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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 20, 2025.

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

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HAS US BECOME A MOST UNRELIABLE NATION?

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AN INDICTMENT OF THE SAD STATE OF NEW YORK GOVERNMENT

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Israel govt approves Gaza ceasefire and hostage accord, due to take effect Sunday

With the accord bitterly opposed by some Israeli cabinet hardliners, reports say 24 ministers in Netanyahu's coalition government voted in favor of the deal while 8 opposed it



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

JANUARY 18, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): Israel's cabinet approved a deal with Palestinian militant group Hamas for a ceasefire and release of hostages in the Gaza Strip, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Saturday, January 17, a day ahead of the agreement's scheduled start, says a Jerusalem/Cairo datelined Reuters report.

In the early hours of Saturday after meeting for more than six hours, the government ratified the agreement that could pave the way for an end to the 15-month-old war in the Palestinian enclave, which Hamas controls. "The Government has approved the framework for the return of the

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INDIA GEARS UP TO CELEBRATE R-DAY

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto to be chief guest at India's 76th Republic Day



Police personnel march past during rehearsal for the Republic Day Parade 2025 amid foggy weather at the Kartavya Path in New Delhi on Thursday, January 16, 2025. Photo: PTI

JANUARY 17, 2025

NEW DELHI (TIP): As India gears up to celebrate its 76th Republic Day on January 26, 2025, the preparations in Delhi for the national festival celebration are in full swing. The event, held annually at Kartavya Path (formerly Rajpath), is a showcase of

India's cultural diversity, military prowess, and technological advancements. The air is filled with the sounds of rehearsals for cultural programs, the fluttering of tricolors, and the anticipation of grand parades. Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto

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Grand spiritual gatherings, unprecedented devotion mark the Mahakumbh at Prayagraj



A group of Sadhus taking a dip at Sangam in Prayagraj

JANUARY 16, 2025

PRAYAGRAJ (TIP): The first three days of the Mahakumbh Mela 2025 have witnessed a massive influx of devotees, spiritual fervor, and meticulous organization in the holy city of Prayagraj. The event, which only occurs

once every twelve years, has already set the stage for a grand display of devotion, with millions making the sacred journey to the banks of the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati rivers.

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President Biden declared that the amendment 'is the law of the land' Photo: White House

Biden Says He Ratified New Constitutional Amendment, Despite Opposition

JANUARY 17, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): President Joe Biden on January 17 announced that the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is the "law of the land," despite the U.S. archivist recently saying the president could not ratify the constitutional amendment.

"It is long past time to recognize the will of the American people," Biden said in a statement.

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COMMENT

America's Oligarchy: A Threat to Democracy

By Indrajit Saluja



In his farewell address, President Joe Biden warned Americans about the growing threat of oligarchy in the United States, signaling the necessity to safeguard the middle class from its clutches. This stark acknowledgment comes amid the increasing concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few billionaires, a trend that has been exacerbated by the rise of populist leaders, particularly Donald Trump. In fact, the idea that America is heading toward an oligarchic state has been articulated by various commentators, including Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja, editor of The Indian Panorama, who in his December 10, 2024 article (<https://www.theindianpanorama.news/opinion/perspective/united-states-on-the-way-to-becoming-an-oligarchic-state/>) highlighted the alarming trajectory of the U.S. toward becoming an oligarchic society.

Over the past few decades, the United States has witnessed a disturbing shift in its political and economic landscape. Once celebrated as the world's foremost democracy, the country now faces the growing dominance of a small, powerful elite whose influence threatens to undermine the democratic foundations that once defined its governance. This concentration of wealth and political power, often referred to as oligarchy, presents a significant challenge to the country's middle class, which has long been the backbone of American society.

A key indicator of the increasing oligarchic tendencies in the U.S. is the dramatic rise in economic inequality. According to a 2023 report by Oxfam, the top 1% of Americans now control approximately 34% of the nation's wealth. In stark contrast, the bottom 50% collectively own just 2.5% of the wealth. This concentration of wealth is not only a result of market forces but also of deliberate policy choices that have disproportionately benefited the ultra-wealthy.

Billionaires like Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Warren Buffett, and others not only dominate the U.S. economy but also exert significant influence over its political machinery. Through their vast financial resources, they are able to fund political campaigns and lobby for policies that protect and expand their wealth. The most glaring example of this is the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which reduced the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%. Proponents argued that the cuts would stimulate economic growth, but an analysis by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy found that the primary beneficiaries were large corporations and the wealthiest Americans. Meanwhile, the middle and lower classes saw little to no tangible benefit.

The pandemic further exacerbated this divide. While millions of Americans lost their jobs, saw their businesses shuttered, and faced economic hardship, U.S. billionaires collectively saw their

wealth increase by more than \$1 trillion between March 2020 and March 2021. This stark contrast underscores the growing divide between the economic elite and the rest of the population, providing clear evidence of an oligarchic power structure in the making.

Economic power alone is not enough to cement oligarchic rule; it must be accompanied by political influence. In the United States, the influence of billionaires over political outcomes has increased dramatically in recent years. The landmark 2010 Supreme Court decision in Citizens United v. FEC opened the floodgates for unlimited corporate and individual spending in elections. This decision allowed the ultra-wealthy to dominate the political process by funding Super PACs and other political action committees.

During the 2020 election cycle, for instance, billionaire Sheldon Adelson and his wife Miriam contributed more than \$218 million to Republican candidates and causes. On the other hand, former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg spent nearly \$1 billion of his own fortune on his presidential campaign and to support Democratic candidates. This concentration of political spending in the hands of a few individuals raises critical questions about the integrity of American democracy. Elected officials may increasingly be more accountable to their deep-pocketed donors than to their constituents.

Moreover, the rise of Super PACs and dark money groups has led to a situation where political campaigns are no longer primarily funded by small donations from ordinary citizens. Instead, the wealthiest Americans can effectively buy influence and shape policy outcomes, undermining the democratic principle of equal representation. As a result, the political system becomes increasingly skewed in favor of the interests of the rich and powerful, contributing to a sense of alienation and disillusionment among the general public.

Another hallmark of an oligarchic system is the revolving door between the public and private sectors, where individuals move seamlessly between powerful positions in government and influential roles in business. This phenomenon ensures that policies remain favorable to corporate interests, reinforcing the power of the economic elite.

For example, the appointment of former Goldman Sachs executives to key positions in government is a prime illustration of this revolving door. These appointments raise concerns about whether public policies are being

shaped to serve the needs of the public or the interests of Wall Street. The influence of business executives in government not only perpetuates oligarchic rule but also erodes trust in public institutions, making it more difficult for ordinary citizens to believe that their government represents their interests.

The election of Donald Trump brought another dimension to the growing oligarchic tendencies in the U.S. His administration was marked by the centralization of power in a small, exclusive circle of friends, family members, and loyalists. These figures, often lacking the necessary qualifications for public office, were nonetheless appointed to high-ranking government positions based on personal loyalty rather than merit.

This pattern of appointing unqualified individuals to key positions undermines public trust in the democratic process and reinforces the idea of an oligarchic system where power is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals and their allies. For example, Trump's appointment of his daughter Ivanka and his son-in-law Jared Kushner to influential positions in his administration exemplified a shift toward a more personalized form of governance, which is reminiscent of oligarchic rule.

The United States has faced oligarchic tendencies in the past, notably during the Gilded Age of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when industrial magnates like John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and J.P. Morgan amassed enormous fortunes and wielded significant political influence. However, the Progressive Era that followed brought important reforms, including antitrust laws, labor protections, and campaign finance regulations, aimed at curbing the excesses of oligarchy.

Unfortunately, many of these safeguards have been eroded in recent years. The weakening of campaign finance laws, the rollback of antitrust enforcement, and the decline of labor unions have all contributed to the resurgence of oligarchic power in the U.S. As a result, the country is now at risk of repeating the mistakes of the past, with wealth and power becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few individuals and corporations.

The United States stands at a crossroads. The concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a wealthy few threatens to undermine the democratic principles upon which the nation was founded. While the challenges are formidable, history offers hope that meaningful reform is possible. By addressing the root causes of oligarchic influence, the United States can reaffirm its commitment to democracy and ensure that power truly resides with the people.

Memorial Service held for India's former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh

RICH TRIBUTES PAID BY A CROSS SECTION OF SOCIETY



Silent Tribute to Dr. Singh

JANUARY 11, 2025

FORDS, NJ (TIP): The Indian Overseas Congress (IOC) USA, in collaboration with its New Jersey Chapter, organized a heartfelt memorial service and tribute on Saturday, January 11, 2025, at Royal Albert's Palace to honor the extraordinary contributions of the late Hon. Dr. Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India and one of the world's most esteemed economists.

The event brought together over 600 distinguished guests, including former New Jersey Governor James E. McGreevey, Senator Owen Henry, leaders of the Indian Overseas Congress, as well as elected officials,



Pradip (Peter) Kothari officially inaugurated the event alongside Mr. Harkesh Thakur, Anil Patel, Mahesh Patel, and Manmit Singh Vasdev, Rajesh Desai, and Harvendar Singh.

community leaders, social activists, and other prominent figures, all united to honor Dr. Singh's extraordinary legacy.

The ceremony began with a warm welcome by Mr. Qayam Masumi and Ms. Arjumand Juveria and Pomposh Sheikh who extended heartfelt greetings to the esteemed attendees.

Mr. Pradip (Peter) Kothari, President of the Indian Overseas Congress New Jersey Chapter, officially inaugurated the event alongside Mr. Harkesh Thakur, Chairman of the New Jersey Chapter. They were joined by IOC NJ Chapter Vice Presidents Anil Patel, Mahesh Patel, and Manmit Singh Vasdev, Treasurer Rajesh Desai, and Public Relations Officer Harvendar Singh.

Mr. Peter Kothari introduced the National President of IOC USA, Mr. Mohinder Singh Gilzian, and Working President, Mr. Pardip Samla. Mohinder Singh delivered a moving speech, highlighting Dr. Singh's achievements during his decade-long tenure as Prime Minister. Quoting Singh's humility and statesmanship, he remarked, "Wo aasman tha, par sir jhuka kar chalta tha" (He was as vast as the sky yet walked with humility).

A special video message from Mr. Sam Pitroda, Global and USA Chairman of the Indian overseas Congress, set the tone for the event, reflecting on Dr. Singh's

visionary leadership and profound impact on India's economic transformation.

Other prominent speakers who shared their personal experiences and insights about Dr. Singh included:

- Mr. Harbachan Singh, Secretary-General of IOC USA, who emphasized the simplicity and integrity of Dr. Singh.
- Former New Jersey Governor James E. McGreevey, who paid homage and highlighted the universal respect Dr. Singh commanded.
- Senator Owen Henry, representing New Jersey's 12th legislative district, who praised Dr. Singh's contributions as a global statesman.
- Councilman Viru Patel, who recounted his experiences, and the profound impact Dr. Singh had on the Indian diaspora.
- Councilman Mr. Rajesh Mehta, a community leader, who emphasized Dr. Singh's enduring legacy and contributions to India's growth.

The event welcomed an impressive lineup of attendees, from different parts of the USA including IOC USA Chapter Presidents, Vice Presidents, and community leaders from across the nation. Notable attendees included:

- John Joseph, Vice President, IOC USA
- Rajiv Gowda, President, Karnataka Chapter
- Gurmeet Singh Gill, President, Punjab Chapter
- Rejeshwar Reddy, President, Telangana Chapter
- Srinivasarao Bhimineni, President, Andhra Pradesh Chapter

These leaders, along with several other eminent personalities, gathered to celebrate Dr. Singh's legacy and his transformative role in shaping modern India.

In a unique segment, a series of video messages from esteemed Indian journalists such as Punya Prason Bajpai, Ashok Vankhede, Vinod Sharma, Deepak Sharma, Abhisar Sharma, and others, were screened, sharing their insights and personal encounters with Dr. Singh.

Arjumand Juveria, Joint Secretary of the IOC, narrated a memorable incident where Dr. Singh responded to a parliamentary debate in poetic style, showcasing his intellect and grace.

The event featured a soulful bhajan program that created a serene and reflective ambiance, enhancing the atmosphere of the proceedings. The musical tribute was performed by a talented group of artists, including Mr. Asif Rajab Ali, Mr. Prakash Parmar, Ms. Rajni Mishra, Mr. Ranjit Shripali, Mr. Bharat Patel, Hardik Patel on keyboard, and Prince Patel. Their devotional songs resonated deeply with the audience, adding a profound spiritual dimension to the event.

The ceremony concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr. Mukesh Kashiwala, accompanied by Mr. Peter Kothari.



Paying Tributes to Dr. Manmohan Singh

Their gratitude extended to all attendees, volunteers, and contributors who made the event a grand success.



Asif Rajab Ali, Mr. Prakash Parmar, Ms. Rajni Mishra, Ranjit Shripali, Bharat Patel, Hardik Patel, and Prince Patel sang a soulful bhajan
Photos : N & M Photography

Mr. Pradip (Peter) Kothari, in his closing remarks, expressed the IOC's commitment to preserving Dr. Singh's legacy, stating, "It is our responsibility to honor and perpetuate the values Dr. Manmohan Singh stood for, as a leader, economist, and human being."

ABOUT INDIAN OVERSEAS CONGRESS USA

The Indian Overseas Congress USA is dedicated to fostering unity among the Indian diaspora, preserving India's rich cultural heritage, and promoting the principles of democracy and inclusivity. The New Jersey Chapter continues to organize meaningful events that honor India's legacy and inspire future generations.

(Based on a press release issued by Pradip (Peter) Kothari)

Indian origin British MP renews UK Parliament call for Bluestar probe

JANUARY 13, 2025

LONDON (TIP): British Sikh Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi has renewed his call in the House of Commons for an independent inquiry into the extent of the involvement of the then Margaret Thatcher-led Conservative government in Operation Bluestar in June 1984.

The MP from Slough in south-east England called on the Labour Party government elected last year to launch the probe after previous Tory governments had "tried to brush the issue under the carpet."

In response to his parliamentary intervention on Thursday, Leader of the Commons Lucy Powell agreed it was a matter of "great importance to the Sikh community in the UK."

"In 1984, the global Sikh community suffered catastrophic collective trauma when the then Indian government

ordered the storming of the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar, which led to devastating destruction and bloodshed, with thousands of innocent people losing their lives," said Dhesi.

"Thirty years later, to our shock, new documents exposed that the Thatcher government had helped their Indian counterpart by providing advice prior to that military operation. In its pursuit for the truth and transparency, the British Sikh community duly launched a campaign for an independent inquiry to establish the extent of that involvement," he said.

"While previous Conservative governments have tried to brush the issue under the carpet, Sikhs expected the new Labour government to establish that promised independent inquiry. When will that be initiated?" he questioned.

The first demand for an independent inquiry arose a few years ago when it emerged that British military advice was given to Indian forces before Operation Bluestar. The then British Prime Minister, David Cameron, had ordered an internal review into this discovery, which led to a statement in Parliament declaring that Britain's role had been purely "advisory" and the Special Air Service advice had "limited impact" on Operation Bluestar.

Dhesi has previously also raised the issue in Parliament and last week Powell said he was "absolutely right" to continue to raise it on behalf of the country's Sikh community.

"We need to get to the bottom of what happened, and I will ensure that the ministers responsible are in touch with him to discuss the matter further," she said.



The British MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi calls on the Labour Party government elected last year to launch a probe into Bluestar operation by government of India, after previous Tory governments had 'tried to brush the issue under the carpet.'

Indian American venture capitalist Nisha Desai sues PayPal for racial discrimination

JANUARY 14, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): Nisha Desai, an Indian American entrepreneur and the founder of Andav Capital, has filed a lawsuit against PayPal, alleging racial discrimination in its minority investment program. The case, brought before the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, challenges the criteria of PayPal's \$530 million initiative launched in 2020 to support minority-owned businesses.

Desai contends that the program unfairly excluded her firm by prioritizing Black and Latino-owned investment funds. She alleges that this exclusion has caused her venture capital firm, which focuses on early-stage tech-enabled companies, to lose millions in potential investments. The lawsuit claims that PayPal's actions violate anti-discrimination laws, including the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1964, as well as New York State and city human rights statutes.

"This case is about fairness and equality," said Desai's legal representatives at Consovoy McCarthy, a firm known for challenging diversity initiatives. Desai argues that the program's focus on certain minority groups, to the exclusion of Asian Americans, represents unlawful racial bias.

Nisha Desai is a seasoned venture capitalist with a career spanning multiple industries. As the founder and General Partner of Andav Capital, her firm has invested in areas such as frictionless commerce, marketplaces, and enterprise software. Before establishing her firm, Desai held leadership roles at Deutsche Bank and



Nisha Desai has filed a lawsuit against PayPal, alleging racial discrimination in its minority investment program

J.P. Morgan, where she managed high-profile projects, including global restructuring programs and crisis management efforts.

Desai's journey began as the daughter of Indian immigrants expelled from Uganda during Idi Amin's regime. She pursued higher education, earning an MBA from The Wharton School and a B.S. with Honors in International Politics from Georgetown University. Desai is also a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Charterholder and has been recognized as one of the "2021 FinTech Women Money Movers."

In addition to her work in venture capital, Desai has contributed to the startup ecosystem as an advisor and mentor with organizations such as Techstars and Google for Startups. Her professional experience includes roles at Google, Sweetgreen, and as staff for civil rights leader Congressman John Lewis.

PayPal's initiative was introduced in the wake of widespread calls for social justice following the death of George Floyd. The program aims to provide funding to minority-owned businesses. While the company has not commented on the pending litigation, the lawsuit has sparked broader discussions about the criteria and execution of corporate diversity programs.

Desai's lawsuit seeks damages and injunctive relief, aiming to challenge what she views as a flawed and discriminatory approach to supporting minority businesses.

The case, which was widely reported by mainstream American media, has drawn attention to the debate on inequities in implementing diversity initiatives.

Indian American Dr. Harsha Sahni loses medical license, faces prison for harboring undocumented women

JANUARY 9, 2025

TRENTON, NJ (TIP): Dr. Harsha Sahni, an Indian American rheumatologist from Colonia, New Jersey, has permanently lost her medical license and is facing a 27-month federal prison sentence for harboring two undocumented women from India as household servants for low wages.

The New Jersey State Board of Medical Examiners announced the revocation of Dr. Sahni's license on Wednesday following her guilty plea earlier this year to charges of conspiracy and filing a false tax return. Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin called Sahni's actions a betrayal of her professional and ethical responsibilities.

Dr. Sahni's license had been suspended since September 2023. The State Board determined that her actions, which included exploiting vulnerable women and evading taxes, demonstrated a severe lack of judgment and moral character.

In a Verified Complaint and other documents filed with the Board, the State alleged that Sahni required Victim 1, who resided in the doctor's home, to work from approximately 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. for roughly \$240 to \$600 a month, which Sahni paid to Victim 1's family in India.

Additionally, the State alleged that Sahni defrauded various entities into providing free and reduced-cost medical care to Victim 1.

In 2016, Sahni falsely claimed that Victim 1 had been abused by her husband to scam a domestic violence charity into providing Victim 1 with free dental treatment. Knowing that Victim 1 could not speak, read, or write English, Sahni allegedly completed the entire charity application form, including those portions which were to be completed and verified by the patient.

Sahni identified herself as a medical professional on the charity's "Advocate



Dr. Harsha Sahni from Colonia, New Jersey, has permanently lost her medical license and is facing a 27-month federal prison sentence for harboring two undocumented women from India as household servants for low wages.

Photo for representation only

Form," listing her medical office's address and phone number, and signing a certification confirming that she believed Victim 1's dental problems were the result of domestic violence. Based upon the application allegedly falsely certified by Sahni, Victim 1 was treated by a volunteer dentist who was not compensated for his work. The value of the donated services was \$6,000.

Sahni allegedly misrepresented Victim 1's income, housing, and employment status, resulting in Victim 1 receiving services for a reduced fee from another charity.

Sahni also allegedly prevented Victim 1 from receiving treatment for a life-threatening brain aneurysm. According to the Verified Complaint, when Victim 1 began developing headaches following an auto accident in 2014, Sahni told the woman that rest was not permitted and if Victim 1 had a headache she should take Tylenol and complete her work. As the headaches worsened, Sahni allegedly told Victim 1 that seeing a doctor would be too expensive and since Victim 1 did not have any paperwork showing she was in the United States legally, she could not be treated.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Sikh couple scales Mt Vinson, places Nishan Sahib at Antarctic peak

'We view mountains as our teachers, imparting invaluable lessons about life': Cheemas

JANUARY 18, 2025

MICHIGAN / CHANDIGARH (TIP):

On January 7, when the clock struck 17.32, Sikh couple Harpreet Singh Cheema and Navneet Kaur Cheema from the US made a history by becoming the first to plant the Nishan Sahib at the summit of Mount Vinson, the highest peak in Antarctica, and the sky echoed with the sound of 'Bole So Nihal, Sat Shri Akal.'

On May 23, 2024, they reached Mount Everest (8848m), the world's highest mountain. Both Harpreet and Navneet had set a goal to complete seven summits of the world together and since then, with great perseverance, they have been working to accomplish the same.

Their journey started when they first climbed 5,895 m high Mt Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain in 2019. After that, they climbed Mt Elbrus in 2022, Mt Aconcagua in 2023, Mt Denali in 2023. Mt Puncak Jaya in Indonesia is the only one left. The couple has a Doaba connection as they got married in Hoshiarpur.

Sharing their experiences with The Tribune they said their passion for mountaineering began as an extension of their love for marathons, cycling and triathlons. "What started as a way to explore new challenges quickly grew into a deep love for the mountains and the tranquility of nature," shared Harpreet who is working as senior vice-president of Strategy for Common Spirit Health, the second largest healthcare



Harpreet Singh Cheema and Navneet Kaur Cheema from the USA on top of Mt Vinson.

system in the US.

His wife, Navneet, is a computer Science Engineer working at Expedia Group (the largest online travel company).

The couple shared that climbing Mount Vinson was a test of endurance, demanding both physical and mental strength. In many ways, it felt like a mirror of Denali, one of the toughest of the seven summits, they said.

"The daily ascent of nearly 3,000 ft, carrying heavy backpacks and sleds

weighing over 50 kg, requires extensive training and resilience. Throughout the challenge, the presence of Nishan Sahib was a constant source of strength," the proud couple told The Tribune.

Reaching the top or achieving something big certainly doesn't come easy. Climbing at such high altitudes carries significant risks, including the potential for injury, frostbite, and other unforeseen dangers. The couple shared their tough and emotional moments as well.

"While we have seen fellow climbers giving up on their summit bids because of severe frostbites, HAPE or HACE, witnessing death and bodies on Mt Everest sent shivers down our spines. Nearing the Hillary Step, we encountered a Kenyan triathlete and strong climber in distress. Sadly, he succumbed to exhaustion shortly after. Witnessing this loss was devastating," they said.

It takes a lot to prepare to achieve such a feat. Their workouts are specifically designed to enhance rock climbing, core strength and hiking endurance.

For the couple, on Mt Everest, the seven weeks spent enduring extreme conditions were a true test of both mental and physical resilience. They faced the harshest environments, dealing with bacterial and viral infections, diarrhea and pneumonia. "At one point, I was on three different antibiotics and paracetamol tablets. Your mind screams to quit, your weakened body craves the comfort of home, but the key is mental strength - to resist the urge to give up, and outlast the weakness. It was Guru Nanak Dev's teachings on resilience and strength that continued to inspire and guide them through every step of this extraordinary journey.

They have two children a 15-year-old daughter, Chaaniyaa Kaur Cheema and a 7-year-old son Huqmaay Singh Cheema. Both children enjoy hiking trips with their parents. (Source: TNS)

Indian Origin Sunita Williams steps out on spacewalk after 7 months in orbit

It was the first spacewalk by NASA astronauts since an aborted one last summer



Sunita Williams

File photo

Indian-origin Sunita Williams, the station's commander, had to tackle some overdue outdoor repair work alongside NASA's Nick Hague. Plans called for Williams to float back out next week with Butch Wilmore.

Williams and Wilmore launched aboard Boeing's new Starliner capsule last June on what should have been a weeklong test flight. But Starliner trouble dragged out their return, and NASA ordered the capsule to come back empty. Then SpaceX delayed the launch of their replacements, meaning the two won't be home until late March or early April-10 months after launching.

It was the first spacewalk by NASA astronauts since an aborted one last summer. US spacewalks were put on hold after water leaked into the airlock from the cooling loop for an astronaut's suit. NASA said the problem had been fixed.

