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'Are we not creating a class of parasites?' Supreme Court of India says on freebie culture



"Rather than permitting them to be a part of the mainstream society by contributing to the development of the nation, are we not creating a class of parasites?" a Bench of Justice BR Gavai and Justice AG Masih wondered.

February 12, 2025 NEW DELHI (TIP): As political parties continued to make irrational poll-eve promises, the Supreme Court on Wednesday, February 12, took a dig at the freebie culture, saying people were not willing to work as they were getting free ration and money. "Unfortunately, because of these freebies which, just on the anvil of election -- 'Ladki Bahin' and some other

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# India's Prime Minister Modi to hold talks with President Trump

DISCUSSIONS TO FOCUS ON RAMPING UP INDIA-US COOPERATION IN DIVERSE FIELDS  
JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE WITH TRUMP ON CARDS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Tulsi Gabbard, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence

I.S. SALUJA  
FEBRUARY 12, 2025  
WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived today in Washington, D.C. to a warm welcome. He will meet President Donald Trump during his 2-day official working visit to the US.

This is Modi's first visit to the US since the inauguration of Trump who assumed office on January 20.

In the meeting between PM Modi and Donald Trump, the two leaders are likely to broadly focus on ramping up India-US cooperation in sectors like trade, investment, energy, defense, technology and immigration. With Mr. Trump's tariff policy sending

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## Ex-Congress MP Sajjan guilty of double murder during '84 riots

Arguments on quantum of sentence slated for Feb 18



Sajjan Kumar has been found guilty of murder and dacoity. Quantum of sentence is scheduled for February 18

File photo

Section 149 of the IPC," Special Judge Kaveri Baweja said.

### ALSO CONVICTED OF DACOITY

Besides murder, Sajjan (79) has also been convicted of rioting, dacoity, attempting to cause death, committing culpable homicide and burning the victim's house as a member of an unlawful assembly

CONTD ON PAGE 34

## US to deport 2nd batch of illegal immigrants to India

The US action comes as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Washington to hold wide-ranging talks with President Donald Trump



The US military plane that brought deported Indian immigrants is seen at Amritsar airport on February 5, 2025. File photo

FEBRUARY 13, 2025  
WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The US will soon deport another batch of 170-180 illegal immigrants to India. This would be the second batch of immigrants to be deported by the US government. These are individuals who entered the US through "donkey routes" or other illegal means, spending thousands of dollars, and have been staying in the US for the last one to three years.

Though official confirmation from Indian officials is awaited, the US administration sources have said that the deportation could take place this week only. Earlier, the first batch had landed at the Shri Guru Ramdas Ji International

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## COMMENT

# Great Expectations from Trump-Modi Meeting

By Indrajit Saluja



The diplomatic relationship between the United States and India has experienced significant shifts over recent years, influenced by leadership changes and evolving geopolitical dynamics. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarks on a two-day visit to Washington, D.C., from February 12 to 13, 2025, to meet President Donald Trump, several critical issues are poised to shape the discourse between the two nations.

During President Trump's first term, he and Prime Minister Modi developed a notably close rapport. This camaraderie was exemplified by events such as the "Howdy Modi" rally in Houston in 2019, where Modi endorsed Trump's leadership before a crowd of over 50,000 Indian Americans when he gave the slogan "Abki Baar, Trump Sarkaar". However, the subsequent Biden administration saw a noticeable decline in high-profile interactions between the two leaders, leading to speculations about a cooling of personal ties.

Trade has been a cornerstone of U.S.-India relations, but it has also been a source of contention. President Trump has frequently criticized India's trade practices, labeling the country as the "tariff king" due to its high average tariffs of 14%, which surpass those of China and Canada. In response, India has initiated measures to reduce tariffs on various U.S. products, including smartphone components and electric vehicle battery materials, aiming to improve trade relations and mitigate potential U.S. retaliatory tariffs.

Despite these efforts, the trade imbalance remains significant. In the fiscal year 2023/24, bilateral trade reached \$118 billion, with India maintaining a trade surplus of \$32 billion. To address U.S. concerns, India has increased imports of American oil and gas and is considering more energy

imports amidst recent tariff changes favoring American products.

Defense collaboration has been a bright spot in U.S.-India relations. The U.S. has become a significant arms supplier to India, with recent deals including the sale of U.S.-made MQ-9B SeaGuardian drones and a partnership between General Electric and Hindustan Aeronautics to produce jet engines. These agreements underscore the deepening military ties between the two nations.

Both countries share a strategic interest in countering China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. has advocated for a more assertive role for India within the Quad-a strategic grouping that includes the U.S., India, Japan, and Australia. However, there is speculation that President Trump may adopt a less confrontational stance toward China in his second term, potentially diminishing India's strategic importance in U.S. regional policy.

Immigration remains a complex and sensitive topic in U.S.-India relations. The U.S. has expressed concerns over the increasing number of undocumented Indian immigrants, with over 25,000 arrests on the Mexican border recently. In response, the Modi government has announced plans to repatriate approximately 18,000 Indian nationals living illegally in the U.S. aiming to demonstrate cooperation with U.S. authorities and protect legal immigration pathways vital for Indian skilled workers.

The recent deportation of 104 Indian nationals, who were reportedly

handcuffed and leg-chained during their return on a U.S. military plane, has sparked controversy and criticism within India. Opposition lawmakers have condemned the treatment of the deportees, urging the Modi government to address the issue with U.S. counterparts.

Given the multifaceted nature of U.S.-India relations, the upcoming meeting between President Trump and Prime Minister Modi is expected to cover a broad spectrum of topics.

Trade and Tariffs: Discussions will likely focus on further reducing trade imbalances, with India potentially offering additional concessions on tariffs and increasing imports of American goods.

Defense Cooperation: Both leaders may explore opportunities to expand defense ties, including potential new arms deals and joint military exercises.

Immigration: Addressing the complexities of illegal immigration and ensuring the protection of legal immigration channels for skilled Indian workers will be crucial.

Geopolitical Issues: The leaders are expected to discuss regional security concerns, including the situations in Gaza and Ukraine, as well as strategies to manage China's influence in the Indo-Pacific.

As Prime Minister Modi and President Trump prepare for their first meeting in Trump's second term, the dynamics of U.S.-India relations stand at a critical juncture. While past warmth between the two leaders may have cooled, the strategic imperatives of both nations necessitate a pragmatic approach to collaboration. The outcomes of this meeting will be pivotal in shaping the future trajectory of bilateral ties, with significant implications for trade, defense, and regional security.

## GUEST COMMENT

## Justice delayed

### SC calls out lax prosecution in 1984 riot cases

Over four decades have passed, but for the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, time has not dulled the wounds of injustice. The Supreme Court's remarks on Monday questioning the Delhi police's laxity in prosecuting cases - especially their failure to challenge acquittals - highlight a troubling reality: justice for the victims remains elusive. Out of the 650 registered cases, charge-sheets were filed in only 362 cases, and convictions secured in a mere 39. The rest - more than 300 - resulted in acquittals, many unchallenged by the prosecution. The apex court's observation that

"prosecution must be carried out seriously, not just for the sake of it" underscores a decades-long pattern of neglect. When the Justice Dhingra Committee - which was set up following a PIL filed by former Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee member Gurlad Singh Kahlon - found in 2020 that several investigations had been derailed, there was a flicker of hope for accountability. Yet, even now, the appeals against acquittals seem more perfunctory than purposeful.

For survivors, the trauma is not just about the horror they witnessed but also the systemic betrayal that followed.

Statements given in court paint a grim picture - families torn apart, homes burned and a justice system that remains indifferent. The Supreme Court's intervention offers a chance to correct past wrongs, but will it amount to real action? The Delhi police's excuse of "lack of evidence" after nearly four decades is an indictment of their own inefficiency, if not complicity.

Justice cannot be an afterthought or a delayed formality. The court's scrutiny must translate into concrete steps - proper legal representation, fresh investigations where needed, and, above all, an unwavering commitment to ensuring that the guilty do not walk free. Until then, the victims of 1984 will continue to wait for a closure that seems forever out of reach.

(Tribune, India)

# AAPI Mourns the Passing Away of Dr. Sampat Shivangi

Dr. Shivangi has left an indelible mark on the Indian American community": Dr. Satheesh Kathula

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

**CHICAGO (TIP):** "We are deeply saddened and shocked by the sudden passing away of Dr. Sampat Shivangi, a physician, an influential Indian American community leader, and a veteran leader of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI)," said Dr. Satheesh Kathula, President of AAPI.

Describing Dr. Shivangi as "A trailblazer of the Indian Diaspora," Dr. Kathula, who has known Dr. Shivangi for decades and has worked closely in several AAPI-led initiatives, said, "Dr. Shivangi has left an indelible mark on the Indian American community. Over the decades, he dedicated his time and efforts to serving AAPI and numerous other Indian American organizations. His leadership, vision, and tireless commitment to advocating for the community set him apart as a pillar of strength and guidance."

"AAPI is proud of Dr. Shivangi's numerous accomplishments, leadership, and contributions to the greater cause of the Indian Diaspora, Indo-US relationship, and particularly for his dedication to



Dr. Shivangi contributed immensely "to the greater cause of the Indian Diaspora, Indo-US relationship, and particularly for his dedication to enhancing the mission of AAPI", said Dr. Sunil Kaza, Chair of AAPI Board of Trustees. He was recognized for his contribution at the highest levels. In this picture he is seen receiving the coveted Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award from the then President of India, Pranab Mukherji

enhancing the mission of AAPI," said Dr. Sunil Kaza, Chair of AAPI Board of Trustees.

Among many other initiatives that Dr. Shivangi led at AAPI during his decades long association, the most outstanding has been his leadership in organizing the annual Legislative day under several Presidents of AAPI. He was instrumental in personally contacting and inviting several lawmakers, including prominent US Senators and Congressman to the Legislative day.

Dr. Amit Chakrabarty, President-Elect of AAPI said, "The Indian American community has lost a great leader, philanthropist, and friend whose contributions will continue to resonate for generations. Through his philanthropic efforts, Dr. Shivangi touched countless lives, always striving to make a positive impact both in the healthcare sector and within the broader community.

Dr. Shivangi has been actively involved in several philanthropic activities, serving with Blind Foundation of MS, Diabetic, Cancer and Heart Associations of America. Dr. Shivangi has a number of philanthropic works in India including Primary & middle schools, Cultural Center, and IMA Centers that he opened and helped to obtain the first ever US Congressional grant to AAPI to study Diabetes Mellitus amongst Indian Americans.

It was only about a month ago that the President of



Dr. Sampat Shivangi's passing away is a terrible loss for the Indian American community.

India, Droupadi Muramu inaugurated the newly built Dr. Sampat Kumar S. Shivangi Cancer Hospital in Belagavi, Karnataka. Spanning 1,75,000 square feet with a capacity of 300 beds, the hospital was built with cutting-edge technology with funds donated and raised by Dr. Sampat Shivangi, a distinguished Indian American community leader with a profound impact on healthcare, education, and cultural preservation across India and the United States.

"A dream comes true! It fills my heart with immense pride and gratitude for the new state-of-the-art Dr. Sampat Kumar S Shivangi Cancer Hospital in my beloved home state, Belagavi, has finally become a reality," Dr. Sampat Shivangi, who donated his family fortunes to build this much needed, cancer hospital in a rural region in the state of Karnataka, said here.

"Having lived in India for three decades, in not so privileged and progressive parts of the world, it always touched my heart and Atma why so and why not we all have equal playing field on earth," Dr. Shivangi said, when asked about what led him to his decision to donate his money, time, efforts and skills.

"During my years in hospitals as a student, resident and staff, I was devastated. I had a great desire to do something that helps people, including for the need to establish a cancer hospital in my native town, where people have to travel hundreds of miles away for such a treatment and possibly could not afford the travel, stay, or medical expenses."

Describing the goals of the Cancer Hospital and the Charitable Foundation, Dr. Shivangi, a soft-spoken physician says, "The Charitable Foundation was set up several years ago to establish, promote, and provide the needy and the downtrodden fellow human beings with opportunities to access quality education, promote mental health awareness, ensure healthcare equity, support tribal communities in their holistic development, empower women to break barriers, and leverage sports as a catalyst for positive change."

