said at least 32 bodies had arrived at hospitals in the past 24 hours.

"I ask the world, do you hear us? Do we exist?" said Hamza Saleh, one of the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million residents who have been displaced. He spoke Friday in the southern city of Khan Younis as children and others jostled for food aid, while hunger grows. (AP)

Jeju Air crash black boxes stopped recording before flight crashed: South Korea

11 JAN 2025

JEJU (TIP): The black boxes holding the flight data and cockpit voice recorders for the crashed Jeju Air flight that left 179 people dead stopped recording four minutes before the disaster, South Korea's transport ministry said on January 11.

The Boeing 737-800 was flying from Thailand to Muan, South Korea, on December 29 carrying 181 passengers and crew when it belly-landed at the Muan airport and exploded in a fireball after slamming into a concrete barrier.

"The analysis revealed that both the CVR and FDR data were not recorded during the four minutes leading up to the aircraft's collision with the localiser," the transport ministry said in a statement, referring to the two recording devices.

The localiser is a barrier at the end of the runway that helps with aircraft landings and was blamed for exacerbating the crash's severity.

"Plans are in place to investigate the cause of the data loss during the ongoing accident investigation," the statement added.



South Korean and US investigators are still probing the cause of the crash of Jeju Air flight 2216, which prompted a national outpouring of mourning with memorials set up across the country.

Investigators have pointed to a bird

strike, faulty landing gear and the runway barrier as possible issues.

The pilot warned of a bird strike before pulling out of a first landing, then crashed on a second attempt when the landing gear did not emerge. (AFP)

Verdict in 190 million pounds Al-Qadir case against Imran Khan, his wife postponed for third time

13 JAN 2025

ISLAMABAD (TIP): A Pakistan court on January 13 postponed for the third time the announcement of the verdict in the 190 million pounds Al-Qadir Trust corruption case against former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi.

The anti-corruption court in Islamabad has now set January 17 as the new date for announcing the verdict.

Judge Nasir Javed Rana of the anti-corruption court completed the hearing in the case on December 18 but reserved the judgment until December 23.

Later he fixed January 6 as the new date for announcing the verdict, Geo News reported.

Judge Rana was on leave on January 6 so the key judgment was postponed until January 13.

Today the judge once again postponed the judgement until January 17, citing the absence of the accused in the court.

The postponement comes amidst the



ongoing negotiation between the government and Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party to address the political instability in the country due to the imprisonment of the former premier and several other leaders of the

party.

So far two rounds of talks have been held and another is expected this week.

It was not clear if the judgment would impact the next round of talks.

The National Accountability Bureau

(NAB) in December 2023 filed the case against Khan (72), Bibi (50) and six others, accusing them of causing a loss to the tune of 190 million pounds (PRs50 billion) to the national kitty.

However, Khan and Bibi have been prosecuted as all others, including a property tycoon, were out of the country.

Both Khan and Bibi are accused in the case, which revolves around allegations that PRs50 billion, returned to Pakistan by the UK's National Crime Agency as part of a settlement with a property tycoon was misused.

The funds were reportedly intended for the national treasury but were allegedly redirected for the personal benefit of the businessman who helped Bibi and Khan to set up a university.

Bibi, as a trustee of the Al-Qadir Trust, is accused of benefiting from this settlement, including acquiring 458 kanals of land for Al-Qadir University in Jhelum. (PTI)

Sri Lanka jails firebrand monk for insulting Islam

COLOMBO (TIP): A Sri Lankan court jailed a politically influential, firebrand Buddhist monk on January 11, putting him behind bars for a second time for insulting Islam and stoking religious hatred in the island nation.

Galagodaatte Gnanasara was sentenced on Thursday to nine months for his anti-Muslim remarks, which date to 2016.

He was previously jailed last year on a similar charge of disparaging Sri Lanka's minority Muslims, who account for just over about 10 percent of the 22 million population.

He was on bail while appealing that four-year sentence.

The monk is a close associate of former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who made him the head of a panel to reform Sri Lanka's legal system to ensure religious harmony in 2021.

At the time, opposition lawmaker Shanakiyan Rasamanickam described Gnanasara's appointment as "the definition of irony".

In 2018, Gnanasara was also sentenced to six years for intimidating the wife of a missing cartoonist and contempt of court, but was freed nine months later after former president Maithripala Sirisena pardoned him.

His patron Rajapaksa was forced to step down following months of protests over the country's unprecedented economic crisis in 2022 and Gnanasara once again fell from grace and faced prosecution. (PTI)

Pakistan sisters set father on fire after rape: Police

LAHORE (TIP): Two teenage sisters were arrested in Pakistan for killing their father by setting him on fire in revenge for rape, police said January 10.

The father was attacked in the Punjabi city of Gujranwala on January 1 and taken to hospital where he died on Tuesday.

"The girls said that they decided amongst themselves to find a 'permanent solution'," Rizwan Tariq, a senior police official in the city, told AFP.

They then took petrol from a motorcycle and set their father on fire as he slept, he added.

The pair, who are step-sisters, said their father had been raping the eldest girl for a year, and had twice attempted to rape the younger girl.

Their mothers -- who are both married to the man -- knew about the abuse but did not know of the revenge plan.

AFP has not named the man in order to protect the identities of the girls, one of whom is from a previous marriage. (AFP)

126 killed, 188 injured as powerful earthquake hits Tibet; tremors felt in Kathmandu, parts of North India

DUJIANGYAN (TIP): At least 126 people were killed and 188 injured as a strong earthquake struck the Tibet region on January 10 morning.

The quake struck at 9:05 am local time (01:05 GMT) at a depth of 10km (6.2 miles), according to the China Earthquake Networks Center, which recorded a magnitude of 6.8. However, the United States Geological Survey measured its magnitude as 7.1. "A total of 126 people have been confirmed dead and 188 others injured as of 7:00 pm (1100 GMT) Tuesday," Xinhua reported.

As an impact of the earthquake, tremours were felt in neighbouring Nepal's capital Kathmandu and northern parts of India, particularly Bihar, where people were reportedly seen running outside their houses and apartments. However, no damage to properties has been reported.

According to the Bihar Disaster Management Department, tremors were felt in Patna, Madhubani, Sheohar, Munger, Samastipur, Muzaffarpur, Katihar, Darbhanga, West Champaran, East Champaran and several other districts along the India-Nepal border.

People in Katihar, Purnea, Sheohar, Darbhanga and Samastipur also came out on the streets when the quake took place. The National Centre for Seismology (NCS) reported that the earthquake was recorded at 6:35 am and also revealed that two more earthquakes hit the region shortly after the first one.

While the second earthquake of magnitude 4.7 was recorded at 7:02 am at a depth of 10 km, the third earthquake of magnitude 4.9 at 7:07 am was recorded at a depth of 30 km.

Disaster relief aid, including cotton tents, quilts and items for high-altitude and frigid areas, had been dispatched by central authorities to areas impacted by the quake, Xinhua said. The high-altitude county in the Tibet region is home to around 62,000 people and situated on the Chinese side of Mount Everest. While earthquakes are common in the region, Tuesday's quake was the most powerful recorded within a 200-kilometre radius in the last five years, the CENC added.

Nepal lies on a major geological faultline where the Indian tectonic plate pushes up into the Eurasian plate, forming the Himalayas, and earthquakes are a regular occurrence.

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday emphasised "the full-scale search and rescue efforts, minimizing casualties to the greatest extent possible, properly resettling affected residents, and ensuring their safety and warmth through the winter", state broadcaster CCTV said. (Agencies)

BANGLADESH EASES VISA PROCESS FOR PAKISTANIS

LAHORE (TIP): The interim government in Bangladesh has simplified the visa process for Pakistanis to further strengthen trade and economic relations.

The interim government headed by Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus had removed the need for clearance from Dhaka for Pakistani heads of missions while issuing visas, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Pakistan Iqbal Hussain told the business community here at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry on January 11.

Dawn News reported that Hussain said increasing trade and investment between the two countries must be a top priority to move forward. He said Bangladesh with its population of 180 million represents a significant consumer market that Pakistan has the potential to tap.

The diplomat said the trade potential between the two countries remains largely untapped, and Pakistan can capitalise on it.

Iqbal Hussain also mentioned the chief adviser's efforts for regional trade and cooperation and called for greater collaboration between South Asian countries.

The High Commissioner said it was the responsibility of both countries to create opportunities for the current generation and remove obstacles to mutual trade and cooperation.

He also reflected on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and how it underscored the importance of international cooperation, saying it is essential to recognise that nations must collaborate in times of crisis to keep trade flowing smoothly. (PTI)

Foods that can naturally help in hair growth

Achieving luscious, healthy hair isn't just about using the right products—it starts with what you put into your body through your diet. A balanced diet rich in essential nutrients can significantly impact hair growth and vitality. Here's a look at some foods known for their natural ability to promote strong, beautiful hair: Eggs

Let's start with a kitchen staple that packs a punch for your hair—eggs. Rich in protein, biotin, and essential nutrients like vitamins A and D, eggs provide the building blocks for strong, healthy hair strands. Protein is crucial for hair structure, while biotin supports keratin production, enhancing hair elasticity and strength. Vitamins A and D nourish the scalp, promoting healthier follicles and preventing dryness.

Spinach

Popeye's favorite superfood isn't just for muscles—it's also a powerhouse for your hair. Spinach is loaded with vitamins and minerals like folate, iron, and vitamins A and C. Iron aids in oxygen transport to hair follicles, promoting growth and preventing hair loss. Meanwhile, vitamins A and C support sebum production, keeping the scalp moisturized and enhancing hair growth.

Fatty fish

Take a dive into the benefits of fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and sardines. These fish are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, essential for scalp health. Omega-3s nourish hair follicles, support the production of scalp oils that keep hair hydrated, and contribute to overall hair shine. They also contain vitamin D, which plays a role in hair follicle cycling and growth.

Sweet potatoes are not only a delicious addition to your diet but also a powerhouse for promoting healthy hair. The vibrant orange color of sweet potatoes indicates the presence of beta-carotene,



a nutrient that is converted into vitamin A in the body. Vitamin A plays a crucial role in promoting cell growth, including the cells that make up our hair strands.

In addition to supporting hair growth, vitamin A helps in the production of natural scalp oils that keep our hair roots well-conditioned and moisturized. This, in turn, leads to stronger, shinier, and more vibrant hair.

Avocados

Avocados are more than just Instagram worthy—they're also a treasure trove of nutrients for your hair. Rich in healthy fats, vitamins E and C, and biotin, avocados support hair health from the inside out. Vitamin E improves scalp circulation, ensuring hair follicles receive vital nutrients. Vitamin C aids collagen production, strengthening hair strands, while biotin promotes keratin production for increased hair elasticity and resilience.

Source: TOI

Mishti doi

Mishti Doi is synonymous with Bengal in East India. The Bengalis are famous for their sweet preparations and Mishti Doi is among their most well-known desserts. Mishti Doi tastes great but is amazingly simple to make.