This was the eighth spacewalk for Williams, who has lived on the space station before.

JANUARY 16, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): One of NASA's two stuck astronauts got a much welcomed change of scene on Thursday, January 16, stepping out on her first spacewalk since arriving at the International Space Station more than seven months ago.

Indian American CEO Satya Nadella unveils new 'AI habitat' Microsoft 365 Copilot

JANUARY 15, 2025

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): Microsoft has unveiled new AI-driven features for its Microsoft 365 suite on Wednesday, January 15 aiming to enhance user productivity and streamline workflows. In a LinkedIn post on Jan. 15, CEO Satya Nadella introduced Microsoft 365 Copilot and Copilot Chat, tools designed to integrate advanced AI capabilities directly into popular applications like Word, Excel, and Teams.

"This is a big step forward in making AI accessible to every employee in every business. It's not just about having access to Copilot-it's about unleashing a swarm of intelligent agents to supercharge your productivity and unlock the full ROI of AI," said Nadella in a video introducing Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat.

Nadella emphasized that these innovations are set to "transform work and unleash creativity," highlighting the company's commitment to leveraging AI to improve user experiences.

"We continue to rapidly add new capabilities like Copilot Actions to tackle people's biggest pain points at work," the company said in a statement.



CEO Satya Nadella inaugurates Microsoft 365 Copilot

The Copilot system combines large language models with user data from calendars, emails, and documents, enabling it to generate content, summarize information, and automate repetitive tasks.

Copilot Chat, a conversational AI assistant, allows users to interact with their data more naturally. By inputting commands or questions, users can receive detailed responses, insights, and suggestions, facilitating more efficient decision-making processes.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Centennial Tribute to Raj Kapoor and Dedication to Late Shobhna Patel Draw over 450 Attendees

JANUARY 16, 2025

PRINCETON, NJ (TIP): On Sunday, January 12, 2025, a sold-out audience of more than 450 music enthusiasts gathered at Royal Albert's Palace in Fords, NJ, for a remarkable Centennial Tribute to the legendary Showman of Indian Cinema, Raj Kapoor, and a dedication to Late Shobhna Patel on her first death anniversary. This extraordinary event featured over 25 singers performing a blend of solo and duet renditions, totaling 50 timeless songs, in a captivating four-hour program.

Participants from diverse backgrounds and professions came together to honor Raj Kapoor's iconic contributions to Indian cinema and to share their passion for music. Kapoor, who began acting at the age of 11 and ventured into filmmaking at 24, is celebrated for classics such as Aag, Barsaat, Awara, Shree 420, and his deeply personal masterpiece Mera Naam Joker. His illustrious career earned him the Padma Bhushan in 1971 and the Dada Saheb Phalke Award in 1987.

The event also paid tribute to the late Shobhna Patel, an extraordinary woman who dedicated her life to preserving Indian culture in the United States. As an



Legendary Showman of Indian Cinema Raj Kapoor

organizer of Miss India NJ, Miss Teen NJ, and numerous other cultural celebrations, Patel's legacy remains a cornerstone of cultural heritage preservation in the region. The evening marked her first death anniversary since her passing on January



Late Shobhana Patel



A Section of attendees



Remembering Late Shobhna Patel on her first death anniversary



Organizers and performers

Photos: AUM Events / Jayesh Mehta

12, 2024. Edison Township Mayor Sam Joshi attended the event to show his support for the cause and addressed the audience, highlighting the progress in Edison and the significant contributions made by the Indian community.

The program was hosted by AUM Events and South Asian Culture, Heritage & Arts (SACHA), a non-profit organization led by Jayesh Mehta. Dr. Tushar Patel, a noted community activist and music enthusiast, lent his expertise as Master of Ceremonies, ensuring the event's smooth flow. Renowned singer Sanjay Shah, along with Raj Macwan, Mukesh Kashiwala, and Pinakin Pathak, also contributed their support to this meaningful occasion.

The evening concluded with special recognitions of outstanding performers. Rising star Neel Nadkarni and veteran singer Foram Shah were honored as Best Male and Female Singers, respectively, for their exceptional contributions to the musical tapestry in the USA. This heartfelt tribute underscored the enduring legacy of Raj Kapoor and Shobhna Patel, leaving attendees inspired and immersed in the rich cultural heritage of Indian cinema and traditions.

(Based on a press release by Tushar B Patel)

Battery Dance gets NEA Grant



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
for the ARTS
arts.gov

JANUARY 17, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): Battery Dance announced that it is thrilled to announce a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts supporting the 44th annual Battery Dance Festival, August

12-16, at Rockefeller Park. The Battery Dance Festival is New York City's longest-running free public dance festival, drawing a combined audience of over 12,000 in-person and over 35,000 virtual viewers each year.

Suoizzi Welcomes Ceasefire-Hostage Release Deal

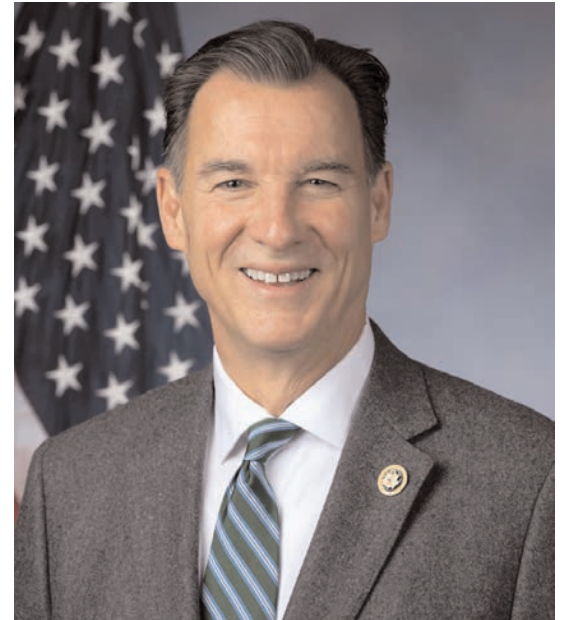
JANUARY 15, 2025
WASHINGTON, D.C.

(TIP): Congressman Tom Suozzi (D - Long Island, Queens) released the following statement regarding the ceasefire-hostage deal between Israel and Hamas:

"Today's news of a six-week ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas is bittersweet. While I am overjoyed about the potential release of some hostages, I am heartbroken that my constituent Omer Neutra, and so many others, will not return home alive. The Neutra family's advocacy helped make this deal possible. May his memory continue to be a blessing.

I applaud President Biden, President-elect Trump, and their teams for working together to finally get a deal done to release hostages from Gaza. Their collaboration put politics aside to save precious lives.

I will continue to advocate for the return of all hostages, and to ensure Gaza is no longer ruled by a terrorist group. Am Yisrael Chai!"



Congressman Tom Suozzi (D - Long Island, Queens) in his statement said: "I applaud President Biden, President-elect Trump, and their teams for working together to finally get a deal done to release hostages from Gaza".

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Turbulence awaits India in Trump zone

There is uncertainty over whether his MAGA push will help Make India Great Again



---> By Sanjaya Baru

"Faced with such transactionalism, it would seem, India has hedged its bets by stabilizing relations with both Russia and China. Some analysts have expressed the hope that Trump may improve relations with Russia and that would in turn enable India to retain that relationship while continuing to deal with China. Whatever the facts, the point is that it will take time before some stability returns to the US-India relationship. Indeed, this would be true even for US relations with key allies and neighbors. Everyone is waiting and watching to see how much of Trumpism is bluff and bluster and how much he means business."

During the US presidential election campaign, the commentariat in India was generally of the opinion that a second Trump presidency would be beneficial for India. Much hope was invested in the so-called personal chemistry and bonhomie between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump. As events have unfolded over the past few weeks, it would appear that New Delhi now awaits Trump a bit nervously.

Much has been made of Trump's early invitation to Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend his inauguration. It took some diplomatic effort on External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's part to ensure that at least he received an invitation. More worrying, however, are Trump's remarks about trade, tariffs and immigration. Along with the rest of the world, India is getting prepared for a period of turbulence in the bilateral relationship as well as in global geopolitics.

Evan Feigenbaum, vice-president of Washington DC-based think tank Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and a former member of the George W Bush administration, warns that Asian governments and markets should be prepared for Trump-induced turbulence. "Geopolitically, Asian governments, firms and especially



It will take time before stability returns to the US-India relationship

markets should prepare to face a whirlwind of strategic turbulence," says Feigenbaum.

Jaishankar's last air dash to Washington helped get the outgoing national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, to New Delhi. That visit sought to inject new energy into a sagging affair. During his proposed visit to Washington DC this weekend, the foreign minister will seek to inject even more energy into the relationship. Such activism draws attention to the concern with anticipated turbulence.

In recent weeks, many within the ruling establishment in India have complained about the anti-India stratagems of the so-called American 'deep state', including influential individuals like George Soros. This kind of talk emanating from within the Sangh Parivar betrays nervousness in New Delhi despite the confidence exuded by diplomats and officials. At least one reason for this would be the uncertainty about the answer to a simple question - will MAGA help MIGA?

Trump's promise for his second presidency is primarily to Make America Great Again (MAGA). Modi's promise to India has been MIGA - Make India Great Again. In the past, especially in the early years of the US-India strategic partnership during the tenures of President George W Bush and Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, the template was that it would be in US interest to help India's rise. It is this view, especially on the part of President Bush and his advisers that facilitated the US-India civil nuclear agreement. This view had to contend with doubts within the American establishment as to where India stood on matters of interest to the US. Doubts

regarding the latter were renewed after India played footsie with Vladimir Putin following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In the United States, three schools of thought contend with each other on the US-India relationship. These can be classified as ideological, realist and transactional. The ideological school, never a decisive voice, has always placed great emphasis on the fact that India is a democracy and that its rise as a plural democracy is in the interests of the US. The West fought Soviet communism during the Cold War and now responds to Chinese authoritarianism. In both battles, the empowerment of a democratic India was viewed as a global public good.

The realist view situates US-India relations within a global balance of power perspective that sees a stronger India as a helpful balancer against an aggressive and assertive China, at least within Asia. The fact is that US-India ties have improved over the past two decades against the backdrop of China's rise.

Hence, both the ideological and the realist views have contributed to an improvement in US-India relations, with the American establishment viewing India's rise as being in its own interest and a positive development in itself. Making India Great Again suited US interests as long as India was viewed as an emerging counterforce to China.

By contrast, the purely transactional view that Trump opted for during his first tenure has insistently asked the question, 'what's in it for me?' Entering his second term Trump now asks that question with renewed vigor and force and the question is asked of the world as a whole, India included.

The rise of transactionalism over realism means India has to show what it

can do to MAGA for the US to do something to MIGA. Even though such transactionalism is associated with the first Trump presidency, it found new takers within the Biden administration after India went along with Russia in the wake of the Ukraine war. A growing number of officials within the Biden administration also became transactional and kept ticking off points as to what India was doing for or against US interests. Expect more of that going forward.

Faced with such transactionalism, it would seem, India has hedged its bets by stabilizing relations with both Russia and China. Some analysts have expressed the hope that Trump may improve relations with Russia and that would in turn enable India to retain that relationship while continuing to deal with China. Whatever the facts, the point is that it will take time before some stability returns to the US-India relationship. Indeed, this would be true even for US relations with key allies and neighbors. Everyone is waiting and watching to see how much of Trumpism is bluff and bluster and how much he means business.

Even as India hopes to stabilize and improve its relationship with the US, it has to be prepared for the anticipated turbulence. After all, Trump's basic and fundamental policy objective will remain America First. The US is determined to retain its dominant global position, secure control over the trans-Atlantic alliance and ensure that allies spend more on their defense so that it can focus its resources on making its own economy more globally competitive and dominant.

(Sanjaya Baru is a political commentator and policy analyst)

File photo

Has US become a most unreliable nation?

Perhaps the middle powers could take a leaf from Qatar's book and play the mediating role to make things happen



---> By TN Ninan

"As these things go, the shift of global power will have to play out before countries agree to talk - after the great powers test the limits of what they can achieve through aggression, or aggressive posturing. That is when a new modus vivendi might be thrashed out. One assumes China will manage to push the US back in the Western Pacific but not push it out altogether, and Russia will get what it seeks: a near-abroad as its zone of influence. Whether this will be a stable arrangement depends on the answers to key questions: Who will come in place of today's rulers; can the great powers agree to live and let live; and what roles the middle powers will play?"

As Donald Trump assumes office again as US President, the world is caught amidst seminal change. Since World War II, even the most powerful countries were willing to limit national sovereignty, in that they agreed for the most part to abide by global rules and cooperative action. Such rules were framed on a wide range of subjects. Not just trade and tariffs, but also nuclear arms, the law of the sea and the sanctity of national borders.

This has changed, for two reasons. The first is the rise of China, and the accompanying shift of global power. China is not a status quo power, so it wants to shake things up and challenge the US. The second is the rise of strongmen as rulers in the great-power countries: Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and now Trump.

These two developments have revived something that had more or less died out after World War II - wars of choice by the great powers, aimed at territorial conquest. The US war on Iraq served advance notice of what was to come. Three years ago, Putin invaded Ukraine. Xi seems to be preparing a Chinese assault on Taiwan. And Trump now threatens the use of force to acquire the Panama Canal and Greenland.

This has been accompanied by other



Great powers have witnessed the rise of strongmen such as Putin and Trump.

File photo

changes. A preference for unilateral action over multilateralism. A diminished role and utility for the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation, and for action to meet climate change targets. Geopolitics was always about power, but increasingly it is about power unrestrained by rules. That's true in the South China Sea, genocide in Gaza, a huge new dam upstream of the Brahmaputra in Tibet and economic sanctions that affect non-combatant third countries.

Underlying these is a change in mindset, from seeing interdependence and trade networks as an advantage to viewing them as vulnerability. So, we see a movement away from more than half a century of trade liberalization. Out, therefore, with globalization, in with 'my country first'. Out with networked economies, in with self-reliance. Out with market efficiency, in with national security. This approach didn't work well the last time it was tried, a century ago, but the lessons of history don't seem to hold much sway.

Perhaps the most important change is that the country that originated much of the rule-making of the past, the United States, is now the most unreliable nation on earth. A Financial Times columnist asked the other day whether America had become a rogue state. No one knows what it will do next, least of all its allies. All of this makes the world a more turbulent place, with many more uncertainties and risks than before.

Laws and agreements reflect pre-existing power structures, and the cooperative agendas that were hammered out since World War II were made possible by the pre-eminence of a Western paradigm. And put in place by the most powerful country to emerge from the war. If that world order, so to

speak, is now breaking down, we have to go back to the root cause: The threat posed to the West by the rise of China, at a speed and on a scale without precedent. The Western response - fueled by perceptions that China has not played by accepted trade rules, systematically worked to de-industrialize the West and also stolen Western technologies - has been trade sanctions, tariffs, technology denials and such.

These may have come too late in the day. China's industrial pre-eminence will remain unchallenged. Last year, it produced 12.6 times as much steel as the US, 22 times as much cement and three times as many cars - with whose electric models it now threatens to overwhelm the Japanese and German car markets. China's shipyards also accounted for over half the ship output. By 2030, China's manufacturing sector is projected to be bigger than that of the entire Western world. It is already far and away the global leader in every sunrise industry.

These strengths are useful only if China can continue to access world markets, which are progressively sought to be denied. Yet China enjoyed a record trade surplus in 2024, approaching a trillion dollars. In several areas, it is now ahead of the West in technology. To be sure, the Chinese economy now faces serious structural problems that could undermine its continued rise. But one could argue that it is dealing with them at least as successfully as Western countries with structural problems, like the UK and Germany, even the US.

The reality to be dealt with is that the more the West feels threatened, the quicker it has abandoned whatever rules it once played by. In the new world, it is every country for itself, and might is right. Indeed, every country's defense budget is being raised, and one must hope

that does not spur wider conflict. Even if this is avoided, the old world isn't coming back. But can the new world agree to new rules?

As these things go, the shift of global power will have to play out before countries agree to talk - after the great powers test the limits of what they can achieve through aggression, or aggressive posturing. That is when a new modus vivendi might be thrashed out. One assumes China will manage to push the US back in the Western Pacific but not push it out altogether, and Russia will get what it seeks: a near-abroad as its zone of influence. Whether this will be a stable arrangement depends on the answers to key questions: Who will come in place of today's rulers; can the great powers agree to live and let live; and what roles the middle powers will play?

Reform of today's global institutions like the Security Council will have to be addressed. Ideally, the Council should abolish the veto and adopt the weighted voting that prevails in the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This should make today's veto countries more responsive to international opinion, and reflect the new global power reality. In trade, plurilateral arrangements are more likely than fully global trading rules. A new global compact on how to help African countries, home to most of the world's poorest, will be essential. None of this will be easy, or the outcomes certain. Perhaps the middle powers could take a leaf from Qatar's book and play the mediating role to make things happen.

T N Ninan is a former editor and chairman of Business Standard and has held several influential positions in journalism and media

AN INDICTMENT OF THE SAD STATE OF NEW YORK GOVERNMENT

"UNLIKE SO MUCH OF TODAY'S POLITICS, THIS INDICTMENT OF THE STATUS QUO ISN'T PARTISAN. AS I SEE IT, THE MOST MEANINGFUL DIVIDE IN NEW YORK IS NOT BETWEEN DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS. IT'S BETWEEN THE INSIDERS WHO THRIVE IN OUR BROKEN SYSTEM AND THE OUTSIDERS WHO ARE FED UP AND KNOW WE MUST FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE IT - FROM ROOT TO BRANCH - SO THAT GOVERNMENT CAN FINALLY ADDRESS OUR MOST ACUTE PROBLEMS."

From 2021 to 2024, I served as the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York. During my tenure, the Southern District brought some of the most significant enforcement actions in America. We fought corruption on Wall Street and in our government. We protected the country from national security threats. We brought sex traffickers to justice. We advanced civil rights.

We dismantled violent gangs. We attacked every level of the fentanyl crisis, from Chinese companies that supply the precursor chemicals, to Mexican cartel leaders who manufacture the drug, to the local dealers who distribute the poison in our communities.

By any measure, the Southern District has been historically productive. We achieved these results by matching innovative approaches with time-tested values. By investigating with urgency. By rewarding creativity and collaboration. By respecting dissent and rejecting partisan bias. By being disciplined with a limited budget - and then returning billions of dollars to the public through our work.

I'm naturally proud of what the Southern District has achieved, but our record of success demonstrates something more important, especially at this moment in history: It shows that government can work. Government can be energetic, efficient and effective. This shouldn't be remarkable. But as every New Yorker knows, excellence in government has become all too rare.

The timing couldn't be worse. Now more than ever, it is essential for state and local governments to put their best foot forward. New York, unfortunately, isn't ready to meet the moment.

Let's review the sad state of things and why it doesn't have to be this way.

The public reporting alone paints a picture of New York City in deep crisis. America's most vital city is



The former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York makes the case for real government reforms. Campaign finance, term limits, and efficiency standards in the government need a thorough review, according to Williams.

being led with a broken ethical compass. All this while New Yorkers deal with a declining quality of life - high housing costs, a too-often-unsafe subway and a general sense of disorder.

Albany is hardly in better shape. Its entrenched culture of corruption, which the Southern District has long sought to address, is only rivaled by its knack for inaction and incrementalism. Albany is wired in every way for insiders, with the predictable result that the problems affecting most New Yorkers are either deprioritized or the responses so diluted by special interests that very little changes. A glaring example is the cost of living. It's so egregiously expensive to live in New York that working people are voting with their feet and fleeing the state altogether.

Lawmakers have belatedly begun to take action, but the problem should never have been allowed to mushroom into a crisis. Similarly, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority - the lifeblood of business and work in greater New York City - has been dysfunctional and wasteful for decades. But because of its byzantine governance structure, accountability is spread so thin that it barely exists. On these problems and others, Albany has been chronically asleep at the switch. And New Yorkers can sense it.

From housing costs to health care, to education, to crime, to transportation, it's difficult to identify a single area where New York's government has clearly succeeded. This pervasive underperformance has led to pervasive public dissatisfaction. The people are in a foul mood, and they have every reason to be. But they also have been conditioned to believe that this is as good as it gets. And that our government is destined to be sclerotic, scandal-plagued and systematically broken.

The truth is that my party - the Democratic Party - has grown too comfortable with the way things are in New York. Reform - the kind of big, structural change necessary to meet our challenges head-on - is rarely pursued with sufficient urgency and imagination. And the measure of success too often appears to be whether we hold power on Election Day instead of whether we wield power on behalf of everyday people. For their part, Republicans - though largely locked out of power in New York City and in Albany - aren't offering anything like the reforms we need.

Unlike so much of today's politics, this indictment of the status quo isn't partisan. As I see it, the most meaningful divide in New York is not between Democrats and Republicans. It's between the insiders who thrive in our broken system and the outsiders who are fed up and know we must fundamentally change it -

from root to branch - so that government can finally address our most acute problems.

For years, reformers have proposed commonsense, structural solutions for returning power to the people and making government more effective. But without elected officials willing to disrupt the status quo, progress has been nonexistent. That needs to change.

Take campaign finance. At a bare minimum, no politician should be permitted to raise money from individuals or entities with business before the state. It reeks of pay-to-play corruption and is offensive to most New Yorkers. And yet the practice has persisted for generations, fattening the coffers of elected officials while feeding the justifiable perception that politicians - and the taxpayer funds they control - are for sale. We also need to establish a truly transformative public financing system for state elections to minimize the toxic influence of special interest money. (The state's new matching funds program is woefully inadequate, a fig leaf meant to resemble reform without actually achieving much of it.) The goal should be empowering anyone with good ideas and leadership chops - teachers, nurses, veterans, homemakers and young people - to run for office, regardless of their access to donors. The ability to raise obscene sums of money for a campaign is precisely the wrong bottleneck to elected office.

Term limits should be enacted. Yes, there are potential drawbacks. But surely, we can agree, as a starting point, that our statewide elected officials shouldn't be able to serve in perpetuity. Four years is a long time. Eight years is an eternity. Who exactly benefits from New York's permanent ruling class? It thwarts generational change and shuts out new ideas. It also promotes timidity - the next election is always just around the corner, after all - when boldness is what the moment requires. Dynamic institutions, including the Southern District, embrace churn and renewal. That's how new thinking emerges, dogma is challenged and vitality is maintained.

The New York government needs a thorough efficiency review. No matter your partisan leanings, it's clear that our government is far too inefficient. New York's taxes are the highest in the country. Yet our roads are among the nation's worst. And, in New York City, 1 in 4 children live in poverty and 1 in 8 public school children are homeless. The government needs to examine whether it's using taxpayer dollars responsibly and whether it can do more to optimize outcomes. There's nothing progressive about bloat, nothing liberal about endless roadblocks that grind infrastructure development to a crawl. It makes the government slow and dysfunctional when it needs it to be nimble and productive. Democrats rightly defend democracy, and to succeed in that effort we need to ensure that government by the people actually serves the people.

Despite our challenges, and there are many, I'm confident we can do better. Change is a choice. New Yorkers can reclaim power and achieve necessary systemic reform if they band together and demand it - loudly enough that politicians finally listen. That kind of transformation is hard, but in New York, it's long overdue.

(Damian Williams served as the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York from 2021 until 2024. Follow him on Bluesky @damian-williams.bsky.social)

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BAPS Hindu Mandir in Los Angeles mobilizes for Los Angeles Wildfires; donates thousands of items across 15 shelters and resource centers

JANUARY 13, 2025

LOS ANGELES, CA (TIP): As the Palisades, Eaton and other fires continue to devastate communities across the Los Angeles area, the BAPS Swaminarayan Hindu Mandir through its charitable arm BAPS Charities, has stepped forward to provide critical relief and recovery support to thousands of displaced families. In collaboration with local authorities, emergency response teams, and mutual aid organizations, BAPS Charities is ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most.

Among the dedicated volunteers leading the charge are Yogin Patel and his wife, Hetal Patel-evacuees from Pasadena themselves. Despite being displaced by the fires, they have channeled their energy into helping others in need.

"We know firsthand how overwhelming it feels to leave everything behind," said Yogin Patel. "That's why we wanted to give back. Volunteering with BAPS and BAPS Charities has allowed us to turn our personal challenge into a way to support others."

Hetal Patel shared, "Even though we are facing uncertainty, it gives us strength to be part of something bigger. Every supply delivered, every person helped, is a step closer to rebuilding our community."