In addition to establishing the Dr. Sampat Kumar S. Shivangi Cancer Hospital in Karnataka, through the Dr. Sampat Shivangi Foundation, Dr. Shivangi has established multiple charitable institutions in India, including primary and middle schools, community halls, and healthcare facilities, greatly enhancing educational and healthcare access for underserved communities.

In the U.S., Dr. Shivangi has contributed to establishing a Hindu Temple in Jackson, Mississippi, providing a cultural and spiritual hub for the Hindu community and beyond. Recognized for his exemplary service, a street in Mississippi bears his name, a testament to his contributions to healthcare and community welfare.

Over the years, in the pursuit of its vision, the Dr. Sampat Shivangi Foundation has come to be known for its belief and tireless efforts that every individual deserves an opportunity to thrive, and is a beacon of hope, fostering resilience and building a more inclusive and harmonious world for all.

At the heart of societal transformation, the Dr. Sampat Shivangi Foundation stands as a testament to unwavering commitment and compassion. The foundation is built upon the pillars of education, healthcare, mental well-being, tribal support, women's empowerment, and sports development. With a profound understanding of the multifaceted needs of underprivileged communities, we have designed a range of initiatives that address these vital aspects of human well-being.

As the first Indian American to serve on the Board of the Mississippi State Department of Mental Health, Dr. Shivangi has made significant strides in mental health advocacy. His leadership extends to national positions, serving on the National Board of Directors for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), appointed by Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

A dedicated advocate for Indo-U.S. relations, Dr. Shivangi has contributed to key initiatives, including



Dr. Shivangi was a veteran leader of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI). From L to R: AAPI President Dr. Satheesh Kathula, Dr. Sampat Shivangi.

the Indo-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement, collaborating with President George W. Bush to strengthen ties between the two nations. His commitment to India is further reflected in his coordination efforts with the White House to lift sanctions against India during President Bill Clinton's administration.

A recipient of numerous awards, including the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award, The US Congressional Recognition Award, the Ellis Medal of Honor Award, Lifetime Achievement Award by the Indo-American Press Club, Dr. Shivangi's legacy reflects a lifelong dedication to improving lives through healthcare, philanthropy, and international diplomacy.

Dr. Shivangi said, he always thought about why, the Indian Americans especially, the Physician fraternity, consisting of more than 100,000 physicians in the United States are not willing to undertake philanthropy in their homeland or in USA. "My hope and prayers is that, many more will follow me just as my dream has come true today. I urge my fellow Indo-American physicians to join this movement and help change the world for the better. My humble request is that let us be the change, and bring this movement to make our world different tomorrow. I hope my prayers will be answered one day and all humanity lives in a better world."

Dr. Shivangi is married to Dr. Udaya S. Shivangi, MD, and the couple are blessed with two daughters: Priya S. Shivangi, MS (NYU); and Pooja S. Shivangi, who is an Attorney at Law. "His legacy will remain an inspiration for all who knew him, and his absence will be deeply felt. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and loved ones during this profoundly difficult time," Dr. Kathula said.

Indian origin convicted minister in Singapore placed under 'home detention'



Singapore's convicted former transport minister S Iswaran File photo

**FEBRUARY 7, 2025**

**SINGAPORE (TIP):** Singapore's former transport minister of Indian origin, S. Iswaran, who was jailed last October for 12 months on corruption charges, was placed in "home detention" on Friday, a news report said.

"Like all inmates placed on the Home Detention Scheme, S Iswaran will serve his remaining sentence at his residence under specified conditions, including curfew monitoring using an electronic monitoring tag, being gainfully occupied either in work, study or training and reporting to SPS for counselling," Channel News Asia quoted Singapore Prison Service (SPS) as saying.

Iswaran began his 12-month jail term on October 7, 2024.

Under the Prisons Act, inmates who display good conduct in prison are eligible for remission after serving two-thirds of their sentence or 14 days of their sentence, whichever ends later.

According to the Channel report, prisoners serving sentences of four weeks or more and serving at least 14 days of their sentence are also eligible to be released on the home detention scheme for a period not exceeding 12 months.

SPS said factors such as conduct, progress, and response to rehabilitation during prison time are taken into account when determining eligibility for home detention.

"(Iswaran) has been assessed suitable for emplacement on the scheme as he is of low risk of re-offending, did not commit any institutional offence in prison, and has strong family support," said the prison service.

"During home detention, inmates who have approved employment can leave the home during their working hours while inmates who are unemployed usually only have a few hours out of the home in the afternoons," Adrian Wee of Lighthouse Law LLC here told the Channel.

SPS added that last year, about 44 per cent of the inmates eligible for home detention were placed on the scheme.

Iswaran pleaded guilty on September 24, 2024 to four charges under Section 165 of the Penal Code, which forbids all public servants from obtaining any valuable thing from someone involved with them in an official capacity.

These were for obtaining valuables from Singapore GP majority shareholder Ong Beng Seng and construction boss Lum Kok Seng while he held portfolios that had official dealings with the two men. (Read full story on [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

# Indian-Origin woman abused on UK train for supporting immigrants

**FEBRUARY 10, 2025**

**LONDON (TIP):** In yet another case of racial abuse on a UK train, a 26-year-old Indian-origin woman was subjected to a vicious tirade by an allegedly intoxicated man, highlighting growing concerns over hate speech in public spaces.

The incident unfolded on Sunday, February 9, as Gabrielle Forsyth was travelling from London to Manchester. During a casual conversation with a fellow passenger, she mentioned her work with a charity supporting immigrants.

This seemingly innocuous remark triggered an aggressive reaction from another passenger, who was drinking from a can and proceeded to launch a xenophobic rant.

A video of the incident, which has since been deleted, captured the man shouting racist remarks at Forsyth and other passengers, boasting about England's colonial past.

"You're in England, you are claiming something. You would not be in England if you weren't claiming something. English people conquered the world and gave it back to you. We conquered India, we didn't want it, we gave it back to you," he stated.

Forsyth, recalling the ordeal, said, "He heard the word 'immigrant' and his



Gabrielle Forsyth, during a casual conversation with a fellow passenger, mentioned her work with a charity supporting immigrants, and was subjected to racial abuse

Photo: @forsyth\_gabby/X

immediate reaction was anger and aggression. It was very jarring. I felt strongly that what he said was wrong. It was an insane situation. I recorded it for my own protection."

After posting the video online, Forsyth found herself facing an overwhelming wave of abuse.

"The amount of hate I have received from this one video is insane. I've been called slurs I didn't even know existed. Violent rhetoric and hate speech can now proliferate so easily on X. I care

deeply about the rights of people of color in this country, and I do think we are backsliding," she said.

Forsyth has reported the incident to the British Transport Police (BTP).

She further expressed pride in her heritage, stating, "Being Indian, being the daughter of an immigrant, being in touch with my history and heritage is a blessing. I stand up for myself and for people of color, and I back us all to the hilt."

This comes just days after another racist confrontation on an Avanti West Coast train, where a woman told an NHS dentist to "go back to your own country."

A video of that incident showed the woman directing racist remarks at a fellow passenger, an NHS dentist, telling him to "go back to Morocco or Tunisia."

The dentist, who was born in the UK, responded, "Why would you say that? That's so disrespectful. I was born here. Were you born here?" To which the woman dismissively replied, "Doesn't look like it."

When he firmly told her, "Do not ever disrespect me like that," she retorted with, "Serves you right."

These back-to-back incidents have sparked fresh concerns about rising intolerance and racial abuse in public spaces across the UK.

## Indian origins among 19,000 illegal migrants deported from UK

**INDIAN RESTAURANTS AMONG TARGETS OF UK 'BLITZ' AGAINST ILLEGAL MIGRANTS**



The UK government has released a video showing the deportation of migrants for the first time, marking the removal of nearly 19,000 foreign criminals and illegal migrants since Labour took office.

nail bars, convenience stores, and car washes, which employ migrant workers. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said her department's Immigration Enforcement teams had a record-breaking January, descending on 828 premises—a 48 per cent rise compared to the previous January, with arrests surging to 609, a 73 per cent increase from the previous year.

A visit to one Indian restaurant in Humberside, northern England, alone led to seven arrests and four detentions.

This comes as the Labour Party government's Border Security, Asylum, and Immigration Bill returns to Parliament for its second reading this week. The new legislation aims to "smash the criminal gangs" that Prime Minister Keir Starmer's administration says undermine border security.

A total of 1,090 civil penalty notices have been issued during that phase, with employers facing a fine of up to GBP 60,000 per worker if found liable. In January, the government claimed to have smashed its target to drive the removal of foreign criminals and immigration offenders to the highest level since 2018, with 16,400 people removed since the July 2024 general election.

(With inputs from PTI)

## Shots fired at Punjabi singer Prem Dhillon's residence in Canada

**FEBRUARY 4, 2025**

**BRAMPTON (TIP):**

Shots were fired outside the residence of Punjabi singer Prem Dhillon in Brampton, Canada allegedly by a member of Jaipal Bhullar gang.

Alleged gang member Jenta Kharad who is also an associate of wanted gangster Arsh Dala, took credit for the attack, referencing the late singer Sidhu Moosewala and jailed gangster Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, reports TOI.

A social media post released by the gangster accused Dhillon of betraying Moosewala after his death and warned of further consequences. Dhillon, known for hits like Boot Cut, Old Skool, and Majha Block, is the latest Punjabi artist to face such threats.

Similar incidents have occurred in the past, including shootings outside the residences of singers AP Dhillon and Gippy Grewal in Canada, allegedly linked to gang rivalries. Premjeet Singh Dhillon, known as Prem Dhillon, is a Punjabi singer from Canada. He was born on January 4, 1995, in Amritsar. He made his debut in the music industry with the single 'Chan Milondi'. He gained fame with his song 'Boot Cut', which had over 37 million views upon its release. In 2020, he released 'Old Skool', featuring Sidhu Moosewala and Nseeb. In April, his song 'Jatt Hunde Aa', debuted at number 38 on the Apple Music chart in India.



Punjabi singer Prem Dhillon Photo: Instagram/Prem Dhillon

# Indian Origin Sunita Williams to return to Earth earlier than scheduled: NASA

Sunita has been stuck in space since June last year due to technical problems with Boeing's Starliner which took them to International Space Station

FEBRUARY 12, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): NASA and SpaceX are accelerating the target launch and return dates for the upcoming crew rotation missions to and from the International Space Station (ISS), which will bring the agency's stranded astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore back home.

The agency's Crew-10 launch now is targeting March 12, pending mission readiness and completion of the agency's certification of flight readiness process, NASA said late on Tuesday, February 11.

The Crew-9 mission, consisting of Williams, Wilmore, NASA astronauts Nick Hague along with Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov, is planned for return to Earth following a several-day handover period with the newly arrived Crew-10.

The previous launch date for Crew-10 was no earlier than late March. The Crew-10 mission will carry NASA astronauts Anne McClain and Nichole



As against late March, NASA now is targeting March 12 for return of the stranded astronauts who include Indian origin Sunita Williams

Ayers, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Takuya Onishi and Roscosmos cosmonaut Kirill Peskov, to the space station.

The earlier launch opportunity is available following a decision by mission management to adjust the agency's original plan to fly a new Dragon spacecraft for the Crew-10 mission which requires additional processing time,

according to NASA.

The flight now will use a previously flown Dragon, called Endurance, and joint teams are working to complete assessments of the spacecraft's previously flown hardware to ensure it meets the agency's Commercial Crew Programme safety and certification requirements.

This comes as US President Donald Trump asked SpaceX CEO Elon Musk to facilitate the return of both Williams and Wilmore as soon as possible.

Musk claimed that it was "terrible" that the pair were left "stranded" at the ISS for so long, even though NASA had already roped in SpaceX months ago for the return of both astronauts as part of its Crew-9 mission.

Williams and Wilmore have been stuck in space since June last year due to technical problems with Boeing's Starliner which took them to ISS.

(Source: ANI)

Aravind Srinivas, Perplexity AI CEO, defies Musk and Trump over USAID  
SAYS 'STOP ME IF YOU CAN' FROM RAISING \$500 BILLION FROM USAID



Aravind Srinivas

Photo: LinkedIn

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Aravind Srinivas, the Indian-origin CEO of the AI search engine Perplexity AI, has challenged Tesla owner Elon Musk to "stop" him if he can from raising a significant amount of funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

"Considering raising \$500B from USAID. Funding secured. Stop me if you can @elonmusk What is USAID?" Srinivas posted on X. As of midnight on Friday, February 7, "All USAID direct hire personnel will be placed on administrative leave globally, with the exception of designated personnel responsible for mission-critical functions, core leadership and specially designated programs," the USAID website read.