Ingredients

1 liter full cream/ whole milk, 3-4 tablespoons yogurt, 250 grams sugar.

Method

- Boil the milk in a heavy-bottomed pan, on a medium flame until it is reduced to half its original volume. Stir frequently to prevent the milk from scorching. When done, cool the milk till it is just lukewarm.
- Put the sugar in another pan and heat over a low flame to melt. Allow the sugar to caramelize (brown). Remove from the fire when done, add the reduced milk to this caramelized sugar and mix well to blend.
- When the milk and sugar are thoroughly mixed, add the yogurt to the mixture and stir gently to mix.
- Pour into the desired container and keep in a warm dark spot for the Mishti Doi to set. The best taste results are achieved by setting the Mishti Doi in an earthenware pot.
- When the Mishti Doi has set and is firm, chill for a few hours and serve.



How being single or married affects men, women differently

The impact of being single or married differs for men and women in various ways, as highlighted by numerous studies. These differences are influenced by factors like societal expectations, emotional well-being, financial stability, and physical health. Below are some key findings:

Effects on Men

Health and Longevity:

- Married men generally live longer and report better physical health compared to single men. Marriage often encourages healthier habits, such as regular medical check-ups and reduced risky behaviors.
- Single men, particularly those who are divorced or widowed, tend to experience higher rates of cardiovascular diseases and mental health issues.

Emotional Support:

- Marriage often provides men with emotional support that they might not seek elsewhere. Wives, in many cases, act as a primary source of emotional connection and stress relief.

Financial Stability:

- Married men tend to earn more than single men, possibly due to increased motivation or perceived stability by employers. This is often termed the



"marriage wage premium."

Social Connections:

- Single men may have broader social networks, but married men may rely heavily on their spouse for social interaction, potentially leading to isolation if the marriage ends.

Effects on Women

Health and Longevity:

- For women, the health benefits of marriage are less consistent. Some studies suggest that the quality of the marriage significantly affects health outcomes. Unhappy marriages can lead to

stress-related illnesses.

- Single women often experience fewer health declines than single men and may benefit from strong social networks.

Emotional Well-being:

- While married women may benefit from companionship, they are often more affected by marital stress and conflict than men. This can lead to higher rates of depression or anxiety in unhappy marriages.
- Single women often report higher levels of independence and self-satisfaction, especially in cultures where marriage is less central to a woman's identity.

Financial Stability:

- Married women may benefit from combined household income, but they are often financially dependent on their spouse in traditional setups. Single women may face greater economic challenges, especially if they are sole earners.

Social Expectations:

- Women, particularly in some societies, face greater societal pressure to marry, which can affect their self-esteem. Single women are sometimes stigmatized more than single men.

Herpes virus likely to have connection with Alzheimer's: Study

The University of Pittsburgh researchers uncovered a surprising link between Alzheimer's disease and herpes simplex virus-1 (HSV-1) which suggests that viral infections may play a role in the disease.

The study has been published in Cell Reports. It revealed how tau protein, often viewed as harmful in Alzheimer's, might initially protect the brain from the virus but contribute to brain damage later.

"Our study challenges the conventional view of tau as solely harmful, showing that it may initially act as part of the brain's immune defense," said senior author Or Shemesh, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Ophthalmology at Pitt. These findings could lead to new treatments targeting infections and the brain's immune response.

"These findings emphasize the complex interplay between infections, immune responses and neurodegeneration, offering a fresh perspective and potential new targets for therapeutic development," added Shemesh.

The scientists identified forms of HSV-1-related proteins in Alzheimer's brain samples, with greater amounts of viral proteins co-localized with tangles of phosphorylated tau. It is one of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease pathology in the brain regions which are especially vulnerable to Alzheimer's across disease stages.

Further studies on miniature models of human



brains in a Petri dish suggested that HSV-1 infection could modulate levels of brain tau protein and regulate its function, a protective mechanism that seemed to decrease post-infection death of human neurons.

While the precise mechanisms by which HSV-1 influences tau protein and contributes to Alzheimer's disease are still unknown, Shemesh and his colleagues plan to explore those questions in future research.

They aim to test potential therapeutic strategies that target viral proteins or fine-tune the brain's immune response and will try to find its possible connections to other neurodegenerative diseases, such as Parkinson's disease and ALS.

Source: ANI



Emotional trauma after miscarriage can secretly affect fertility

Experiencing a miscarriage is deeply distressing and for couples who endure multiple miscarriages, the emotional, physical and psychological toll is compounded. Recurrent miscarriages — typically defined as two or more consecutive losses before the 20th week of pregnancy — can be particularly complex, often signaling underlying fertility issues.

In an interview with HT Lifestyle, Dr Seema Jain, Director – Department of IVF and Fertility at Cloudnine Group of Hospitals in Pune, shared, "The link between recurrent miscarriages and fertility is intricate, involving various factors, including hormonal imbalances, genetic abnormalities and psychological challenges. Understanding the causes and implications of recurrent pregnancy loss can be the key to improving fertility outcomes and helping couples on their journey to parenthood."

Dr Seema Jain revealed, "Miscarriages are not uncommon, with approximately 10-20% of known pregnancies ending in loss. When miscarriages are recurrent, however, they may indicate specific underlying fertility issues that need to be addressed for a successful pregnancy. Recurrent miscarriages are often associated with both structural and functional problems within the reproductive system, which can directly impact fertility."

One common underlying cause is uterine abnormalities. Dr Seema Jain said, "Structural issues like fibroids, polyps, or a septate uterus (a condition where a fibrous band divides the uterine cavity) can interfere with embryo implantation or growth, leading to recurrent pregnancy loss. Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, and other reproductive disorders also raise the likelihood of miscarriage and are often associated with reduced fertility. Additionally, age plays a role: women over 35 are at greater risk for both miscarriages and infertility due to decreased egg quality and potential genetic abnormalities."

Source: HT

HMPV scare: Symptoms, risks, expert advice - your detailed guide

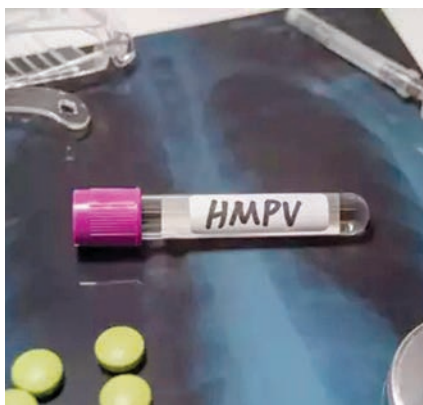
Signs and symptoms of HMPV

HMPV typically affects the respiratory system, with common symptoms including sore throat, fever, nasal congestion, cough, and shortness of breath. In severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia or bronchiolitis, requiring hospitalisation and oxygen therapy.

"HMPV generally affects children below one year of age to under five years. Major symptoms include fever, cough, cold, and respiratory distress. Sometimes the distress may be so severe that breathing support in PICU, like high-flow nasal cannula or CPAP, becomes necessary," said Dr Saheli Dasgupta, Pediatric Critical Care Head at Peerless Hospital, Kolkata.

She further emphasised that timely consultation with a pediatrician is critical to prevent complications, as HMPV mostly affects infants.

In adults, HMPV often affects people over 65 years of age who experience flu-like symptoms such as fever, sore throat, runny nose, and shortness of breath.



Is HMPV like any other common cold virus?

While HMPV shares similarities with other respiratory viruses like the flu or RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus), it can cause more severe symptoms in vulnerable populations, such as infants, older adults, and those with weakened immune systems.

Dr Manisha Mendiratta, Associate Director & Head of Pulmonology at Sarvodaya Hospital, stated, "HMPV usually produces mild to moderate flu-like symptoms but can become severe in people with low immunity."

Healthcare providers typically

rely on nucleic acid amplification tests (NAAT), including RT-PCR, and immunofluorescence or ELISA tests for accurate detection.

Is HMPV similar to Covid-19 virus?

HMPV and SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19 virus) are both respiratory pathogens but differ significantly in virology, transmission, and public health impact.

Both spread through respiratory droplets and contaminated surfaces and can cause symptoms like fever, cough, and shortness of breath. However, Covid-19 has a broader range of symptoms, including loss of taste and smell, and a higher potential for systemic complications.

Dr Srivatsa Lokeshwaran, Lead Consultant, Aster Whitefield Hospital, Bengaluru, remarked, "It's premature to compare HMPV with Covid-19. HMPV has been in circulation for a long time and primarily affects children under five and adults over 65. While any virus can mutate and become more virulent, current data does not indicate pandemic potential for HMPV."

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Android phones may soon support iPhone-like MagSafe wireless charging

After years of waiting, it seems like Android phones are finally catching up with Apple's MagSafe wireless charging. The Wireless Power Consortium (WPC) has confirmed that Qi2 wireless charging is coming to Android, with Samsung and Google leading the way. The announcement was made at CES 2025, bringing an exciting update for fans who have long wanted the Qi2 wireless charging standard for Android smartphones.

For the unaware, Qi2 is the next big step in wireless charging, replacing the older Qi standard. It promises faster and more efficient charging, with speeds of up to 15W. The technology uses magnetic rings to align your device perfectly with the charger. This clever design reduces energy loss caused by misalignment, making it a more reliable option than before. While Apple's MagSafe has been using similar technology since 2023, Android phones have mostly lagged behind — until now.

Both Samsung and Google have officially committed to the Qi2 standard. Samsung announced that Galaxy phones will start supporting Qi2 later this year. However, it's still unclear if the upcoming Galaxy S25 series, set to launch this month, will include native Qi2 support. Rumours suggest the S25 might offer Qi2 functionality through special cases, but full integration may have to wait until the Galaxy S26.

Google's plans are a bit more mysterious. The company has said it's playing a major role in advancing the technology, especially with the development of Qi 2.2. Google aims to improve cross-brand compatibility, which has been a pain point for Android users. If successful, this could allow chargers and phones from different manufacturers to take full advantage of Qi2's faster speeds.

Google's Gemini AI may come soon to Wear OS smartwatches

Last year, Gemini made its way to iOS devices through a dedicated app, and now Google is eyeing even bigger opportunities. One of the big announcements at CES 2025 was that Google TV devices will soon get a boost from Gemini. The highlight? You'll be able to talk to your TV's virtual assistant without needing to speak into the remote. This is all thanks to an upgraded voice assistant powered by Gemini AI, set to roll out later this year.

But TVs aren't the only focus. Wear OS, Google's smartwatch platform, is also likely to get Gemini support very soon. There's been speculation that this could happen alongside Google's March 2025 Pixel Feature Drop. A recent report from 9to5Google pointed out some strong hints about this in the beta version of the Google App (v16.0.5). Buried in the code are references to Gemini as a wearable assistant. One line reads, "Easily talk back and forth to get more done with an assistant on your watch, reimagined with Google AI." That wording suggests that the assistant on Wear OS will be more natural and conversational than before, allowing for more dynamic back-and-forth chats.