Since the fires erupted, within 24 hours BAPS Charities launched its #SOCALSTRONG relief efforts and deployed teams of volunteers to procure and deploy essential supplies to resource hubs, evacuation centers, and first responders. BAPS Charities also dispatch volunteers to the field to support shelters and organizations in their efforts. To further amplify efforts, BAPS Charities has conducted a "Wildfire Donation & Volunteer Drive" on Saturday, January 11, 2025, at its Los Angeles headquarters at the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Chino Hills, CA. In addition to procuring items, community members donated thousands of high-priority items. Since January 9th, the BAPS Swaminarayan Hindu Mandir through its charitable arm BAPS Charities, has donated the following items to 15 shelters and resource centers in the Los Angeles and Pasadena/Altadena area.



The BAPS Swaminarayan Hindu Mandir through its charitable arm BAPS Charities, has stepped forward to provide critical relief and recovery support to thousands of displaced families affected by Los Angeles Wildfires

"The road to recovery will be long, but standing together as a community makes it possible," said Yogin Patel. "The BAPS Hindu Mandir and BAPS Charities embody that spirit of unity and service, and we're proud to be part of this effort."

Donations were made across 15 sites in the Los Angeles, Pasadena and Altadena area. Donation sites include: It's Bigger Than Us, Pasadena Convention Center, Nativo, The Good Karma Los Angeles, Dena Donation Center, Inner City Struggle, Los Angeles City Council Distribution Center, NoRes Gourmet, Holy Assembly Church, West Angeles Church, Tarzana Fire Station, Snoop Dogg's Snoopy Clothing Store Distribution Center, Los Angeles County Altadena Drive, Friendship Church, Altadena Girls, East Valley YMCA, Westchester Los Angeles City Council Distribution Center.

BAPS Charities urges the community to join the relief efforts by donating or volunteering. Contributions will directly support the purchase of critical supplies and long-term recovery efforts for wildfire victims and first responders.

ITEM	QUANTITY
BABY ESSENTIALS (PACKS OF WIPES, FORMULA, DIAPERS)	5041
BATH & HYGIENE ESSENTIALS (SHAMPOO, SOAP, TOOTHPASTE, TOOTHBRUSHES, WHOLE BODY WIPES, NAIL CUTTERS, DEODORANT, RAZORS, HAIRBRUSHES/COMBS)	11851
BLANKETS & PILLOWS	234
FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS	2794
FIRST AID KITS/SUPPLIES	2483
GATORADE BOTTLES/HYDRATION PACKS	2571
ASSEMBLED CARE KITS (CONTAINING HANDWARMERS, NAIL CUTTER, TOOTHBRUSH, TOOTHPASTE, HYDRATION PACK, WIPES, SHAMPOO, SOAP)	400
MASKS (K95, N95, P100)	9840
NON-PERISHABLE FOODS & PANTRY ESSENTIALS	1709
PACKAGED SNACKS	3477
WATER BOTTLES	9028

Visit bapscharities.org/socalstrong to make a donation or learn more about upcoming initiatives.

ABOUT BAPS CHARITIES LOS ANGELES

BAPS Charities is the charitable arm of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir (LA Hindu Temple) in Chino Hills, CA off the 71 freeway. Working in five key areas, BAPS Charities aims to express a spirit of selfless service through Health Awareness, Educational Services, Humanitarian Relief, Environmental Protection & Preservation, and Community Empowerment. For more about our work in the Los Angeles Area, please visit <https://www.bapscharities.org/usa/losangeles/> or follow us on social media @bapslosangeles

AAPI's Share-the-Warmth Program to Bring Comfort to the Needy

JANUARY 16, 2025

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): "Continuing the tradition of providing comfort and warmth to the needy and the homeless in the United States during this winter season, with the overwhelming support from dozens of Chapters, we at the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) are relaunching the Share-the-Warmth program that will benefit thousands of people across the nation through the generosity of AAPI members," Dr. Satheesh Kathula, President of AAPI said.

For several years, AAPI at the national level and various local Chapters at the state levels have been jointly leading efforts to bring warmth and comfort into the lives of the needy across the United States. Launched in 2019, this noble initiative has now become an annual tradition of giving by AAPI to local communities. AAPI's "Share-The-Warmth" project has donated thousands of blankets to the poor and the needy in several homeless shelters across the nation every year.

"We are immensely happy to state that our AAPI's 'SHARE THE WARMTH' program has been highly successful this year," said Dr. Raghu Lolabhattu, Chair, Share-The-Warmth program. "Holiday season is here again! Time to care and share again!! Last few years



AAPI's "Share-The-Warmth" project has donated thousands of blankets to the poor and the needy in several homeless shelters across the nation every year.

AAPI along with several local chapters and some of our members made tremendous effort and helped numerous needy people by DONATING A BLANKET and proud to say that this was very well received by the targeted communities."

Dr. Malti Mehta, Co-Chair of the Share-the-Warmth program said, "AAPI launched the Share-A-Blanket project in 2019 during the presidency of Dr. Suresh Reddy to bring warmth to the needy around the nation.

Dr. Binod Sinha, founder President of AAPI Chapter in New Jersey organized and conducted it successfully that year, and since then it has been held annually by AAPI and local Chapters of AAPI."

Praising the concerted efforts of several other AAPI Chapters, Dr. Lolabhattu said, "I am happy to share those thousands of homeless and other needy citizens benefited from this program in the past. Hence this year, AAPI as an organization under the leadership of our President Dr. Satheesh Kathula wants to continue this ongoing and much needed tradition."

"We at AAPI are extremely grateful for the opportunities we have been blessed with to serve the communities we live in and work in," said Dr. Sunil Kaza, Chair of AAPI BOT. "As a token of our appreciation and gratitude, we believe we are happy to be able to give back and serve the less fortunate in our society in times of their need."

"This has been a one-of-a-kind experience for the teams of physicians and young volunteers alike who have generously volunteered their time and resources to bring joy to the less fortunate. I want to thank all the State Chapter leaders for their commitment and their enthusiastic participation," said Dr. Amit Chakrabarty, President-Elect of AAPI.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Haven't decided on post-inauguration Chicago raids, Homan says



"Border czar" Tom Homan said the incoming administration is reconsidering plans for an immigration enforcement blitz in Chicago next week after preliminary details leaked.

JANUARY 18, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): President-elect Donald Trump's handpicked "border czar" Tom Homan said in an interview Saturday, January 18, that the incoming administration is reconsidering whether to launch immigration raids in Chicago next week after preliminary details leaked out in news reports, the Washington Post reports.

Homan, the former acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, told The Washington Post that the new administration "hasn't made a decision yet."

"We're looking at this leak and will make a decision based on this leak," Homan said. "It's unfortunate because anyone leaking law enforcement operations puts officers at greater risk."

ICE has been planning a large operation in the Chicago area for next week that would start after Inauguration Day and would bring in additional officers to ramp up arrests, according to two current federal officials and a former official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal law enforcement planning.

Homan said he did not know why Chicago "became a focus of attention" and said the incoming administration's enforcement goals are much broader than one city.

"ICE will start arresting public safety threats and national security threats on day one," he said. "We'll be arresting people across the country, uninhibited by any

prior administration guidelines. Why Chicago was mentioned specifically, I don't know."

"This is nationwide thing," he added. "We're not sweeping neighborhoods. We have a targeted enforcement plan."

The seesawing reports of possible raids in Chicago can stir up fears that advance the administration's broader enforcement goals, even if operations are postponed or shifted to other cities. Homan and other Trump aides say they want immigrants living in the United States illegally to once more fear arrest and choose to leave the country on their own, or "self-deport."

All administrations have made arresting criminals a top priority, and ICE officer teams typically develop target lists of immigrants who have disregarded deportation orders. Officers may also arrest other immigrants who cannot prove they have legal status, a tactic the agency refers to as "collateral arrests." Biden largely banned such arrests in hopes that Congress would pass a law-making undocumented immigrants eligible for citizenship.

Despite Homan's protestations, he and other incoming Trump officials have said repeatedly that they are planning to immediately switch into enforcement mode, and that any of the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States illegally could be a target.

The Wall Street Journal, which was first to report on the possible raid, wrote that Homan said at a holiday party last month in Chicago that the administration would start raids "right here" and threatened to prosecute Mayor Brandon Johnson (D) for harboring undocumented immigrants if he got in the way.

Homan declined to confirm details about a possible deployment in Chicago and said operational plans are left up to regional ICE offices. It would be unusual for an administration to be involved in law enforcement planning operations before the presidential transition is complete, though Homan acknowledged he has engaged in some preliminary discussions about enforcement.

"We just told them: Put your boots on," Homan said.

News of next week's raids leaked after the Chicago City Council decisively rejected an effort to allow city police to cooperate with immigration enforcement. "We intend to stand by and protect Chicago's immigrant communities against threats from ICE," Johnson said Wednesday after the vote.

In a television appearance on Friday, Fox News host Jesse Watters asked Homan if he was "blowing your cover" by asking him about a "big raid" planned for Chicago next week.

"Or do you want people to know?" Watters mused. "Maybe they can self-deport?"

"There's going to be a big raid all across the country. Chicago is just one of many places," Homan said with a short laugh. "ICE is finally going to do their job. We're going to take the handcuffs off of ICE and let them go arrest criminal aliens. That's what's going to happen."

Homan was one of the nation's most strident critics against advertising immigration raids ahead of time under the Trump administration in 2018. He called the Oakland, California, mayor "reckless" and "irresponsible" for alerting city residents that ICE was planning a raid when he was the agency's deputy director.

He noted then that after the report leaked, ICE made 150 arrests but were still missing 864 fugitives.

John Sandweg, an acting director for ICE during the Obama administration, said he was surprised to see discussion of the operations ahead of time.

"Historically this is something we kept very close wraps on for officer safety reasons," he said, adding that fugitives "start hiding. It completely undermines the effectiveness of the operation by telegraphing that you're coming."

He said it is also unusual for ICE to start planning an operation before the new leadership is sworn in. Official policies remain under Biden's control, and he has barred immigration agents from arresting people merely because they are undocumented, preferring to focus on serious offenders and recent border crossers.

"It's incredibly unusual. This isn't like

policymaking or briefings, the normal stuff you see in transition," Sandweg said. "This is an actual operational planning for an operation to take place on the first day of an administration. That's weird."

ICE typically arrests immigrants on civil immigration charges after local police have taken them into custody for a crime. Immigration officials prefer this approach because it gives them a better chance of finding possible threats to public safety, and because it is safer for an officer to arrest someone inside of a jail than out on the street.

Illinois is one of several states that fall under the supervision of ICE's Chicago field office, and the state has passed laws severely restricting police cooperation with ICE.

Chicago City Council members Raymond Lopez and Silvana Tabares, both Democrats, sought to pass a measure Wednesday that would have allowed police to work with ICE to deport some criminals.

Lopez did not respond to an interview request, but in a letter to the Chicago Tribune, he said that helping federal agents detain criminals could help protect other undocumented immigrants from harm.

"Would it not keep thousands more safe from being collateral captures of the Trump administration?" he wrote. "I believe so. So does Homan. That is exactly what he stated to me when we met in December."

Advocates in Chicago said rumors of raids began circulating on social media Wednesday. A Spanish-language post in WhatsApp groups warned that a "trusted source" had confirmed that ICE would be "patrolling" the city from 5 a.m. to 9 a.m. on Inauguration Day and the next day to "detain people heading to work or home."

"We wrestled with whether to share it," said Eréndira Rendón, vice president of immigrant justice for the Resurrection Project, who noticed fewer people out shopping in her neighborhood after the rumors began. "We anticipated Chicago would be a target, but the message is the same: 'You should be as prepared as possible.'" (Source: Washington Post)

H-1B visa revamped from 17 January: Key changes introduced in H-1B program

JANUARY 12, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): On January 17, the long-awaited H-1B Modernization Final Rule from the Department of Homeland Security will go into effect. The purpose of this rule is to speed up the hiring of highly skilled foreign workers and enhance oversight. Workforce demands, program effectiveness, and regulatory clarity for employers managing the visa process are all addressed by the changes.

The revised Form I-129, which becomes required on the day the rule goes into effect, must be used by employers who petition for H-1B workers. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services

(USCIS) website offers a preview of the updated form to help employers adjust to the changes.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE H-1B PROGRAM

Employers in the US are able to hire foreign professionals in specialized fields that demand advanced qualifications through the H-1B program.

Revised Specialty Occupation Criteria: The link between the necessary degree and job responsibilities has been clarified in the updated specialty occupation criteria. Although DHS has changed the definition of specialty

occupation, it still refuses to remove it from the final rule. Among these changes are the definition of "directly related" and the elimination of all references to general degree titles.

Increased Flexibility: New eligibility terms will be advantageous for government and non-profit research organizations that are not subject to the annual cap.

Assistance for F-1 Visa Holders: In order to prevent disruptions in lawful status and employment authorization while a petition for a change of status to H-1B is pending, students who want to switch to H-1B status will have more flexibility by automatically extending



the duration of their F-1 status and any employment authorization until April 1 of the relevant fiscal year.

Processing Efficiency: For holders of previously authorized H-1B visas, USCIS will expedite applications.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian Embassy, in collaboration with AAPI-CF and El Salvador Ministry of Health and Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds Medical camp

OVER 500 RECEIVE FREE HEALTH CHECKUP AND MEDICAL TREATMENT



Dr. Manoj Mohapatra, Ambassador of India to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, in his opening remarks, emphasized India's capability to contribute meaningfully to global healthcare needs.

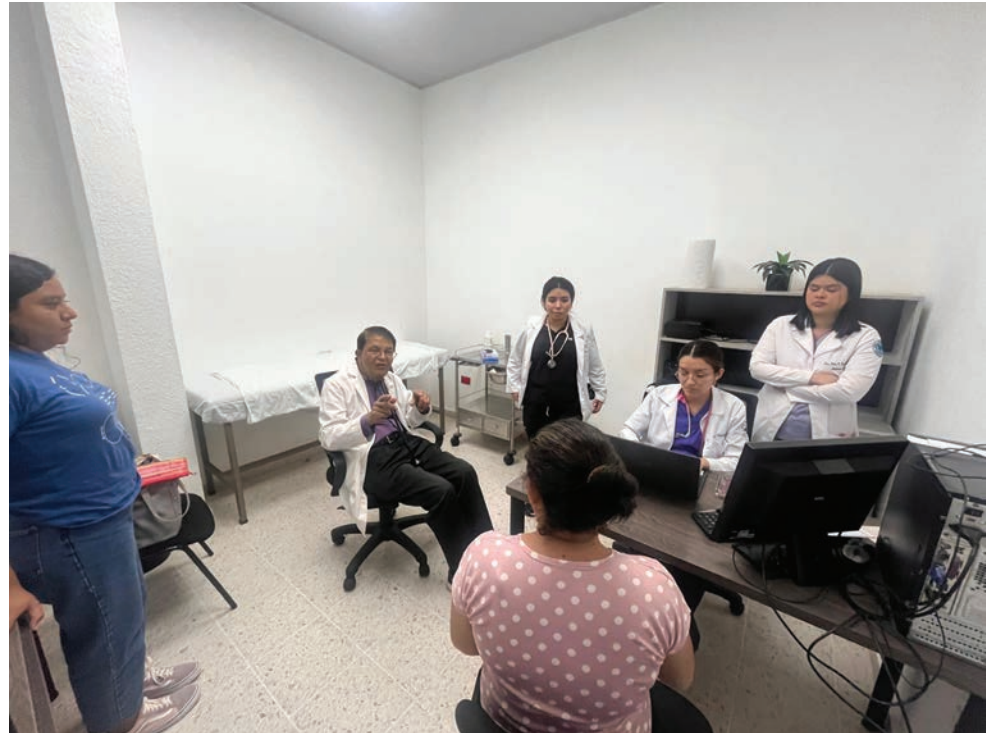
JANUARY 13, 2025

GUATEMALA CITY (TIP): The Embassy of India, in collaboration with the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin Charitable Foundation (AAPI-CF), the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in El Salvador, successfully organized medical camps at Zacamil National Hospital. This event, held on January 10-11, 2025, aimed to provide healthcare services to underserved communities in the region, enhancing access to quality medical consultations, treatments, and essential medicines. The camp was a significant humanitarian initiative, underscoring the strong bilateral relations between India and El Salvador, and was supported by generous donations from Caplin Point Laboratories and AAPI-CF.

Over 500 plus individuals from various localities in and around San Salvador were provided with free medical consultations and treatments. A team of volunteer doctors and healthcare professionals from AAPI conducted medical assessments, diagnosed illnesses, and provided consultations in various specialties, including internal medicine, cardiology, oncology, otorhinolaryngology, surgery, gastroenterology, and gynecology. The generous donation of medicines from Caplin Point Laboratories and AAPI-CF ensured that patients received necessary medications for a range of health issues, from chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes to acute infections and ailments. This donation was instrumental in offering long-term relief to the community. In addition to medical consultations, healthcare professionals from both AAPI and El Salvador engaged with the community to provide valuable health education. Topics included hygiene practices, nutrition, the importance of regular health check-ups, and the prevention of common diseases.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Adriana Mira, who underlined the growing partnership between India and El Salvador, calling it a testament to the shared commitment to improving the lives of the Salvadoran people. She highlighted the importance of collaboration in healthcare as a bridge for stronger bilateral relations. Vice Minister of Health Carlos Gabriel Alvarenga Cardoza also delivered remarks, expressing his excitement for the medical camp and its potential to address critical healthcare needs in the region. He highlighted how India has emerged as a valuable partner for El Salvador, particularly in the healthcare sector, through initiatives like this one.

Dr. Manoj Mohapatra, Ambassador of India, in his opening remarks, emphasized India's capability to contribute meaningfully to global healthcare needs. He added that in the wake of the recent storm that severely impacted El Salvador, the government of India, in a gesture of solidarity and humanitarian support, provided a substantial donation of medicines and medical devices to assist in the ongoing relief and recovery efforts. This timely contribution was aimed at addressing the increased healthcare needs arising from the storm's aftermath, which left many people injured and vulnerable to waterborne diseases and other health issues. The support from India is a testament to the strong bilateral ties between the two nations and underscores India's commitment to standing by El Salvador during times of crisis, ensuring that the affected communities receive the necessary medical care and resources for their recovery. Medical assistance has been instrumental in alleviating the strain on local healthcare facilities, enabling them to provide better care to storm victims and accelerate the recovery process.



Doctors from American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin Charitable Foundation (AAPI-CF) examining the patients at the health camp at Zacamil National Hospital.

Dr. Ajeet Raj Singhvi, representing AAPI-CF, applauded the Salvadoran government for its proactive support in organizing the medical camps. He reaffirmed the foundation's commitment to expanding its outreach in Central America. "This initiative is part of our long-standing mission to bring quality healthcare to those in need. We look forward to continuing this journey in collaboration with India and El Salvador," he said. Dr. Singhvi also highlighted the foundation's previous successes in Guatemala, which served as a model for the current initiative.



M 3: A generous donation of medicines from Caplin Point Laboratories at the health camp. Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Adriana Mira and Vice Minister of Health Mr. Carlos Gabriel Alvarenga Cardoza receiving the medicines in the presence of Dr. Manoj Mohapatra, Ambassador of India

The success of the medical camps at Zacamil National Hospital reflects the power of collaboration between governments, charitable organizations, and local stakeholders in creating a lasting impact on communities. This initiative showcases India's dedication to fostering meaningful relationships with countries in Central America, using healthcare as a cornerstone for building trust and goodwill. It also aligns with India's broader commitment to South-South cooperation, ensuring that developing nations work together to address shared challenges. The Embassy of India and AAPI-CF have expressed their willingness to organize similar initiatives in other parts of El Salvador, further solidifying the partnership between the two nations. (Based on a press release issued by Ramesh Khulbey)



BY
PRABHJOT SINGH

January 16, 2025

Will Canada be represented at Donald Trump's coronation?

OTTAWA (TIP): Notwithstanding recent visits of federal ministers, political delegations, and premiers of the provinces to Mar-a-Lago in Florida, the question of whether Canada would be represented at Donald Trump's coronation on January 20 continues to elude an answer.

Going by the media reports, there is no indication of the US President-elect Donald Trump soliciting the presence of any of the political bigwigs of Canada or Mexico, the two immediate neighbors that he has threatened with extra 25 per cent tariffs over the contagious issue of cross border smuggling of both drugs and illegal aliens.

No official word has been said about whether or not the White House has extended any special invite to Ottawa's Parliament Hill. The silence of the minority Liberal government caught in its political turmoil is understandable.

Justin Trudeau, who has already announced his decision to quit the leadership, was in the United States some days ago to attend the funeral of former President Jimmy Carter. During his two-day visit to Washington, he also met some US business leaders and gave an interview to a news channel.

This was his second visit to the US since November when he accompanied by some of his Cabinet members and other officials visited the US President-elect Donald Trump at his Mar-A-Lago resort in Florida where he was embarrassed when his host mocked for the first time saying Canada would better become 51st state of the United States and Justin Trudeau its Governor. It took more than six weeks for the outgoing Canadian PM to issue a rejoinder to the repeated mocks of Donald



Trump is sworn in as President of America on January 20, 2016

File photo: Wikipedia

Trump. Since the process to elect Justin Trudeau's successor has already started, the country and the rest of the world have to wait till March 9 to know who the next Prime Minister of Canada will be.

When Donald Trump assumes office for his second term in the Oval Office of the White House, Canada will still be under the command of a Prime Minister who has remained a subject of continuous mocking by Trump.

Some senior Canadian ministers, including Foreign Minister, Melanie Joly, and the new Finance Minister, Dominic LeBlanc, also made trips to the US in recent days as they still maintain a role in responding to the tariffs. They have maintained that they will not join the leadership race.

The recent statement of Donald Trump that it was not dependent upon Canada for any of its requirements aggravated the situation. Canada retaliated by quoting recent bilateral trade figures between the

two nations.

Traditionally, the coronation ceremony of the President is treated as a "domestic" event with little or no participation of heads of friendly nations. But recently, invites were sent to some select heads of state. This time some heads, including those of Argentina and Italy besides China, were stated to be on the official invite list. Canada and Mexico, the two largest trade partners of the US, did not figure on that list. From the Canadian side, the most talked about visit has been of the Alberta Premier Danielle Smith. She visited Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida on January 11, as well as at his golf club the following day.

Smith, who appears with Trump and Canadian entrepreneur and "Shark Tank" investor Kevin O'Leary in photos she posted on social media from the visit on Jan. 12, said she talked about the importance of the Canadian energy sector to the United States.

"We had a friendly and constructive conversation during which I emphasized the mutual importance of the US-Canadian energy relationship, and specifically, how hundreds of thousands of American jobs are supported by energy exports from Alberta," she said.

She said she also met with "key allies" of the incoming Trump administration during her visit, adding that she was "encouraged to hear their support for a strong energy and security relationship with Canada." Smith said that both countries need to maintain their independence while strengthening their partnership. Trump has said on different occasions that he wishes for Canada to become part of the United States, and that he may use "economic force" to merge Canada with his country.

"The United States and Canada are both proud and independent nations with one of the most important security alliances on earth and the largest economic partnership in history," Smith said. "We need to preserve our independence while we grow this critical partnership for the benefit of Canadians and Americans for generations to come."

After giving a miss to the President's coronation, a delegation of Canadian premiers will visit Washington on February 12 to discuss the issue of trade.

In response to the tariffs, Ottawa has announced a \$1.3 billion plan to strengthen border security, which includes creating special task forces, and deploying more helicopters and drones and other tools. Finance Minister and former Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, who still maintains a role in responding to the tariffs, has said he will not join the leadership race to focus on his role, as has Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly.

January 15, 2025

TORONTO (TIP): The threatened tariff stand-off between Canada and the US notwithstanding, premiers of various Canadian provinces will give it a try to keep the trade relations between two neighbors and traditional partners alive.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, as Chair of the Council of the Federation, will lead a joint mission of Canada's Premiers to Washington, D.C. on February 12.

Doug Ford, who was the first to react to the US President-elect Donald Trump's proclamation that the first thing he would do after assuming power for his second term in the Oval Office of White House would be to levy 25 per cent tariff on all imports from both Canada and Mexico. Doug Ford had threatened to snap power supply to the US. He, however, relented and started advocating for sustaining the strong bilateral trade relations with the US.

The Canadian Premiers will meet with key members of the new Administration, Congress, and business leaders to advocate for maintaining

Canadian Premiers to visit US on February 12



A file photo of Canadian Premiers.

strong Canada-U.S. relations by addressing shared issues such as jobs and the economy, energy, critical mineral supply chains, border security and immigration.