On Wednesday, hundreds of people gathered in Washington DC as part of a nationwide demonstration against the Trump administration's decision to dismantle USAID. Before Musk called it a "criminal organization," Trump said the US agency was "run by radical lunatics."

The USAID "has been run by a bunch of radical lunatics, and we're getting them out... and then we'll make a decision (on its future)," Trump said.

The Trump administration has said that the agency is wasting money and has to be aligned with its policy priorities. Aravind's post was after US President Donald Trump and Elon Musk called for shutting down the federal agency.

## WHO IS ARAVIND SRINIVAS?

Aravind Srinivas is the co-founder and CEO of Perplexity AI, an AI-powered search engine backed by prominent investors, including Jeff Bezos. Perplexity AI was jointly developed by Srinivas, Andy Konwinski, Denis Yarats and Johnny Ho. Srinivas is an alumnus of IIT-Madras. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. He began his career as a research intern at OpenAI. He also worked for Google and DeepMind.

(Source: TNS)

## Indian-origin man gets up to 25 years jail for killing 2 teens in New York crash

ACCORDING TO REPORTS, THE ACCUSED WAS DRUNK AND HIGH ON COCAINE WHEN HE DROVE HIS PICKUP TRUCK THE WRONG WAY AND STRUCK THE BOY'S CAR



Amandeep Singh in a Nassau County Court File photo

FEBRUARY 8, 2025

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): A 36-year-old Indian-origin construction executive has been sentenced to up to 25 years for driving at 95 mph while drunk and high on cocaine resulting in a crash that killed two teenagers in the US, according to media reports.

The wrong-way crash took place in 2023 on Long Island in New York. Amandeep Singh was sentenced on Friday, February 7, to eight-and-a-third to 25 years in prison for the deaths of 14-year-old Ethan Falkowitz and Drew Hassenbein in the drunk driving crash in Nassau County, the New York Post reported. Singh appeared stonefaced and barely acknowledged the victims' family members as he entered the courtroom Friday, February 7, in Mineola.

Hundreds of tearful friends and loved ones packed a Nassau County courtroom as Singh was sentenced to up to 25 years for the deaths of Roslyn Middle School eighth-graders Falkowitz and Hassenbein on May 3, 2023, the report added.

"Instead of picking up my son at school, I had to identify him at the morgue. It's inhuman torture," Drew's father, Mitch Hassenbein, said in court - calling Singh "the definition of evil." Drew's 85-year-old grandfather shouted at Singh. "Why didn't you go home, you turkey. You're a bad, bad guy. You're now sorry after you killed two beautiful boys?" he said.

Singh spoke in court for the first time, calling his actions the epitome of stupidity and selfishness.

"This was all my fault. Losing a child is the greatest grief. I have committed the great sin. If anyone should have died, it should have been me," he said.

In May 2023, both the tennis stars were on their way home from a tennis tournament victory dinner on North Broadway in Jericho when police say Singh drove his pickup truck the wrong way at 95 mph (150 kmph) in a 40 mph zone and struck the boys' car, killing the two middle schoolers and injuring two other teens, the CBS news reported.

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

## Indian national arrested by US immigration authorities over charges related to sexual assault

THE OTHER INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED ARE CITIZENS OF MEXICO, GUATEMALA AND EL SALVADOR

FEBRUARY 8, 2025

WASHINGTON (TIP): An Indian national is among four persons arrested by US immigration authorities over charges related to sexual assault.

Jaspal Singh, 29, a citizen of India was arrested on January 29 in Tukwila, Washington.

Singh is charged with "assault with sexual motivation", US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Seattle said in a release last week.

The other individuals arrested are citizens of Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador. All four will remain in ICE custody pending removal proceedings.

"Protecting our communities, and preventing further victimization is of paramount importance to ICE throughout the Pacific Northwest," said ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Seattle Field Office Director Drew Bostock.

"These arrests reinforce the message that the presence of illegal criminal threats will not be tolerated."

President Donald Trump kicked off his second term in office with an ambitious immigration agenda, promising to deport millions of undocumented immigrants and seal off the US southern border.

Since then, Trump administration officials have swiftly moved to strip temporary protections for migrants and delegate more authority to federal and state partners.

More than 8,000 people have been arrested by federal immigration authorities since Trump's inauguration. Administration officials have not shared exactly how many undocumented immigrants they're aiming to arrest this year, but daily apprehensions have already surpassed last year's daily average under President Joe Biden, CNN reported.



Jaspal Singh, 29, a citizen of India was arrested on January 29 in Tukwila, Washington.

Photo for representational purpose only. iStock

# GOPIO International Team Sworn in with Community Leader Prakash Shah as the New President

FEBRUARY 5, 2025

**STAMFORD, CT (TIP):** Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) conducted its election last month and the new team was sworn in on January 31st at a virtual Zoom ceremony with veteran community leader from New Jersey Mr. Prakash Shah as its president. Prakash Shah, former Chairman of New Jersey Development Authority, has been a Founder Life member from GOPIO inception in 1989 and was serving as the Global Ambassador and later as the Convener of the GOPIO Convention 2024 in New Jersey in his last term. Others sworn in at the ceremony are media and community leader Mr. Umesh Chandra from Brisbane, Australia as Executive Vice President; Los Angeles area community leader Kewal Kanda as Vice President, and former IBM official and New York Social Activist Ms. Jasbir "Nami" Kaur as Global Ambassador. Also elected were International Coordinators for Africa Mr. Ishwar Ramlutchman and for South Asia Mr. Dhiraj Ahuja,

The election was conducted according to the GOPIO bylaws by a four-member committee appointed by the GOPIO Executive Council. It was headed by Mr. Mridul Pathak along with Mr. Dinesh Mittal, Mr. Manohar Dev and Mr. Prashant Gupta providing technical support and was under the supervision of GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham. The election was conducted for the position Vice President using eballot.com platform. All other positions were elected unanimously.

Since the officers come from the different continents of the world, the oath ceremony was conducted virtually and started with a universal prayer by Ms. Devika Gadhavi, who is a young professional working in New York City. Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman of GOPIO International welcomed the participants from all continents and provided a brief introduction to the birth of GOPIO and many of its achievements in the last 36 years.

GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham administering Oath of Office to the new team

"GOPIO chapters around the world have been doing a lot of organizational groundwork in many countries to promote leadership in public service and the thrust has been to promote and involve the Indian Diaspora in the larger society and local communities wherever they live," said Dr. Abraham.

Outgoing president Lal Motwani spoke on the activities done during his term and thanked his team members. Dr. Abraham then administered the Oath of Office.

In his acceptance speech, President Prakash Shah said, "It is my ambition to try and activate those regions and Chapters which are not active now so that GOPIO does become a functioning Network for the 38 million strong India Diaspora, We need many Young Leaders to get involved in the GOPIO to take GOPIO to a New Level. We will officially relaunch GOPIO Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) in different parts of the world. We are having our next Convention in Brisbane, Australia March 28-30 2025 under the leadership of Umesh Chandra.

After the Oath ceremony, all elected officials spoke briefly on their plans for GOPIO. Many GOPIO chapter



GOPIO Officials who were sworn-in. From L to R: Prakash Shah, Umesh Chandra, Kewal Kanda, J. Nami Kaur, Ishwar Ramlutchman and Dhiraj Ahuja

presidents and other community leaders made remarks complimenting the new officials.

## THE NEWLY ELECTED OFFICIALS.

### PRESIDENT - PRAKASH SHAH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY, USA

Prakash Shah has been involved in Founding a number of Leading Community Organizations including Global Organization for the People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIA) and the NYC based India Chamber of Commerce of America (ICCA). He was a Presidential Appointee under President Clinton to the Southern Africa Fund and was Chairman of New Jersey Development Authority under Governors Florio and Whitman.

### EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT - UMESH CHANDRA, BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

Umesh Chandra is highly respected nationally and internationally. He was awarded OAM -the highest civilian honor in Australia, in 2020. He is a founder member and board of trustee of the Queensland Multicultural Council and serves on the police ethnic advisory group and Lord Mayors Multicultural round table. He has been the founder and president of GOPIO Qld and serves as a Trustee of GOPIO Queensland. He is the chair of the White Ribbon Queensland State Committee and has been a long-standing ambassador for White Ribbon. He has won many community service awards, including the Bharat Gaurav award in 2011. Umesh and Usha Chandra were named Brisbane City Councils' citizen of the year in 2019 and own Globenet Realty.

### VICE PRESIDENT - KEWAL KANDA

Kewal Kanda retired from Boeing Company after 26 years of service as production planner, principal analyst and planning manager. Community service being his passion he is a member of many non-profit community organizations such as Founder of Rajput Association of America (1984), Founder president of GOPIO-LA Chapter; Treasurer of GOPIO International, and President FIA-SC, He organized RPBD in Los Angeles as NFIA RVP-Pacific South West core member; and four programs as chairman of committee to celebrate 75 years of India's Independence as Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, including publishing a its commemorative Coffee Table Book.

### GLOBAL AMBASSADOR - NAMI KAUR, YONKERS, NEW YORK, USA

J. Nami Kaur successfully completed her 32-year Corporate professional career in Technology, Marketing and Communications at IBM. Since 2009, she has had been actively engaged in the Non-Profit Sector, donating her time and skills pro-bono to New York Botanical Garden, Children's Hope India, Riveredge Cooperative Board, and GOPIO (Global Organization of People of Indian Origin). She has served GOPIO as a volunteer since its inception in 1989. Since 2009 she has served formally as the Media Council Chair, General Secretary, Chair of GOPIO Election, and Editor of GOPIO Newsletter.

### INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR AFRICA - ISHWAR RAMLUTCHMAN, DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

Philanthropist and Humanitarian Prince Ishwar Ramlutchman (Mabheka Zulu) has received many awards. He is the first person of Indian Origin to foster relations with the Largest African Tribe and become part of Zulu Royal Family. He is a former Executive VP of GOPIO International and the President and Founder of the Sivananda World Peace Foundation. He has Supported the Indian diaspora in many of His cultural, peace initiatives and heritage programs. He upholds corporate social responsibility by building schools, feeding and providing health facilities for the poor and disadvantaged in South Africa.

### INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR SOUTH ASIA - DHIRAJ AHUJA, NEW DELHI, INDIA

A self-made businessman, Dhiraj Ahuja has an international network throughout globe and is a member of Indian Press Club. He has been working effectively as President of GOPIO-Delhi/NCR Chapter. Dhiraj is associated with a few prominent NGOs as well as business houses.

Formed in 1989, GOPIO is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, secular organization with Individual Life Members and over 100 chapters in 35 countries. GOPIO's volunteers are committed to enhancing cooperation and communication between NRIs/PIOs and the local communities, building networks, bonds, friendships, alliances, and the camaraderie of citizens and colleagues alike. GOPIO volunteers believe that when they help network the global Indian community, they facilitate making tomorrow a better world for the Indian Diaspora and the countries they live in.

## Suozi Leads Letter to Social Security Administration, Expresses Alarm at Potential DOGE Access

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** Congressman Suozzi, on February 11, led a Ways and Means letter to Michelle King, Acting Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (SSA). The letter was co-signed by every Democratic Member of the Ways and Means Committee, including Ranking Member Neal (D-MA).

The letter expressed alarm about the recent access Elon Musk and the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency ("DOGE") was able to gain to the Department of the Treasury's payment systems, and conveyed further concern about reports that DOGE plans to turn its attention to the SSA.

"Social Security has been the bedrock promise of



Congressman Suozzi led a Ways and Means letter to Michelle King, Acting Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (SSA). The letter was co-signed by every Democratic Member of the Ways and Means Committee, including Ranking Member Neal (D-MA).

economic security in our nation for the last century," the Members wrote. "After a lifetime of work or in life's most precarious moments, it provides benefits to approximately 70 million people across the United States, including seniors, survivors, and people with disabilities."

The SSA has access to Americans' most personal information, including banking information, home addresses, disability status, medical conditions, if a parent or spouse has died, and Social Security numbers themselves.

The letter also requests Commissioner King respond to several questions regarding the security of Americans' Social Security information within 72 hours. These inquiries include an assessment of potential risks to information, whether or not DOGE has requested access to SSA's systems, and what kind of security checks are currently in place.