When Gemini arrives on Wear OS, it'll likely be through an update to the existing Google Assistant app. The basic way to call up the assistant probably won't change much — you'll still use the Hey Google wake word or long-press your watch's side button. However, there's also been talk about a new Hey Gemini hot word, which could replace or sit alongside Hey Google. This was spotted in demo videos for Android XR and could make its way to Wear OS as well.

Google is clearly betting big on Gemini to redefine how we interact with its devices. From TVs to smartwatches, it's all about making tech feel more human. While we'll have to wait for exact dates, 2025 looks like it's going to be another exciting year for Google's AI-powered ecosystem.



For the unaware, Google made significant strides with its Gemini AI in 2024, and it seems the momentum will continue going forward. Originally introduced as Bard, Google's chatbot has since evolved into Gemini, which is gradually being integrated into a variety of the company's products and services. From smartphones and tablets to Gmail, Google Docs, and Maps, Gemini is becoming a more common presence across Google's ecosystem.

Google Gemini is racing to win the AI crown in 2025

Google CEO Sundar Pichai acknowledged at the company's year-end strategy meeting that the AI models powering Google Gemini are behind OpenAI and ChatGPT but promised a real push in 2025 to get Gemini to outpace its rivals, as reported by CNBC.

Pichai's directive comes off as more serious than the usual corporate rah-rah; it's a declaration that Google won't lose any more ground in a race it once led. Google's nearly bottomless coffers and enormous infrastructure give it a good chance of coming out on top in 12

months, but only because the company is no longer resting on the laurels it's been polishing since the early 2000s.

"In history, you don't always need to be first, but you have to execute well and really be the best in class as a product," Pichai said at the meeting. "I think that's what 2025 is all about."

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ISRO has said the cowpea seeds it had sent to space on board the PSLV-C60 POEM-4 platform have germinated under microgravity conditions within four days of the launch of the mission.

The space agency sent eight cowpea seeds as part of the Compact Research Module for Orbital Plant Studies (CROPS) experiment conducted by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) to study plant growth in microgravity conditions.

"Life sprouts in space! VSSC's CROPS experiment onboard PSLV-C60 POEM-4 successfully sprouted cowpea seeds in 4 days. Leaves expected soon," ISRO said in a post on X.

The PSLV-C60 mission placed two SpaDeX satellites in orbit on the night of December 30. The fourth stage of the rocket carrying the POEM-4 platform has been orbiting the earth with 24 onboard experiments at an altitude of 350 km.

The CROPS experiment aims to understand how

'Life sprouts in space', says ISRO after cowpea seeds germinate under microgravity conditions

plants grow in the unique conditions of space, which is essential for future long-duration space missions.

The experiment involves growing eight cowpea seeds in a controlled environment with active thermal regulation, simulating conditions that plants might encounter during extended space travel.

CROPS is envisioned as a multi-phase platform to develop and evolve ISRO's capabilities for growing and sustaining flora in extra-terrestrial environments.

Designed as a fully-automated system, a five to seven-day experiment has been planned to demonstrate seed germination and plant sustenance until reaching the two-leaf stage in a microgravity environment.

The cowpea seeds have been placed in a closed-box

environment with active thermal control.

Passive measurements, including camera imaging, oxygen and carbon dioxide concentrations, relative humidity, temperature, and soil moisture monitoring, are available for plant growth and monitoring, the space agency said.

ISRO also posted a separate "selfie video" of the chaser satellite of the space docking experiment that is orbiting the earth at an altitude of 470 km.

The chaser satellite is expected to dock with the target satellite in space on Tuesday, a feat that would make India only the fourth country to master this cutting-edge technology after Russia, the US and China.

Source: PTI

India's GDP growth to hit 4-yr-low of 6.4% in FY25: Govt estimate

The Indian economy is expected to grow at 6.4% in 2024-25, a significant loss of momentum when compared to the 8.2% growth in 2023-24. Driven by a slowdown in investment, this is the lowest this number has been since the pandemic induced a contraction of 5.8% in 2020-21 and is also lower than both the Reserve Bank of India's and government's initial forecasts -- suggesting that the policy establishment either did not see the slowdown coming or was complacent about headwinds to growth, including those generated by monetary policy.

How economic policy responds to these numbers will be seen in the Union Budget which is due on February 1 and the next Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting of RBI which is scheduled from February 5-7. The former will decide the broad direction of fiscal policy and the latter will decide whether monetary policy finally makes an effective pivot and starts cutting interest rates. This will provide relief to households with mortgage payments as well as lower the cost of new investment.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) released the first advanced estimates of GDP for the fiscal year 2024-25 on Tuesday projecting a GDP growth of 6.4%. This number was 7% and 8.2% in 2022-23 and 2023-24. The 2021-22 GDP growth of 9.7% is misleading because it came on the back of a -5.8% number in 2020-21.

While the latest GDP growth estimate is in line with the 6.4% forecast by a Bloomberg poll of economists, it is significantly lower than institutional forecasts at the beginning of the fiscal year. The 2023-24 Economic Survey -- it was presented along with the Union Budget in July 2024 -- for example, projected a GDP growth of 6.5% to 7% for 2024-25. RBI's MPC started with a projection of 7% in its April 2024 resolution, revised it upward to 7.2% until its October resolution and then made a downward revision to 6.6% in the December meeting. Even IMF's World Economic Outlook projected a 7% GDP growth for India in 2024-25 in October 2024.

The bottom line from all of these comparisons is the same.



Almost everyone overestimated India's economic momentum in the first half of the fiscal year. India's quarterly growth rate fell to a four-quarter low of 5.4% in the quarter ending September 2024 according to data released in November 2024, inflicting a huge negative surprise on everyone. RBI's MPC forecast this number to be 7% in its October 2024 resolution.

The projected growth rate of 6.4% assumes a growth of 6.7% in the second half (October-March) of the ongoing fiscal year, which is 45 basis points -- a basis point is one hundredth of a percentage point -- lower than the growth assumed in MPC's December resolution.

What has led to this growth slowdown in the Indian economy? From an expenditure side perspective, the culprit seems to be a slowdown in investment rather than consumption. Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) and Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE) growth is expected to increase from 4% to 7.3% and 2.5% to 4.1% respectively between 2023-24 and 2024-25. Growth in Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), on the other hand, is expected to fall from 9% to 6.4% during this period. A slowdown in investment basically means subdued expectations of future demand and can therefore set off a vicious cycle of low growth.

Source: HT

Microsoft to invest \$3 bn in India to expand AI ops

Microsoft will invest \$3 billion (about Rs 25,700 crore) to expand its cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities in India, its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Satya Nadella has said.

The tech giant will also train 10 million people in AI skills in India by 2030, Nadella said, addressing a conference of start-up founders and executives from technology firms in Bengaluru. Nadella is the latest among tech tycoons to visit India. Chip-maker Nvidia chief Jensen Huang, AMD's Lia Su and Meta Chief AI Scientist Yann LeCun have also visited India in recent months.

Nadella said the \$3 billion investment in India would be the "single-largest expansion" done in the country. He noted that the diffusion rate of AI in India was exciting, but did not give a time frame for spending the investment.

At present, Microsoft provides its cloud computing services under the brand name of Azure; and has over 60 Azure regions -- comprising more than 300 data centres.

During his last visit to India in February 2024, Nadella had announced that the company would provide 2 million people in the country with AI skilling opportunities by 2025, focused on training individuals in smaller cities and rural areas.

Artificial intelligence, Big Data among top 10 fastest growing jobs by 2030: Report

In the next five years, artificial intelligence (AI), big data and security management specialists will be the fastest-growing jobs, showed the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Future of Jobs Report 2025.

The report, released days before the WEF annual meeting in Davos from January 20 to 25, said that the job disruption will equate to 22 per cent of jobs by 2030.

The study also showed that by 2030, 170 million new jobs will also be created.

"Technological change, geoeconomics fragmentation, economic uncertainty, demographic shifts and the green transition, individually and in combination, are among the major drivers expected to shape and transform the global labour market by 2030," the report said.

The information presented by the Future of Jobs Report 2025 is a result of data gathered from more than 1,000 leading global companies, collectively representing over 14 million workers



across 22 industry sectors and 55 economies from across the world.

It said that 60 per cent of employers expect that the growing digital access will have the most transformative trend on businesses.

AI and machine learning, software and application developers, and FinTech engineers figured among the fastest

growing jobs in percentage terms, the report said.

Meanwhile, frontline job roles are predicted to witness the largest growth in absolute terms of volume. These include farmworkers, delivery drivers, construction workers, salesperson, food processing workers, care economy jobs like nursing professionals, social work, etc.

Top 10 Fastest Growing Jobs By 2030

As per the WEF's Future of Jobs report 2025, here are the top 10 fastest growing jobs by 2030:

- Big data specialists
- FinTech engineers
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning specialists
- Software and applications developers
- Security management specialists
- Data warehousing specialists
- Autonomous and electric vehicle specialists
- UI and UX designers
- Light truck or delivery services drivers
- Internet of things specialists

Notably, artificial intelligence is transforming industries across the globe, with half of the employees planning to use it to tap into new opportunities. Of these, 41 per cent are planning to reduce their workforce due to automation and 77 per cent to upskill their workers.

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - JAN 13, 2025 TO JAN 19, 2025

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



ARIES

Ganesha says this week can be a big time for Aries natives. This time will indicate new beginnings and positive changes for you. With mental strength and proactiveness, you will be able to achieve most of your goals. Relationships with colleagues and partners will improve in work life. This week will help establish harmony not only on the professional front but also in your personal life. Time spent with family members will further strengthen your relationship. In terms of health, you need to take special care of your body. You can increase your freshness and energy by adopting regular exercise and proper diet. On the financial front, it will be important to control expenses. You can think about a new investment somewhere but proceed thoughtfully while making any decision. This week, getting into the habit of self-analysis and meditation will help in improving your mental state. Keep in mind that expressing your emotions is also important to enhance your personality. This week is to increase your positivity and look for new opportunities.

TAURUS

Ganesha says this week, you are likely to come across many opportunities. Your goals and desires can be fulfilled faster with your hard work. It will be important to maintain harmony and cooperation with colleagues at the workplace, as your positive energy can inspire others. There will be an atmosphere of happiness and peace in your family as well. You can make relationships even stronger by paying attention to small matters at home. This is a perfect time to spend time with your loved ones. It is important to avoid harmful situations in terms of health. A little caution will help you feel better. Focusing on yoga and meditation will strengthen your mental health. Financial matters will remain stable this week. However, pay attention to all aspects before making big investments. Do not forget to spend time on your hobbies and favorite things; this can give a new experience to your creativity. This week, just trust your intuition and decide on your options carefully.