The U.S. sells more goods and services to Canada than it sells to China, Japan, and Germany combined. Our economic partnership is worth more than a trillion dollars annually and supports millions of jobs on both sides of the border.

"Americans and Canadians are like family. We've been allies for generations," said Premier Doug Ford, Chair of the Council of the Federation. "By working together, the U.S. and Canada have an

enormous opportunity to grow our economies and bring good jobs back home on both sides of the border. Now more than ever, Canada's Premiers are best positioned to carry this message and work alongside U.S. lawmakers and business leaders."

In addition to the joint mission on February 12, some Premiers will also travel to Washington during the annual meeting of the National Governors Association from February 20 to 22.

The Council of the Federation comprises all 13 provincial and territorial Premiers. It enables Premiers to work collaboratively, form closer ties,

foster constructive relationships among governments, and show leadership on important issues that matter to Canadians.

(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. He can be reached at prabhjot416@gmail.com)

Pannun inquiry report 'positive first step', but process not done yet: US envoy

An Indian inquiry committee's report on the foiled plot to kill US-based Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun is a "very positive first step" but doesn't mark a "closed chapter" for both countries as action remains to be taken, outgoing US ambassador Eric Garcetti said on Thursday, January 16.

Garcetti, a political appointee of US President Joe Biden who is set to step down this week, said in an interview that both countries have a deeper understanding of each other's perspective on key matters such as New Delhi's concerns about the activities of pro-Khalistan elements and Washington's call for accountability and systemic reforms in the wake of the so-called "murder-for-hire" plot.

He said the US remains open to a positive role in helping India and Canada address the fallout of the killing of another Khalistani separatist, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, but made it clear that "a lot of people overplay" the cooperation between the US and Canada as members of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance.

Asked specifically if the Indian high-powered enquiry committee's report, announced by the Union home ministry on Wednesday, marked a closed chapter as far as the foiled plot is concerned, Garcetti replied: "I see it as a very positive step. It's the delivery of what India promised – accountability and systemic reforms. We haven't seen the report yet and obviously there's a case still going on in New York."

Noting that the US and India have covered a lot of ground in the past few years in appreciating each other's concerns and sensitivities, he said, "When it comes to threats to Indian diplomats like in San Francisco and things like that, there's really been growth and understanding of the perspective of India and vice versa, when we've been very clear about lines that cannot be crossed."

"India has taken that seriously and governments make mistakes. People should be held accountable, and this is a very positive first step."

He pointed out the legal case in the US on the foiled plot "has its own trajectory" but the Indian enquiry committee's report "opens up the path". He added, "It's not a closed chapter for India or for America, because the report itself says [that it is] recommending action." This action will have to be taken and US "prosecutors will have to win victories", he said.

The Union home ministry said on Wednesday that the enquiry committee set up by the government in November 2023 to investigate allegations about the plot to kill Pannun on American soil has recommended legal action against an individual whose "criminal links and antecedents" came to light earlier.

Mulling data, renewable energy corridors with India, says Singapore Prez

NEW FELHI (TIP)

Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam on Thursday, January 16, announced that India and Singapore are exploring the creation of a data corridor between Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) and Singapore. The proposed corridor aims to facilitate the secure and trusted exchange of data between financial institutions in both countries.

Speaking to mediapersons at Rashtrapati Bhavan, alongside President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shanmugaratnam said, "We are exploring the possibility of a data corridor between GIFT City and Singapore so that our financial institutions can exchange data on a safe and trusted basis."

He also highlighted ongoing efforts to establish a renewable energy corridor between India and Singapore, expressing optimism about the deepening partnership between the two nations. "We are natural partners," he remarked.

Shanmugaratnam emphasised the Indian Government's focus on the eastern states. Recalling his earlier visit to Assam at the suggestion of Prime Minister Modi, he said, "We are doing some things in Assam."

During his current state visit, he plans to visit Odisha, which he described as a state of special significance among the Eastern states. "India has high ambition for Odisha, and indeed it holds great promise," he noted.



PM Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu with Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and wife Jane Yumiko in Delhi.

Earlier, President Murmu held extensive discussions with Shanmugaratnam. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the talks focused on avenues to further strengthen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Singapore.

Meanwhile, Murmu and Shanmugaratnam jointly unveiled a commemorative logo to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Singapore. The logo features elements symbolising the deep

ties between the two nations, including colours from the Indian and Singaporean national flags, the lotus (India's national flower) and the orchid (Singapore's national flower).

It also prominently displays the number 60, celebrating the milestone anniversary. The logo carries the text: 'India Singapore 60 years of diplomatic relations.' According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the design reflects the enduring partnership and shared aspirations of the two countries.

PM approves 8th pay commission for central government employees

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced on Thursday, January 16, that the prime minister has approved the formation of the 8th Pay Commission for central government employees.

The decision was shared by the minister during a press briefing to announce cabinet decisions in Delhi.

The minister highlighted that since India's independence in 1947, there have been seven pay commissions formed to revise the salaries and benefits of central government employees.

He said "For your awareness, our Prime Minister has approved the establishment of the 8th Central Pay Commission for all central government employees".

He also emphasized the commitment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to maintain a regular schedule for the establishment of pay commissions. The last such commission, the 7th Central Pay Commission, was initiated in 2016



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw

and is set to complete its term in 2026.

He added "Following the commitment made by the Prime Minister to establish pay commissions in a regular rhythm, the 7th Pay Commission started in 2016, and its term will be completed in 2026".

Vaishnaw stated that setting up the 8th Central Pay Commission well before 2025 will ensure sufficient time to review and finalize its recommendations. This proactive

approach will enable the government to implement the proposed changes effectively before the 7th Pay Commission's tenure ends.

The pay commission plays a crucial role in determining salary structures, allowances, and other benefits for government employees, and its recommendations significantly impact millions of workers and pensioners across the country.

The announcement of the 8th Pay Commission highlights that the government is committed to address the financial and professional needs of its workforce.

This announcement brings hope to central government employees who rely on pay commissions to ensure fair and timely revisions to their compensation.

With the 8th Pay Commission set to begin its work soon, employees can expect a thorough review of their pay scales and benefits in line with evolving economic conditions and government priorities.

Source: ANI

ISRO docks 2 satellites in space as India joins elite 4-nation club

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Setting at rest the uncertainties resulting from multiple deferments, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Thursday, January 16, successfully carried out the docking of two satellites in space, making India the fourth country in the world after the US, Russia and China to accomplish the feat.

In space, docking technology is essential when multiple rocket launches are required to achieve common mission objectives. The in-space docking experiment is crucial for the smooth conduct of the country's ambitious future missions, including Chandrayaan-4, Gaganyaan, setting up a space station and landing an astronaut on the moon.

Last October, the government had announced that India would have by 2035 its own space station, "Bharatiya Antariksh Station".

"Spacecraft docking successfully completed! A historic moment," ISRO said in a post on X. "Let's walk through the SpaDeX docking process: Manoeuvre from 15 metres to 3 metres hold point completed. Docking initiated with precision, leading to successful spacecraft capture. Retraction completed smoothly, followed by rigidisation for stability. Docking successfully completed," the post added.

After docking, the control of two satellites—Chaser and Target—as a single object was successful, ISRO said, adding that undocking and power transfer from one satellite to the other would follow in the coming days.

"India's space programme achieves historic milestone with the successful docking of the two satellites launched under Space docking experiment,



SpaDeX!" President Droupadi Murmu wrote on X, congratulating ISRO.

"Congratulations to our scientists at ISRO and the entire space fraternity for the successful demonstration of space docking of satellites. It is a significant stepping stone for India's ambitious space missions in the years to come," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a message.

Jitendra Singh, MoS, Science and Technology, said the feat was all the more memorable as the technology used was "indigenous Bharatiya Docking System".

V Narayanan, ISRO chief, congratulated the team. The two satellites, each weighing 220 kg, were originally supposed to dock on January 7. The experiment was deferred to January 9 after scientists felt the process required further validation

through ground simulations in view of an abort scenario identified by them.

A day ahead of the docking planned on January 9, the space agency initiated the drift on Spacecraft A (Chaser) to move closer to the other spacecraft (Target) from 500 metres to 225 metres. But the operation was postponed as the drift was found to be more than expected.

On January 12, the two satellites were brought as close as 3 metres from each other, but then moved away following signal issues. The two satellites were put in space in a low earth orbit by a PSLV rocket on December 30.

With the successful docking, ISRO has achieved the primary objective of the mission. Undocking and separation of the two satellites will follow. The satellites will be deployed for the operation of their respective payloads.

Farmers to make 4th attempt to reach Delhi from Shambhu border on January 21

A group of 101 farmers will make a fourth attempt to reach Delhi by crossing the Shambhu (Punjab-Haryana) border on January 21 to press for their demands, including a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP) on crops, farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher said on Thursday, January 16.

The "jatha" (group) of 101 farmers, termed as Marjeevdas (those ready to sacrifice their lives), had earlier made three attempts to reach Delhi on foot on December 6, 8 and 14, last year, but their attempts were thwarted by the Haryana Police and paramilitary forces, who used tear gas shells, water cannons and pepper sprays to stop them from entering the state. Nearly 50 farmers were left injured in these attempts.

Unlike the earlier three attempts, this 'Delhi Chalo' march has been announced jointly by the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political).

KMM convener Sarwan Singh Pandher said, "I don't think the Union government is in any mood to hold talks with us. Our group of 101 Marjeevdas will make another attempt to reach Delhi on January 21. It is now up to the government to either fulfil our demands or kill us."

Announcing the action plan, Pandher said farmer leaders Manjit Singh Rai and Balwant Singh Behramke would lead the group.

"We have been told, in the past, by BJP leaders that we can reach Delhi on foot (not on tractors). However, we were not allowed to reach Delhi by the Haryana Police and Centre even when we were marching peacefully. I request Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow peacefully protesting farmers to reach Delhi, and let us continue our demand for a legal guarantee on MSP," said Pandher.

The fresh move of protesting farmers came a day after a group of 111 farmers began a fast-unto-death on the Haryana side of the border near Khanauri in solidarity with farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, whose fast-unto-death entered its 52nd day on Thursday.

The new 'jatha' sat on the Haryana side of the border -- Dallewal has been sitting on a hunger strike since November 26 last year at the Khanauri border point on the Punjab side.

The Haryana Police has enhanced security on its side of the border near Khanauri. It has already imposed Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, banning gatherings of five or more people.

Rahul Gandhi stirs up storm with 'fighting Indian state' remark, faces BJP fire

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi stirred a hornet's nest on Wednesday, Jan 15, after claiming that the Congress was not only fighting the BJP and its ideological mentor RSS, but the "Indian state" as well. Addressing party workers after the inauguration of the new Congress headquarters, Gandhi went all guns blazing in attacking the BJP and RSS, accusing them of capturing all institutions of the country.

"Do not think that we are fighting a fair fight. There is no fairness in this. If you believe that we are fighting a political organisation called the BJP or RSS, you have not understood what is going on. The BJP and the RSS have



captured every single institution of our country. We are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian State itself," Gandhi asserted.

Gandhi also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he wanted to "crush the voice" of the country by gagging the Dalits, minorities, backward castes and tribals.

The BJP was quick to pounce upon the Congress MP's remarks, saying that the "ugly truth" of the party "stands exposed by their own leader".

Firing the first salvo, Union Minister and BJP chief JP Nadda said Gandhi and his "ecosystem" have close links with "urban naxals" and the "Deep State" who want to "defame, demean and discredit" India.

"Hidden no more, Congress's ugly truth now stands exposed by their own leader. I 'compliment' Rahul Gandhi for saying clearly what the nation knows - that he is fighting the Indian state! His repeated actions have also strengthened this belief. Everything he has done or said has been in the direction of breaking India and dividing our society," Nadda tweeted.

India in history this Week

JANUARY 17 TO JANUARY 23

17 JANUARY

2008 The Central Government approved a scheme of Rs 1800 crore for providing jobs to the disabled.

2009 Randhir Singh, the general secretary of the Indian Olympic Association, resigned from his post.

2010 The Supreme Court of India has given a proactive definition of the right to self-defense in the event of unlawful assault, saying that people who follow the law do not have to be cowardly. Its two-member bench set a 10-point directive on the right to self-defense, stating that a person cannot be criminalized under these circumstances, even if he had caused the attacker's death.

18 JANUARY



1996 Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister NT Rama Rao died on 18 January 1996.

1955 On this day in 1955, the famous Urdu writer and poet Sadat Hasan Manto said goodbye to this world.

1991 After 62 years of business, in 1991, today the Eastern airline was closed for economic reasons.

2003 Famous Hindi writer and poet Harivansh Rai Bachchan died in 2003.

1896 The first demonstration of the 'X-ray machine' was done in 1896.

1930 In 1930 Rabindranath Tagore visited the Sabarmati Ashram.

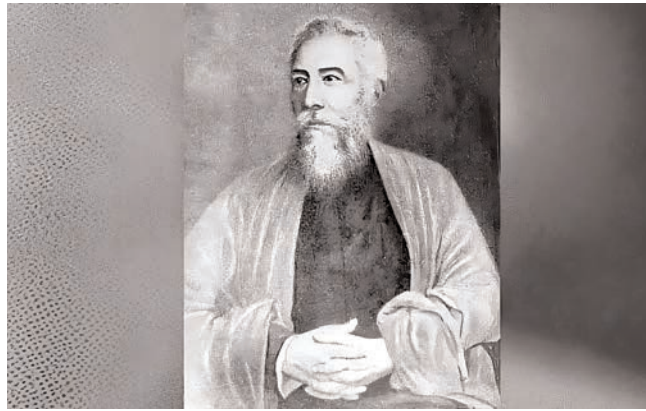


1997 In 1997, Nafisa Joseph became Miss India.



1995 In 1995, the domain of Yahoo.com was created on this day.

19 JANUARY



1905 Devendranath Tagore Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's father and Indian thinker, died.

1990 Rajneesh, popularly known as Osho, died in Pune.



1966 On this day, the Congress Party chose Indira Gandhi as its leader for the post of Prime Minister of India. Indira Gandhi was the only daughter of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.



20 JANUARY

Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the greatest activist of Pashtun independence and called Frontier Gandhi, passed away.



1817 Hindu college was established in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

1945 National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, who is considered the master mind of surgical strike, was born.



21 JANUARY

2008 India successfully launched an spy satellite of Israel and installed it in Polar Orbit.

1958 Copyright Act enacted.

1945 Renowned lawyer and freedom fighter Ras Bihari Bose died.



22 JANUARY

1965 Steel factory started in Durgapur, West Bengal.

1966 Mughal emperor Shah Jahan died.

1963 The National Library for the Blind was established in 1963 in Dehradun.

23 JANUARY



1897 India's freedom fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was born in Cuttack, Odisha.

1926 Bal Thackeray, Indian politician and founder of Shiv Sena was born.

1966 Indira Gandhi became the third Prime Minister of India.

1977 Janata Party was formed.

2009 The ban on smoking scenes in film and television programs is over.



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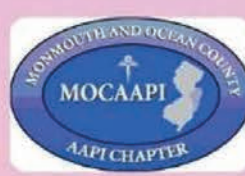


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FROM BROADWAY TO NJPAC. THAT VOICE. THAT POWER. THAT PERSONALITY! 3X TONY AWARD WINNER



Patti LuPone

Photo Credit : njpac.org

By Mabel Pais

You guessed it!

PATTI LUPONE brings her latest show, 'A Life In Notes' to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) on Sunday, February 2, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.

In her new concert, 'Patti LuPone: A Life in Notes,' the three-time Tony Award winner performs an array of songs that are touchstones and reflections on her life growing up in America. The songs range from her youth during the burgeoning rock 'n' roll scene of the 1950s, to coming of age in the politically and socially turbulent '60s, to eventually achieving success with both career and family.

THEATER

She is a three-time Tony Award winner for her performances as Joanne in Marianne Elliott's award-winning production of the Stephen Sondheim George Furth musical 'Company,' Madame Rose in the most recent Broadway revival of the Jule Styne-Stephen Sondheim-Arthur Laurents classic 'Gypsy' and the title role in the original Broadway production of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's 'Evita.'

Her previous New York stage credits include War Paint (Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle nominations); Shows for Days; The Seven Deadly Sins (New York City Ballet); Company (New York Philharmonic); Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown (Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle nominations); Sweeney Todd (Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle nominations); Noises Off; Master Class; Anything Goes (Tony nomination and Drama Desk Award); Oliver!; Accidental Death of an Anarchist; and The Robber Bridegroom (Tony and Drama Desk nominations). Ms. LuPone has also enjoyed a long association with David Mamet, starring on Broadway in productions of his plays The Anarchist, The Old Neighborhood, and The Water Engine; off-Broadway productions of Edmond and The Woods; as well as his films Heist and State and Main.

In London, she starred on the West End in Company (Olivier Award and WhatsOnStage awards); Master Class; and created the role of Norma Desmond in Sunset Boulevard (Olivier nomination). She was the first American artist to win an Olivier Award for her performances in The Acting Company's production of The Cradle Will Rock and as Fantine-a role she also created-in the Royal Shakespeare Company and subsequent West End world premiere production of Les Misérables.

Ms. LuPone made her debut with the LA Opera in Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny before returning to appear in the company's production of The

Ghost of Versailles. Her other operatic credits include Jake Heggie's To Hell and Back for San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and title role in Regina at the Kennedy Center.

A graduate of the first class of the Drama Division of New York's Juilliard School and a founding member of John Houseman's 'The Acting Company.'

FILM

Her roles in film are in Ari Aster's 'Beau is Afraid' opposite Joaquin Phoenix; 'The School for Good and Evil' (Netflix); 'Last Christmas'; 'The Comedian'; 'Union Square'; 'Parker'; 'City by the Sea'; 'Just Looking'; 'Summer of Sam'; 'The 24 Hour Woman'; 'Family Prayers'; 'Driving Miss Daisy'; 'Witness.'

TELEVISION/STREAMING



Patti LuPone

Photo Credit : njpac.org

On Television and Streaming platforms, she has appeared in 'Hollywood' (Netflix); 'Pose'; 'Crazy Ex-Girlfriend'; 'Penny Dreadful' (Critics Choice nomination); 'Girls'; 'American Horror Story: Coven &

NYC'; 'Law & Order'; 'SVU'; 'Glee'; '30 Rock'; PBS Great Performances: 'The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny' (Grammy Award for the broadcast's recording); 'Ugly Betty'; 'Will & Grace' (as herself); PBS Great Performances 'Candide'; 'Oz'; the TNT film 'Monday Night Mayhem'; PBS' Evening At The Pops' with John Williams and 'Yo Yo Ma'; 'Falcone'; 'Bonanno: A Godfather's Story'; 'Frasier' (1998 Emmy nomination); 'Law & Order'; 'An Evening with Patti LuPone' (PBS), the NBC movie 'Her Last Chance,' Showtime's 'The Song Spinner' (Daytime Emmy nomination, Best Actress); 'The Water Engine'; 'L.B.J.'; AMC's Remember 'WENN'; and ABC's 'Life Goes On.'

RECORDINGS

Recordings include 'A Life in Notes,' 'Don't Monkey with Broadway,' 'Far Away Places,' 'Patti LuPone at Les Mouches,' 'The Lady with the Torch,' and many original cast recordings including, most recently: the West End production of Company, 'War Paint,' 'Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown,' 'Gypsy,' and 'Sweeney Todd' (both the 2006 Broadway revival cast recording and 2000 live performance recording on NY Philharmonic's Special Editions Label).

AUTHOR

She is the author of the NY Times best-selling memoir 'Patti LuPone: A Memoir.'

TICKETS

To experience Patti LuPone live at NJPAC, visit njpac.org or the NJPAC Box Office or call 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

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

SUNDANCE BRINGS US ITS FORTY FIRST EDITION

By Mabel Pais

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Director/Screenwriter ROHAN PARASHURAM KANAWADE's 'SABAR BONDA' (Cactus Pears) with Producers NEERAJ CHURI, MOHAMED KHAKI, KAUSHIK RAY, HAREESH REDDYPALLI, NAREN CHANDAVARKAR, SIDHARTH MEER

with Actors BHUSHAAN MANOJ, SURAAJ SUMAN, JAYSHRI JAGTAP

And many more

The SUNDANCE INSTITUTE has the list of 87 feature films and six episodic projects selected for the 2025 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL presenting its 41st year a revealing lineup of bold independent storytelling. The Festival (festival.sundance.org) will take place from January 23-February 2, 2025, in person in Park City and Salt Lake City, Utah, with all of the competition films and more available online from January 30-February 2, 2025, for audiences across the country.

Single Film Tickets (festival.sundance.org/tickets/in-person) for in-person and online screenings are on sale from January 16 at 10 a.m. MT. Members (sundance.org/support) have access to a Single Film Ticket pre-sale, and limited quantities of passes and packages



Bubble and Squeak remain on sale (sundance.org/support). Visit the Sundance Film Festival site for more information @ festival.sundance.org.

The 2025 Festival will commence on Thursday, January 23, with premieres in Park City every day through the end of Tuesday, January 28. Additional showings will take place in Park City and Salt Lake City throughout the Festival until Sunday, February 2. Over 11 days, world debuts of projects across program categories will highlight fresh voices, entertaining stories, and groundbreaking works.

Beginning January 30, more than half the feature program will be available online for audiences nationwide to watch from home festival.sundance.org. The curated online program will include all

Credit: festival.sundance.org competition titles (U.S. Dramatic, U.S. Documentary, World Cinema Dramatic, World Cinema Documentary, and NEXT presented by Adobe), as well as additional selections from the feature, episodic, and Short Film Program presented by Vimeo.

The film lineup includes 87 feature-length films representing 33 countries and territories. The 2025 program is composed of 36 of 87 (41%) feature film directors who are first-time feature filmmakers. Ten of the feature films and projects selected were supported by Sundance Institute in development through direct granting or residency labs. This year the film and episodic slate includes 89 (or 96%) world premieres.

GALA AND HONOREES

The annual fundraising gala,

Celebrating Sundance Institute (sundance.org/blogs/michelle-satterto-be-honored-at-2025-sundance-film-festival-gala-celebrating-sundance-institute-presented-by-google-tv) presented by Google TV and honoring artists and art supporters, will take place on Friday, January 24, at the Grand Hyatt Deer Valley in Utah. The Sundance Film Festival Awards ceremony will be held on Friday, January 31, in Park City. In addition to the feature film and episodic lineup, the 2025 Festival will offer short film programs, compelling conversations and talks, and special events. Festival updates will be available throughout January.

The winner of the 2025 Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize, an annual juried award granted to an artist with the most outstanding depiction of science and technology in a feature-length film. The prize has gone to 'SALLY,' screening in the Premieres category.

The 2025 Sundance Film Festival program was curated from 15,775 submissions from 156 countries or territories, including 4,138 feature-length films. Of these feature film submissions, 1,591 were from the U.S. and 2,547 were international. The six episodic projects were selected from 484 submissions. Director demographics are available in an editor's note below.

For the complete Film & Event lineup, visit festival.sundance.org

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

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Ranbir Kapoor's Dhoom 4 looks for an antagonist in South

Actor Ranbir Kapoor has been locked in Dhoom 4, the fourth film in the YRF franchise. The film is set to go on floors next year in April, as per sources. The actor will wrap up his two films, Love and War and Ramayan, before hopping onto his next franchise.

A source now informs us that the makers are currently looking to cast a popular South actor as the main villain opposite Ranbir in the franchise. This will be first film in the Dhoom franchise to have a villain from the South film industry. The heist franchise earlier had John Abraham, Hrithik Roshan and Aamir Khan respectively as the main villain.

The name for the main antagonist has not been locked yet but talks are on with several actors, who have shown a keen interest in being a part of the franchise.

Meanwhile, in March 2026, Ranbir will be seen alongside Alia Bhatt and Vicky Kaushal in Love & War, a Sanjay Leela Bhansali-directed love triangle set against a war backdrop. Following that, Kapoor will take on the role of Lord Rama in Nitesh Tiwari's epic Ramayan, with Part 1 scheduled for Diwali 2026 and Part 2 for Diwali 2027. Additionally, he is preparing for Animal Park, which is expected to release between 2028 and 2029.