"We will not stand by and allow the sensitive personal information of our nation's Social Security beneficiaries to be politicized or bought and sold to the highest bidder, or to allow any harm to their Social Security benefits," the Members continued.

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

# AIA-NY Forges Cultural & Educational Links with Queensborough Community College



Dr. Jagdish K Gupta, President AIA-NY, with Dr. Christine Mangino, President of Queensborough Community College

**FEBRUARY 11, 2025**

**NEW YORK (TIP):** In a new direction for the Association of Indians in America (AIA)-NY Chapter, its President, Dr. Jagdish K. Gupta, recently led a high-powered delegation to meet the leadership of Queensborough Community College (QCC), a premier CUNY institution, to initiate cultural and educational collaboration.

Nidhi Gadura (Chair of Chairs), Audrey Maroney (Director of Nursing), Prof. Michael D. Lawrence (Engineering Technology), Vice President & Chief Strategy Officer Stephen Di Dio, and Director of Development Sajedeh Sheerazi welcomed the AIA-NY delegation.

Queensborough Community College in Bayside, NY, is a top-ranked, fully accredited two-year college recognized for its exceptional success in helping low-income students advance in life. Its students come from over 110 countries and speak over 60 languages, 30% of whom are of Indian origin. Dr Gupta said that reflecting the rich diversity of Queens, QCC is an ideal partner for cultural and educational collaboration with AIA-NY.



Donation picture: (Standing from left) Jasbir Jay Singh - Chief Editor and CEO of Hum Hindustani, Dr. Nidhi Gadura - Chairperson of Chairs of QCC and Professor, Biological Sciences & Geology, Gobind Munjal - President AIA, Dr. Christine Mangino - President of Queensborough Community College, Dr. Jagdish K. Gupta - President AIA-NY Chapter, Smiti Khanna - Advisor AIA-NY, Beena Kothari - President-Elect AIA-NY, Mrs. Bhavna Sharma - Director Hum Hindustani, Saji Sheerazi - Director of Development, Division of Strategic Initiatives and Advancement QCC. (Sitting) Stephen Di Dio, Vice President & Chief Strategy Officer, Division of Strategic Initiatives and Advancement, Harsh Vyas - Vice President, AIA-NY.



Visiting Nursing deptt: Visiting AIA-NY delegation with Audrey Marone of the Nursing Program at QCC.

Jackson & Muriel Lum Nursing Resource Lab, where students train with cutting-edge simulation computers.

## AIA-NY LAUNCHES SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR QCC

AIA-NY has pledged to support education at QCC by establishing the 'Student Success Scholarship Fund' with an initial donation of \$10,000 (10 scholarships of \$1,000 each).

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



Nursing deptt mannequin: Audrey Maroney, Director Of The Jackson & Muriel Lum Nursing Resource Lab, posing with Interactive Mannequin Models for Nursing Education.

## EXPLORING INNOVATION AT QCC

### THE AIA-NY DELEGATION VISITED TWO QCC DEPARTMENTS:

**Engineering & Technology Department:** The delegates were introduced to the latest advancements in 3D printing technology. Prof Michael D. Lawrence explained the department's collaborative project with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, in which 3D models of cancerous tissues generated from MRI and CAT scan images aid surgical teams in precise cancer treatment planning.

**Nursing Department:** Established in 1967, QCC's Nursing Program is highly

The AIA-NY team was given a firsthand look at two of QCC's distinguished departments: Engineering & Technology, and Nursing. Inspired by the visit, AIA-NY pledged to support education at QCC by establishing a scholarship fund with an initial donation of \$10,000.



Holding 3d Models group pic: Visiting AIA-NY delegation with Prof Michael D. Lawrence, Engineering Technology Department, learning about 3-D printed models of various cancer pathologies created in collaboration with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and MRI/CAT scan images preoperatively to assist in surgical resection.

Dr Jagdish Gupta was accompanied by AIA-NY Vice President Beena Kothari, National AIA President Gobind Munjal, Past President & Advisor Smiti Khanna, Secretary Harsh Vyas, and other community leaders.

They met the QCC team led by President Dr. Christine Mangino. Prof.

respected and ACEN-accredited. The delegation was impressed by its state-of-the-art simulation labs, which feature interactive mannequins representing adult patients, pregnant mothers, pediatric cases, and newborns. Audrey Maroney detailed the comprehensive nursing curriculum and showcased the

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# Trump-Modi bond faces trade test in second term



---> By Brahma Chellaney

"So far, Trump has done nothing to spare India from his frenetic push to implement his campaign promises, from raising tariffs to deporting undocumented immigrants. When the Trump administration sent more than 100 Indian nationals back to India on a military aircraft - a 40-hour ordeal - their hands and feet were shackled. Modi said nothing.

In fact, far from standing up to Trump, Modi has pre-emptively slashed tariffs on US imports, hoping that this would keep India out of the "Tariff Man's" sights. But a dissatisfied Trump, who has called India a "very big abuser" of tariffs, has not spared India from his steel and aluminum levies. He wants India to wipe out its \$35-billion bilateral trade surplus by buying more oil and petroleum products, and more weapons, from the US."

The last time Donald Trump was president, ties between the United States and India flourished. But the bilateral relationship began to fray during Joe Biden's presidency, owing not least to divisions over the Ukraine war. Will Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's latest meeting with Trump at the White House mark the first step toward restoring this critical relationship?

Trump has made no secret of his conviction that personal bonds between leaders can underpin stronger bilateral relationships. And he and Modi certainly share an affinity: both are nationalist politicians who love little more than to

Trump's 'America First' trade agenda - which clashes with Modi's 'Make in India' initiative - threatens to undermine India's status as the world's 'back office'.



Common interest: India and the US share concerns over China's growing ambitions

File photo

please a roaring crowd with elaborate theatrics.

In September 2019, the two came together for a public rally in Houston, attended by 50,000 Indian-Americans and several US legislators. The following February, Trump addressed more than 1,00,000 people in Ahmedabad. "America loves India," he declared. "America respects India, and America will always be faithful and loyal friends [sic] to the Indian people."

The US-India relations took a turn for the worse after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The Biden administration mobilized America's allies and partners to join its campaign to punish Russia - and, ideally, compel it to change its behavior. But far from joining this effort, India stayed neutral and seized the opportunity to secure cheap Russian oil.

There were other points of contention, as well. The Biden administration sought to weaken Myanmar's military junta by imposing stringent sanctions on the country and sending "non-lethal aid" to rebel groups - a policy that has contributed to instability in India's border state of Manipur. Biden also coddled Pakistan's military-backed regime, including by approving a \$450-million deal in 2022 to upgrade the country's fleet of F-16 fighter jets.

Similarly, Biden welcomed the interim government that Bangladesh's military installed following the overthrow of the country's India-friendly government last August. Bangladesh's rapid descent into lawlessness and Islamist violence since then has raised serious security risks for India, which is already home to millions of illegally settled Bangladeshis.

America's approach to Sikh separatist leaders on its soil has also raised India's

hackles. Under the Biden administration, the US carried out a criminal investigation into India's alleged involvement in supposed assassination plots against Sikh militants in the US and Canada.

Last September, just days before Biden met with Modi in Delaware, senior White House and US intelligence officials met with Sikh separatists to assure them that they would be protected from "transnational repression". The following month, the US charged a former Indian intelligence officer in an alleged failed plot to kill a New York-based Sikh militant, who is on India's most-wanted list.

Against this backdrop, it is easy to see why Trump's victory in last November's presidential election raised hopes in India for a reset in bilateral relations. It helps that Trump has repeatedly pledged to negotiate a quick conclusion to the Ukraine war, meaning that India's choice not to pick a side in that conflict would no longer matter.

A few weeks into Trump's second presidency, however, there are reasons to doubt this rosy scenario. So far, Trump has done nothing to spare India from his frenetic push to implement his campaign promises, from raising tariffs to deporting undocumented immigrants. When the Trump administration sent more than 100 Indian nationals back to India on a military aircraft - a 40-hour ordeal - their hands and feet were shackled. Modi said nothing.

In fact, far from standing up to Trump, Modi has pre-emptively slashed tariffs on US imports, hoping that this would keep India out of the "Tariff Man's" sights. But a dissatisfied Trump, who has called India a "very big abuser" of tariffs, has not spared India from his steel and

aluminum levies. He wants India to wipe out its \$35-billion bilateral trade surplus by buying more oil and petroleum products, and more weapons, from the US.

India is the world's third-largest primary energy consumer, after China and the US, and the largest source of oil demand growth. That makes the country a highly attractive market for a US administration that is committed to increasing domestic oil and gas production. It also means that Trump's commitment to pushing down oil prices, including by applying pressure on OPEC leader Saudi Arabia, would benefit India's economy.

But Trump has never been particularly concerned about ensuring that his trade agreements are mutually beneficial. Regarding India, his plan may well be to use the threat of tariffs to compel Modi's government to accept the trade deal of his choosing.

That is what he did to Japan during his first presidency. He also tried to do it to India, but failed, so he stripped India of its special trade status instead, prompting India to impose retaliatory tariffs on some US products.

If Trump ends up slapping more tariffs, the Indian economy could slow down, at least marginally. More broadly, Trump's "America First" trade agenda - which clashes with Modi's "Make in India" initiative - threatens to undermine India's status as the world's "back office", providing extensive IT and business services to US companies.

Where trade is concerned, Trump treats friends and foes alike. But it matters that India is a friend - and Trump should want to keep it that way. The US-India strategic partnership helps advance the two countries' shared interests in the Indo-Pacific region, the world's emerging economic and geopolitical hub, including strengthening maritime security and supporting a stable balance of power. Already, the two countries are working to deepen military interoperability, and the US has overtaken Russia as India's leading weapons supplier, new contracts show.

As Trump and Modi build on their rapport, both should recognize that India is America's most important partner in countering China's hegemonic ambitions. It is thus in shared interest to restore and deepen bilateral ties, including strengthening collaboration on critical and emerging technologies, from AI to biotechnology. Warm personal relations are an added bonus.

*(Brahma Chellaney is an Indian geostrategist and columnist. He is a professor of strategic studies at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi; a Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow of the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin; and an affiliate with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization at King's College London)*



# SAD's control over SGPC and fate of Jathedars



---> By Paramjit S Judge

The Shiromani Akali Dal established itself in the political dynamics of Punjab after spearheading the Gurdwara Reform Movement in the early 20th century. With this powerful movement, the SAD built a strong cadre base, one that could be mobilized for Sikhs' religious issues. During the period of Constituent Assembly debates from 1946 to 1949, issues concerning the Sikh community were raised by some leaders, particularly Hukam Singh, and fiercely debated. The SAD never abandoned the movement mode since it was playing pressure politics as also keeping the support base intact.

In electoral politics, the SAD gained significance only in 1962, when it became the official opposition party. After the formation of the Punjabi Suba in 1966, the SAD headed the coalition government and Gurnam Singh became the Chief Minister in 1967. The intra-party dynamics of the SAD can be traced to this year.

Understanding the internal politics of the SAD at present requires two sets of forces which work in two distinct situations -- when SAD is in power and when it is out of power. In both situations, there is a struggle for power among top leaders. The 1967-72 period was the beginning of what became the signature image of the SAD. During this time, there were three chief ministers. First, Lachhman Singh Gill toppled Gurnam Singh and then, Parkash Singh Badal replaced Gurnam Singh. A similar process was seen in 1986 when Surjit Singh Barnala was reduced to minority as some MLAs rebelled, led by Parkash Singh Badal. It was in 1997 that Parkash Singh emerged as the undisputed leader of the SAD and remained so till his death in 2023.

The SAD has had such strong leaders as Master Tara Singh, Sant Fateh Singh and Harchand Singh Longowal, who influenced and shaped the Akali politics. Except for Master Tara Singh, who was discredited for ending his fast unto death without getting the Sikhs' demands accepted by the Government of India, the others remained at the citadel for long periods of time.

Parkash Singh Badal faced challenges from strong leaders like Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Jagdev Singh Talwandi. The SAD had realized quite early that to remain in power, resources were needed and for this, the SGPC was the most important source. Over time, the SGPC came under the control of the SAD. Thus, with Tohra, who remained the SGPC president for a record 27 years, there emerged two centers of power, both competing and cooperating with each other. Since 1997, Parkash Singh began to control the entire machine.