GEMINI

Ganesha says this week, you may have a wave of activities in your social life. People around you will be ready to understand and adopt your ideas and ideologies. This is the time to spend more time with your friends and family. Conversation and

exchange of ideas will strengthen your relationships. In the workplace, this week can bring new opportunities for you. The unique creativity of your ideas and communication skills will help you play an important role in the team. Present your ideas with clarity, and establish good relations with colleagues. In terms of health, this week needs a little attention in your routine. A little exercise and a proper diet will help maintain your energy level. For mental health, practicing meditation and yoga will be beneficial. Keep in mind, your curiosity and creativity can take you to new heights this week. Move forward with positive thinking and welcome new experiences.



CANCER

Ganesha says this week will start well for Cancer natives. Your relationship with your family and friends will deepen. At this time, you can have exciting conversations with people around you, which will boost your morale. There may be some challenges in the work area, but your hard work and patience will make you successful. Try to express your ideas clearly, this will create better coordination with your colleagues. This week is likely to be mixed from the financial point of view. Try to control expenses. It is time to invest wisely, which can give you good results in the coming time. In terms of health, focus on a balanced diet and regular exercise. Spend time on your favorite activities to stay away from mental stress. This week, stay focused on your goals and maintain a positive attitude to fulfill your dreams.



LEO

Ganesha says this week, you may come across some new opportunities that will prove beneficial for you. Leo born in August, your self-confidence will increase, and you will move forward effectively in your field of work. This time is right for you to start new projects, or improve existing tasks. There are also signs of change in your personal life. You may meet an old friend or family member, which will refresh old memories. Strengthen relationships through communication and express your feelings clearly. Be cautious in investments and financial matters. You may have to make some important decisions, so it will be extremely important to take steps thoughtfully. For health, try yoga and meditation. This will not only improve your physical condition but will also provide mental peace. The main mantra of this week is to build self-confidence and balance. Focus on your goals and face any challenge with patience and courage.



VIRGO

Ganesha says this week you will feel motivated to move forward with your plans. A new energy is going to be added to your actions, which

can result in significant achievements. Health needs to be taken care of; make proper diet and exercise a priority. Positive changes will come in your social life, and you may experience new relationships. Reuniting with an old friend is also possible, which will make you happy. This is a good time to share your thoughts and feelings, so express them openly. Make decisions thoughtfully in financial matters, and avoid any impulsive decisions. Emotionally, it is important to create balance this week. Take care of your mental health and rest when needed. This week is an opportunity for you to grow and exchange creativity. Move forward with confidence and keep moving towards your goals.



LIBRA

Ganesha says this week is a period of new opportunities and positive changes for Libra natives. You will be quite active in your social life, which can lead to new friendships and relationships. As the week progresses, you will get inspiration from the people around you. Your hard work will pay off in the work area and you will get to see the fruits of your efforts. Your relationship with colleagues will get stronger. This is the right time to share your ideas and work with the team. In your personal life, you will also feel sweetness in love relationships. Try to spend time with your loved ones, as it will keep you mentally happy and balanced. Relationships will become even stronger with mutual understanding and cooperation. In terms of health, pay a little attention. Give priority to regular exercise and a balanced diet. Resort to meditation and yoga for mental peace. This week is going to bring balance and harmony for you. Instead of denying your feelings, accept them and work to improve your life.



SCORPIO

Ganesha says your relationships will strengthen and the time spent with your loved ones will make you happy. You can plan a trip somewhere far away, which will refresh your mind. In terms of health, it is important to stay away from stress. Yoga and meditation will help in improving your mental state. Try to fill yourself with positivity. In the career field, your efforts are going to be rewarded, but be patient. Work carefully and move towards your goals with determination. In financial matters, be thoughtful while making some business decisions. There may be sudden gains or losses. This week, try to maintain mental balance and trust your inner voice. This is the time to understand yourself and move forward towards your goals.



SAGITTARIUS

Horoscope for this week for Sagittarius: Your enthusiasm will be the main source of your

energy this week. You will be motivated to achieve new successes. You will get cooperation and support in the workplace, which will ensure that your projects are completed on time. In your personal life, this is a great week to spend time with family and friends. Your positivity and wisdom will attract other people, and your relationships will strengthen. In terms of health, participate in sports activities to keep yourself active. It will be beneficial for both your mind and body. You need to welcome new experiences and adopt new ideas. Keep exploring this week, as it will prove beneficial for your growth. Keep your perspective open, and be prepared for positive changes.



CAPRICORN

Ganesha says this week is a sign of new beginnings for you. People will appreciate you for your hard work and dedication. You will develop good relations with colleagues at work, which will open the way for you to move forward. Thus, leaving behind the stress that has been going on for some time, now is the time for success for you. The atmosphere at home will be happy, but be a little careful, as a family matter can make you worried. It is necessary to control your emotions during this time. In terms of health, focus on yoga and meditation. This will not only give you mental peace but will also improve physical health. This week you will get time to self-analyze. You will get an opportunity to reconsider your plans, which will help you make better decisions in the coming days. Remember, only with your confidence and hard work can you touch the heights of success. Stay positive and take advantage of opportunities.



AQUARIUS

Ganesha says this week's forecast for Aquarius points to positivity and change. You will move forward with new ideas and plans, which will unleash your creativity. This is the right time to expand your social network, as new relationships and friends can make a positive impact on your life. On the work front, your hard work and dedication will soon bring fruit. If you are working on a project, success is indicated in it. Keep in mind that collaborating with the team will be beneficial for you. In personal life, some turmoil is possible in relationships. It is important to communicate and make your feelings clear. Do not ignore your partner's needs. In terms of health, try to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Regular exercise and a balanced diet will keep your energy levels up. This week, have faith in yourself and stick to your goal. You will overcome whatever obstacles come your way with your wisdom. Trust your insight and keep positivity in your life.

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : JANUARY 13 TO JANUARY 19 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

JANUARY 19

Ganesha says the task you undertake this time will provide you with a tremendous deal of satisfaction. Your coworkers and colleagues would be supportive, and some of them would end up being your closest friends. Although you would make good money from your job, it would be difficult for you to keep your profits. It would be enjoyable to get romantically involved, and there would be a good potential that you may get married. Be prepared to receive gifts and delights in both cash and kind.

Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at www.bejandaruwala.com | info@bejandaruwala.com | +91 81412 34275

JANUARY 13

Ganesha says some significant choices would be made this time. You would feel highly energized and prepared to put forth extra effort to accomplish your professional goals. You would have incredible financial success thanks to your enormous energy and fierce drive. By the middle of the day, any legal or property conflicts plaguing you will have been resolved amicably. The spouse would continue to be supportive and show your love and affection. A huge source of happiness would be having kids.

JANUARY 14

Ganesha says today will provide you with a few exceptional possibilities, but you must seize them quickly before others do. Investments and even speculative activities would result in monetary advantages. While partnerships should be avoided, they would create new streams of income. Later, it appears likely that you'll take a trip to somewhere foreign. While the well-being of a family member may raise worries and anxiety for you, your health will continue to be fine.

JANUARY 15

Ganesha says you would be at the height of your self-assurance and resolve. You would likely be promoted or transferred, and the organization where you work would experience significant administrative changes. At least two different sources would provide you with revenue. Midway through the month, your financial situation would start to improve, bringing home prosperity and happiness. Significant help would come from your emotional companion. Adequate care may be required for a sibling's health.

JANUARY 16

Ganesha says despite your best efforts and numerous odd jobs completed, your boss would be under a lot of pressure and may only partially appreciate your work. Your salary would increase, but you would also spend more on luxuries, making it very challenging for you to plan any savings. Due to your busy job schedule, your romantic connection will suffer. Property conflicts will be resolved amicably. You will enjoy your day with your family and have a great time.

JANUARY 17

Ganesha says several of the unexpected happenings would be to your advantage. Your financial situation would be comfortable thanks to past investment gains. You should solely focus on achieving your career objectives and not worry about rumors and gossip. Both business and leisure travelers would make long-distance trips. Despite the extra hours you could work in the first several months, your health should be good. There are benefits to yoga and meditation.

JANUARY 18

Ganesha says you would devote a lot of things to seeking out new employment. Being extremely motivated and imaginative, you could quickly seize upcoming opportunities. Businesspeople should expect a lot of high returns after signing significant agreements. Your emotional ties to your close pals would get in the way of any plans you could have with your spouse. You must arrange your social activities such that no one is harmed. Gains from the sale of real estate may not be completely excluded.

CONTD FROM PAGE 38



PISCES

Ganesha says this week, most of the time will be pleasant and positive for Pisces. The sensitivity and empathy within you can add a new dimension to your relationship with others. This is the time to spend quality time with your loved ones. You will be able to understand their feelings and support them. On the work front, your creativity will be at its peak. It is the right time to work on new projects or ideas. Your actions will receive support from others, which will help you move faster towards your goals. In terms of health, take care of your mental health. Meditation and yoga may prove beneficial for you. Indulge in activities that give you mental peace. Lastly, this week is all about pursuing your passion and enjoying new experiences. Accept new opportunities and don't be afraid to bring out your hidden abilities. There are signs of positive changes in your life.

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

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Nastur Bejan Daruwalla

Sikh History This Week

JANUARY 10 TO JANUARY 16

10th January

- 1770 Sikhs attack Delhi from Panipat side.
- 1943 Harbans Singh Babbar of Sirhala was arrested.

11th January



- 1666: Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji released from prison.
- 1843: A friendship treaty was signed between Maharaja Sher Singh and Amir Dost Mohamed Khan, ruler of Kabul. This treaty was signed during Mohamed Khan's visit to Lahore.

12th January

- 1758 Baba Aalla Singh attacked Abdul Samand Khan of Sirhind and reached a mutual agreement.
- 1797 Shah Zaman lost 20,000 soldiers against Sikhs in a battle in Amritsar during his 3rd invasion. In a reckless hand-to-hand fighting at Amritsar, Shah Zaman lost 20,000 of his choicest soldiers against 15,000 Sikhs. During his 3rd invasion, Shah Zaman reached Peshawar in Nov. 1796 and entered Lahore in Jan. 1797. Sikh Sardars vacated Lahore and assembled at Amritsar to face Shah Zaman. Shah Zaman was defeated at Amritsar and returned to Lahore. The Sikhs pursued the retreating Afghans up to the outskirts of Lahore. Ranjit Singh with his 9000 troops was made responsible for security of the holy city. This marked the beginning of the rise of Ranjit Singh. Sikhs cut off his supply lines and forced Shah Zaman to return back.



- 1922 British government announced its decision to finally withdraw from the management of the Drabar Sahib at Amritsar. The British government announced its decision to finally withdraw from the management of Sri Darbar Sahib at Amritsar and leave the administration in the hands of the Sikh community. The government had mistakenly believed that the Sikh community wanted to use the Gurudwara resources for political purposes. Despite its intense efforts, it found no Sikh willing to accept the office of Sarbrah at its hands. Finally, the government was left with no option but to negotiate with the SGPC, conceding the demands of Baba Kharak Singh, the uncrowned King of the

Sikhs.