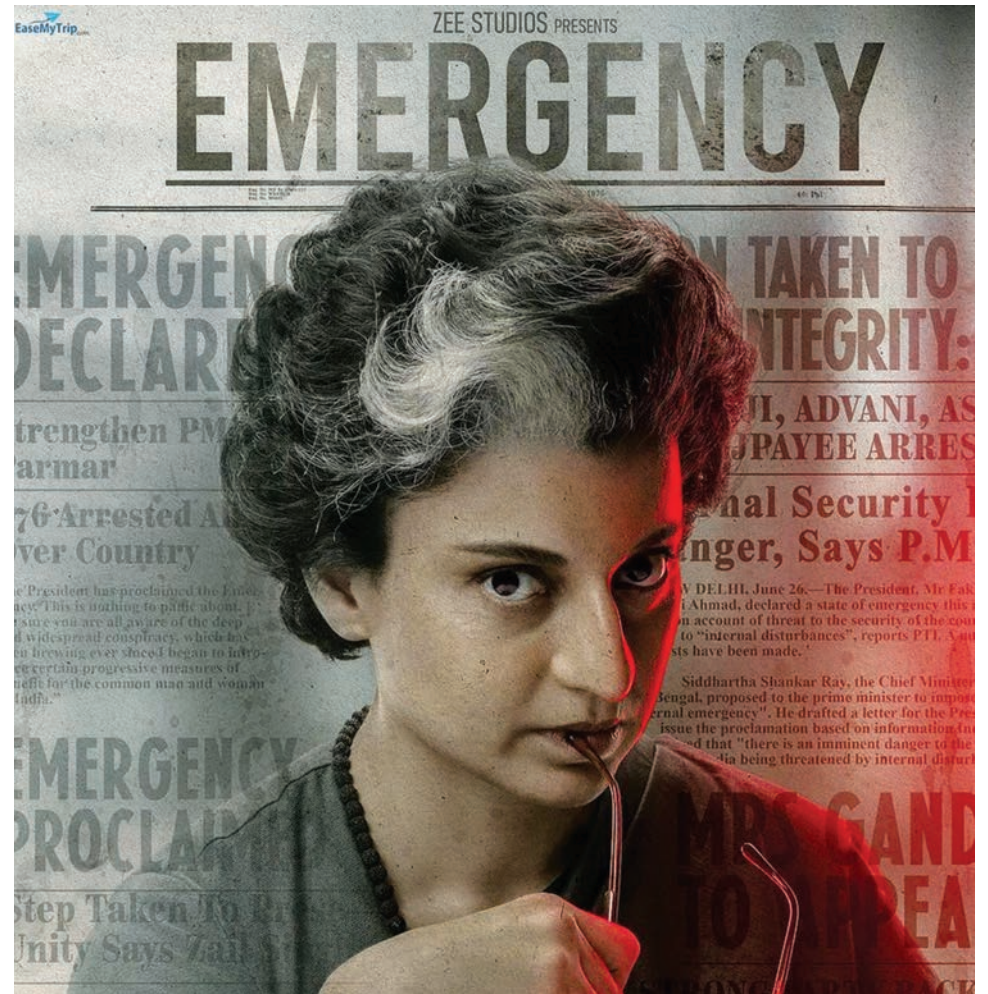
Emergency: Kangana Ranaut brings 'epic saga' of Indira Gandhi to life but others fail to deliver

Kangana Ranaut is back on the big screen, but this time not only with her acting stint; she has taken over the chair of director for the first time. Her much-awaited biographical political drama 'Emergency' is out in cinemas after much delay. If you are willing to watch Emergency, then it is highly recommended that you read this detailed review of the film beforehand.

The movie is touted to be a political biopic of Indira Gandhi and, most briefly, of the time when she imposed an Emergency in the country in 1975. However, the story of the film begins with her childhood time, and with bookmarking a few major events of the country, the plot reaches the era of her prime ministership. The film revolves mostly around her struggle to liberate Bangladesh and post her imposition of Emergency in the country. However, other incidents, including her assassination, are covered in the film in a gist.

On acting front, the film solely belongs to Kangana Ranaut, who portrayed the role of former late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the screen. If you belong to those times when you somewhere saw Indira Gandhi on the screen or heard her on the radio, then you are bound to connect with the time and take a trip down memory lane. However, many other important characters of the political timeframe fail to impress, but Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw (played by Milind Soman) will steal your hearts even with his less screen time. Other characters can be called 'okayish' but not that impactful.

Apart from acting the most important role that Kangana had was the film's direction. Since it was her directorial debut and some people have a notion of



considered a biopic an easy one to begin with and so was the case. However, she perfectly managed the easy job. Of course, the tough one with acting BUT the first half of the film might be a bit boring for some as it begins when she was a teenager, watching her father in a political scenario, her struggle to get into the limelight. Still, the main 'Dhamaka' of the film begins when the story enters the time of the Indo-Pak War of 1971 (Bangladesh Liberation).

The movie is fine, and one with an

eagerness to know about the intensity of the time during the Emergency must give it a try. And, if you are a political analyst and enthusiast, then one must give the movie a chance. It won't give you goosebumps throughout but will surely showcase the 'darkest chapter' after India's Independence in front of you with a blend of Indira Gandhi's personal and political life till her death. Overall, the movie 'Emergency' deserves three out of 5 stars for Kangana's effort in all segments.

Varun Dhawan preps for Border 2, shares pics with soldiers on Army Day



Actor Varun Dhawan, who is prepping for JP Dutta's Border 2, shared photos with soldiers on Army Day 2025. He will star alongside Sunny Deol, who's headlining the multi-starrer. The film will hit the screens next year.

On Wednesday, January 15, Varun honoured "the real heroes of India" as he prepped for his film. He is currently at the film's shoot location, where he spent the day interacting with soldiers, gaining a deeper understanding of their lives and their unparalleled devotion to the nation.

Sunny Deol, too, shared photos and videos with soldiers on Army Day. However, whether his location is the

same as Varun's is not confirmed. "Saluting the courage, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication of our heroes. Happy Indian Army Day!", wrote Deol, while sharing his glimpses in a turban.

Border 2 is backed by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, JP Dutta, and Nidhi Dutta. Presented by Gulshan Kumar and T-Series in association with JP Dutta's JP Films and directed by Anurag Singh, the sequel is set to carry forward the legacy of the original film which released in 1997.

The film was announced on June 13, 2024, marking 27 years of Border. Border 2 will release on January 23, 2026.

Hugh Jackman, Deborra-Lee Furness heading towards a 'messy' divorce

After nearly three decades of marriage, Hugh Jackman and Deborra-Lee Furness are struggling to finalize their separation. Despite announcing their split in September 2023, the estranged couple has yet to file for divorce, reportedly due to complications surrounding their decision to forego a prenuptial agreement.

Daily Mail has reported that their split could become "messy" as they work to divide their substantial \$250 million fortune. "One of the biggest reasons why they haven't yet filed is that they never had a prenup," a source close to the Wolverine star told the British outlet.

The couple, who met on the Australian TV show *Correlli* in 1995, married in April 1996 and went on to adopt two children, son Oscar, 24, and daughter Ava, 19.

"When they got married, they thought it would be forever. Who doesn't?" the source told Daily Mail. "At the time, neither of them expected Hugh's career to get as enormous as it has. Because there was no prenup, and he made a fortune during their marriage, this divorce is not going to be cut and dry. It may even get messy because the stakes are high."

"They put their differences aside to co-parent and he cares a lot about his children," the insider added.

The couple's shared assets include a sprawling property portfolio, such as a \$3.5 million estate in East Hampton, a



\$5.9 million Bondi beach house in Sydney, and a \$21 million Manhattan penthouse purchased just a year before their split. "A lot of moving parts need to be worked out and there is a huge amount of money involved," the insider noted, and the couple wants to "make this as easy as possible" for them.

Jackman and Sutton Foster confirmed their romance last week when they were photographed holding hands outside a Los Angeles restaurant. The relationship has only fueled the discord, as Furness has struggled with feelings of "resentment

and an imbalance of power" during the final years of their marriage.

"They are cordial to each other, but they are no longer friends," the insider told Daily Mail. "They put their differences aside to co-parent, and he cares a lot about his children."

Jackman's relationship with Foster began as a friendship during their time on Broadway, but the insider insisted there was no overlap between his relationships with Furness and Foster. But, Furness sparked speculation by "liking" a social media post claiming Jackman was "running off with the mistress."



'Wolf Man' is a toothless reboot that'll make you bark at the moon

Blake Lovell thinks taking his wife and young daughter to rural Oregon to pack up his dead father's belongings is a good idea. It's a break from their urban life, might help repair his fraying marriage and reconnect them all with nature. "It would be good for us," he argues.

It will not, of course, because this is a Blumhouse movie called "Wolf Man." It will not be good for Blake and it will not be good for the audience. That's because this film is a terrible misfire using a classic movie monster poorly rebooted by the modern home of horror.

Slack when it should be terrifying, "Wolf Man" suffers from cheap sentimentality, laughably obvious script reveals, poor continuity and a creature that is less predatory than painful. Pity comes to mind.

Christopher Abbott stars as Blake, a father and husband whose own estranged dad was a tad unstable, constantly drilling in his son a survivalist ethic. "It's not hard to die. It's the easiest thing in the world," his dad says. He being officially declared dead 30 years after he disappeared into the forest starts this sludgy movie off.



Jennifer Lopez and Jharrel Jerome shine in crowd-pleasing wrestling drama

There's nothing quite like the impact of a good sports biopic drama. A classic underdog story where the protagonist rises up against all odds and wins. But to a degree, sports biopics have reached a saturation point in the last few years. One can smell the next plot point a mile away, can predict the next dramatic meltdown right from the way the camera pauses for a close-up shot. Sadly, these are some of the cases that plague the new Prime Video entry *Unstoppable*, based on the extraordinary real-life journey of wrestler Anthony Robles, who was born with one leg.

Make no mistake. *Unstoppable* is very likeable and ultimately packs an emotional wallop. It has all the ingredients to make an amazing genre entry, but it stays so expectedly overwrought in its own formula that the story rarely takes shape. Marking the directorial debut of Oscar-winning *Argo* editor William Goldenberg, and produced by Ben Affleck,

Unstoppable features a fierce central performance from Jharrel Jerome as Anthony, and an equally impressive supporting turn from Jennifer Lopez as his mother Judy. However, the film feels too caught up trying to impress, too one-note to add any texture to these characters to make them feel more than what they are offered on screen.

Unstoppable starts off with Anthony's final years in high school, where he impresses with his agile moves in the match. His mother roots for him to excel, and his coach (Michael Peña) supports his dreams. But back home, he has to deal with his abusive stepfather (Bobby Cannavale), which amounts to his anxieties about his next steps. Should he take the offer of a full college scholarship at Drexel or pursue at Iowa, where he believes the best wrestlers go? During his search, his way will lead to coach Shawn Charles (Don Cheadle), whose push will keep Anthony striving for more.

Impeached South Korean president arrives for arrest warrant hearing

18 JAN 2025

SEOUL (TIP): Impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol arrived at court for the first time Saturday to attend a hearing that will decide whether to extend his detention as investigators probe his failed martial law bid.

Yoon, who has claimed his arrest is illegal, threw the nation into chaos on December 3 when he attempted to suspend civilian rule, citing the need to combat threats from "anti-state elements".

Yoon's die-hard supporters gathered outside the court building Saturday, even trying to surround the blue van carrying the suspended leader, AFP reporters saw.

Yoon's martial law bid lasted just six hours, with lawmakers voting it down despite the president ordering soldiers to storm parliament to stop them.

Yoon was subsequently impeached by parliament and resisted arrest for weeks, holed up in his guarded residence until he was finally detained Wednesday in a dawn raid.

South Korea's first sitting president to be detained, Yoon has refused to cooperate during the initial 48 hours detectives were allowed to hold him.

But the disgraced president remains in custody after investigators requested a new warrant Friday to extend his detention.

A judge at Seoul Western District Court was set to review the request at a 2:00 pm (0500 GMT) hearing, with her decision expected Saturday night or early Sunday.

Before the hearing, Yoon's lawyer Yoon Kab-keun told AFP the president would attend "with the intention of restoring his honour".

If approved, the new warrant would likely extend Yoon's detention by 20 days, giving prosecutors time to formalise an indictment.



The Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) is probing Yoon for insurrection, a charge that could see him jailed for life or executed if found guilty.

- Detention silence -

Yoon said Wednesday he had agreed to leave his compound to avoid "bloodshed", but that he did not accept the legality of the investigation.

His supporters have gathered in front of the court since Friday, holding South Korean and American flags and demanding judges dismiss the request to extend the president's detention.

The court closed its entrance to the

public Friday evening, citing safety concerns.

Yoon has refused to answer investigators' questions, with his legal team saying the president explained his position when detained on Wednesday.

The president has also been absent from a parallel probe at the Constitutional Court, which is mulling whether to uphold his impeachment.

If the court rules against Yoon, he will lose the presidency and elections will be called within 60 days.

He did not attend the first two hearings this week, but the trial, which could last

months, will continue in his absence.

Although Yoon won the presidential election in 2022, the opposition Democratic Party has a majority in parliament after winning legislative polls last year.

The Democratic Party has celebrated the president's arrest, with a top official calling it "the first step" to restoring constitutional and legal order.

As challenges against the embattled leader mount, parliament passed a bill late Friday to launch a special counsel probe into Yoon over his failed martial law bid. (AFP)

Three lawyers of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny jailed by Russian court

17 JAN 2025

PETUSHKI (TIP): Three lawyers who once represented the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny were convicted by a court Friday as part of the Kremlin's crackdown on dissent that has reached levels unseen since Soviet times.

Vadim Kobzev, Igor Sergunin and Alexei Liptser were already in custody and were given sentences from 3 1/2 to five years by a court in the town of Petushki, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Moscow.

They were arrested in October 2023 on charges of involvement with extremist groups, as Navalny's networks were deemed by authorities.

The case was widely seen as a way to increase pressure on the opposition to discourage defense lawyers from taking political cases.

At the time, Navalny was serving a 19-year prison term on several criminal

convictions, including extremism. He died in a Russian prison camp in February 2023.

The independent Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported that Kobzev said in his final statement in court on Jan. 10 that "we are being tried for transmitting Navalny's thoughts to other people."

The independent Russian news outlet Mediazona reported three journalists attending the sentencing were detained and taken to a police station.

Navalny's networks were deemed extremist following a 2021 ruling that outlawed his organizations — the Foundation for Fighting Corruption and a network of regional offices — as extremist groups.

That ruling, which exposed anyone involved with the organizations to prosecution, was condemned by Kremlin critics as politically motivated and

designed to stifle Navalny's activities.

According to Navalny's allies, authorities accused the lawyers of using their position to pass information from him to his team.

Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner and outspoken opponent of President Vladimir Putin, was arrested in 2021 upon his return from Germany, where he was recuperating from a nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. He was ordered to serve 2 1/2 years in prison.

After two more trials, his sentence was extended to 19 years. He and his allies said the charges were politically motivated and accused the Kremlin of seeking to jail him for life.

In December 2023, Navalny was moved from a penal colony in the Vladimir region east of Moscow to one above the Arctic Circle, where he died in February at the age of 47 under still-unexplained

circumstances. His widow, Yulia Navalnaya, and members of his team alleged he was killed on orders from the Kremlin. Officials have rejected the accusation.

Two other Navalny lawyers, Olga Mikhailova and Alexander Fedulov, are on a wanted list but no longer live in Russia. Mikhailova, who defended Navalny for a decade, said she was charged in absentia with extremism.

Kobzev, Liptser and Sergunin have been deemed to be political prisoners, according to human rights advocates from Memorial, Russia's most prominent rights group that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022. The group demands their immediate release.

Independent Russian media reported Friday that Konstantin Kotov, an activist accused of donating to Navalny's organization, left Russia before he was due to appear in a Moscow court Friday. He told Mediazona he decided to leave after a heart surgeon, Ivan Tishchenko, was jailed for four years for donating around \$34 to Navalny's organization. (AP)

Death toll rises to 87 as standoff between police and miners ends in South Africa

16 JAN 2025

STILFONTEIN, (TIP): The death toll in a monthslong standoff between police and miners trapped while working illegally in an abandoned gold mine in South Africa has risen to at least 87, police said Thursday as they wound down a rescue operation that has pulled more than 240 survivors out from deep underground.

National police spokesperson Athlenda Mathe said that 78 bodies were retrieved from the mine in an official rescue operation that began Monday, while another nine had been recovered previously. She did not give details on how those other bodies were retrieved.

Community groups have said they launched their own rescue attempts when authorities said last year they would not help the hundreds of miners because they were "criminals." The miners are suspected to have died of starvation and dehydration, although no causes of death have been released. South African authorities have been criticized for their approach, having cut off food and supplies to the miners for a period of time last year in an attempt, as one Cabinet minister said, to "smoke them out" of the Buffelsfontein Gold Mine. That tactic has been called "horrific" by one of South Africa's biggest trade unions.

Police and the mine owners are also accused by community members and civic groups of taking away ropes and



dismantling a pulley system the miners used to enter the mine through one shaft and send supplies down from the surface.

A court ordered authorities last year to allow food and water to be sent down to the miners, while another court ruling last week forced the government to launch a rescue operation.

Many say the unfolding disaster underground was clear weeks ago, when community members sporadically pulled decomposing bodies out of the mine, some with notes attached pleading for food to be sent down.

"If the police had acted earlier, we would not be in this situation, with bodies piling up," said Johannes Qankase, a local

community leader. "It is a disgrace for a constitutional democracy like ours. Somebody needs to account for what has happened here."

He said he was saddened "seeing so many pathology vans coming to get bodies of dead people."

South Africa's second biggest political party, which is part of a government coalition, called for President Cyril Ramaphosa to establish an independent inquiry to find out "why the situation was allowed to get so badly out of hand."

"The scale of the disaster underground at Buffelsfontein is rapidly proving to be as bad as feared," the Democratic Alliance party said. (AP)

SOUTH KOREA PLANE CRASH INVESTIGATORS FIND FEATHERS IN ENGINES

SEOUL (TIP): Investigators probing the Jeju Air crash that killed 179 people last month have found feathers in both engines, according to South Korean media reports, with a bird strike being examined as one possible cause.

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 Muan airport and exploded in a fireball after slamming into a concrete barrier. It was the worst aviation disaster on South Korean soil. "Feathers were found in both engines," the government-linked National Institute of Biological Resources told South Korean broadcaster MBN, without specifying who gave them the information.

"We have completed the analysis of a total of 17 samples, including feathers and blood," it said.

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport declined to confirm the report when asked by AFP.

BOOTLEG ALCOHOL CLAIMS LIVES OF AT LEAST 30 PEOPLE IN ISTANBUL WHILE DOZENS ARE HOSPITALIZED

ANKARA (TIP): At least 30 people have died in Istanbul over the past three days after drinking bootleg alcohol, Turkey's state-run news agency reported on January 16, as authorities intensified a crackdown on counterfeit drinks.

The dead were among some 80 people who sought treatment in hospitals around Istanbul, Anadolu Agency reported. At least 31 patients were in intensive care units.

Deaths from counterfeit alcohol have become increasingly frequent in Turkey, where the prices of alcoholic beverages continue to rise. Many people, confronted with ever-increasing costs, resort to cheaper alternatives or homemade spirits, increasing the risk of poisoning from toxic substances.

A combination of soaring inflation and government taxes has driven beverage prices to all-time highs.

On Wednesday, six people were detained for allegedly selling the counterfeit drinks while two other suspects were charged with "deliberate murder," the Istanbul governor's office said in a statement.

Authorities also seized 29 tons of bootleg alcohol in raids around Istanbul since Jan. 1 and revoked the licenses of 64 businesses for allegedly selling counterfeit or smuggled alcohol, according to the statement.

"We consider those who cause the death of dozens of our citizens by producing or selling fake alcohol to be no different from the terrorists who kill people," the statement said. (AP)

Six Chinese firms including Xiaomi, TikTok hit by privacy complaints in Europe

16 JAN 2025

VIENNA (TIP): Online privacy campaigners said Thursday they had filed complaints in several European countries against six Chinese companies including TikTok, accusing them of "unlawfully" sending Europeans' personal data to China.

Prominent Austria-based privacy campaign group NOYB (None of Your Business) said it has lodged six complaints against TikTok, AliExpress, Shein, Temu, WeChat and Xiaomi—in its first such action against Chinese companies. The complaints were filed in Austria, Belgium, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands.

Noyb has launched several legal cases against US technology giants such as Meta and Google, often prompting action from regulatory authorities over violations of the EU's landmark General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The GDPR aims to make it easier for people to control how companies use their personal information.

"Given that China is an authoritarian surveillance state, it is crystal clear that China doesn't offer the same level of data protection as the EU," said NOYB data protection lawyer Kleanthi Sardeli.

"Transferring Europeans' personal data is clearly unlawful—and must be terminated immediately," Sardeli said according to a statement.

According to the privacy group, AliExpress, Shein, TikTok and Xiaomi "transfer data to China", while Temu and WeChat mention transfers to "third countries."

"As none of the companies responded adequately to the complainants' access requests, we have to assume that this includes China," the statement added.

Noyb believes that "the rise of Chinese apps opens (up) a new front" for EU data protection law.

A spokesperson for Xiaomi said in a statement that the



An Austria-based privacy campaign group claims that AliExpress, Shein, TikTok, and Xiaomi "transfer data to China," while Temu and WeChat mention transfers to "third countries."

company was "aware" of the complaint and is "investigating the allegations made therein."

"By complying with applicable local laws and regulations in the markets where Xiaomi operates, user data is stored and processed in accordance with local laws," the statement added.

"In the event that a national data protection authority approaches Xiaomi in the future due to this complaint, we will fully cooperate with the authority to resolve the issue."

TikTok declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

Noyb said it is seeking administrative fines of up to four percent of the companies' global sales, which could amount to 1.35 billion euros (\$1.39 billion) for Temu. (AFP)

BEIJING TO INVEST \$3.7B IN SRI LANKAN OIL REFINERY AS DISSANAYAKE SEEKS MORE CHINESE INVESTMENTS

16 JAN 2025

BEIJING (TIP): China has offered to invest USD 3.7 billion in Sri Lanka, stated to be the biggest-ever foreign investment in the island nation, to build a state-of-the-art oil refinery as the two countries signed a new plan to upgrade BRI cooperation during Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake's state visit here.

On Thursday, Disanayake met Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhao Leji and pitched for more Chinese investment in his address to Chinese firms.

A day earlier, Disanayake held talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping following which the two sides signed 15 agreements.

According to a press release by the Sri Lankan President's media division, his visit marked a significant milestone by securing the largest foreign direct investment to date of USD 3.7 billion Chinese investment to build a state-of-the-art oil refinery at Hambantota.

"This significant achievement was formalised this morning with the signing of an agreement between Sri Lanka's Ministry of Energy and Sinopec, a leading Chinese international petroleum corporation," it said.

The refinery will have a capacity of two lakh barrels. China has secured the strategic Hambantota port in the Indian Ocean on a 99-year lease as a debt swap. It has also secured a long-term lease to build an economic zone at Hambantota.

Disanayake incidentally was a critic of the Hambantota port deal for its long-term lease while he was in the opposition.

It was seen as a balancing act as last year India and Sri Lanka inked a deal to jointly develop 85 World War II-era oil storage tanks at the strategic Trincomalee port in the eastern region of the country.

Asked for his reactions to Sinopec deal with Sri Lanka at a media briefing here, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and exchanges and collaboration in various fields have delivered fruitful results.

"China and Sri Lanka today have a historic opportunity to build on what has been achieved and take the relationship into the next chapter. It is important to view bilateral relations from a strategic perspective and jointly build a China-Sri Lanka community with a shared future," he said. As Disanayake concluded his visit, his second foreign tour after his last month's visit to New Delhi where he committed not to allow Sri Lanka's territory to be used against the interest of India, there is no word from both sides yet. (PTI)

Former Pakistan PM Imran Khan, wife Bushra get prison sentence in al-Qadir Trust case

17 JAN 2025

ISLAMABAD (TIP): A Pakistan court on Friday found former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi guilty of corruption in the 190 million pounds al-Qadir Trust case and sentenced them to 14 and seven years in prison respectively.

Besides jail sentences, Khan was fined Rs 1 million and Bushra Bibi half a million rupees. Failure to pay the fine will entail an additional six months of imprisonment for Khan and three months for Bibi.

The court had also ordered the confiscation of the land of Al-Qadir University set up by them.

Khan is already in jail while Bushra was arrested from the court.

Judge Nasir Javed Rana of the anti-corruption court announced the verdict that had been deferred thrice due to different reasons, last time on January 13.

The judge announced the verdict in a makeshift court set up in Adila jail.