With politics dominating the SGPC, the position of Takht Jathedars also came under the influence of the SAD. The recent removal of the Jathedar of

The SAD had realized quite early that to remain in power, resources were needed and for this, the SGPC was the most important source

Takht Damdama Sahib, Giani Harpreet Singh, is not unprecedented. The major reason for such ousters is SAD's domination. The appointments of Takht Jathedar are done keeping political pragmatism and interests in mind. The control over religious institutions through the SGPC is the major source of political power to the SAD and is done in such a way that both reinforce each other.

Giani Harpreet Singh's removal is crucial in light of the crisis faced by the SAD, which has politically shrunk. To rejuvenate itself, the SAD recently approached the SGPC and conceded that

committed by some Dera Sacha Sauda followers, its head Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh came under fire. Along with the acts of sacrilege, the acceptance by the Akal Takht Jathedar of the apology of the dera chief, who was dressed like the tenth Guru, angered the Sikh community.

From this point began SAD's slide. In the 2017 Punjab Assembly elections, it did not win the numbers to even be the opposition party in the Vidhan Sabha. And, in the 2022 elections, its position further deteriorated.

The humiliating electoral defeat should have led to introspection. But

including the Simranjit Singh Mann-led Akali Dal (Amritsar). At present, there is talk on the formation of a new Akali Dal due to the success of Amritpal Singh in the elections. It is a temporary phenomenon.

What is important is who controls the SGPC. The forthcoming SGPC elections is the reason behind all this fuss.

The two major political parties in Punjab - the SAD and the Congress - have been challenged by the AAP, but both consider it to be a temporary phenomenon. Between the two, only the Congress can form a government on its own. The SAD needs an alliance with



Payback: Giani Harpreet Singh's removal is crucial in the light of the SAD crisis.

Photo : Courtesy Tribune

its party leaders had committed mistakes in the past. The Five Singh Sahiban pronounced punishment to the Akali leaders for their mistakes and they accepted it. The title of Panth Rattan Fakhr-e-Qaum that was awarded to Parkash Singh Badal in 2011 was taken back as punishment. It was a danger signal for the Akalis.

By getting Giani Harpreet Singh removed through the SGPC, the Sukhbir Badal-led SAD has tried to manage the crisis created by the Five Singh Sahiban's verdict.

It is believed that the current crisis that the SAD is facing is mainly due to certain incidents of sacrilege that occurred in Punjab. They include the Bargari incident and the Behbal Kalan police firing which led to the death of two Sikh protesters in 2015. When it became clear that the sacrileges were

instead of discussing the issue, some Akali Dal leaders chose to form a new group. Their public acceptance of mistakes committed between 2012 and 2017, when the Akali-BJP alliance was in power, compelled Sukhbir Badal and other leaders to apologize for their actions.

The verdict of the Five Singh Sahiban surprised everybody as it pointed to their autonomy and freedom from SAD's influence. Giani Harpreet Singh's removal can be seen as a reaction to the verdict.

Some experts are of the view that the SAD is politically dead. But it is not so. The SAD has been facing such challenges over time. Lachhman Singh Gill, after defecting from the party, formed his own group. Tohra did the same thing following differences with Badal. There are many SAD factions,

other parties to form a government. The SAD got a majority in the Vidhan Sabha elections in 1997 only due to its alliance with the BJP.

The Akalis' decline should be seen in the light of the SAD-BJP break-up. Other parties of note do not have any effective electoral influence. One may consider the BSP as the SAD's probable partner, but it is not a winning alliance. An alliance with the BJP is possible only if the SAD sheds its advantage in seat-sharing. But the SAD should remember what the BJP has done to its alliance partners in other states, notably to the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra.

*(Paramjit Singh Judge is Professor and Hed of the Department of Sociology at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar)*

# Tulsi Gabbard (and Hindutva) Have Won For The Present Moment

Gabbard's service to India's Hindu nationalist movement didn't block her as Director of National Intelligence



---> By Pieter Friedrich

Last month, I sat with two FBI agents in Washington, DC for at least two hours to discuss my experiences as a victim of transnational repression by India's Hindu nationalist ("Hindutva") government. Along the way, I also mentioned that I was there in DC to visit U.S. Senate offices and advocate against the confirmation of former Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard as the Director of National Intelligence.

I did do that. I visited 25 Senate offices, and spoke at length with many staffers specializing in national security and intelligence areas. Every one of them was fascinated and disturbed by what I shared: that the foundation of Tulsi Gabbard's political career was support from U.S. affiliates of the Hindutva movement.

One staffer suggested that Gabbard's intimacy with Hindutva ought to be examined from a counterintelligence perspective.

I failed. Gabbard was confirmed on 12 February 2025 by a Senate vote of 52-48. Only one Republican Senator, Mitch McConnell, broke party ranks to vote against her. Others who were considered "swing votes," such as Senators Todd Young and Lisa Murkowski, offered their "ayes."

Both had stood on principle to vote against Pete Hegseth as Secretary of Defense. What bought Murkowski's vote is anyone's guess, but Elon Musk denouncing Young as a "deep state puppet" before having a private call with him was undoubtedly the key factor in his pro-Gabbard vote.

Gabbard's confirmation was on the rocks for much of the time leading up to the final vote. Senators were upset about a wide range of far more mainstream issues than the Hindutva allegiance which I discussed. Most of these issues - Assad, Putin, Snowden, and more - were raised on the floor by multiple Democratic senators in the hours before the vote.

Senators Elissa Slotkin, Dick Durbin, Chris Coons, Chuck Schumer, and others all pleaded with the Senate to vote "no" on Gabbard. Unfortunately, none of them raised the issue on which Gabbard is most vulnerable: the issue of Hindutva.

For the past six years, I have been reporting on Hindutva influence in U.S. sociopolitics, especially elections. I reported on:

Sri Preston Kulkarni's campaign for U.S. Congress. He lost, catastrophically.

U.S. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi. He has faced strong opposition since for his Hindutva ties.

Ambassador (acting) Atul Keshap's

meeting with India's RSS, the paramilitary that serves as the fountainhead of Hindutva. He resigned, prematurely.

Michigan State Assemblywoman Padma Kuppa. She lost her campaign for Michigan State Senate.

Ohio State Senator Niraj Antani. He lost his campaign for U.S. Congress.

I've reported on much more, but the very first Hindutva-tied politician I ever reported on was Tulsi Gabbard, in a cover article for India's Caravan magazine in August 2019. Titled "How The American Sangh Built Up Tulsi Gabbard," it referenced the "Sangh Parivar" or "Family of Hindu Nationalist Organizations" spearheaded by the RSS, to discuss in depth how Gabbard owes her political career to them.

As Congressman Ro Khanna, himself a Hindu, commented at the time: "Important article. It's the duty of every American politician of Hindu faith to

Democrat, and was made a vice-chair of the Democratic National Committee. Since then, she has left the D.N.C., because she wanted to endorse Bernie Sanders; left Congress, because she wanted to run for President; and left the Democratic Party, because she had become convinced that it is, she says, 'led by an elitist cabal of woke warmongers.' In August, she endorsed Donald Trump, later saying, 'A vote for President Trump is a vote to express our deep love for our country, and our appreciation for our God-given rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution.'"

These unpredictable flip-flops are best explained, in the words of *The Atlantic*, as a "dogged pursuit of power, or at least of proximity to power." They represent a constant attempt to shift with the political winds, to stay relevant, and to keep close to power.

Such desperation can only be explained by what I've uncovered: that

Gabbard was first introduced to India's RSS by a family friend named Michael Brannon Parker. Parker was hired by the RSS to write a book whitewashing the RSS's 2008 massacre of Christians in the Indian state of Odisha. Asked by RSS leader Ram Madhav to introduce him to Gabbard in 2008, Parker did so.

Then Gabbard became a member of U.S. Congress, ran for U.S. President, and eventually was confirmed as the Director of National Intelligence.

In the meantime, Modi's regime started assassinating critics in North America. One, successfully, in Vancouver, Canada. One, unsuccessfully, in New York City.

## WHERE DOES ALL OF THIS TAKE US?

I remember when Tulsi Gabbard was repeatedly protested in the streets during her presidential campaign over her ties to the RSS. "The princess of the R\$\$," read signs.

Today she controls my country's intelligence services.

For 20 years, I have joined my life with the Indian diaspora to take up concerns about the dismal human rights situation in India, especially that facing religious minorities. Under the past 10 years of Modi's reign, India has moved from the world "largest democracy" to the world's largest autocracy or, as some might phrase it, the world's largest fascist nation.

For those 20 years, I have been deeply concerned on behalf of another community about the trajectory of their nation. Today, I am deeply concerned by the direction that my own country is headed, and Tulsi Gabbard exemplifies that.

The greatest struggle against the influence of Hindutva - a fascist movement that has overwhelmed India - in the U.S. has failed. Hindutva is now in the innermost circles of the U.S. presidency.

As we are led by people who insist on putting "America First," those same people have put into power figures who will destroy America.

As someone who intentionally made myself the most vocal opponent of Tulsi Gabbard since 2019, I am concerned but I am also doing what I can to watch my back. As a patriot, I am terrified by what her control of our nation's intelligence means, especially when her oldest, biggest, most faithful political supporters are affiliates of the very same Hindutva movement that tried to murder American citizens on American soil. As a believer, I pledge to continue the struggle.

And as a realist, I have hope that President Trump's habit of repeatedly turning his back on those who were once his closest allies will soon include Tulsi Gabbard.

*(Pieter Friedrich is a freelance journalist)*



Tulsi Gabbard, Trump's Director of National Intelligence

stand for pluralism, reject Hindutva, and speak for equal rights for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhist(s) & Christians."

My article was 18,000 words, all about Tulsi Gabbard and her ties to Hindutva. As I repeatedly said during my Senate visits last month, "Gabbard's interactions with Assad are problematic. But if you asked me to write an article using hard facts describing her relationship with Assad, I'd be hard-pressed to give you 1,000 words. That I can give you 18,000 words on Tulsi's relationship with Hindutva says a lot."

Since then, Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard lost office as she dedicated herself to a failed campaign for the U.S. presidency. Her bizarre political gymnastics - which I recently called those of an "American chameleon" - were recently summarized as the "mystery of Tulsi Gabbard" in *The New Yorker*:

"She comes from Hawaii, where she served in the state legislature and the National Guard; in those years, she campaigned against "homosexual advocacy organizations" and in favor of environmental protections. Gabbard was elected to Congress in 2012, running as a

Gabbard's political career was created by U.S. affiliates of Hindutva. That Hindutva in America wants politicians in their pocket. And that, in the words of key Hindutva advocate Dr. Bharat Barai, who has given tens of thousands of dollars in campaign donations to Gabbard, "It doesn't matter to me whether it is a Republican or Democrat."

Gabbard donning the colors of a foreign political party at events hosted by what would become a registered foreign agent didn't faze those who voted for her. Gabbard's justification of Hindu nationalism - a chauvinistic, misogynistic, xenophobic ideology - as merely "expressing pride in one's religion" didn't faze her Republican backers. Gabbard taking hundreds of thousands of dollars from donors who also helped to elect India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, then turning around and arguing, in India, that "there was a lot of misinformation that surrounded the event in 2002," referring to the Gujarat Massacre of Muslims which Modi is accused of orchestrating and which got him banned from America, no, that did not faze anyone in the Senate from confirming her.



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# Trump Says Putin Agreed to Start Negotiations to End Ukraine War

TRUMP ALSO DISCUSSED THE PLANS WITH UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY. ZELENSKY IS DUE TO MEET WITH VICE PRESIDENT VANCE ON FEB. 14.

FEBRUARY 13, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Following phone calls with his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts on Feb. 12, President Donald Trump announced Russia has agreed to "start negotiations immediately" to end the war in Ukraine.

"I just had a lengthy and highly productive phone call with President Vladimir Putin of Russia," Trump announced in a Feb. 12 post on Truth Social. The call marks Trump's first known conversation with Putin since taking office.

"First, as we both agreed, we want to stop the millions of deaths taking place in the War with Russia/Ukraine."

Speaking with reporters at the White House later on Feb. 12, Trump said he may soon meet with Putin in person in Saudi Arabia, though he didn't provide an exact timeline for such a meeting.

So far, the Russian side has provided few additional details about the call between Trump and Putin.

In remarks carried by Russia's state-sponsored TASS news agency, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the two leaders spoke for about an hour and a half.