1922 The Akalis under Mula Singh Bahawal took control of Anandpur Sahib.

1922 The militant Akalis under Kishan Singh Garhgaj helped capture the Gurudwara of Kiratpur Sahib. Akalis forcibly captured the Kirtapur Gurdwara, despite the SGPC's disapproval of such measures. The Akalis were helped by the Chakravarti Jatha under the leadership of Kishan Singh Garhgaj.

1923 Letters of the solidiers published in Babbar Akalis Doaba newspaper. These letters expressed the gist of their talks with District Commissioner of Jalandhar.

1982 Harsimran Singh, Chief organizer of Dal Khalsa, arrested. Harsimran Singh, Mukh Panch (chief Organiser) of the Dal Khalsa was arrested from Mohali near Chandigarh. The Dal Khalsa leaders believed that that was possible because of a conspiracy by some member of the Organisation. Harsimran Singh was tortured by the police and forced to read out a written statement if he wanted to save his life. The police told him that they had the permission of the Government to kill him in a fake encounter near the Indo-Pakistan border. Such atrocities were perpetrated on various Sikhs arrested during that period.

13th January

1588: Foundation stone of Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, laid by Sain Mia Mir.

Foundation stone of Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, was laid down by the renowned Sufi Saint of Qadiry order, Mir Mohamed Khan, popularly known as Hazarat Mian Mir of Lahore. Sri Harmandir Sahib, unlike any other place of worship, was built at a lower level than the surrounding area. It has doors on all four sides, signifying both humanity and universalism and that it was open to people of all the denominations.

1761: Janam Din Akali Phula Singh Ji.

PHULA SINGH AKALI was son of Siha village (Bangar) resident Eshwar Singh. After being introduced to amrit through Nihangh Singh (of Naena Singh Shaheedhi misl), he assumed the name Phula Singh. He was one of the precious flowers of Kalgidhar's Akali garden. He led the Akali movement in restoration of our Gurudwaras and general improvement of the whole Panth. He traveled extensively in pursuit of Gurudwara reforms. However, he maintained his residence in Amritsar. Even today there is a "burgh" and an establishment, named after him, in Amritsar. Akali Phula Singh helped Maharaja Ranjit Singh fight and successfully win numerous wars. He was so true to his faith and strong in his principles that he did not hesitate in pointing Maharaja Ranjit Singh's lapses in public forums. Further he actively sought appropriate punishment (Tankha) for such lapses.

1764: Conquest of Sirhind by the Khalsa Dal.

Sirhind was attacked and successfully conquered by the Khalsa Dal. The city was plundered and the walls of the fort were pulled down. Sirhind is the place where the younger sahibzadas, Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Fateh Singh Ji, were bricked alive at this place. Ahmed Shah Abdali's proclamation to blow up Sri Harmandir Sahib was answered by the total demolition of Sirhind.

1849: Battle of ChellianWala fought between Khalsa Army and East India Company resulting in tremendous loss of lives on both sides.

1913: Walls of the Gurudwara RakabGanj forcibly demolished by the British Government.

1974: Harbhajan Singh Yogi was honored with the title of "Bhai Sahib" at Sri Akal Takhat, Amritsar. He had been honored for his contributions for the American Sikh movement that accounted for 500,000 of

American decent.

14th January

1553: Guru Amar Das visits Kurukshetra.

The solar eclipse of "Abijit Nakshatra (recurring after about 25 years) brought Guru Amar Das and his Sikhs to Kurukshetra for preaching Guru Nanak's mission to the vast multitude. It led to discussions with yogis, naked ascetics, sanyasis and the followers of all the six schools of Hindu philosophy. The earlier solar eclipse had taken Guru Nanak to Kurukshetra, known as a big centre for pilgrimage on such an occasion.

1705: Mela Maaghi (Muktsar) in remembrance of 40 Muktas.



Mela is observed every year at Muktsar. Guru Gobind Singh cast off the blue dress that he used for his escape at Dhilmi. He then moved on to Talwandi and was at Rohi when a group of 40 Sikhs from Majha, accompanied by Mata Bhag Kaur, visited him. They were visiting to convey their condolences at the death of his four sons and his mother, and also to offer their services to mediate a compromise between the Guru and the Mughal authorities. However, the Guru put them on the defensive by narrating the series of Mughal atrocities from Guru Arjan's martyrdom through Guru Hargobind's incarceration for several years at Gawalior, Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom to the laying of the siege of Anandpur.

1761: Abdali destroyed Panipat but the Sikhs faced him in Goindwal and rescued their honor.

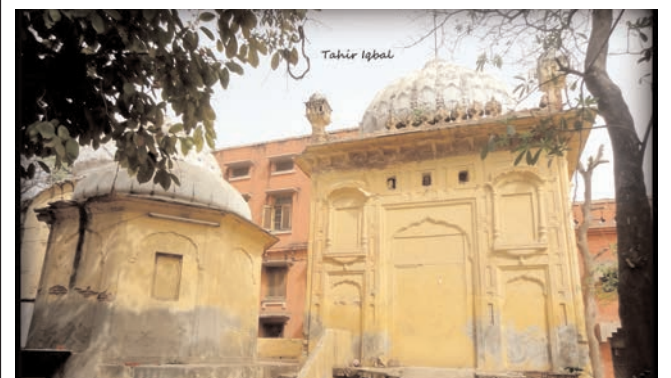
15th January

1350: Bhagat Namdev Ji passed away. Annual mela observations are held in village Ghumaan, district Gurdaspur.

16th January

1766: Sirdar Chadat Singh Sukarchakia killed Hameed Khan and captured Gujrawala.

1841: Chand Kaur defended Lahore against Sher Singh's attack with the help of Gulab Singh. Fort was



well defended by Gulab Singh and Gardner. Dhian Singh returned to Lahore. Sher Singh lost about 5000 men. And Gulab Singh left fort and Lahore and carried away great wealth.

1923: First abortive attempt is made to kill Arjan Singh Patwari of Haripur. He was alleged to be responsible for Master Mota Singh's arrest.

Mahakumbh of Prayagraj 2025: A confluence of spirituality, legends and traditions

The Mahakumbh Mela, set to unfold in Prayagraj on January 13, 2025, stands as one of the world's largest and most profound gatherings of faith. Held every 12 years at the sacred Triveni Sangam—the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mystical Saraswati rivers—this event transcends religious boundaries and showcases the rich spiritual and cultural heritage of India.

The Legend Behind the Mahakumbh

The origin of the Kumbh Mela is rooted in the Puranic story of the Samudra Manthan (churning of the ocean) by the devas (gods) and asuras (demons). According to Hindu mythology, during the churning, a pot (kumbh) of amrita (nectar of immortality) emerged. To prevent the nectar from falling into the hands of the asuras, the devas carried it away. In the ensuing chase, drops of amrita fell at four places: Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik. These locations became sanctified, and the Kumbh Mela is celebrated to commemorate this divine event. Prayagraj holds a special place among these sites as it is where the three sacred rivers meet, symbolizing unity and purification.

Traditions and Rituals of the Mahakumbh

The Mahakumbh Mela is marked by a range of spiritual practices that draw millions of devotees, sadhus, and pilgrims from all corners of the globe. Key rituals and traditions include:

- **Shahi Snan (Royal Bath):** The most significant ritual of the Mahakumbh, the Shahi Snan, involves taking a dip in the holy waters of the Sangam. This act is believed to cleanse the soul of sins and pave the way for moksha (liberation).
- **Akharas and Sadhus:** The Akharas, or monastic orders of ascetics, play a vital role in the Kumbh Mela. Naga sadhus (naked ascetics), Urdhwavahurs (those who practice severe austerities), and Parivrajakas (wandering monks) showcase their spiritual discipline and lead the processions to the Sangam.
- **Ganga Aarti:** The mesmerizing Ganga Aarti, performed at the banks of the river, is a visual and spiritual treat. Devotees light lamps and chant hymns, creating a divine atmosphere.
- **Spiritual Discourses and Cultural Programs:** The Mahakumbh serves as a platform for spiritual leaders, scholars, and artists to share wisdom and perform, fostering an exchange of ideas and cultural expressions.

Origins and Evolution

The Kumbh Mela's documented history dates back to ancient scriptures such as the Rigveda, which mentions river confluences as sacred. The significance of Prayagraj as a tirtha (pilgrimage site) is highlighted in texts like the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Over centuries, the Kumbh Mela evolved from a localized festival into a global phenomenon. It was institutionalized during the reign of Emperor Harsha in the 7th century CE and gained prominence under the guidance of Adi Shankaracharya, who united various ascetic orders to participate in the event.

Mahakumbh 2025: A Global Phenomenon

The Mahakumbh of 2025 is expected to be a grand spectacle, with advanced preparations to accommodate millions of devotees. The government and local authorities are working tirelessly to ensure infrastructure, sanitation, and safety measures are in place. With technology integration, live streaming, and mobile apps, the event aims to reach a global audience



while preserving its traditional essence.

Maha Kumbh Mela: Astrological and Cultural Significance

The Maha Kumbh Mela is based on different astrological conditions at each place, which are determined by the position of the Sun, Moon, and Jupiter. The festival is celebrated when the position of

these planets attains perfection, which is considered a very holy time in Hinduism. The Kumbh Mela is a wonderful amalgamation of astronomy, astrology, spirituality, ritual traditions and socio-cultural customs, making the event a symbol of profound knowledge. The Kumbh Mela attracts people from all religions, including sadhus, Naga sadhus, sanyasis and common devotees. Naga sadhus and sanyasis follow intense sadhana and spiritual discipline and come into public life only during the Kumbh Mela. At the same time, spiritualists and common people who follow Hinduism also attend the fair in large numbers.

There are many special events in the Kumbh Mela. The traditional procession of the Akharas, called 'Peshwai', is taken out with elephants, horses and chariots. The performance of Naga sadhus during the 'Shahi Snan', their gleaming swords and traditional rituals, besides several cultural activities attract lakhs of devotees to the fair.

The Mahakumbh Mela of Prayagraj is more than a religious event; it is a celebration of humanity's quest for the divine. It brings together faith, tradition, and community, offering a unique opportunity for spiritual rejuvenation and cultural immersion. As the world converges at the sacred Sangam in 2025, the Mahakumbh promises to be a beacon of hope, unity, and timeless wisdom.

Mahakumbh Mela 2025, Prayagraj: Key Dates

Mahakumbh Mela 2025 will be held in Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26. Various important festivals and rituals will be held during this period. The key dates of these festivals are as follows:

Festival Name	Date
Paush Purnima	13-01-2025
Makar Sankranti	14-01-2025
Mauni Amavasya (Somvati)	29-01-2025
Basant Panchami	03-02-2025
Maghi Purnima	12-02-2025
Mahashivratri	26-02-2025

RULES ON FAMILY REUNIONS PUT ON HOLD

By Prabhjot Singh



JANUARY 11, 2025

OTTAWA (TIP): The New Year did not augur well for those hoping to reunite with their wards in Canada in the next couple of years.