"Today's verdict has tarnished the reputation of the judiciary. In this case, neither I benefited nor the government lost. I don't want any relief and will face all cases. A dictator is doing all this," Khan was quoted as saying by his party.

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.

The case revolves around allegations that an amount of PRs 50 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.

The judgment 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 Khan and several other leaders of his party.

So far three rounds of talks have been held and the PTI has presented its charter of demands in writing to the government.

Khan is facing dozens of cases after his ouster as prime minister in 2022.

He has been jailed since August 2023. (PTI)

Nepal's top court bars infrastructure in protected areas

KATHMANDU (TIP): Nepal's Supreme Court has scrapped controversial laws allowing hydropower and hotel projects in protected nature reserves, a lawyer said on January 16, calling it a win for the Himalayan republic's conservationists. A fifth of Nepal's lands are designated as protected areas. But both hydropower projects and tourism are major earners, and the government passed laws last year to allow infrastructure projects in national parks, forests and other conservation areas, except in highly sensitive zones. "The controversial decision was made with deception," environmental advocate Padam Bahadur Shrestha, one of the petitioners challenging the changes to the law, told AFP.

"It clearly shows how our government is working just to appease investors because it lacks farsightedness."

Shrestha said that the verdict, which was issued on Wednesday, offers "justice to preserve ecology and biodiversity". Kathmandu has been praised worldwide for its efforts to protect wildlife, allowing it to bring several species back from the brink of local extinction, including tigers and rhinos. Nepal's protected habitat laws have helped to triple its tiger population to 355 since 2010 and to increase one-horned rhinoceros from around 100 in the 1960s to 752 in 2021.

After decades of rampant logging, Nepal also nearly doubled its forest cover between 1992 and 2016.

"The laws should have never been passed," said Rampreet Yadav, former chief conservation officer of Chitwan National Park, Nepal's most important conservation area. "If development projects are allowed in protected areas, it will destroy our nature, it will destroy the habitats of animals." Nepal is eager to develop its hydropower industry after a dam-building spree in the past two decades that has given it an installed capacity of more than 2,600 megawatts.

It signed deals with India and Bangladesh last year to export thousands of megawatts of hydroelectricity. Tourism is also a major earner for Nepal, which saw a million foreign visitors last year after a post-pandemic bounceback, with the government pumping investments into infrastructure including airports. (PTI)

Over 40 Pakistanis among dozens feared drowned en route to Spain by boat

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Over 40 Pakistanis are feared dead after a boat carrying 80 migrants, attempting to reach Spain, capsized near Morocco, according to officials.

Migrant rights group Walking Borders on January 16 said 50 migrants may have drowned.

Moroccan authorities rescued 36 people a day earlier from a boat that had left Mauritania on January 2 with 86 migrants, including 66 Pakistanis.

Forty-four of those presumed to have drowned were from Pakistan, Walking Borders CEO Helena Maleno said on X.

"They spent 13 days of anguish on the crossing without anyone coming to rescue them," she said.

The Pakistan Foreign Office in a statement on Thursday night said its embassy in Morocco was in touch with the local authorities. "Our Embassy in Rabat (Morocco) has informed us that a boat carrying 80 passengers, including several Pakistani nationals, setting off from Mauritania, has capsized near the Moroccan port of Dakhla.

Several survivors, including Pakistanis, are lodged in a camp near Dakhla," it said. It added that a team from the embassy has been dispatched to Dakhla to facilitate the Pakistani nationals and provide necessary assistance while the Crisis Management Unit in the Foreign Ministry has been activated.

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar instructed the relevant government agencies to extend all possible facilitation to the affected Pakistanis.

President Asif Ali Zardari in a statement called for far-reaching and effective steps to stop human smuggling.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sought a report on the incident from authorities and said that strict action would be taken against those involved in the heinous act of human trafficking.

Hundreds of Pakistani migrants die every year while attempting to cross into Europe via perilous land and sea routes with the help of human smugglers. (PTI)

Sikh History This Week

JANUARY 17 TO JANUARY 23

17th January

1766: Jahan Khan, the Commander of Ahmed Shah Abdali's forces, attacked Amritsar. The united forces of the Sikh Misls, faced Jahan Khan and successfully defeated the enemy forces at Putlighar, on the outskirts of Amritsar. 1846 The Khalsa Army of Ranjit Singh ransacked a garrison of East India Company at Ludhiana.

1872: Baba Ram Singh, Naamdhari Leader, was arrested by the British government. He was subsequently exiled from India.

1872: 42 Naamdhari GurSikhs, accused of secessionist acts, were bown-up at Malaerkotla, after being tied with the cannons while one boy was cut to pieces. These executions were carried out under orders of Mr. L. Cowan, Deputy Commissioner Ludhiana, Malaerkotla.

1922: All Akalis arrested in connection with the Keys agitation are released.

1925: A jatha of 500 Akali Sikhs, led by Lakha Singh JahanShah (Gujran Wala), ready to lay down their lives was stooped from proceeding to Gangsar, Jaito – the place of Sikh agitation, and arrested.

19th January

1908: First Gurdwara Sahib in Canada 19th, 1908 the was officially opened at 1866 west 2nd Avenue Vancouver B.C., under the management of the Khalsa Diwan Society. This Gurdwara Sahib served the Greater Vancouver Sikh community until new Gurdwara Sahib was occupied on April 25th, 1970. The 2nd Avenue property was sold for \$100,000 to build a bigger (present) Gurdwara Sahib. It was very unfortunate to lose this historical Sikh monument.

20th January



1706 Guru Gobind Singh Sahib reached Talwandi, where he set camp, outside the village, is the location of Gurduara Damdamaa Sahib. Dam damaa means breathing place. That is take a breather after the many battles he had been through.

1841 After Gulab Singh left Lahore, Sher Singh occupied the fort. Dhian Singh became the Wazir. The Sandalwalia Sardars, hostile to the ruling group, started entering into intrigues.

1926 The British Government announced the judgement in Babbar Akali case. As a result, 5 Babbar Akalis were ordered to be hanged, 11 were sentenced to life imprisonment, and 38 were imprisoned four years. Approximately 90 religious, high spirited, daring

fighters formed the Babbar Akali group. They had promised freedom to the masses and vigorously fought the British, especially in the Duaba and Malwa regions.

1986 Sentences handed in the case of Indian Airline hijacking.

21st January



1831 The King of England sent valuable gifts to Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a gesture of friendship. The gifts were really meant to be a bate of friendship! The British had encroched into his territory and came all the way to the other side of river Satluj and finally attacked the Sikh kingdom as soon as he breatherd his last, after buying all the Dogras. What followed afterwards is a history!



1846 Budhowal battle was fought and won by the Sikh troops against the East India Company. Sikhs defeated Harry Smith at Budhowal and captured his baggage. Sikhs also attacked and burned down large part of Ludhiana cantonement. HARRY Smith fought a minor skirmish with Ranjodh Singh at Atwal.

22nd January

1848 Mool Raj, Governor of Multan, revolted against the British but was defeated.

MOOL RAJ: During Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign, Mool Raj was an efficient and loyal Governor of Multan, He was the son of Diwan Sawanmal



Chaupadhae and appointed Governor by the Lahore darbar. During his reign, two British officers were killed by the Lahore forces. As a result, the British Resident of Lahore, John Lawrence, wanted to dismiss Mool Raj. On account of his loyalty to the kingdom of Ranjit Singh, he revolted against the British East India Company who were forcibly annexing Ranjit Singh's Punjab. He put up a brave defense of the fort of Multan but was defeated on this day. The British arrested and imprisoned him in Calcutta jail, where he died in 1850.

1849 Multan fell to the British.



1986 The additional session judge announced his judgement in the case of Indira Gandhi's murder. Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh were to be hanged. The sentence was carried out on Jan. 6, 1989. Indira Gandhi was gunned down at her resident on Oct. 31, 1984, as a retribution for her role in operation Bluestar, during which the Indian Army attacked and desecrated Sri Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar.

23rd January

1923 Dhanna Singh Behbalpur joins the Babbar Akali Jatha.

1923 Second attempt to kill Arjan Singh Patwari of Haripur also ends in a fiasco. He was alledged to be responsible for Master Mota Singh's arrest.

1948 Dr. B.R. Ambedkar suggested the Sikhs to struggle for a Punjabi speaking state.

1960 Sirdar Tirath Singh accepted shahadat in Delhi, in connection with the Punjabi Subha morcha.



Avoid these acne-causing habits

- Not washing your face properly : It is important to use good medicated cleansers twice a day, but hard cleansers and washing too frequently can make the acne worse and face drier.
- Using dairy products on a daily basis : Dairy products have abundance of hormone IGF 1 (Insulin-like growth factor 1) which is specially found in milk. It can cause inflammation in humans. Milk causes insulin spike in humans that makes the liver produce IGF 1. This can cause excess sebum production causing more clogged pores and thus, the acne. Try to reduce dairy product consumption.
- Using smartphones too much : Smartphones are one of the common causes of breakouts. This is because when your phone is placed on skin while talking to someone, you press bacteria into your pores and ultimately, get pimples. So, use ear phones to keep a check on breakouts.
- Applying body cream on face : Many body care products can give you acne on your face. Some people apply body products on their face to get some more beauty benefits. But it is better not to use body products on face. Feel free to use face cream on dry patch of body, but using a body lotion on your face could cause acne.

This could specifically be the case if your skin is sensitive and the facial lotion you generally use is oil and fragrance-free, and then you reach for a scented and thicker body lotion in the hope to achieve the same hydrating results.

- Diet issue : Sweet food items may not always be good for skin. Diet rich in sugar or food with high glycemic index can be a cause for acne. Avoid sugar, carbohydrate-rich food and starch for acne-free skin. Eat small meals with diet rich in fruits and vegetables.

Here's how you can choose your night cream smartly

Night time is when one's skin gets the maximum rest, repair and time to rejuvenate. So always remember to wash and deep cleanse your face before you apply your



night time moisturiser for the best results. But how do you decide what constitutes a good moisturiser? Divya Mehta, co-founder of skincare brand Epique, shares tips to keep in mind when deciding on a good night cream:

It doesn't need to have the word 'night' to describe it : The difference between a night cream and any other is that it doesn't have UV protection or any sunscreen ingredients in it. Hence you don't necessarily need to use a cream that uses the word 'night' to define it. So long as the cream does not contain sunscreen, works well with your skin type and is rich in active ingredients, you are good to go!

- High concentration of active ingredients : Look for components such as boswellia serrata, coffee bean extract, centella asiatica, andrographis, liquorice, coleus forskolin, horse chestnut, oils, vitamins like E and C and other antioxidants to name a few (in your night creme). In addition to these, actives need to be highly concentrated to address specific mature skin issues.
- Deep penetrating and light weight in texture : Ensure the cream texture is light, penetrates deeply and is comfortable for your skin. Try avoiding creams that sit on the skin's surface and don't get absorbed well, causing the skin to feel oily.

Grilled chicken

Ingredients

8 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, 1 pinch salt and ground black pepper to taste, 2 cups peach preserves, 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, 2 tablespoons soy sauce, 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic, 1 tablespoon mustard, 4 ripe peaches, halved and pitted

Method

- Preheat grill for medium heat and lightly oil the grate. Season chicken breast halves with salt and black pepper.
- Stir peach preserves, olive oil, soy sauce, garlic, and mustard in a bowl; season with salt and black pepper. Reserve about 1/2 cup peach sauce.
- Place chicken on preheated grill; cook until golden brown, 6 to 7 minutes, then flip chicken. Continue cooking for 5 to 6 minutes. Brush both sides of the chicken with peach sauce. Cook until no longer pink in the center and the juices run clear, 4 to 5 more minutes. An instant-read thermometer inserted into the center should read at least 165 degrees F (74 degrees C).
- Arrange peach halves cut side down on the grill. Grill for 2 minutes, flip, and brush with reserved 1/2 cup peach sauce. Continue to grill until peaches are tender, 3 to 4 minutes more.



How to manage your child's anger and stubbornness?

When you have a child around, it's common to see them get upset or angry when they don't get what they want. A simple wish can quickly turn into a tantrum, with crying and howling when it's unmet. But when their desires are fulfilled, their faces light up with a big grin.

Parenting isn't easy, and parents often find themselves criticised no matter what they do. If they give in to their child's demands, they're accused of spoiling them. If they refuse, they're labelled as heartless or uncaring.

But the question here is: should parents give in to their child's stubbornness and anger, or is there a better way to navigate these moments?

Dr Sarthak Dave, an Ahmedabad-based psychiatrist, tells India Today that kids become stubborn and express their anger loudly because they absorb behaviours from their surroundings and consider them normal. If they frequently observe their parents displaying anger or reacting loudly, they learn to replicate this behaviour, believing it to be acceptable.

He explains, "At a young age, their id (the instinctual drive to fulfil their desires) is very strong, while their ego (logical reasoning) and superego (moral understanding) are still underdeveloped and grow with age and experience. When children want something, they struggle to think logically or anticipate the consequences of their actions. If they don't get what they want, they feel distress and express it in ways



they've learnt from their environment."

Additionally, if they've previously received what they wanted by acting out, this behaviour gets reinforced, encouraging them to repeat it.

Further, Riddhi Doshi Patel, a Mumbai-based child psychologist and parenting counsellor, tells us that kids can be stubborn or loud because they don't yet have the words or skills to express their emotions or because they feel ignored or misunderstood by adults.

She mentions that these outbursts are their way of coping with emotions they can't fully control or explain.

According to Patel, while kids do learn from their environment and often replicate their parents, stubbornness is also a natural part of development as

children learn to assert themselves. It doesn't always mean parents are at fault.

A child's stubbornness, anger, and loud reactions are often ways of acting out due to their limited ability to handle emotions and distress.

"These behaviours indicate that the child may not yet be developing the emotional tools needed to cope effectively. If such reactions are not addressed or discouraged, they can become ingrained as primitive defence mechanisms, suggesting that the child's emotional growth is not progressing as it should," says Dr Dave.

Meanwhile, Patel feels that stubbornness and anger are signs that a child:

- Is seeking attention, understanding, or control.
- May be feeling overwhelmed, insecure, or unsure how to handle a situation.
- Is in a stage of development where they're learning to test limits and establish independence.

According to the experts, if left unchecked, constant anger and stubbornness can lead to issues such as difficulty managing emotions later in life, strained relationships with peers and family, and increased feelings of frustration or anxiety.

Parents should make sure they are not rewarding such behaviour. By rewarding them, you are feeding stubbornness and anger, and this will only increase the tantrums.

Source: India Today

Best snacks for hearty health

Snacks are often considered to be unhealthy, but this is simply a matter of selection. When unprepared, most of us tend to grab the first thing that we see.

Usually, this is always an unhealthy snack as junk food is readily available at every nook and corner these days. Eating these junk foods leaves our hearts open to ailments and poor health, while increasing our waistlines. But what about healthy, heart-friendly snacks? Here are some snacks that will not only maintain your heart health but also help you shed extra kilos.

Mushroom egg white omelet

This combination of mushroom and egg white is perfect for your heart health. It is low in calories, delicious and requires not much time to prepare. Hence, it is an all time favorite snack.

Dalia upma

Dalia upma is a perfect snack to re-energize yourself because it provides you with valuable fibre, minerals and vitamins.

Just make sure you use less oil and more vegetables to make it more nutritive.

Whole wheat egg white crepes

Made with the mixture of wheat flour, skimmed milk and egg whites, these whole wheat crepes are perfect for a health conscious person.

This snack is blended with taste and nutrients, which makes it an ideal snack option.

Carrot, green peas & brown bread sandwich

This is an easy to prepare sandwich and is a great way to add protein, vitamin A and fibre to your diet. Add a dash of mayo, some ketchup, boiled carrots and peas and grill it to make it even more delicious.



Egg white spinach omelet

If you are watching your cholesterol level, and a big fan of eggs but can't eat them, then this snack is just the thing for you.

When spinach is cooked with egg whites, it makes it a perfect calorie cutter snack for the day.

Hara dhania whole wheat roti

Replace your regular rotis with this healthy alternative. The hara dhania or coriander, and whole wheat flour, makes it a healthy and yummy snack.

Pudina egg white omelet

This omelet is prepared with a mixture of pudina and egg whites, making it a healthy, low calorie snack.

Idli sandwich

A light twist to the popular South Indian snack we all love. For best benefits, prepare this at home with a low-oil and low-salt recipe. Slice the idli and stuff with stir fried vegetables like cabbage or sprouts to make this a healthy snack for your day.



Fibre in diet may boost the body against infections: Study

A new study has found that the composition of the gut microbiome helps in predicting how likely a person will succumb to potentially life-threatening infection with *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *E.coli* and other bugs -- and it may be altered by changing your diet.

The group of bacteria called Enterobacteriaceae, including *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Shigella*, *E.coli* and others, is present at low levels as part of a healthy human gut microbiome. However, certain catalytic factors such as increased inflammation in the body, or by eating contaminated food these bugs can cause illness and disease. In extreme cases, too much Enterobacteriaceae in the gut can be life-threatening.

Researchers have used computational approaches including AI to analyse the gut microbiome composition of over 12,000 people across 45 countries from their stool samples. They found that a person's microbiome 'signature' can predict whether a person's gut is likely to be colonised by Enterobacteriaceae. The results are consistent across different states of health and geographic locations.

The researchers identified 135 gut microbe species that are commonly found in the absence of Enterobacteriaceae. It likely protects against infection. The results are published in the journal *Nature Microbiology*.

Notable among the protective gut species is a group of bacteria called *Faecalibacterium*, which produces beneficial compounds called short-chain fatty acids by breaking down fibre in the foods we eat.

This seems to protect against infection by a range of disease-causing Enterobacteriaceae bugs.

The researchers suggest that eating more fibre in our diet will support the growth of good bacteria -- and crowd out the bad ones to significantly reduce the risk of illness.

In contrast, taking probiotics -- which don't directly change the environment in the gut -- is less likely to affect the likelihood of Enterobacteriaceae infection.

Source: ANI

High levels of fluoride can lead to lower IQ in kids

High levels of fluoride exposure has been linked to lower IQ in children. Fluoride is a mineral that naturally occurs in water, soil, and plants. It is added to products to prevent tooth decay and in several over-the-counter drugs.

While fluoride consumption in given range is safe, large amounts of exposure can be dangerous. The US government's National Toxicology Program (NTP) recently conducted a meta-analysis which highlighted the potential neurodevelopmental risks associated with excessive fluoride exposure.

The study found a statistically significant association between higher fluoride exposure and lower IQ scores in children, raising questions about the balance between fluoride's dental benefits and its broader health implications.

Low IQ (intelligence quotient) in children refers to a measure of cognitive abilities that are below the average for their age group. IQ tests are standardised assessments designed to evaluate intellectual skills, problem-solving abilities, and reasoning.

In children, low IQ could mean developmental delays in learning basic skills, struggling with



communication, not understanding complex concepts or might need support in daily decision-making.

Since its introduction in 1945, fluoride has been a cornerstone of public health efforts to reduce dental cavities, the researchers revealed.

However, the meta-analysis, published in *JAMA Pediatrics*, evaluated 74 epidemiological studies from ten countries, including India, China, and Mexico, and revealed concerning trends.

Fluoride and IQ Decline: The analysis reported that for every 1 mg/L increase in urinary fluoride, children's IQ scores decreased by 1.63 points.

High Exposure Threshold: Significant IQ reductions were observed at fluoride exposure levels

exceeding 1.5 mg/L in drinking water or urine.

Limited Data on Lower Levels: There was insufficient evidence to conclude whether fluoride levels at or below 0.7 mg/L - the US Public Health Service's recommended level - have adverse effects on IQ.

Excess fluoride exposure is not a new issue in India. Groundwater in regions like Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan often contains fluoride levels exceeding safe limits.

Dr. Kadam Nagpal, Head of Neuroimmunology at Salubritas Medcentre, explained that this has led to health complications such as dental and skeletal fluorosis and potential neurological impairments in children.

"Excessive fluoride gets deposited in teeth, bones, and soft tissues, altering metabolism. This can impair learning and memory in children," said Dr. Nagpal.

India's National Programme for Prevention and Control of Fluorosis (NPPCF) monitors and mitigates high fluoride levels in groundwater. Measures like installing reverse osmosis (RO) plants and raising awareness about fluoride-containing products are some critical components of the initiative.

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Elon Musk's SpaceX Starship explodes in flight test

A SpaceX Starship rocket broke up in space minutes after launching from Texas on Thursday, forcing airline flights over the Gulf of Mexico to alter course to avoid falling debris and setting back Elon Musk's flagship rocket program.

SpaceX mission control lost contact with the newly upgraded Starship, carrying its first test payload of mock satellites but no crew, eight minutes after liftoff from its South Texas rocket facilities at 5:38 pm EST (2238 GMT).

Video shot by Reuters showed orange balls of light streaking across the sky over the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, leaving trails of smoke behind.

"We did lose all communications with the ship - that is essentially telling us we had an anomaly with the upper stage," SpaceX Communications Manager Dan Huot said, confirming minutes later that the ship was lost.

Microsoft to end support for Office apps on Windows 10 in October

Microsoft has announced that it will end support for Microsoft Office apps on Windows 10 devices after the operating system reaches its end of support on October 14, 2025. Users will need to upgrade to Windows 11 to continue using Microsoft 365 apps without potential issues, the tech giant stated on Tuesday.

Microsoft 365 Apps will no longer be supported after October 14, 2025, on Windows 10 devices. To use Microsoft 365 Applications on your device, you will need to upgrade to Windows 11, the company explained.

This announcement also affects standalone Office versions, including Office 2024, Office 2021, Office 2019, and Office 2016, meaning these versions will no longer receive updates or technical support on Windows 10 devices.

While the applications will still function beyond the support cutoff, Microsoft cautioned users about potential performance and reliability problems. We strongly recommend upgrading to Windows 11 to avoid performance and reliability issues over time, the company advised in a separate support document.

Microsoft has been urging users to migrate to Windows 11 since its launch in October 2021, even dubbing 2025 the year of the Windows 11 PC refresh. However, adoption has been slow, with only 35 per cent of Windows users worldwide running Windows 11 as of now, according to Statcounter Global data. Meanwhile, Windows 10 remains the dominant version, powering 62 per cent of all Windows systems globally.

A key barrier to Windows 11 adoption has been Microsoft's stringent hardware requirements, particularly the need for



TPM (Trusted Platform Module) 2.0. The feature, which Microsoft claims enhances resistance to tampering and cyberattacks, has been labelled non-negotiable for Windows 11 installations. Many users with older hardware have found the requirement difficult to meet, prompting the creation of workarounds to bypass it.

In light of the challenges, Microsoft has offered some leeway for users unwilling or unable to upgrade. Home users can delay the switch to Windows 11 for an additional year by purchasing Extended Security Updates (ESU) for \$30. Certain enterprise and specialised systems, including those using Long-Term Servicing Branch (LTSB) and Long-Term Servicing Channel (LTSC) editions, will continue to receive updates beyond the October 2025 cutoff.

Although users can keep using their Windows 10 PCs and Office apps after

support ends, they will no longer receive security updates, exposing them to increased risks over time. Microsoft has also reiterated that the free upgrade to Windows 11 remains available, provided users meet the minimum system requirements.

Margaret Farmer, a representative for Microsoft, emphasised this point: You need to confirm that your computer meets the minimum system requirements for the update, she stated.

The clock is ticking for the millions still on Windows 10. While the operating systems popularity has endured, Microsoft's move to cut off Office app support adds another incentive for users to transition. For those who rely heavily on Microsoft 365 or other Office products, the decision to upgrade sooner rather than later is becoming increasingly pressing.

Google makes Gemini AI free to use in Gmail and Docs

If you've been shelling out extra cash for Google's Gemini-powered AI features in Workspace apps, here's some good news: it's now free. Google has announced that starting this week, all its AI tools formerly locked behind the Rs 1,500 per month Gemini Business plan are included in standard Workspace Business and Enterprise subscriptions. The move aims to make AI capabilities more accessible as Google races against Microsoft and OpenAI.

Before you celebrate too much, there's a small caveat. Google is hiking the price of all Workspace plans to cover these new features. Most businesses will now pay about Rs 125 more per user per month. For context, the base subscription that previously cost Rs 900 (\$12) will now be priced at Rs 1,050 (\$14). It's not exactly a bank-breaker, but it's a notable shift for companies managing large teams.