Immediately after speaking with the Russian leader, Trump called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

In another post on Truth Social, Trump said that conversation "went very well" and that Zelenskyy also wants to negotiate a peace agreement.



President Donald Trump announced Russia has agreed to "start negotiations immediately" to end the war in Ukraine.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent also met with Zelenskyy in person in Kyiv on Feb. 12.

Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio will lead another U.S. delegation to meet with Zelenskyy in Germany on Feb. 14.

Putin and Trump's phone conversation comes a day after the Trump administration secured the release of Marc Fogel, who had been held in Russia since 2021 over a marijuana possession charge.

Trump thanked his Russian counterpart for agreeing to Fogel's release.

Announcing Fogel's release on Feb. 11, national security advisor Mike Waltz said, "[The exchange] serves as a show of good faith from the Russians and a

sign we are moving in the right direction to end the brutal and terrible war in Ukraine."

The call between Trump and Putin also came on the same day Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth met with Ukraine's network of international backers in Belgium. At the meeting, Hegseth reiterated the Trump administration's calls to negotiate an end to the war.

Hegseth also pushed back on Ukraine's ambitions to retake all of the territory it has lost to Russia throughout the war, and its wish to join NATO. Speaking with reporters on Feb. 12, Trump stood by Hegseth's assessment of Ukraine's war time prospects and reinforced his opposition to Ukraine joining NATO.

While Trump has called for negotiations to end the war, he has left open the possibility of continuing U.S. support for Ukraine. This week, he announced he had taken steps on an agreement in which Ukraine would trade access to its rare earth minerals in exchange for U.S. aid.

"No one wants peace more than Ukraine. Together with the U.S., we are charting our next steps to stop Russian aggression and ensure a lasting, reliable peace," Zelenskyy said in a post on social media platform X after his conversations with Trump and Bessent.

The Ukrainian leader also announced that a document is in the works that will cover a "security, economic cooperation, and resource partnership."

## Dallas makes the top 10 list of best cities for creatives to live, work

The Dallas Arts District was named one of the best in the country by a USA Today competition last year

FEBRUARY 12, 2025

DALLAS (TIP): Dallas is one of the top 10 cities for creatives. That's according to a new study by Compare the Market, an online comparison platform.

The study looked at the number of museums, galleries, theaters, architectural landmarks and average salaries for creative fields.

Dallas landed as No. 10 on the list, followed by Austin and Philadelphia.

The study shows Dallas has on average 10 museums for every 100,000 residents. Just last year, the Dallas Arts District was named one of the best in the country by a USA Today competition. Plus, the study showed Dallas scored higher than both Denver and Los Angeles on the list when it comes to salary. Dallas provides a competitive average monthly salary of about \$5,000 for creative professionals.

Will Heron is the artist liaison at Meow Wolf, an interactive art venue in Grapevine, and has been an artist in Dallas full time since 2012. Heron is not surprised Dallas ranked high. He said the city's affordability and community support



Dallas Arts District comprised of (clockwise from left foreground) City Performance Center, Dee and Charles Wyle Theatre, Hall Arts Tower (under construction), Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, Winspear Opera House and Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing Arts, as seen Saturday evening, May 10, 2014.

Photo: Courtesy Dallas Morning News

make it easy to sustain a career.

"With the Internet and with the right connections of people, you can make it here in Dallas just as well as any of these major art city hubs, and it's just a little bit

cheaper to live, which is wonderful," he said.

Heron also finds the city to have a supportive arts community and believes his life is less stressful than his artistic peers who live in Los Angeles or New York.

"Everyone's almost like competing for the same jobs," he said. "I think Dallas has this really special creative community that we're all supporting each other and working together trying to uplift each other rather than tear each other down, or have this really competitive only-one-person-can-succeed mentality."

**HERE'S THE FULL LIST OF BEST CITIES FOR CREATIVES:**

- 1 - San Francisco
- 2 - New York City
- 3 - Seattle
- 4 - Chicago
- 5 - Denver
- 6 - San Diego
- 7 - Los Angeles
- 8 - Philadelphia
- 9 - Austin
- 10 - Dallas

(Source: Dallas Morning News)

# THE 1ST INVEST IN INDIA BUSINESS FORUM HOSTED IN SEATTLE

INVITES INVESTMENTS IN AI, AGRI TECH, HIGHER EDUCATION, TOURISM AND HEALTH CARE  
SHOWCASES ONE DISTRICT ONE PRODUCT FROM EACH STATE OF INDIA



Invest in India Business Forum commences with lighting of the traditional Indian



Consul General delivering the inaugural remarks



Mayor of Bellevue Lynne Robinson addressing the Invest India Business Forum

**FEBRUARY 1, 2025**

**SEATTLE (TIP):** Consulate General of India in Seattle, in partnership with Greater Seattle Partners and The Northwest Seaport Alliance, organized the First Invest India Business Forum at the Bell Harbor International Conference Center on 27th January 2025.

Several dignitaries and leading CEOs from companies of the Puget Sound region joined the event. These included Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson, Mayor of the city of Bellevue Lynne Robinson, Commissioner of the Port of Seattle Sam Cho, and President of Greater Seattle Partners Brian Surratt.

Experts from various sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, Agri-Tech, Healthcare, Higher Education,



Port of Seattle Commissioner Sam Cho addressing the Invest India Business Forum



Participants at the Invest India Business Forum



Exhibits- One District One Product, coffees from Araku valley, Indian distilleries



Panelists at the Invest in India Business Forum

and Tourism presented detailed project specific opportunities available for investment in these sectors in India and also highlighted India's potential for growth and innovation across these industries.

## THE EVENT ALSO SHOWCASED FIVE UNIQUE EXHIBITS ON DISPLAY, WHICH INCLUDED:

- o ODOP (One District, One Product) - featuring one unique cultural heritage product from each state and union territory of India.

- o Exhibition on India as the Next Destination for Hi-Tech Investments.
- o Photo Exhibit: India through Tim's eyes, which put on display some of India's most iconic tourism sites, that were photographed by ace photographer Tim Durkan, during his recent visit to India in September last year.
- o Indian wines and distilleries: showcasing some of India's finest wines and distilleries; and B2B meetings between Washington winery producers and Indian distillery representatives.
- o Araku Coffee: samples of one of India's finest coffees from Araku valley was available on display and for tasting by the participating company representatives

The Invest India Business Forum (IIBF) was aimed to attract investments from the Pacific Northwest into the above key sectors, particularly in high end technologies like AI, which is anticipated to contribute \$500 billion to India's economy by 2025. Presentations made during the IIBF underscored Government of India's commitment to developing key sectors, its skilled workforce, digital infrastructure, and the related GOI policies. It also provided a platform to showcase select items for possible exports from India into the Greater Seattle area.

# Tariff War: Former Prime Ministers want Canadians to fly Maple Leaf on Saturday as Premiers land in Washington



--->By Prabhjot Singh

While Canadian premiers landed in Washington in a historic solidarity effort to convince US lawmakers, business groups, and lobbyists to oppose President Donald Trump's plans for devastating duties, five former Prime Ministers have asked Canadians to fly Maple Leaf flags on Saturday to express their solidarity.

It is the first time all 13 premiers have travelled to the American capital together.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, chair of the Council of the Federation, appealed to members of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday to send a message to Trump that tariffs would hurt the American and Canadian economies. Incidentally, Doug Ford had called early provincial elections on February 27. He has taken time out of his hectic election schedule to plead for the withdrawal of tariffs on Canadian exports to the US.

Since his return to the White House last month, Trump has rapidly implemented tariffs to reshape global trade and American foreign policy. This has surprised the world, as some trade-partnering nations have announced counter-tariffs.

Donald Trump signed executive orders on the first day of the week to impose 25 per cent levies on all steel and aluminum imports into the United States, including Canadian products, starting March 12.

The imposition of new duties was announced one week after Donald Trump agreed to a month-long pause on his plan to slap Canada with 25 per cent across-the-board tariffs on imports, with a lower 10 per cent levy on Canadian energy.

As a pause was announced, five Prime Ministers, while cutting across their



Twelve of Canada's premiers are seen posing for a photo in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday. All 13 premiers were in the U.S. capital this week in a lobbying push against broad tariffs on Canadian goods

political affiliations, want all Canadians to fly the maple leaf on Saturday to stand up to Trump as this weekend marks 60 years since the flag was first raised on Parliament Hill

All of the country's living former prime ministers are asking Canadians to fly the red maple leaf this weekend in a huge display of national pride as the country stares down U.S. President Donald Trump's threats to its economy and sovereignty.

Joe Clark, Kim Campbell, Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin and Stephen Harper have jointly written an open letter, telling Canadians to "show the flag as never before" as the country contends with "threats and insults from Donald Trump."

"Let's fly our flag with pride. Let's show the world that we are proud of our history and proud of our country," the former first ministers write.

"We've had our share of battles in the past. But we all agree on one thing: Canada, the true north, strong and free, the best country in the world, is worth celebrating and fighting for."

Canada observes Flag Day on February 15 every year to mark the raising of the red and white maple leaf flag on Parliament Hill in 1965 for the first time to replace the Canadian Red Ensign.

The five former prime ministers said in their joint message that they have "witnessed a surge of Canadian pride and patriotism" in the wake of Trump's threats and they are heartened to see so many people "come together to express their love for our country and their determination to defend Canada's values and our independence."

Since his installation on January 20, Trump has repeatedly mocked Canada's economy and military and has threatened to use "economic force" to somehow convince Canadians to join the U.S. as the 51st state. Polls show Canadians are overwhelmingly against the idea.

Just last weekend, Trump said Canada was "not viable as a country" without U.S. trade, and warned that the founding NATO member can no longer depend on the U.S. for military protection.

After brokering a trade war pause with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last week, Trump announced Monday he is going ahead with punishing 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum in March.

U.S. tariff threats and the possibility of a trade war are already having an impact on how some Canadians spend their money, with many saying they're boycotting American products and

buying Canadian.

Several social media groups have emerged urging Canadians to buy Canadian products besides urging them to boycott the American goods.

Feeling the people's pulse, former Premiers Clark, Campbell, Chrétien, Martin and Harper have taken the lead in asking Canadians to put the country's national symbols on display as a show of strength.

All six candidates in the run for the Liberal Party leadership - Mark Carney, Chrystia Freeland, Ruby Dhalla, Karina Gould, Frank Baylis and Jaime Batiste - also issued a joint statement urging Canadians to fight the Tariff war unitedly.

Mark Carney welcomed the "show of unity and leadership" in the wake of Trump's abuse, holding "Canada is so much bigger than our politics."

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is planning a "Canada First" rally in Ottawa on Saturday where participants would be encouraged to wear red and white in honor of the nation's flag.

In a letter of her own to Canadians, Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge said it's important "this year, more than ever" to celebrate the flag and "remind ourselves what it represents: our values, our resilience and our sovereignty."

St-Onge said there will be a special ceremony in Ottawa on Friday where officials and youth will unfurl the flag along the historic Rideau Canal.

"This national emblem represents the values we all cherish - generosity, openness, respect and equality. A flag that could not be mistaken for any other; it connects us to our national identity, to our Canadian pride and to each other," she said.

St-Onge also encouraged people to cheer for Team Canada at Saturday's much-anticipated Four Nations Face-Off hockey game. Flags will be on display as Canada, led by captain Sidney Crosby, plays the U.S. in Montreal.

## First Sikh RCMP officer Baltej Dhillon among three nominated to Canadian Senate by Justin Trudeau



Baltej Dhillon, the first turban-wearing Sikh to become a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer in 1991, is one of the three new independent members appointed to the Canadian Senate

BY PRABHJOT SINGH

Baltej Dhillon, the first turban-wearing Sikh to become a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer in 1991, is one of the three new independent members appointed to the

Canadian Senate. Baltej Dhillon represents British Columbia while Martine Herbert (Quebec) and Todd Lewis (Saskatchewan) are the other new Senators named by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Baltej, who recently contested unsuccessfully in British Columbia assembly elections, is the second turbaned Sikh after Sebi Marwah, to become a Senator in Canada.

An official communique from the office of the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, said that the Governor General, Mary Simon, has appointed Baltej Dhillon, for British Columbia, Martine Hébert, for Quebec, and Todd Lewis, for Saskatchewan as independent senators to fill vacancies in the Senate.

Baltej Dhillon is a retired career police

officer, a community leader, and a lifelong advocate for diversity and inclusion.