After slashing down the immigration quotas and discontinuing LMAI points in the Express Entry scheme, the Government of Canada has delivered yet another blow to parents and grandparents of immigrants. It has now decided to suspend the application process for sponsoring parent and grandparent permanent residency.

The latest directive published in the Canada Gazette reiterates that the government remains committed to family reunification but will not accept any new applications under the scheme. Instead, it will focus on processing applications received last year.

The suspension of the application process, says the directive, corroborates Immigration Minister Marc Miller's opinion that this will "best support" the government's goals around immigration and family reunification.

It is not only the family reunification, other immigration streams, too, have seen new sponsorships paused to help clear the



The application process corroborates Immigration Minister Marc Miller's opinion that this will "best support" the government's goals around immigration and family reunification.

existing backlog.

Recent changes have met with mixed responses from politicians, social scientists, economists and immigration specialists. Mayors of some of the smaller towns in Ontario and British Columbia have been voicing their concerns over the changes and want the Federal

Government to reconsider them. They have argued that while they have been encountering negative population growth, they have no takers for the jobs they have to offer. In addition, new immigrants contribute immensely to the local economies. They insist that the federal government should abide by its original

immigration levels.

The recent changes, however, see an overall decrease in immigration over the next three years. Since the government has been under immense pressure from the Opposition parties and various other organizations, it has been constantly reviewing its plans and targets. Under the family reunification scheme, especially in cases relating to parents and grandparents, the goal was to admit more than 24,000 people through this stream this year.

The new directive says a maximum of 15,000 applications made in 2024 through the family reunification program will be processed thus leaving a huge gap. Under the parent and grandparent program, 35,700 randomly selected people were invited to submit applications in 2024, to accept 20,500 applications. According to the 2024 annual report to Parliament on immigration, tabled by Miller, there were more than 40,000 parent and grandparent permanent residency sponsorships in the inventory as of the end of 2023. The report puts the average processing time for a sponsorship application at 24 months.

CHANDRA ARYA DECLARES HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRIME MINISTERSHIP

BY PRABHJOT SINGH

JANUARY 10, 2025

TORONTO (TIP): Chandra Arya, Liberal MP from Nepean, sprang a surprise on Friday, January 10 by declaring his candidature for the position of Prime Minister of Canada.

In a social media post, Arya announced his candidature, holding that he was "ready to lead a small, more efficient government to rebuild our nation and secure prosperity for future generations."

While the process to choose a successor to Justin Trudeau is still to be formally initiated, he has become the first candidate to make public his intent. He is known for his "pro-India stance" as he has been openly opposing any proposals or motions brought up on the floor of the House in support of Sikh separatism or "anti-India campaigns."

Justin Trudeau often faced criticism by the Government of India for not taking any action against those performing "anti-India activities carried out from the Canadian soil."

When Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland sprang a major surprise by sending a stunning resignation letter to Justin Trudeau on December 17, hours before she was to present her fall Financial Statement in the House of Commons, Chandra Arya was the first member of the Liberal caucus to declare his support to her as replacement of Justin Trudeau.

He was also the first Liberal MP of South Asian descent to ask Justin Trudeau to step down as he claimed he had a "difference of opinion" with the Prime Minister on various contagious issues. He posted a letter on his social media handles within a few hours after Justin Trudeau rejigged his Cabinet following Chrystia Freeland's resignation.



Liberal MP Chandra Arya has declared his candidature for the position of Prime Minister of Canada

"I am running to be the next Prime Minister of Canada to lead a small, more efficient government to rebuild our nation and secure prosperity for future generations. We are facing significant structural problems that haven't been seen for generations and solving them will require tough choices.

"I have always worked hard for what is best for Canadians, and for the sake of our children and grandchildren, we must make bold decisions that are necessary. If elected as the next Leader of the Liberal Party, I offer my knowledge and expertise to do so. We have a perfect storm: many Canadians, especially younger generations, face significant affordability issues.

"The working middle class is struggling today, and

many working families are retiring directly into poverty. Canada deserves leadership that is not afraid to make the big decisions. Decisions that rebuild our economy, restore hope, create equal opportunities for all Canadians, and secure prosperity for our children and grandchildren.

"Bold political decisions are not optional—they are necessary. With prudence and pragmatism as my guiding principles, I am stepping forward to take on this responsibility and lead Canada as its next Prime Minister. Join me in this journey. Let us rebuild, revitalize, and secure the future. For all Canadians, for generations to come," he said in his social media post.

He said that more details, including his policy proposals, were in the statement next in the thread. You can also visit my website <http://AryaCanada.ca> which will be operational later today," he concluded.

(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)

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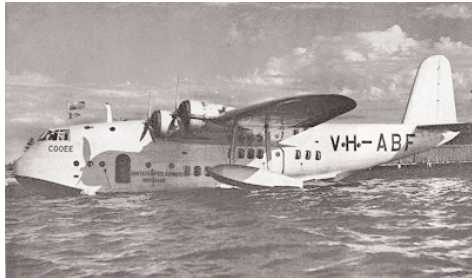
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History This Week

JAN 10 - JAN 16

JANUARY 10



January 10, 1912 - The flying boat airplane, invented by Glenn Curtiss, made its first flight at Hammondsport, New York.

January 10, 1920 - The League of Nations officially came into existence with the goal of resolving international disputes, reducing armaments, and preventing future wars. The first Assembly gathered in Geneva ten months later with 41 nations represented. More than 20 nations later joined, however, the U.S. did not join due to a lack of support for the League in Congress.

January 10, 1922 - Arthur Griffith was elected president of the newly formed Irish Free State.

January 10, 1946 - The first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly took place in London with delegates from 51 countries. The U.N. superseded its predecessor, the League of Nations.

January 10, 1984 - The U.S. and Vatican established full diplomatic relations after a break of 116 years.

JANUARY 11



January 11, 1964 - The U.S. Surgeon General declared cigarettes may be hazardous to health, the first such official government report.

January 11, 1990 - In Lithuania, 200,000 persons demanded political independence from Soviet Russia after Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the Soviet Union, publicly warned that separatism could lead to tragedy. Independence was achieved in September of 1991, three months before the collapse of the Soviet Union itself.

Birthdays - Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804) was born in the British West Indies. He was a founder of the United States who favored a strong central government and co-authored the Federalist Papers, a series of essays in defense of the new Constitution. He was selected by George Washington to be the first Secretary of the Treasury. He died from a gunshot wound received during a duel with Aaron Burr.

JANUARY 12

January 12, 1932 - Hattie W. Caraway, a Democrat from Arkansas, was appointed to the U.S. Senate to fill the term of her deceased husband. Later in the year, she became the first woman elected to the Senate.

January 12, 1990 - Romania outlawed

the Communist Party following the overthrow of Dictator Nicolae Ceausescu who had ruled for 24 years.

January 12, 1991 - Congress authorized President George Bush to use military force against Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait.

January 12, 1996 - The first joint American-Russian military operation since World War II occurred as Russian troops arrived to aid in peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia.



January 12, 1999 - President Bill Clinton sent a check for \$850,000 to Paula Jones officially ending the sensational sexual harassment legal case that ultimately endangered his presidency. The president withdrew \$375,000 from his and Hillary Rodham Clinton's personal funds and got the remaining \$475,000 from an insurance policy. The lawsuit had exposed the president's affair with Monica Lewinsky and resulted in investigations by Independent Counsel Ken Starr that led to Clinton's impeachment by the House of Representatives and subsequent trial in the Senate.

Birthdays - John Winthrop (1588-1649) was born in Suffolk, England. In 1630, he joined a group of Puritans emigrating to America and became the first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, establishing a colony on the peninsula of Shawmut, which became Boston.

Birthdays - Irish orator, politician and philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was born in Dublin. Best known for his essays and pamphlets including *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770), *On American Taxation* (1774), *On Conciliation with the Colonies* (1775) and *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).

Birthdays - American statesman and patriot John Hancock (1737-1793) was born in Braintree, Massachusetts. He was elected president of the Second Continental Congress in 1775, was the first signer of the Declaration of Independence, and went on to become the first elected governor of Massachusetts.

JANUARY 13

January 13, 1935 - The population of the Saar region bordering France and Germany voted for incorporation into Hitler's Reich. The 737 square-mile area with its valuable coal deposits had been under French control following Germany's defeat in World War I.

January 13, 1990 - Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the first African American governor in the U.S. as he took the oath of office in Richmond.

January 13, 2021 - President Donald Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives on a charge of "Incitement of Insurrection" following a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol by his supporters seven days earlier. The

charge alleged Trump encouraged the January 6th insurrection to interfere with Congressional certification of the 2020 presidential election, after losing to Democrat Joe Biden. Trump was acquitted on February 13, 2021 when the U.S. Senate failed to reach the two-thirds majority needed for conviction.



Birthdays - Author Horatio Alger (1834-1899) was born in Revere, Massachusetts. He wrote over 100 books for boys, many featuring "rags to riches" themes of poor boys triumphing over life's obstacles.

JANUARY 14



January 14-23, 1943 - President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met at Casablanca in Morocco to work on strategy during World War II. At the conclusion of the conference, Roosevelt and Churchill held a joint news conference at which Roosevelt surprisingly announced that peace would come "by the total elimination of German and Japanese war power. That means the unconditional surrender of Germany, Italy and Japan."

Birthdays - Benedict Arnold (1741-1801) was born in Norwich, Connecticut. He was the American Revolutionary War hero who turned traitor, sending information to the British in exchange for money. After obtaining command of West Point in 1780, he conspired to turn over the garrison to the British. However, his plans were discovered and he fled to British headquarters in New York. After the war, he lived in England.

Birthdays - Philosopher-physician Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) was born in Upper Alsace, Germany. He served as a medical missionary in Africa and received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his work on behalf of the brotherhood of all nations.

Birthdays - American film pioneer Hal Roach (1892-1992) was born in Elmira, New York. His output included nearly 1,000 movies of all lengths, including the classic Laurel and Hardy comedies.

JANUARY 15

January 15, 1973 - Golda Meir became the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit the Pope.

Birthdays - Martin Luther King (1929-1968) was born in Atlanta, Georgia. As an African American civil rights leader he spoke eloquently and stressed nonviolent



methods to achieve equality. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968. In 1983, the third Monday in January was designated a legal holiday in the U.S. to celebrate his birthday.