With Google's Workspace AI suite, you get tools like email summaries in Gmail, automated meeting notes in Meet, spreadsheet design help in Sheets, and AI writing assistants in Docs. The Gemini bot, Google's flagship AI, acts as a personal assistant capable of

summarizing emails, finding data, and even brainstorming ideas.

There's also NotebookLM Plus, a research assistant designed to break down complex topics. It lets users upload documents, extract insights, and share customised notebooks for collaboration.

Google's decision to scrap the extra fee for Gemini seems strategic. The AI race is heating up, and rival Microsoft recently made its own AI features part of standard subscriptions for certain Microsoft 365 plans. Google is betting that by removing the financial barrier, it can convince more businesses to try its AI tools.

Google's move to make AI a core part of its Workspace plans signals a shift in how businesses approach productivity. The company plans to keep rolling out new AI features over the next year, ensuring its tools remain at the forefront of workplace innovation.

For users, the message is clear: AI isn't an optional add-on anymore; it's the future of work. Whether you're excited or skeptical, one thing is certain: Google's Gemini is here to stay, and it's now a standard part of doing business in the digital age.

Asian stocks gain after US core inflation cools

Shares in Asia followed Wall Street higher on Thursday, January 16, as easing US core inflation kept alive the prospect of Federal Reserve rate cuts this year. Benchmarks in Australia, Japan and South Korea all notched gains. The S&P 500 closed Wednesday 1.8% higher, the benchmark's best day since the November election, which erased its 2025 decline. The tech-heavy Nasdaq 100 climbed 2.3%.

Treasuries were little changed on Thursday after a rally in the previous session pushed 10-year yields 14 basis points lower. An index of the dollar steadied. The yen edged higher after climbing 0.9% against the greenback on Wednesday, its strongest showing since November, while the South Korean won strengthened as the central bank unexpectedly left interest rates unchanged.

The moves centered upon US core consumer price index data for December that rose less than forecast, reinvigorating bets the Fed will cut rates sooner than previously thought. Swap traders are back to fully pricing in a rate cut by July — a quick shift after Friday's hot jobs data spurred bets officials would only be able to resume policy easing in September or October.

"We're in a goldilocks scenarios where growth is holding up," Suresh Tantia, a strategist for UBS Wealth Management, said on Bloomberg Television. "We do expect the earnings of tech companies in Asia to rise substantially this year, especially in the AI space."

The gains spread across asset classes and supported some of the most speculative corners of financial markets. Bitcoin traded around \$100,000 and Goldman Sachs Group Inc.'s basket of money-losing tech companies rose 3.2%. The CBOE VIX index slumped the most this year and a Bloomberg measurement of the "Magnificent Seven" megacaps rallied 3.7%.

A gauge of commodity prices hit the highest level in almost two years against a mixed geopolitical backdrop as sanctions on Russia began to hit crude flows while a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas eased concerns over intensifying conflict.



Oil extended a powerful early-year advance on mounting risks to global supplies, and as commercial crude inventories in the US posted their longest run of declines since 2021. Gold slipped after climbing in the previous two sessions.

The Australian dollar rose after data showed the unemployment rate remained low in December as the economy extended a streak of hiring gains.

Later Thursday, Jan 16, the European Central Bank will release its meeting minutes while US data to be released includes initial jobless claims and retail sales, providing investors with a broader picture of the health of the world's largest economy.

The Canadian dollar edged higher after a report stated the country has drawn up a list of US goods it would hit with tariffs if President-elect Donald Trump decides to levy tariffs on Canadian goods.

The so-called US core consumer price index — which excludes food and energy costs — increased 0.2% in December. That marked the first stepdown in the rate in six months. From a year ago, it rose 3.2%. That's still above the Fed's 2% target.

Source: Bloomberg

India's fiscal conditions to limit credit strength in 2025: Moody's

India's fiscal conditions will continue to constrain its credit strength in 2025, although tension in US-China relations could benefit the Indian economy, Moody's Ratings said on Wednesday, January 15.

In its report on Asia Pacific Sovereigns, Moody's Ratings said growth and inflation are levelling out, with strong domestic demand bolstered by modest easing in global and regional financial conditions.

But proposed trade restrictions by the US would weaken economic output across the region.

"India's fiscal conditions will continue to constrain its credit strength in 2025. We expect only gradual fiscal consolidation, and debt to remain significantly higher than the Baa-rated peer median of around 57 per cent," Moody's said.

"Despite gains in revenue in recent years, we also expect debt affordability to remain much weaker than rated peers," it added.

It said politics and social unrest pose significant economic and fiscal risks. In APAC, geopolitical risks will persist in 2025, flowing from tensions in the US-China relationship and around regional hotspots.

Moody's assesses a low likelihood of military conflict in the Taiwan Strait or Korean Peninsula, and tensions will remain elevated, particularly driven by US-China relations.

US-based short-seller Hindenburg shuts down

Hindenburg Research, a US investment research firm known for short-selling, and whose reports resulted in wiping out billions of dollars of Indian billionaire Gautam Adani and his companies, has been shut down, its founder Nate Anderson announced on Wednesday, January 15.

"As I've shared with family, friends and our team since late last year, I have made the decision to disband Hindenburg Research. The plan has been to wind up after we finished the pipeline of ideas we were working on. And as of the last Ponzi cases we just completed and are sharing with regulators, that day is today," Anderson announced.

In the last few years, Hindenburg Research had launched a campaign against the Adani group. Its reports published since 2023 had resulted in billions of dollars of loss for the Indian billionaire. All the charges were denied by Adani and his companies.

The sudden and surprising announcement by Anderson comes within days of a Republican Congressman, a member of the House Judiciary Committee, asking the Department of



Justice to preserve all the documents and communications related to the investigations of Adani and his companies.

Anderson did not give a specific reason for disbanding his organization, which is less than a week before the end of the four-year term of the Biden Administration and the swearing-in of Donald Trump as the 47th President of the United States on

January 20.

"So, why disband now? There is not one specific thing—no particular threat, no health issue, and no big personal issue. Someone once told me that at a certain point a successful career becomes a selfish act. Early on, I felt I needed to prove some things to myself. I have now finally found some comfort with myself, probably for the first time in my life," he said.

"I probably could have had it all along had I let myself, but I needed to put myself through a bit of hell first. The intensity and focus has come at the cost of missing a lot of the rest of the world and the people I care about. I now view Hindenburg as a chapter in my life, not a central thing that defines me," he said.

In an interview to The Wall Street Journal, Anderson said he looks forward to taking up hobbies, travelling and spending time with his fiancée and their child, adding that he has earned enough money to provide for them in the future. He said he plans to invest his money in index funds and other low-stress investments.

Anderson said for now, he will be focused on making sure everyone on his team lands where they want to be next.

"Some are going to start their own research firm, which I will strongly and publicly encourage, even as I will have no personal involvement. There are others on our team who are now free agents—so feel free to reach out to me if you have a need for anyone who is brilliant, focused, and easy to work with, as they all are," he said.

Source: PTI

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - JAN 20, 2025 TO JAN 26, 2025

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



ARIES

Ganesha says this week your energy and confidence will be at their peak. You will use your full potential in new ideas and plans. There will be harmony in the family and positive changes will be seen in relationships as well. Some new responsibilities may be given in the work field, reflecting your hard work and dedication. But there is also a need to rest occasionally, so do not forget to take care of your health. Spending time with your spouse or loved one will improve your emotional health. This is the right time to resolve some old issues. This week is a sign of a new beginning for you, so maintain a positive attitude and move forward. Overall, this week will be full of enthusiasm and possibilities for you. Keep moving towards your goals and listen to your inner voice.



TAURUS

Ganesha says this week may bring you a lot of important opportunities. You will start getting the fruits of your hard work, which will increase your confidence. Challenges may come in terms of work, but with your patience and perseverance, you will overcome them easily. New relationships will also be established in social life. Meeting old friends will make you happy. Spending time with family will also give you mental peace. In terms of health, practicing yoga and meditation will prove beneficial to keep the mental state stable. This week is for you to move towards self-reflection and new objectives. Be careful in money matters; think well before making any major financial decisions. This week, positive energy will be all around you; accept it and make the most of it!



GEMINI

Ganesha says this week, new possibilities are opening up for Gemini in the social and professional sphere. Your communication skills will come in handy, and you will be able to express your ideas effectively. It is time to spend quality time with your friends and family. Your creativity will be at its peak this week, allowing you to come up with innovative ideas for a project. Do not hesitate to share your ideas, as your exchanges can lead to positive results. In terms of health, minor symptoms need attention. Yoga and meditation will help improve your mental health. Be careful in financial matters, especially while investing. It is better to take advice from friends and colleagues. This weekend, you may show activeness in a new hobby



CANCER

Ganesha says many new possibilities are going to open up for you this week. Try to balance your personal and professional life. This is the time to spend with your loved ones, which will give you emotional support and love. Your creativity is going to be at its peak this week. Success is expected in studies or works related to art. Also, do not hesitate to express your thoughts clearly, as what you say can have a deep impact on others. Be careful in matters of health. You may feel the need for rest and meditation. Give priority to your mental health, as it is important to avoid mental stress amid busyness. Positive changes can come in social life. You may make new friends or get an opportunity to strengthen old relationships. This week, move ahead with proper planning and patience so that you can get better results in the future. Listen to your heart and understand your instincts-this will help you move in the right direction.



LEO

Ganesha says there is a lot of positive energy and possibilities for Leo natives. You will get many opportunities to excel in your personal and professional life. The leadership potential within you will emerge, and you will be successful in motivating others. This week, be alert at your workplace. Your hard work and dedication will be appreciated. Maintain good relations with colleagues, as it will give a new direction to your career. You may get an opportunity to work on an important project that will highlight your talent. These days will be very favorable in personal relationships as well. Your charm will touch everyone's heart, which is likely to lead to new friendships and love relationships. This is a golden opportunity to spend time with family. Moments spent with your loved ones will give you happiness and satisfaction. In terms of health, take a little caution. Do yoga and meditation to reduce mental stress. If you channel your energy in the right direction, this week will prove to be extremely beneficial for you. This week, stay confident and keep moving towards your goals. Success is at your feet, just need to recognize it.



VIRGO

Ganesha says this week, many important changes and opportunities will come up for Virgo natives. Your analytical abilities will help you face challenges, but keep in mind that sometimes thinking too much can make it difficult for you to make decisions. Listen to your inner voice and maintain balance in any matter. At work, your hard work and dedication will be appreciated. Collaboration with colleagues will

increase, and this is the time to share your ideas. Your leadership ability in a project can lead you to more responsibilities. In personal life, your relationship with family and friends will be strong. Mutual understanding and support will give you mental peace. If you are in a relationship, this is a good time to have a sincere conversation. In terms of health, try to keep yourself active. Yoga and meditation will not only improve your physical health but will also strengthen your mental state. In summary, move forward with balance, cooperation, and honesty this week. The fruits of your dedication will be visible this week.



LIBRA

Ganesha says this week is a time of balance and harmony for Libra natives. Your inner energy will give you positivity. Supportive relationships will be formed at work, which will sweeten the fruits of your hard work. There will be an atmosphere of peace and love in the family, which will keep your mind happy. Try to stay away from any kind of controversial situation. In terms of health, focus on regular exercise and proper diet. A little peace and meditation can improve your mental health. Participating in social activities will allow you to add new knowledge and friends. This week try to bring out your art and talents. Remember that your balance and harmony are your strengths. Move forward with a positive attitude and enjoy this week.



SCORPIO

Ganesha says this week, new possibilities will begin for Scorpio natives. You will be aware of your emotions by immersing yourself in the depths of them. This is the time to recognize your inner strength and use it in a positive direction. Be careful in communication; your words can have a deep impact. This week you may feel a new wave of energy, which will help you move faster towards your goals. Collaboration with colleagues in the professional field can yield great results. Meeting an old friend or relative can further strengthen your relationship. Maintain balance in personal life and keep everyone's point of view in mind. Be a little cautious in terms of health, it is especially important to pay attention to mental health. Meditation can be beneficial for you. Overall, this week is a good time for self-reflection and clarity of your intentions. Be ready to start new activities and move forward with positive energy.



SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says this week brings the principle of new possibilities and opportunities for Sagittarius natives. Your confidence will increase, and you will find the motivation to move forward towards

your goals. Some new challenges may come your way in the workplace, but your positive thinking and adaptability will lead you to success. Some new meetings are also possible in social life, which can open new avenues of friendship and cooperation for you. Reuniting with an old friend will give you mental peace. In your personal life, you will get a chance to spend time with family members. This time of communication and discussions with them will further strengthen the brotherhood. In terms of health, it is important to pay attention to routine. A little exercise and healthy food will keep your body and mind fresh. This week, consider reading new books or attending online courses to enhance your knowledge. This will prove to be beneficial for your personal and professional growth. Maintain a positive attitude and try to give your best in whatever you do. This week will prove to be a symbol of growth and new possibilities for you.



CAPRICORN

Ganesha says this week, it is time for Capricorn natives to focus on their goals. You may see the fruits of your efforts made in the past with your hard work and dedication. Colleagues at your workplace will support your ideas, which will allow you to get involved in new projects. Some positive changes will also come in social life. Time spent with friends and family will make you happy. Meeting an important person can prove beneficial for you, which will allow you to build new relationships. Special care is needed in terms of health. Even a little negligence can create problems. Try to maintain harmony and stay away from mental stress. The end of this week will be a time for you to clear your thoughts. It is the right time to understand your feelings and make necessary decisions. Listen to your inner voice and move forward with self-confidence.



AQUARIUS

Ganesha says this week may open the door to new possibilities for Aquarius natives. Your creativity and sense of freedom will help you reach new heights this week. Colleagues at work will appreciate your ideas, so be active in communication and do not hesitate to express your opinion. Harmony will prevail in personal relationships but try to spend time with your loved ones. This is the time to share emotions, which will strengthen your relationship. It is important to be health conscious. Take care of regular exercise and proper nutrition. Do not ignore mental health as well, for this practice meditation or yoga. This week may remain normal from the financial point of view but try to take advantage of sudden opportunities. In short, this week is indicating new beginnings and positive changes for you.

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : JAN 20, 2025 TO JAN 26 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

JANUARY 20

Ganesha says You enjoy reading to expand your knowledge, but you need to learn to control your desire when you are shy, cocky, or moody. Children can provide immense happiness and success in their chosen careers. Going on a distant journey or pilgrimage may be high on your agenda. Asset sales, rental income, dividends, and interest payments all result in a financial gain to the seller. Long-term investments and speculative ventures are also beneficial at this time.

JANUARY 21

Ganesha says today you should work on controlling your reckless and stubborn behavior at times. Entrepreneurs can diversify their businesses and pursue new, lucrative opportunities. If you are in the real estate business, you can do incredibly well, but you can expect some partner rivalry. You may be happy to hear some exciting news from your children later today. Make the most of your new romance, which may be new to you. Meditation and yoga should be practiced

for both spiritual and physical benefits.

JANUARY 22

Ganesha says starting new businesses is encouraged in times to come. Earlier sluggish projects can gain momentum. If there is any difference, it can be resolved, due to which you can feel relieved. Due to your competitive nature, you may always try to outperform others and be liked by your classmates. Friends can be cooperative but unpleasant. A love affair with colleagues is likely to develop, but it may be very fleeting.

JANUARY 23

Ganesha says at this time you can have a lot of energy and if you use it well then you can achieve great achievements. At the end of the year, there is a possibility of a long journey to attend some important event. It is not advisable to rely on friends and family as they may not be friendly. Financially, this appears to be an excellent time to buy equity and real estate, but all purchases should be made with the long term in mind.

JANUARY 24

Ganesha says the financial condition

of many people may improve today and some may inherit family property. Progress in business and financial gain can increase your confidence. Both academically and athletically, students can do incredibly well. People with high blood pressure or piles should be careful about their health. Legal issues running in your mind can be resolved to your satisfaction. For some, there are chances of promotion and increment.

JANUARY 25

Ganesha says to be aware of your tendency to be impulsive and hasty. To improve your productivity, take the initiative to adapt the workplace environment to your needs. You can target meetings with well-known delegates from around the world. You can be able to start saving for the future now. You can appreciate your partner being around. You have deep faith in God, and you may visit many holy places soon. Your attention can be drawn toward interior design and construction.

JANUARY 26

Ganesha says people may look at you with respect and reverence. You have the



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

patience to handle any situation. You can become a famous person who attracts everyone's attention due to your originality and well-planned work. Your short temper and eccentric nature can keep you away from social gatherings. Due to your powerful nature, you may have to lose your credibility. You can take matrimonial vows soon. Be patient, as it may take some more time to resolve your legal challenges.

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PISCES

Ganesha says this week you need to pay attention to your emotional aspects. You may feel a little sensitive yourself, and you must accept and understand your feelings. Your conscience will guide you in the right direction, so trust your intuition. On the work front, this week is indicating new possibilities and collaborations. Focus on new projects and work with a dedicated approach. Give importance to communication to maintain good relations with your colleagues. In your personal life, this is the time to increase love and affection. The company of your loved ones will excite you and strengthen your relationship. If there is any old misunderstanding, then this is the right time to clear it. In terms of health, pay special attention to mental health. Yoga and meditation can provide you with peace and balance. Keep yourself away from negativity and include positive thoughts in your life. Be active in your social life, meet new friends, and share your thoughts. This week is an opportunity for you to stay balanced and happy.

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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World Famous Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



Nastur Bejan Daruwalla

Bhanu Saptami: A Celebration of the Sun God

Bhanu Saptami, also known as Surya Jayanti, is a significant Hindu festival dedicated to the Sun God, Surya. Observed on the seventh day (Saptami) of the Shukla Paksha (waxing phase of the moon) in the Hindu month of Magha, this auspicious occasion celebrates the divine energy and life-giving force of the sun.

Mythological Significance

According to Hindu mythology, Bhanu Saptami marks the day when Lord Surya, the celestial source of light and energy, manifested in his full glory to illuminate the universe. The word Bhanu translates to "sun," and the festival is a tribute to the sun's role as the sustainer of life on Earth. Lord Surya is considered one of the Navagrahas (nine celestial planets) and is revered as a symbol of health, vitality, and prosperity.

The Sun God is often depicted riding a chariot driven by seven horses, symbolizing the seven colors of the spectrum and the seven days of the week. This imagery signifies Surya's control over time and his ability to dispel darkness and ignorance.

Rituals and Practices

Surya Puja

Devotees wake up early on Bhanu Saptami and take a holy bath, often in sacred rivers, lakes, or water bodies, to purify their body and soul. They then perform Surya Puja, offering water, red flowers, rice, and other sacred items to the rising sun. Chanting the Aditya Hridayam or other Surya mantras is a common practice during the puja.

Fasting

Many devotees observe a fast on Bhanu Saptami to seek the blessings of Lord Surya. The fast is typically broken in the evening with sattvic (pure) food.

Charity

Acts of charity hold special significance on this day. Donating food, clothes, or money to the needy is believed to bring prosperity and spiritual merit.

Special Offerings

Devotees prepare special dishes as offerings to Lord Surya. Traditional items include jaggery, wheat, and red-colored fruits or sweets, as these are considered auspicious and symbolic of the sun's energy.

Spiritual and Health Benefits

Bhanu Saptami holds great spiritual and health significance. The rituals performed on this day are believed to:

- Promote good health: Surya is associated with vitality and healing. Sun salutations (Surya Namaskar) and exposure to sunlight are emphasized for their physical and mental benefits.
- Enhance spiritual growth: Offering prayers to the Sun God helps devotees connect with cosmic energy and attain inner peace.
- Remove obstacles: Worshipping Surya on Bhanu Saptami is said to eliminate negativity and bring prosperity and success.

Regional Observances

Bhanu Saptami is celebrated with great fervor across India, particularly in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu. In South India, the festival is often observed as Ratha Saptami, where the focus is on Surya's chariot and his journey through the cosmos.

Temples dedicated to Lord Surya, such as the Konark Sun Temple in Odisha and the Suryanar Kovil in Tamil Nadu, witness grand celebrations, attracting devotees from far and wide.

Bhanu Saptami is more than just a religious observance; it is a celebration of the sun's life-sustaining energy and its profound impact on our existence. By honoring Lord Surya, devotees express gratitude for the blessings of health, vitality, and prosperity. This vibrant festival serves as a reminder of



Important information

Bhanu Saptami 2025

Tuesday, 21 January 2025

Saptami Start: 20 January 2025 at 09:59 am

Saptami Ends: 21 January 2025 at 12:40 pm

the sun's eternal presence and its pivotal role in our spiritual and physical well-being.

Legend of Surya

The Sun God, Surya, is a central figure in Vedic traditions, symbolizing light, knowledge, and life force. He is often depicted riding a golden chariot drawn by seven horses, representing the seven colors of light and the seven days of the week. The significance of Surya in Bhanu Saptami lies in his role as the eternal source of energy and vitality.

According to Hindu mythology, Surya is the son of sage Kashyapa and his wife Aditi, and he is considered one of the Adityas (celestial deities). The Rig Veda and other scriptures praise Surya as the

illuminator of the universe and the dispeller of darkness.

The Bhanu Saptami Story

Bhanu Saptami is believed to mark the day when Surya Deva first began illuminating the world with his brilliance. On this day, devotees honor the Sun God for his life-sustaining energy.

One popular legend relates to Lord Krishna's son, Samba, who was cursed with leprosy due to his arrogance. Samba undertook a rigorous penance to please Surya, bathing in the Chandrabhaga River (now Konark, Odisha) and offering prayers to the Sun God. Surya, impressed by Samba's devotion, cured him of his disease. This story highlights Surya's role as a healer and protector, making Bhanu Saptami a day of reverence for health and vitality.

Symbolism

Bhanu Saptami is not just a festival of rituals; it symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and the nurturing role of nature. It serves as a reminder to respect and harmonize with natural forces, fostering gratitude for the Sun's blessings.

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CONTD FROM PAGE 1

Israel govt approves Gaza ceasefire...

hostages. The framework for the hostages' release will come into effect on Sunday," Netanyahu's office said in a brief statement.

In Gaza itself, Israeli warplanes have kept up heavy attacks since the ceasefire deal was agreed. Medics in Gaza said an Israeli airstrike early on Saturday killed five people in a tent in the Mawasi area west of Khan Younis in the enclave's south.

This brought to 119 the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli bombardment since the accord was announced on Wednesday.

After the Israeli cabinet approval, lead US negotiator Brett McGurk said the plan was moving forward on track. The White House expects the ceasefire to start on Sunday morning, with three female hostages to be released to Israel on Sunday afternoon through the Red Cross.

"We have locked down every single detail in this agreement.

We are quite confident... it is ready to be implemented on Sunday," McGurk said on CNN from the White House.

Under the deal, the three-stage ceasefire starts with an initial six-week phase when hostages held by Hamas will be exchanged for prisoners detained by Israel.

Thirty-three of the 98 remaining Israeli hostages, including women, children, and men over 50, were due to be freed in this phase. Israel will release all Palestinian women and children under 19 in Israeli jails by the end of the first phase.

The names of 95 Palestinian prisoners to be turned over on Sunday were announced by the Israeli Justice Ministry on Friday.

After Sunday's hostage release, McGurk said the accord called for four more female hostages to be released after seven days followed by the release of three further hostages every seven days thereafter.

With the accord bitterly opposed by some Israeli cabinet hardliners, media reports said 24 ministers in Netanyahu's coalition government voted in favor of the deal while eight opposed it.

The opponents said the ceasefire agreement represented a capitulation to Hamas. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir threatened to resign if it was approved and urged other ministers to vote against it. However, he said he would not bring down the government.

His fellow hardliner, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, also threatened to quit the government if it does not go back to war to defeat Hamas after the first six-week phase of the ceasefire.

After a last-minute delay on Thursday that Israel blamed on Hamas, the Israeli security cabinet voted on Friday in favor of the ceasefire accord, the first of two approvals required.

Israel began its assault on Gaza after Hamas attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023 during which some 1,200 people were killed and 250 were taken hostage, according to Israeli tallies.

The war between Israeli forces and Hamas has razed much of heavily urbanized Gaza, killed more than 46,000 people and displaced most of the enclave's pre-war population of 2.3 million several times over, according to local authorities.

If successful, the ceasefire could also ease hostilities in the Middle East, where the Gaza war spread to include Iran and its proxies - Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis and armed groups in Iraq as well as the occupied West Bank.

Gaza civilians have faced a humanitarian crisis due to hunger, cold and sickness. The ceasefire agreement calls for a surge in assistance, and international organizations have aid trucks lined up on Gaza's borders to bring in food, fuel, medicine and other vital supplies.