In 1991, Baltej Dhillon made history as the first Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer to wear a turban. He went on to have a successful 30-year career with the RCMP, playing a key role in several high-profile investigations. Since 2019, he has worked with British Columbia's anti-gang agency, while remaining active in his community as a youth leader.

In 2013, Baltej Dhillon led the Sikh Leadership and Police Committee on Gang Violence to support youth prevention strategies within the Sikh Community. Since retiring from the RCMP in 2019, he has worked as Program Manager for the Crime Guns Intelligence

and Investigations Group with the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of British Columbia, the province's anti-gang agency.

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

(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)



## Waqf Bill report tabled in Rajya Sabha amid Opposition uproar

The Rajya Sabha was adjourned briefly on Thursday amid uproar by Opposition parties after tabling of the joint committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill.

The report was tabled by BJP member Medha Vishram Kulkarni, a member of the panel.

The tabling of the report was followed by uproar by members from the Opposition benches.

The clamour continued as Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar tried to read out a message from the President.

“Don’t show disrespect to the president of India...” Dhankhar said and urged Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge to ask the opposition members to take their seats.

As the uproar continued, the Upper House was adjourned for ten minutes till 11:20 am.

## Political situation in Manipur remains uncertain, BJP yet to decide on new leader

Four days after N Biren Singh resigned as Manipur chief minister, the political situation in the state remains uncertain with the ruling BJP yet to decide on a new leader. Meanwhile, state forest minister Th. Bishwajit left Imphal for Guwahati on Wednesday evening, and no official reason has been cited for his visit to the neighbouring state.

Despite several rounds of discussions between BJP’s northeast in-charge Sambit Patra and party legislators, the deadlock persists with some lawmakers suggesting that the final decision may rest with the Centre.

Patra has met Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla twice over the past two days. On Tuesday, Patra, accompanied by state party president A Sharda Devi, held talks with Bhalla, and on Wednesday, he met the governor again.

Patra also held a meeting with BJP MLAs, including state consumer affairs minister L Susindro and MLA Karam Shyam, to discuss the situation.

Speaking to reporters, Shyam had said there was no constitutional crisis following Singh’s decision to step down and the ongoing issues would be resolved by the Centre with the help of legislators.

# India, France to co-build N-reactors; PM Modi wraps up ‘productive’ visit

NEW FELHI (TIP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, Feb 12, wound up his “productive” France tour, with the two sides agreeing to co-develop nuclear reactors and deepen civil nuclear energy cooperation.

A decision was taken to declare 2026 as the “India-France Year of Innovation” and a logo for the same was unveiled at the 14th India-France CEOs Forum, which PM Modi addressed on Tuesday. The two sides today signed a Declaration on AI, besides agreeing to speed up collaboration to develop the world’s largest museum, Yuge Yugeen Bharat, in the heart of New Delhi.

In a special gesture of friendship, President Emmanuel Macron came to see off Modi, who departed to the US on Wednesday on the second leg of his two-nation tour. The two leaders exchanged a hug after day-long bilateral engagements during which they discussed the full spectrum of bilateral relations and key global and regional issues.

The letter of intent India and France signed on co-designing, co-developing and co-producing small modular reactors (SMR) and advanced modular reactors (AMR) was a major takeaway from the three-day visit that saw 10 outcomes across sectors of technology and innovation, civil nuclear energy, triangular cooperation, environment, culture and people-to-people relations.

Bilateral discussions happened aboard the French Presidential aircraft in which the leaders travelled to Marseille, over dinner later and were followed by delegation-level talks through Wednesday, which also saw PM



PM Modi & French President Emmanuel Macron after the inauguration of the Indian consulate in Marseille. Reuters

Modi and President Macron jointly inaugurating the Indian consulate in the city. “India and France relations touched new heights literally as PM Modi and President Macron held discussions aboard the Presidential aircraft. These discussions continued upon landing in Marseille where the leaders were joined by delegations and discussions over dinner,” Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri later said.

On the SMR and AMR agreement, the India-France joint statement said, “The two sides stressed that nuclear energy is an essential part of the energy mix for strengthening energy security and transitioning towards a low-carbon economy. Both leaders acknowledged the India-France civil nuclear ties and efforts in cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, notably in relation with the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant Project.

“They welcomed the first meeting of the Special Task Force on Civil Nuclear

Energy and welcomed the signing of a letter of intent on SMR and AMR and the implementing agreement between India’s GCNEP, DAE and France’s INSTN, CEA for cooperation in training and education of nuclear professionals.”

India’s recent declaration to amend the Atomic Energy Act for enabling private entry in the civil nuclear sector will play a key role in advancing the India-France cooperation.

The agreement came a day after Fatih Birol, chief of the International Energy Association, told 300 world leaders at the Paris AI Summit that there was no AI without energy, specifically electricity. “If we get into co-developing SMRs and AMRs, we can leverage the industrial ecosystem in India that exists for nuclear power plants,” said Misri. The joint statement added that the two leaders underlined their common commitment to a free, open, inclusive, secure and peaceful Indo-Pacific region.

Source: TNS

## RSS’ new home in Delhi — A plush Rs 150-cr highrise

NEW FELHI (TIP)

The ruling BJP’s parent body — the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh — has moved into a new, plush high-rise home, complete with three 12-storey towers built at a cost of Rs 150 crore, donated by Sangh members and volunteers.

Built by architect Anup Dave from Gujarat, Keshav Kunj, the RSS’ new home, blends ancient Indian architectural elements with modern and has some 300 rooms for the residential accommodation of Sangh cadres.

The complex has a built-up area of 5 lakh sq ft, including the basement which can park 135 cars as of now with plans to accommodate 270 vehicles.

At least 75,000 RSS cadres and volunteers contributed the finances to rebuild the old Sangh home. That too was located at the same address.

“Contributions ranged from Rs 5 upwards and 75,000 people donated,” said RSS sources, pointing to the main auditorium named after VHP’s Ashok



Singhal, a leading light of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

The three towers, which house both office and residential spaces, have been named Sadhna, Prerna and Archana in a sign of women’s empowerment, said an RSS leader.

The complex also has a huge library

with some 8,500 books, an OPD clinic which even the neighbourhood dwellers can use and a five-bed small in-patient facility.

The newly built complex will see RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat interact with workers on February 19. Top Sangh leadership will also be present at the informal get-together.

RSS sources said they were moving into the new office gradually and there was no formal inauguration of the new building.

The RSS started its outreach from Delhi in 1939 but got its first address only in 1962.

“That was a single floor complex. In the 1980s, we built two floors. Later, we expanded and remained located at Keshav Kunj in the Jhandewalan area of Delhi. We shifted out to a rented place in 2018,” said an RSS leader.

The redone Keshav Kunj home of the RSS was built from 2018 to 2024.

Source: TNS

# ‘If Budget is so good, why are Indians leaving country?’: Oppn lashes out at govt in Parliament

NEW DELHI (TIP)

From the US deportees to “problems” during Maha Kumbh to the Union Budget, which they described as “void of vision” for a developed India, the Opposition members in Lok Sabha targeted the government over a range of issues Tuesday, Feb 11.

Samajwadi Party member Akhilesh Yadav said the Budget was “targeted and focused for those people who are very wealthy, big people and industrialists”.

He said the Budget is “void of a roadmap to make India developed”. “The roadmap is not visible because as the Budget was unveiled, we have seen those pictures... in those pictures, hathon me hathkadi aur pairon me bediyan (handcuffs and shackles) are seen,” he said, pointing to the deportation of illegal immigrants from the US.

Without naming PM Narendra Modi, who is on a two-nation visit to France and the US, Yadav said, “If possible, bring some more Indians with you...”

Congress member Saleng A Sangma said, “It was unfortunate to see citizens of India shackled, chained, and brought as prisoners from the USA... If the Budget is so good, why are our own citizens fleeing to get better jobs in other countries?” he said.

Hanuman Beniwal of RLP criticised the government for not increasing the MGNREGS budget and demanded income up to Rs 15 lakh be made tax-free.

Yadav also attacked the government over “problems” faced by people going for the Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. “People faced problems and it happened for the first time that people were stuck in a 300 km jam... Two Chief Ministers had to be deputed... Their office bearers had to make an appeal that BJP workers should come out to help the people,” Yadav said.

When Yadav raised the issue, BJP member Nishikant



Dubey said the SP leader can not speak against any religion.

Congress MP Manish Tewari in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday raised concerns over the recent deportation of some Indians from the United States “in handcuffs and shackles”.

Speaking during Zero Hour, Tewari asked whether the “so-called illegal immigrant” Indians should be shackled while being deported. Tewari was still speaking when Jagdambika Pal, who was chairing, moved on to the next speaker.

Tewari later posted on X: “Extremely unfortunate that my microphone was shut off when I put forth the sensitive issue of Indians detained in the USA being deported to India in handcuffs and shackles, completely robbed of basic human dignity and rights. Enquired from (Govt) if it considers such treatment fair on the undocumented Indians who are in the US for a living and aren’t terrorists or criminals per se, emphasising a dire need to tide over the BJP-Congress agenda when it’s a question of our country’s self-respect.”

Source: *The Indian Express*

## SC pulls up ED: Concept of PMLA cannot be to ensure that a person remains in jail

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Supreme Court on Wednesday, Feb 12, took exception to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) continuing to keep Indian Telecommunication Service officer Arun Kumar Tripathi in custody even after the order taking cognisance of its complaint against him under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in the Chhattisgarh liquor scam had been quashed by the High Court.

Directing that he be released on bail, a bench of Justices A S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said that the “concept of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) cannot be to ensure that a person should remain in jail”.

The ED had arrested Tripathi on August 8, 2024, but the Chhattisgarh High Court quashed the Special Court order taking cognisance of the complaint against him on February 7, 2025, saying no sanction had been obtained to prosecute him.

The HC based its decision on the November 6, 2024 decision by a two-judge



bench presided by Justice Oka which said Section 197(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) that mandates prior sanction from the government to take cognisance of an offence against public servants will apply to cases under the PMLA too.

Questioning the ED, Justice Oka asked Additional Solicitor General S V Raju Wednesday: “If cognisance has been quashed, why should the accused be in jail?”

Raju said that the quashing of the order taking cognisance did not make the arrest illegal. He added that sanction had now been obtained and the agency had again applied for cognisance.

Drawing parallels with the alleged misuse of Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code which criminalises cruelty against a married woman by her husband or his relative, Justice Oka said: “Concept of PMLA cannot be to ensure that a person should remain in jail. I will tell you frankly, looking at several cases, See what happened in 498A cases, if this is the approach of the ED... if the tendency is to keep the person somehow in jail, even after cognisance is quashed, what can be said?”

Raju contended that many complaints were filed by the ED before the SC mandated sanction last year and added “the order quashing cognisance will not make the accused entitled to regular bail”, but the bench did not agree.

“What kind of signals are we giving? Order taking cognisance is quashed and the person is in custody since August 2024!” said Justice Oka.

Raju said the quashing was not because no offence wasn’t made out but for lack of sanction which has been obtained now.

## Army to procure 1,000 indigenous surveillance copters for high-altitude operations

To beef up its capability of keeping a watch over rugged and snow-bound areas along the border, the Indian Army has initiated the process to procure 1,000 indigenously developed surveillance copters for use in high-altitude areas.

These are small sensor equipped rotor powered drones, weighing up to 10 kg and designed to operate from confined and unprepared areas as small as 15 metres for carrying out tactical recce and observation missions.

“The surveillance copter will be employed primarily in high-altitude mountainous terrain at elevations up to 18,000 ft,” a request for information (RFI) issued by the Ministry of Defence on February 12 to identify probable Indian vendors states.

The copter’s pay load will include different types of high-resolution cameras video and still cameras along with infrared sensors to provide real time feedback to ground controllers up to a range of 5 km for at least 60 minutes of flying time.

A satellite-based navigation system, such as GNSS, NAVSTAR, GLONASS and IRNSS, with option to select, de-select or block a particular service and compatibility with defence series map is necessary.

The copters should be operational by day and night and in commonly encountered weather conditions in all kind of terrain in the country and be able to function in the temperature range from minus 30 degrees Celsius to 30 degrees Celsius and be able to withstand wind speeds up to 30 kmph.

The Army wants the copter to be modular in design, thereby lending itself to future upgrades through simple modifications that do not require design or structural changes. It should also facilitate integration and installation of any system and sub-system without impacting its performance.