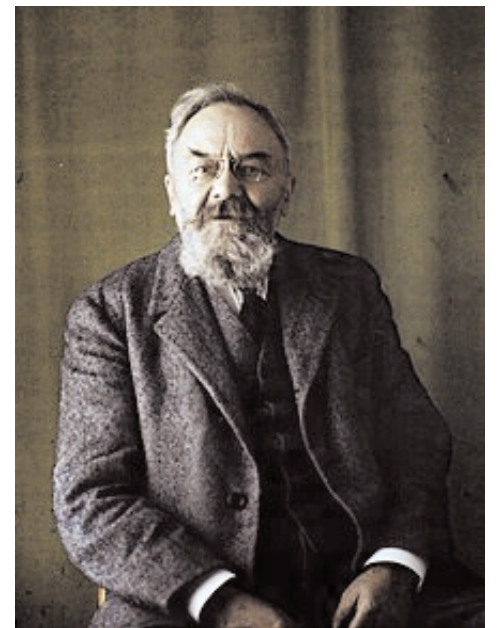
JANUARY 16

January 16, 1547 - Ivan the Terrible had himself officially crowned as the first Russian Czar (Caesar) although he had already ruled Russia since 1533. His reign lasted until 1584 and brought much needed reforms including a new legal code and cultural development. However, during his reign he instituted a campaign of terror against the Russian nobility and had over 3,000 persons put to death. He also killed his own son during a fit of rage.

January 16, 1979 - The Shah of Iran departed his country amid mass demonstrations and the revolt of Islamic fundamentalists led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The Shah had ruled Iran since 1941 and had unsuccessfully attempted to westernize its culture.

January 16, 1991 - The war against Iraq began as Allied aircraft conducted a major raid against Iraqi air defenses. The air raid on Baghdad was broadcast live to a global audience by CNN correspondents as operation Desert Shield became Desert Storm.

January 16, 1992 - The twelve-year civil war in El Salvador ended with the signing of a peace treaty in Mexico City. The conflict had claimed over 75,000 lives.



Birthdays - French industrialist Andre Michelin (1853-1931) was born in Paris. He started the Michelin Tire Company in 1888, pioneering the use of pneumatic tires on autos.

Jodhpur: The Gateway to Thar

Nestled in the heart of Rajasthan, Jodhpur, popularly known as the "Blue City," is a mesmerizing blend of history, culture, and vibrant traditions. This city, with its azure-hued houses and imposing forts, invites travelers to step back in time and experience the grandeur of India's royal past. Whether you're a history enthusiast, a culture seeker, or an adventure lover, Jodhpur has something for everyone.

Jodhpur is the second largest city in the state of Rajasthan, India. It is called the Gateway to Thar, as it is literally on the edge of the Thar desert. It is also called the Sun City as the sun shines (very bright and hot) almost every day of the year.

Udai Mandir

Udai Mandir is an architectural beauty. If you are an appreciator of architectural brilliance and quality then this place is for you. Half of the temple entrance gate is made from the carved sandstone (Jodhpur is the hub of sandstone). The main temple stands on a huge raised platform and is supported by 102 pillars.

Inside Udai Mandir there are beautiful wall paintings with 84 Yogasanas and the pictures of Nath Yogis made up with gold.

The temple has a Garbh Griha. The upper portion of the Garbh Griha is kept covered with cloth and is surrounded by gold pots. The gold polishing in Udai Mandir still has its original shine and quality.

Siddhant Shiv Temple

Siddhant Shiv temple is situated between Takhat Sagar hills and Kalyana Lake. Its way is on Chopasani Road and it is about 10 Kms away from Jodhpur. You can reach the temple only after crossing the hundreds of stairs made up by cutting rocks.

Once upon a time the place, exactly where the temple now stands, was completely a deserted area.

Siddhant Shiv temple is believed to be built by GauriShanker (also called Nepali Baba, his real name was Veetrage Narain Swami) himself by cutting stones.

He was a handicapped saint who had only four fingers in each of his hand and foot.

Masuriya Hill Garden

Masuria hill garden is located on the Masuria hills of Jodhpur. It has the Asia's largest TV tower in it. It is green lush garden with full and clear view of Jodhpur. Earlier Mehrangarh fort was proposed to be made on Masuria hills but due to lack of water (at that time) Mehrangarh was made where it is at present.

Arna Jharna

Arna-Jharna is a unique approach to the way museums should be. Instead of being enclosed in a box, it enjoys the open space of the desert. Here you learn by exploring and enjoying with visuals.

Mehrangarh Fort

Mehrangarh Fort of Jodhpur is one of the largest and most popular forts in India. The fort is located at the centre of the city and appears to command Jodhpur. Every visit to Mehrangarh is as exciting as before.



Jaswant Thada

Jaswant Thada lies to the left of the Mehrangarh fort complex. It is a royal memorial made up of white marble and wonderful architecture piece of art.

Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park

Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park was created in 2006 and is situated next to Mehrangarh Fort.

There are plants in this park that are adapted to growing in arid, rocky areas of the Thar Desert. Rao Jodha Park is open throughout the year from 9 AM to 5:15 PM every day.

Ram Dwara

This is a temple of great Hindu god and leader of the epic Ramayana 'Shree Ram'. It is located in the Chandpole (near Soorsagar) of Jodhpur. Here the sages preach and practice principles of Hindu Dharma.

Umaid Bhawan Palace

Umaid Bhawan Palace is one of the world's largest private residences. Taj Hotels manage a part of the palace.

It was named after Maharaja Umaid Singh, grandfather of the present Maharaja Gaj Singh II, this monument has 347 rooms and serves as the principal residence of the Jodhpur royal family.

Ghanta Ghar or Clock Tower

Ghanta Ghar also known as the clock tower. Beside the tower, there is the Sardar Market that is trusted by tourists for shopping. From this market, you can purchase Rajasthani textiles, clay articles, miniature camels and elephants, marble inlay work and classic silver and gold jewelry.

Sachiya Mata Temple

The Sachiya Mata Temple is located in Osian, near Jodhpur. Osian is 60-65 kms from Jodhpur. In this Temple mother goddess Sachiya (Also called Indrani) is worshipped by many castes living in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and North India.



CONTD FROM PAGE 1

Indian Diaspora Integral to Vision of...

Acknowledging Her Excellency Christine Kangaloo, President of Trinidad and Tobago, as an exemplary leader championing women and the Indian Diaspora, President Murmu praised her for setting a global benchmark.

The President highlighted that the PBD Convention is more than an event-it serves as a platform to strengthen India's ties with its Diaspora, foster collaborations, and exchange ideas.

As India advances towards the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047, President Murmu called on the global Indian community to actively participate in this national mission. She invoked the timeless philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam-the world as one family-encouraging the Diaspora to contribute towards economic progress, social justice, and environmental stewardship.

Concluding her address, President Murmu expressed hope and determination for the future, urging the Indian Diaspora to join hands in building a developed India that shines on the global stage as a beacon of progress and prosperity.

The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention celebrates the contributions of overseas Indians and aims to deepen the bond between India and its global community.

Prabhjot Singh, a Toronto-based senior journalist reports that twenty-seven eminent members of the Indian Diaspora drawn from 24 countries, including the President of Trinidad & Tobago, Christine Carla Kangaloo were felicitated by President Droupadi Murmu before the curtains were rung down on the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas at Janata Maidan on Friday, January 10.

The three-day convention that attracted more than 3000 delegates from overseas and over 7500 total participants had a series of sessions on various issues relating to youth, women, and investments and saw the engagement of global experts, including top leaders and captains of industry, trade, business, medicine, and community services.

The last day sessions included "Diaspora Divas celebrating women's leadership and influence - Nari Shakti", which featured top women leaders drawn from various walks of life, and "Diaspora Dialogue: Stories of Culture, Connection, and Belongingness."

The session on women's leadership was presided by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while Gajendra Singh, Shekhawat, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, presided over the session on Diaspora Dialogues.

Though the focus remained on building bridges between the overseas community and India, panelists were unanimous in projecting India as a developed nation in 2047.

The President, Droupadi Murmu, who hails from Odisha, while appreciating the role played by the overseas community in projecting a great image of the country, held that holding of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas provided a much-needed platform for reaffirming the strong bond between Diaspora and the country.

India, she said, was being acknowledged worldwide for the progress it had made since its independence in 1947.

The President of Trinidad and Tobago, who was the chief guest, was among the recipients of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards. Those felicitated included Ravi Kumar of Odisha, who, speaking on behalf of all the awardees, applauded the efforts to bring together the overseas community with its motherland.

Those felicitated on the occasion included: -
Prof. Ajay Rane (Australia Community Service)
Dr. Marialena Joan Fernandes (Austria Education)
Dr. Philomena Ann Mohini Harris (Barbados)
Swami Sanyuktanand (Fiji Community Service)
Saraswati Vidya Niketan (Guyana Community Service)

Dr. Lekh Raj Juneja (Japan Science & Technology)
Dr. Prem Kumar (Kyrgyz Medical Sciences)
Mr. Soukthavy Chowdhury (Laos Business)
Mr. Krishna Savjani (Malawi Business)
"Tan Sri" Dr. Subramaniam K. V. Sathasivam (Malaysia

Politics)

Dr. Sarita Boodhoo (Mauritius Community Service)
Mr. Abhaya Kumar (Moldova Business)
Dr. Ram Niwas Hla Tun (Myanmar Education)
Mr. Jaggannath Shekhar Asthana (Romania Business)
Hindustani Samaj (Russia Community Service)
Ms. Sudha Rani Gupta (Russia Education)
Dr. Syed Anwar Khursheed (Saudi Arabia Medical Sciences)
Mr. Atul Arvind Temurnikar (Singapore Education)
Mr. Robert Masih Nahar (Spain Community Service)
Dr. Kaushik Laxmidas Ramaiya (Tanzania Medicine)
Christine Carla Kangaloo (Trinidad & Tobago Public Affairs)
Mr. Ramakrishnan Sivaswamy Iyer (UAE Business)
Mr. Bonthala Subbaiah Setty Ramesh Babu (Uganda Community Service)
Baroness Usha Kumari Prashar (UK Politics)
Dr. Sharad Lakhpal (USA Medicine)
Dr. Sharmila Ford (USA Community Service), and
Mr. Ravi Kumar S. (USA Business)

The valedictory function was attended among others by the External Affairs Minister, Dr S. Jaishankar; Chief Minister of Odisha, Mohan Charan Majhi, Union Education Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan; and the Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Jual Oran.

Santoor concert by Abhay Rustum Sapori provided the climax. The Chief Minister of Odisha also announced the extension of the exhibition on Odisha for two more days to facilitate the locals.

US President Biden awards Pope...

As the People's Pope, you are a light of faith, hope, and love that shines brightly across the world," Biden said on X.

Pope Francis, your humility and your grace are beyond words, and your love for all is unparalleled.

As the People's Pope, you are a light of faith, hope, and love that shines brightly across the world.

Today, it was my honor to award His Holiness Pope Francis the Presidential... pic.twitter.com

- President Biden (@POTUS) January 11, 2025

In a statement from the White House, it was stated that President Biden spoke with the Pope and named him as a recipient of the medal, which is the highest civilian honor in the United States. The award is given to individuals who have made "exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public or private endeavors."

This was also the first time that Biden awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction during his time at the White House, the statement added.