Palestinian relief agency UNRWA said on Friday that it has 4,000 truckloads of aid, half of which are food, ready to enter the coastal strip.

Palestinians waiting for food in the southern Gaza Strip on Friday said they hoped a truce will mean an end to hours of queuing to fill one plate.

"I hope it will happen so we'll be able to cook in our

homes and make whatever food we want, without having to go to soup kitchens and exhaust ourselves for three or four hours trying to get (food) - sometimes not even making it home," displaced Palestinian Reeham Sheikh al-Eid said. (Source: Reuters)

Grand spiritual gatherings...



An aerial view of the mammoth gathering of devotees at the Mahakumbh



The Naga Sadhus in thousands descend at the Mahakumbh

ARRIVAL AND INAUGURATION

The grand opening of the Mahakumbh Mela on January 14, 2025, saw an overwhelming crowd of devotees and tourists, all eager to immerse themselves in the spiritual significance of the event. The day began with a ceremonial bathing procession led by religious leaders and saints, setting the tone for the vast spiritual celebration to follow.

Authorities reported the arrival of approximately 3 million pilgrims on the first day, all partaking in the ritual baths and praying at the temporary tented settlements that have sprung up along the riverbanks. As the day unfolded, the mesmerizing sight of pilgrims offering prayers and taking a holy dip in the Sangam resonated deeply with both locals and visitors. Special arrangements, including security and healthcare services, were put in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all attendees.

THE FIRST SHAHI SNAN

January 15 marked the first Shahi Snan (royal bath) of the Mahakumbh, a key moment in the Mela where ascetics, saints, and spiritual leaders take their ceremonial dips. This day attracted an estimated 5 million pilgrims, including thousands of Naga sadhus, the naked ascetics renowned for their fierce devotion. The sight of the Naga sadhus leading the procession to the river's edge added a dramatic and powerful element to the event.

The sacred bath is believed to purify the soul and cleanse sins, a tradition followed by millions who gathered from across the country and abroad. Many pilgrims were seen traveling on foot, some barefoot, through miles of sacred paths to reach the river. Several prominent spiritual leaders and gurus addressed the crowd, reinforcing the deep religious and cultural significance of the Mahakumbh Mela.

SPIRITUAL DISCOURSES AND CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

On January 16, the crowd remained steady as devotees continued to arrive in large numbers. Temples and makeshift pandals (tents) filled with spiritual discourses, cultural performances, and religious activities offered a space for reflection and celebration. Pilgrims engaged in yoga sessions, meditation, and group chants, underscoring the spiritual essence of the Mela.

In addition to the religious rituals, several cultural programs were organized throughout the day. Traditional dance, music, and art performances brought the vibrant cultural heritage of India to the forefront, adding to the sense of unity and collective spirituality. Many local artists and craftsmen also set up stalls to showcase their work, contributing to the lively atmosphere of the event.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOGISTICS

Authorities have made extensive arrangements to handle the massive crowds, with a focus on ensuring safety and comfort for the pilgrims. Over 50,000 police officers, paramedics, and volunteers are deployed to maintain order and provide assistance where needed. Special trains, buses, and temporary accommodation facilities have been set up to cater for the millions of visitors arriving daily. Clean drinking water, food stalls, and medical camps are also available across the venue.

With ongoing health and safety measures, including sanitation facilities, temperature checks, and COVID-19 monitoring, the administration is striving to provide a safe environment amidst the heavy footfall.

The Mahakumbh Mela 2025 is expected to continue its spiritual and cultural momentum in the coming weeks, with several more significant bathing days and religious activities scheduled. The Mela will culminate with the final Shahi Snan on the auspicious day of Mauni Amavasya, expected to draw the largest crowd.

For millions, the Mahakumbh is more than just an event-it is a journey of faith, purification, and renewal. As the first three days have shown, it is a living testament to India's rich spiritual heritage, drawing people from all walks of life to experience a profound connection with the divine.

India gears up to celebrate R-Day

is all set to be the chief guest for India's 76th Republic Day celebrations. This visit marks a significant milestone in the enduring relationship between India and Indonesia as President Subianto will undertake his first state visit to India after assuming office in October 2024.

The invitation for this state visit was extended by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the Indonesian President is scheduled to visit India from January 25-26, 2025. The visit not only celebrates the warm and friendly ties between the two nations but also commemorates the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Indonesia.

One of the key moments during the visit will be President Subianto's ceremonial welcome by Indian President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Following this, he will meet with Prime Minister Modi at Hyderabad House on January 25, 2025, for discussions aimed at enhancing ties across multiple sectors, including defense, health, education, culture, maritime safety, and traditional medicine.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Biden Says He Ratified New...

"In keeping with my oath and duty to Constitution and country, I affirm what I believe and what three-fourths of the states have ratified: the 28th Amendment is the law of the land, guaranteeing all Americans equal rights and protections under the law regardless of their sex." Biden pointed to how Virginia in 2020 became the 38th state to ratify the ERA, which would prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender.

The U.S. archivist and U.S. deputy archivist said in late 2024 that the president could not ratify the amendment because the amendment did not receive the required support from three-fourths of the states by the deadline Congress imposed, which was June 30, 1982.

The Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel in 2020, while Donald Trump was president, and in 2022, after Biden took office, also said that ratification cannot occur unless Congress or the courts extend or remove the ratification deadline.

However, the American Bar Association (ABA) is among the organizations that have offered a different view: that Virginia's ratification was sufficient to meet the three-quarters requirement, and the deadline is not relevant.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Discover Assam: The Jewel of Northeast India

Assam, nestled in the heart of Northeast India, is a land of unparalleled beauty and cultural richness. Renowned for its vibrant tea gardens, unique wildlife, and the mighty Brahmaputra River, Assam offers an eclectic mix of experiences for travelers. Whether you are a nature lover, history enthusiast, or someone seeking spiritual tranquility, Assam has something to enthrall you.

A Glimpse into Assam's Cultural Tapestry

Home to diverse communities, Assam boasts a rich cultural heritage. The state is famous for its traditional dance forms like Bihu and Sattriya and its handwoven textiles like Muga silk, often referred to as the "golden fiber." The festivals, particularly Bihu, Rongali Bihu, and Durga Puja, are celebrated with much fervor and showcase the state's cultural vibrancy.

How to Reach Assam

Assam is well-connected to major cities in India and neighboring countries.

- **By Air:** Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati is the primary gateway, with flights to and from major cities like Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai.
- **By Train:** Assam's railway network connects it to many parts of India. Guwahati Railway Station is the central hub.
- **By Road:** The state has a well-maintained road network, with national highways linking it to neighboring states.

Best Time to Visit

The ideal time to visit Assam is between October and April, when the weather is pleasant, and the landscape is lush from post-monsoon greenery. This period also aligns with major festivals and offers opportunities for wildlife spotting.

Top Places to Visit in Assam

Kaziranga National Park

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Kaziranga is synonymous with the one-horned rhinoceros. Spread over 430 sq km, the park is a haven for wildlife enthusiasts. Apart from rhinos, you can spot elephants, tigers, wild water buffalo, and numerous bird species. Jeep safaris and elephant rides offer close encounters with the park's inhabitants.

Manas National Park

Another UNESCO World Heritage Site, Manas National Park, is renowned for its biodiversity and stunning landscapes. Nestled at the foothills of the Himalayas, it is home to rare species like the golden langur and pygmy hog. Adventure seekers can also enjoy river rafting and birdwatching here.

Majuli Island

The world's largest river island, Majuli, is a cultural treasure. Located on the Brahmaputra River, Majuli is known for its Satras (Vaishnavite monasteries) that preserve traditional art, dance, and music. Visitors can explore the island's serene landscapes, interact with local



tribes, and witness pottery-making.

Guwahati

As Assam's largest city, Guwahati offers a mix of urban life and cultural heritage. Key attractions include:

- **Kamakhya Temple:** A revered Shakti Peeth dedicated to Goddess Kamakhya.
- **Umananda Temple:** Situated on Peacock Island in the Brahmaputra River.
- **Assam State Museum:** Showcasing artifacts from Assam's history and culture.
- **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary:** Known for its high density of one-horned rhinoceroses.

Sivasagar

A historical town, Sivasagar was the capital of the Ahom dynasty. The town is dotted with architectural marvels, including:

- **Rang Ghar:** Asia's oldest amphitheater.
- **Talatal Ghar:** A multi-storied palace with underground tunnels.
- **Shivadol:** An iconic Shiva temple surrounded by lush greenery.

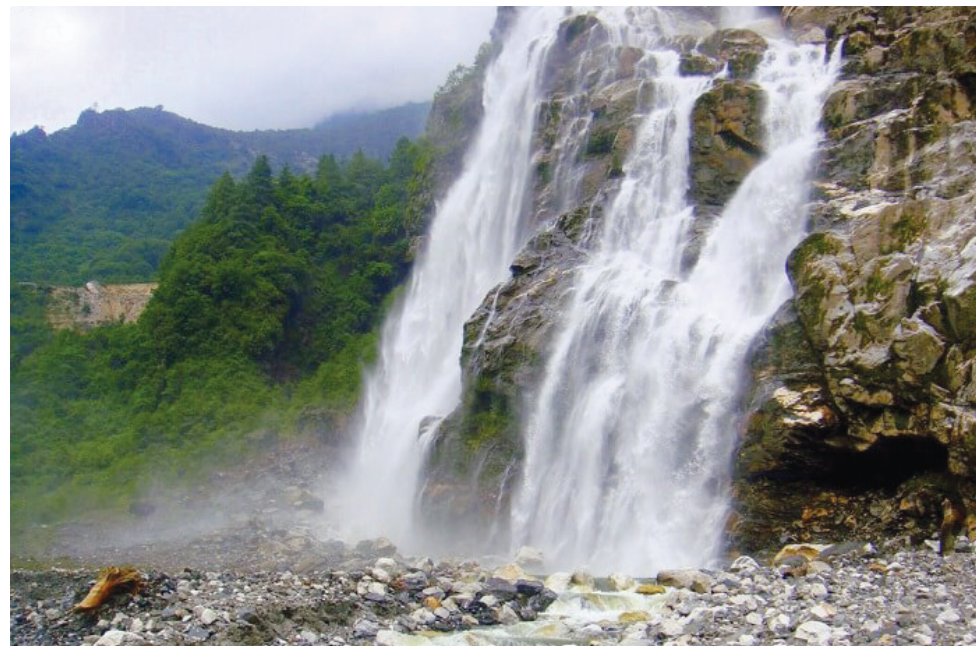
Tezpur

Known as the "City of Eternal Romance," Tezpur is steeped in mythology and natural beauty. Key attractions include:

- **Agnigarh Hill:** Associated with the legend of Usha and Aniruddha.
- **Cole Park:** A picturesque spot with fountains and sculptures.
- **Bhalukpong:** A gateway to Arunachal Pradesh, offering river rafting and trekking.

Jorhat

Often called the "Tea Capital of Assam," Jorhat is a hub for tea



plantations and Assamese culture. Must-visit spots include:

- **Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary:** A haven for the hoolock gibbon.
- **Tocklai Tea Research Institute:** A center for tea research and development.

Haflong

Assam's only hill station, Haflong, is a paradise for nature lovers. Surrounded by rolling hills and serene lakes, it offers activities like trekking and birdwatching. Don't miss the picturesque Haflong Lake and the Maibong ruins nearby.

Dibrugarh

Known as the "Tea City of India," Dibrugarh offers a unique blend of natural beauty and modernity. Visitors can explore vast tea estates, take a cruise on the Brahmaputra, and enjoy local cuisine.

Silchar

Located in southern Assam, Silchar is known for its scenic beauty and vibrant Barak Valley culture. The town's highlights include:

- **Khaspur Ruins:** Remnants of the ancient Dimasa kingdom.
- **Maniharan Tunnel:** A site of mythological importance.

Unique Experiences in Assam

Tea Tourism

Assam's tea estates offer immersive experiences where visitors can learn about tea cultivation, processing, and tasting. Popular estates like Mancotta and Ethelwold in Dibrugarh provide guided tours.

River Cruises on the Brahmaputra

Luxury cruises on the Brahmaputra River offer breathtaking views of the surrounding landscapes. These cruises often include cultural performances, wildlife spotting, and visits to riverside villages.

History This Week JAN 17 - JAN 23

JANUARY 17

January 17, 1945 - During World War II, Warsaw, Poland, was liberated by Soviet Russian troops.

January 17, 1966 - A Hydrogen bomb accident occurred over Palomares, Spain, as an American B-52 jet collided with its refueling plane. Eight crewmen were killed and the bomber then released its H-bomb into the Atlantic.

Birthday - Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Considered the Elder Statesman of the American Revolution, he displayed multiple talents as a printer, author, publisher, philosopher, scientist, diplomat and philanthropist. He signed both the Declaration of Independence and the new U.S. Constitution.



Birthday - Muhammad Ali was born in Louisville, Kentucky, January 17, 1942 (as Cassius Clay). At age 22 in 1964, he knocked out Sonny Liston to win the world heavyweight boxing championship, shouting out "I shook up the world!" After converting to the Muslim religion, the boxing superstar became an outspoken conscientious objector (on religious grounds) to America's escalating involvement in the Vietnam War and refused military duty upon being drafted. As a result, he was stripped of his boxing title, banned from boxing, and subsequently jailed. After a long legal battle, his conviction was reversed and he regained the championship in 1974 by defeating George Foreman. In the early 1980s, after retiring from boxing, Ali revealed his new struggle with Parkinson's disease. However, he has remained active, devoting himself to various philanthropic and humanitarian causes.

JANUARY 18



January 18, 1966 - Robert Clifton Weaver was sworn in as the first African American cabinet member in U.S. history, becoming President Lyndon B. Johnson's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Birthday - American orator and politician Daniel Webster (1782-1852) was born in Salisbury, New Hampshire. "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!" he stated in the U.S. Senate in 1830 in response to Southern Senators who contended that individual

states had the right to refuse to obey Congress.

JANUARY 19



January 19, 1966 - Indira Gandhi was elected prime minister of India in succession to Lal Shastri who had died eight days earlier. She served until 1975 and later from 1980 to 1984, when she was assassinated by her own bodyguards as she walked to her office. Her only surviving son, Rajiv, became the next prime minister. In 1991, he was assassinated while campaigning for reelection.

January 19, 1983 - Former Gestapo official Klaus Barbie, known as the "Butcher of Lyon," was arrested in Bolivia, South America. He was responsible for deporting Jewish children from Lyon to Auschwitz where they were gassed. He also murdered French Resistance leader Jean Moulin and tortured others. He was exposed by Nazi hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, extradited in 1987, then convicted by the French and died while in prison.

Birthday - Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) military leader of the Confederacy during the American Civil War, was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia. He was the son of a Revolutionary War hero, a graduate of West Point and served in the U.S. Army for 25 years preceding the Civil War. At the outbreak of hostilities, he was offered command of the Union Army, but declined and instead accepted command of the military and naval forces of Virginia.

Birthday - Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849) poet and writer of mystery and suspense tales, was born in Boston, Massachusetts. His works include; The Fall of the House of Usher, Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, The Murders in the Rue Morgue and his famous poem The Raven.

JANUARY 20



January 20, 1936 - King George V of England died at age 71. The grandson of Queen Victoria, he had reigned since 1910. He renamed his line as the House of Windsor, breaking his association with the family's German line of descent. He was succeeded by his son King Edward VIII who abdicated in December and was succeeded by George VI.

January 20, 1942 - During the Holocaust, Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's second in command of the SS, convened the Wannsee Conference in

Berlin with 15 top Nazi bureaucrats to coordinate the Final Solution (Endlösung) in which the Nazis would attempt to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe, an estimated 11 million persons.

January 20, 1945 - Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated to an unprecedented fourth term as president of the United States. He had served since 1933.

January 20, 1981 - Ronald Reagan became president of the United States at the age of 69, the oldest president to take office. During his inauguration celebrations, he announced that 52 American hostages that had been seized in the U.S. embassy in Tehran, Iran, were being released after 444 days in captivity.

January 20, 1996 - Yasir Arafat became the first democratically-elected leader of the Palestinian people with 88.1 percent of the vote.

JANUARY 21



January 21, 1924 - Soviet Russian leader Vladimir Lenin died of a brain hemorrhage. He led the Bolsheviks to victory over the Czar in the October Revolution of 1917 and had then established the world's first Communist government. Lenin's body was placed in a tomb in Red Square in Moscow and was a much venerated national shrine until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

January 21, 1954 - The USS Nautilus, the world's first nuclear powered submarine, was launched at Groton, Connecticut.

January 21, 1976 - The Concorde supersonic jet began passenger service with flights from London to Bahrain and Paris to Rio de Janeiro, cruising at twice the speed of sound (Mach 2) at an altitude up to 60,000 feet.

Birthday - Ethan Allen (1738-1789) was born in Litchfield, Connecticut. He was a hero of the American Revolution who led the small force that captured Fort Ticonderoga in New York without bloodshed in 1775. The fort contained much needed supplies and ammunition.

Birthday - Confederate Army General "Stonewall" Jackson (1824-1863) was born in Clarksburg, Virginia (as Thomas Jonathan Jackson). He was a West Point graduate who served in the Mexican War then resigned to teach at the Virginia Military Institute. He sided with the South and became a Brigadier General, earning his nickname at the first battle of Bull Run as his troops held firm while others wavered. "There is Jackson standing like a stone wall," a fellow general commented. He was shot in 1863 by a Confederate lookout who had mistaken him in the dark. "I have lost my right arm," lamented General Lee upon his death.

JANUARY 22

January 22, 1943 - During World War II in the Pacific, Japanese resistance ended in New Guinea, resulting in the first land

victory of the war for Allied forces.



January 22, 1973 - Abortion became legal in the U.S. as the Supreme Court announced its decision in the case of Roe vs. Wade striking down local state laws restricting abortions in the first six months of pregnancy. In more recent rulings (1989 and 1992) the Court upheld the power of individual states to impose some restrictions.

Birthday - British essayist, philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was born in London. Best known for his philosophical works concerning the acquisition of knowledge; Novum Organum and The Advancement of Learning.

JANUARY 23

January 23, 1937 - In Moscow, 17 leading Communists went on trial, accused of participating in a plot engineered by Leon Trotsky to overthrow Stalin's regime and assassinate its leaders. After a seven-day trial, 13 of them were sentenced to death. Trotsky fled to Mexico where he was assassinated in 1940.



January 23, 1943 - In North Africa, British forces under General Bernard Montgomery captured Tripoli in Libya.

January 23, 1968 - The American ship USS Pueblo was seized by North Koreans in the Sea of Japan amid claims the Navy ship was spying. The ship was confiscated and its crew held in captivity until December, with one fatality.

Birthday - Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) was born in Riga, Latvia. He developed a new way of film making utilizing artistic montages (a series of arbitrary images) to deliver an emotional impact. Prior to him, most film makers showed scenes in strictly chronological sequences. His classic films include Potemkin, Alexander Nevsky, and Ivan the Terrible.

BCCI lays out strict guidelines for players after Australia debacle

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has introduced a comprehensive 10-point policy aimed at addressing the "star culture" within the Indian cricket team and fostering a sense of unity and discipline. Announced on Thursday, January 16, these measures follow a series of disappointing performances, including a 3-0 loss against New Zealand and the recent surrender of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy to Australia.

New guidelines set out for players

The new guidelines require players to maintain discipline on and off the field, with specific restrictions on family presence during tours and the banning of personal endorsements during ongoing series. This policy stems from a review meeting with head coach Gautam Gambhir, who voiced concerns over the team's approach to preparation and professionalism.

Mandatory Participation in Domestic Cricket

The BCCI has made it compulsory for players to participate in domestic cricket matches. This move is designed to ensure that players stay connected with the domestic cricket ecosystem, helping maintain match fitness, develop talent, and strengthen the overall domestic structure. Any exceptions will require approval from chairman of selectors, Ajit Agarkar. The policy highlights the growing concern over the lack of participation from top players in Ranji Trophy matches. Notable players like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma have not featured in the tournament for years, a trend the BCCI aims to reverse.

Approval Required for Family Stays on Tour

The BCCI has introduced strict guidelines regarding family visits during overseas tours. Players must obtain approval from both the head coach and the chairman of selectors for any relaxation, including the duration of family stays. Families will only be allowed to stay for up to two weeks during overseas tours that exceed 45 days. This policy is aimed at promoting discipline and team cohesion.

Traveling with the Team

To ensure unity, players are now expected to travel with the team for all matches and practice sessions. Separate travel arrangements, particularly with families, are discouraged. Any exceptions to this rule must be pre-approved by the head coach and the chairman of selectors. The BCCI is enforcing this rule after a few players, including a prominent



star, were seen traveling separately during tours, including the South Africa assignment and the recent Australia tour.

Excess Baggage Regulations

The new policy also imposes a limit on the amount of baggage players can carry during long tours. The weight limit for baggage has been set at 150 kg. Any additional baggage costs will now be borne by the players themselves. This regulation was introduced after several players were found to be carrying excess baggage, often including the bags of family members and personal staff.

Restrictions on Personal Staff

The BCCI has also placed restrictions on the presence of personal staff, such as managers, chefs, assistants, and security, during tours and series. Only those staff members who are explicitly approved by the BCCI will be allowed to travel with the team. This rule follows incidents where players, including Gautam Gambhir, had brought personal staff members into the team setup without prior approval. The move is intended to keep the team environment streamlined and focused.

Coordination for Equipment

and Personal Items

Players are now required to coordinate with the team management when sending their equipment and personal items to the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru. Any additional costs incurred due to separate arrangements will be the responsibility of the players. Some senior players have previously been criticized for sending their equipment ahead of their arrival, leading to unapproved excess costs.

Staying for Entire Practice Sessions

A key component of the new policy is ensuring that players remain committed to their training. All players are mandated to stay for the full duration of scheduled practice sessions. The new rule will prevent any player from leaving early, a habit previously adopted by some star players who would leave the nets early in a separate car. This regulation aims to foster a strong work ethic within the team.

Prohibition on Personal Commercial Endorsements

The BCCI has banned players from engaging in personal commercial endorsements or shoots during an ongoing series or tour. This restriction aims to eliminate distractions and ensure that players stay focused on their cricketing responsibilities. The board has also emphasized that players must prioritize team functions and official shoots, even if a series or match ends prematurely.

End of Series, Staying with the Team

Players are now required to remain with the team even if a series or match concludes early. This is part of an effort to maintain team spirit and commitment to the overall goals of the team, ensuring players are present and engaged until the very end of a tour or series.



India dominate Bhutan by 37 points, secure quarter-final spot in Kho Kho WC 2025

India continued their impressive run in the Kho Kho World Cup 2025, securing a commanding 71-34 victory over Bhutan at the IG Indoor Stadium on Thursday, Jan 16. The win guarantees India's position at the top of Group A and a place in the quarter-finals.

The hosts set the tone early in the first turn, displaying exceptional attacking prowess to accumulate 32 points. The Indian team's skydiving skills were particularly noteworthy, with players demonstrating remarkable agility throughout the match, according to a release from Kho Kho World Cup 2025.

In the second turn, India showcased their defensive expertise, effectively containing Bhutan's attacks. Despite Bhutan's speed, they managed only 18 points across three batches, thanks to India's strategic play and clever opposition management.

The third turn saw India return to attack mode with renewed vigour. Nikhil emerged as a standout performer with his exceptional skydiving abilities, helping the team secure 36 points. The Indians demonstrated excellent coordination in their Khos, combining running touches and skydives effectively.

Bhutan struggled in their final attacking turn, managing just 9 points in more than half the allocated time. India's overall performance included an impressive tally of 18 skydives, 2 post-dive points, and 8 running touchpoints across their attacking turns.

The 39-point victory margin reflects India's dominance in the match, as they continue their unbeaten streak in the tournament. Having previously defeated Nepal, India looks well-positioned heading into the knockout stages of the competition.

Meanwhile, In a masterclass of strategy and skill, the Indian women's kho kho team crushed Malaysia with a commanding victory. Starting with a spectacular Dream Run by defenders Bhilar Opinaben and Monika, Team India dominated across all four turns, securing an emphatic 80-point win. The victory cemented India's position atop Group A with a massive score difference, setting up a quarterfinal clash with Bangladesh.



An Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh combatting avoidable blindness in children.

"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MD. I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautifully facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses, and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"

Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



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In 2018 Prasanth, Sushanth and Nisanth were diagnosed and treated for Prematurity Retinopathy. An illness in premature babies which can cause blindness.

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.