According to The Hill, President Biden, the second Catholic president in US history, had initially planned to visit Rome but cancelled the trip due to the ongoing wildfires in Los Angeles.

Biden had originally planned to travel to Italy on Thursday to meet the Pope and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni for what would have been his final foreign trip as president, the Hill reported.

According to the Hill, the two leaders last met in June while Biden was in Italy for the G7 summit and also met in October 2021 when conservative Catholic bishops were considering whether Biden should be allowed to receive communion due to his pro-abortion rights position. (Source: ANI)

Xi, Bolsonaro, Meloni Invited; Jaishankar...

well as other visiting dignitaries, the press note added.

The press release was conspicuously silent on whether the invitation for the ceremony on January 20 was in the name of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Jaishankar would be sent instead.

So far, foreign media reports have suggested that invitations were extended to heads of state or, in one instance, a former head of state. However, the MEA press release did not specify whether the invitation was addressed to a particular individual or if the recipient was named.

This development comes after Jaishankar's recent visit to the US, where he met with Trump's choice for National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, along with talks

with officials from the outgoing Biden administration, including US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

On Monday, the external affairs minister also held talks with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, broadly reviewing the trajectory of India-US global strategic partnership in the last four years under the Biden administration. Sullivan was on a visit to India two weeks ahead of Trump's inauguration as the 47th president of the US.

The inauguration ceremony will mark the beginning of Trump's second term as president. J.D. Vance will take oath as the vice president of the United States.

Last month, Trump revealed that he had invited world leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, to attend the inauguration of his presidential term - an unprecedented move for this American event.

Initial reports suggested that Trump had personally extended an invitation to Jinping, sparking a sensation in the US. Throughout his campaign and after his victory, Trump had pledged to impose heavy tariffs on China, as well as on traditional allies like Canada and Mexico.

From the outset, it was evident that President Xi would not be attending the inauguration. Earlier this week, the UK newspaper Financial Times reported that Xi plans to send a special envoy, possibly Vice President Han Zheng or Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The report also noted that Trump's aides would prefer the envoy to be Cai Qi, a Politburo Standing Committee member who is believed to hold significantly more influence than Han or Wang.

While much of the focus among foreign invitees was on China, reports in December also indicated that other world leaders, who were from right-wing parties, had also been invited to the inauguration.

Argentinian President Javier Milei's office confirmed receiving an invitation, while the Ambassador of El Salvador in Washington publicly stated that President Nayib Bukele had also been invited, according to an AP report on December 18. Notably, Milei was the first foreign leader to meet Trump after the election at his Mar-a-Lago club.

Recently, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni expressed her intention to attend Trump's inauguration but noted that she was reviewing her schedule before finally confirming her participation.

Meanwhile, former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro wrote on X on Wednesday that he has requested the return of his passport, which he had previously surrendered during an investigation into his alleged role in a 2023 coup attempt to stay in power. Bolsonaro explained that he needed the passport to attend the upcoming inauguration ceremony.

During Trump's first term, Modi made a concerted effort to strengthen ties, with Trump attending the 'Howdy Modi' rally in Houston and hosting him at a massive stadium event in Ahmedabad. However, unlike other world leaders, India has not clarified whether a specific invitation was extended to Modi.

India is set to host the Quad leaders' summit later this year, with Trump expected to visit for a second time. (With inputs from The Wire)

Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto...

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesian President Subianto held their first meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rio last year. During their meeting, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment towards strengthening bilateral ties in the framework of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The leaders noted that had called for celebrating the occasion in a befitting manner, as per the Ministry of External Affairs.

"Indonesia and India have long-standing and excellent relations. We deeply value this relationship and are committed to enhancing it across various sectors," said the President as per the Cabinet Secretariat of Indonesia.

In October last year, Indonesia's former defense minister, Prabowo Subianto took oath as the eighth President of Indonesia along with Gibran Rakabuming, son of former President Joko Widodo who was elected Vice President of the country.

(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)

I was 'poisoned' in the hotel: Novak Djokovic claims his food was contaminated in Australian Open 2022

Novak Djokovic set eyes rolling before the Australian Open 2025 by claiming that he was "poisoned" by lead and mercury in his food while being detained in Melbourne in 2022, just before his deportation on the eve of that year's Australian Open.

The former world number one had his visa revoked and was ultimately expelled from the country due to his refusal to get vaccinated against Covid-19. He spent time in a detention hotel as he unsuccessfully fought a legal battle to stay in Australia.

"My stance is exactly the same today as it was a few years ago," Djokovic, 37, shared in an extensive interview with GQ magazine published on Thursday. "I'm not pro-vaccine. I'm not anti-vax. I am pro-freedom to choose what is right for you and your body. So when somebody takes away my right to choose what I should be taking for my body, I don't think that's correct." After being expelled from Australia, Djokovic boarded a private plane back to Spain, where his family was staying. On the way, he says, they rerouted his flight to Serbia. "Why? Because they had information through lawyers that if I land in Spain, I'll probably go through the same thing as in Australia," he said.

And so he and his family met up in Serbia instead.

When he got home, he said, "I had some health issues. And I realized that in that hotel in Melbourne, I was fed with some food that poisoned me."

The revelation comes days after he had claimed the Melbourne episode had sent him into depression.

He added, "I had some discoveries when I came back to Serbia. I never told this to anybody publicly, but discoveries



that I had a really high level of heavy metal. I had lead, a very high level of lead and mercury."

When asked whether he thought his food had been contaminated, Djokovic responded, "That's the only way."

A representative from Australia's Department of Home Affairs stated that it could not comment on specific cases "for privacy reasons." However, the department noted that the lease agreement with the Park Hotel, where Djokovic was held, ensures that detainees receive freshly prepared, individually portioned lunches and dinners.

All catering staff have undertaken food safety certifications, it says.

As of December 31, 2021, the hotel had been providing the contractor responsible for detention services with samples of the food provided to detainees at each meal.

Australia says detainees had access to a variety of nutritious, culturally

appropriate food and drink that satisfied specific medical or dietary requirements.

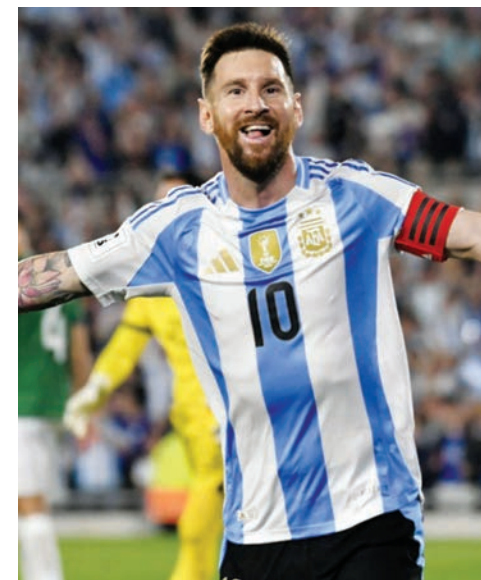
They were also offered breakfast items such as bread, cereal, noodles, tea and coffee at any time of the day or night.

Djokovic does not hold any grudges

Djokovic will be bidding for an 11th Australian Open title and a record-setting 25th major when the season's first Grand Slam event gets underway on Sunday, Jan 12.

He insists that he does not hold "any grudge over the Australian people" despite the 2022 controversy. A year later, he returned to Melbourne where he swept to the title.

"A lot of Australian people that I meet in Australia the last few years or elsewhere in the world, have come up to me, apologising to me for the treatment I received because they were embarrassed by their own government at that point," he said.



Messi planning a Barcelona reunion by signing contract with Inter Miami: Report

Inter Miami are planning to extend Lionel Messi's stay in the MLS for another year as they are set to offer a new contract to the Argentine great. Messi has brought a lot of attention to MLS with his arrival at the Inter Miami in 2023. He boosted the sport's popularity in the US as they are set to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Messi's existing contract is set to expire after next season, but Inter Miami is in no mood to let him go so early.

According to a report on Marca, Messi is working on signing a new contract with Miami, which will allow him to play in Europe. The 37-year-old is planning to extend his stay with the Argentine team for the 2026 World Cup to help them defend their crown. To get himself ready for the big challenge in 2026, Messi might return to Europe in his potential contract extension; there will be a clause allowing him to play in Europe at the end of 2025 and the start of 2026. It might allow a Barcelona reunion, his former club, which is still very close to his heart.

Hero-worshipping reason behind India's generational slump in Tests: Manjrekar

Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar has blamed the culture of hero-worshipping behind India's awful slump in Test cricket. In his recent column in Hindustan Times, Manjrekar wrote that the slump that the Indian team is facing is nothing new. The former player highlighted that India faced a similar slump back in 2011-12 as well, losing 0-8 to England and Australia under the leadership of MS Dhoni.

Manjrekar termed the current lapse in form under the captaincy of Rohit Sharma, a generational slump. India lost two back to back series under the leadership of Rohit Sharma. First India lost their first ever home series against New Zealand (0-3) at home and then fell to Australia 1-3 away. Manjrekar pointed out the reason behind the losses and said that the icon-players were dragging the Indian team.

"India are a sought-after cricket team that the world wants to eagerly host. They play a lot of matches in SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand, Australia) countries, so it is fair to be judged to the highest standards. This 'generational slump' is inevitable for



all teams. It's what we know as the transition phase and among the best teams in the world, I believe it affects India the most," Manjrekar wrote in his column.

"The one foremost reason behind this is the icon culture we have in India and the hero worship of certain players. Be it 2011-12 or now, it's the same scenario that gets played out -- iconic players featuring prominently doing the opposite of what they did their

entire careers, thereby dragging the team down with their diminished performances," he added.

Manjrekar cited the examples of Sachin Tendulkar and VVS Laxman, who had failed in the transition period of 2011-12, and compared their fortunes with Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, who simply have not turned up in the last 2 series for India.

"When India lost 0-8 to England and Australia, Tendulkar averaged 35, Sehwag 19.91 and Laxman 21.06. Only Dravid stood out and got runs in England (he averaged 76.83) but in Australia he too was given a harsh reality check (he averaged 24.25)," Manjrekar said. "Thing is, when it comes to the big players, we as a country are just not able to stay rational. Emotions run high and those in positions to take decisions on these players are influenced by this climate. Cricketing logic goes out of the window and then the selectors hope the player leaves on his own so that they don't look like the villains who brutally ended the career of a great who millions of fans worship. They just fear the backlash," the former batter concluded on the matter.



An Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh combatting avoidable blindness in children.

"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MD. I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautifully facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses, and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"

Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



New Goutami Institute building to be constructed 2024

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In 2018 Prasanth, Sushanth and Nisanth were diagnosed and treated for Prematurity Retinopathy. An illness in premature babies which can cause blindness.

Luckily through GEMROP an initiative funded by EFA to screen premature babies throughout hospitals in India, the triplets were able to receive an expensive surgery free of charge. The boys are now the age of 4 with perfect vision.