A few weeks ago, the Indian Army had organised a symposium in Ladakh exclusively focused on drone operations in high altitude areas, where several firms had demonstrated their products.

The Army, like its sister services, uses several types of armed and unarmed drones of different size, payload capacity and range for objectives like strike, surveillance and recce, logistics, and search and rescue.

While some of the drones have been developed indigenously, others have been sourced from foreign vendors. A number of public and private sector establishments associated with the armed forces also have several ongoing and planned programmes to develop newer and more advanced variants of drones.

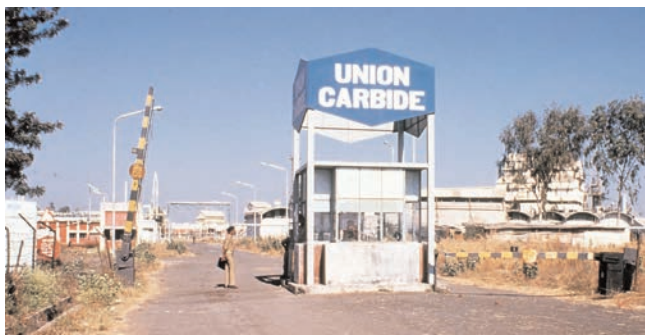
Source: *TNS*



# India in history this Week

FEBRUARY 14 TO FEBRUARY 20

## 14 FEBRUARY



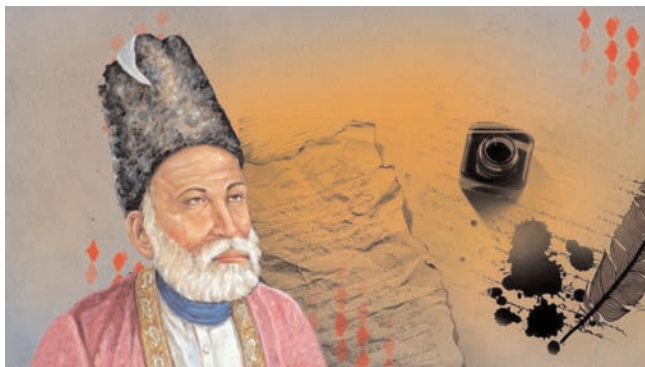
1989 Union Carbide, responsible for Bhopal gas scandal, agreed to give compensation to the government.

1881 In 1881, Rajendra Lal Dutt and Basu opened the country's first homoeopathic college in Calcutta.

1967 In 1967, the 74th Lok Sabha elections were held.

1999 The fifth National Games were inaugurated in Imphal in 1999.

1970 The ordinance was passed by the President in 1970 about nationality.



## 15 FEBRUARY

1869 Mirza Ghalib, the famous Urdu poet, died.

2017 On this day ISRO launched 104 satellites simultaneously.

1903 On February 15, 1903, the world's favorite soft toy teddy bear was launched into the market by Morris Miktom.

1967 Elections to the fourth Lok Sabha were held in 1967 in India.



## 16 FEBRUARY

1944 Dada Saheb Phalke died.

1982 The Jawaharlal Nehru International Gold Cup football tournament was held in Calcutta for the first time in 1982.

1987 A missile with submarine capable of hitting the submarine was inducted into the Indian Navy in 1987.

2008 Tata Motors launched a vehicle for the Army

on February 16, 2008, called a Light Specialist Vehicle, to allow the Army to show its power through it.

2009 On February 16, 2009, former President Pranab Mukherjee presented the Interim Budget for the year 2009-2010.

## 17 FEBRUARY

1915 Gandhiji visited Santiniketan for the first time.

1931 Lord Irwin welcomed Gandhiji to the Viceroy's residence.

2007 Veteran Gandhian Smt. Arunaveen Desai passed away in Gujarat.

2014 On 17 February 2014, the Election Commission



banned the transmission of exit polls until the last phase of voting was over.



## 18 FEBRUARY



2007 68 people were killed in bomb blast in the Samjhauta Express going from Delhi to Lahore.

1905 Shyamji Krishnavarma founded the India Home Rule Society in London in 1905.

1911 In 1911, the first delivery of the aircraft by air was done in India.

1964 The Royal Indian Navy (Navy) rebellion occurred in 1946 in Mumbai.

1971 India established its first satellite contact with

Britain in 1971 through the Arvi satellite station.

1979 The US gave India a check for Rs 1664 crore in 1979, which is considered to be the largest check in the world.

## 19 FEBRUARY



1891 Daily publication of Amrit Bazar Patrika started.

1630 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the first ruler of the Maratha Empire, was born.

1389 In 1389, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq II of Delhi was assassinated.

1986 In 1986, the first computerized railway reservation ticket was introduced in India.

## 20 FEBRUARY

1987 Mizoram, India's northeastern state got the status of 23rd state. It was a part of the state of Assam before it became a union territory.

1983 A large-scale violence erupted before the assembly elections to be held in the north eastern state of Assam. It also led to the death of 600 people.



1968 The first heart transplant was done in 1968 at KEM Hospital in Mumbai.

1950 In 1950, Sharat Chandra Bose, the elder brother of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, passed away.

1999 Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee took a historic bus tour of Pakistan in 1999.

1999 The sports channel started on Doordarshan in 1999.



# SUNDANCE FILM FEST HONORS DESI FILMMAKERS

BY MABEL PAIS

The 2025 Sundance Film Festival which took place January 22 to February 2. The awards were announced and presented on January 31 at a ceremony for the jury and audience award-winning films at The Ray Theatre in Park City, where independent storytelling was celebrated ahead of the Festival's conclusion. The 2025 Festival featured premieres, screenings, talks, events, and more in Park City and Salt Lake City, Utah. All feature award-winning films were available online nationwide for ticket holders and passholders until February 2. For more information, visit [festival.sundance.org](http://festival.sundance.org).

"The past 11 days of the Festival have been a meaningful opportunity to connect as a community in support of independent storytelling," said Amanda Kelso, Acting CEO, Sundance Institute. "We look forward to being reunited with audiences, artists, industry, and press next January for another edition of the Festival."

## AWARDS WON BY INDIAN FILMMAKERS

**THE WORLD CINEMA GRAND JURY PRIZE: DRAMATIC** was presented to 'SABAR BONDA' (Cactus Pears) / India, U.K., Canada (Director and Screenwriter: Rohan Parashuram Kanawade; Producers: Neeraj Churi, Mohamed Khaki, Kaushik Ray, Hareesh Reddypalli, Naren Chandavarkar, Sidharth Meer)

Anand, a 30-something city dweller compelled to spend a 10-day mourning period for his father in the rugged countryside of western India, tenderly



Rohan Parashuram Kanawade

Credit: Sushant Murkar/ Courtesy of Sundance Institute

bonds with a local farmer struggling to stay unmarried. As the mourning ends, forcing his return, Anand must decide the fate of his relationship born under duress.

Cast: Bhushaan Manoj, Suraj Suman, Jayshri Jagtap.

World Premiere. Available online for Public.

**JURY CITATION:** This is a great modern love story. To say it's an honor to award this tender film is an understatement. We cried, we laughed, and we wished to be loved in the same way. It is exactly what the world needs right now. This authentic point of view opens the door to an intimate language we all understand. We feel the humming



Geeta Gandbhir

Credit: Andrew H. Walker/Shutterstock for Sundance Film Festival

heartbeat of the main character's inner life, and when it bursts, it wraps us with its sweetness.

We award the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize: Dramatic to 'Sabar Bonda' (Cactus Pears).

## JURY AWARDS FOR DIRECTING, SCREENWRITING, AND EDITING

The Directing Award: U.S. Documentary was presented to GEETA GANDBHIR for 'THE PERFECT NEIGHBOR' / U.S.A. (Director and Producer: Geeta Gandbhir, Producers: Nikon Kwantu, Alisa Payne, Sam Bisbee) - A seemingly minor neighborhood dispute in Florida escalates into deadly violence. Police bodycam footage and

investigative interviews expose the consequences of Florida's "stand your ground" laws.

World Premiere. Available online for Public.

Jury citation: The Directing award goes to a filmmaker of remarkably disciplined vision who turns creative constraints into cinematic power, creating a searing indictment of "stand your ground laws."

The Directing Award: U.S. Documentary goes to Geeta Gandbhir for 'The Perfect Neighbor.'

A U.S. Documentary SPECIAL JURY AWARD for ARCHIVAL STORYTELLING was presented to 'SELENA LOS DINOS' / U.S.A. (Director: Isabel Castro, Producers: Julie Goldman, Christopher Clements, J. Daniel Torres, David Blackman, SIMRAN SINGH) - Selena Quintanilla - the "Queen of Tejano Music" - and her family band, Selena y Los Dinos, rose from performing at quinceañeras to selling out stadium tours. The celebration of her life and legacy is chronicled through never-before-seen footage from the family's personal archive.

World Premiere. Available online for Public.

**JURY CITATION:** This award goes to a film that transported us to a specific time and place, evoking themes of family, heritage, love, and adolescence. The power of the story speaks to the essential nature of the archive - employed in this film to chart the emergence of a once-in-a-generation talent. The winner of the U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Archival Storytelling goes to 'Selena y Los Dinos.'

## CURRENT FILMS BY MABEL PAIS

### REZ COMEDY

After the Canadian Screen Awards qualification theatrical run in Toronto last October, REZ COMEDY, the first all Indigenous stand-up comedy feature documentary world premieres on SVOD on AAM.tv and TVOD on Amazon Prime on Friday February 14, 2025, Valentine's Day!

From the creators who won 'Best Comedy Special' at the 2024 Canadian Screen Awards, Rez Comedy is the first all-Indigenous stand-up comedy documentary feature, showcasing nine diverse and talented Indigenous comedians.

The feature film is produced and co-directed by Keith Nahanee, rising Squamish nation comic and filmmaker, and Comedy Invasion creator Quentin Lee, a 2024 Canadian Screen Award winner ([academy.ca/2024/comedy-invasion-rez-style](http://academy.ca/2024/comedy-invasion-rez-style)). It is also produced by Comedy Invasion producer Cindy AuYeung, 2024 Canadian Screen Award winner ([academy.ca/2024/comedy-invasion-rez-style](http://academy.ca/2024/comedy-invasion-rez-style)).

Rez Comedy is qualified for the 2025 Canadian Screen Awards in the following categories: Ted Rogers Best Feature Length Documentary, Best Cinematography in a Feature Length Documentary, Best Editing in a Feature Length Documentary, and Best Original Music in a Feature Length Documentary.

### DEATH WITHOUT MERCY - WORLD PREMIERE @ SHEFFIELD DOCFEST IN 2024

Dir: Waad Al-Kateab (SAMA);

DEATH WITHOUT MERCY follows the harrowing journey of two Syrian families over ten harrowing days in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria in 2023 and took 55,000 lives. As they search for their missing loved ones and try to make sense of the event, the film reveals unsettling truths about corruption, governmental negligence, and the systemic failures that exacerbated the disaster's impact.

Through intimate first-hand survivor footage from under the rubble interwoven with television news reports, social media interaction, and closed circuit tv and drone footage, the film is at once a moving testament to human dignity and a heartfelt tribute to the lives that have been lost in this catastrophic event. The release is timely not only because of the two-year anniversary but also in light of current world events.

Broadcast/Streaming Launch Date: February 6, 2025, exclusively on Paramount+ with Showtime.

### SILENT TREES - US PREMIERE: 2025 SLAMDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

Director: Agnieszka Zwiefka; Producer: Zofia Kujawska

SILENT TREES follows a Kurdish teen and her family as they find their lives on the cusp of being forfeited due to a dirty political power play between Belarus and Poland. Due to their circumstances, she has no choice but to assume the role of an adult well beyond her years if they are to survive in their new home. The film looks at one family, led by a spirited 16-year-old girl, whose lives are at risk due to the global refugee crisis and a political power play between Belarus and Poland.

While her father desperately tries to find work to feed and take care of his family while hampered by language barriers and other seemingly insurmountable hurdles, Runa finds comfort in drawing, which the film morphs into animated sequences that capture her dreams and nightmares.

### DISPOSABLE HUMANITY - WORLD PREMIERE: 2025 SLAMDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

Director: Cameron Mitchell; Executive Producer: Steve Way (Co-star of Hulu's Ramy)

This eye-opening film delves deep into the dark history of the Nazi Aktion T4 program, where hundreds of thousands of disabled individuals deemed "unworthy of life" were systematically exterminated, highlighting the ongoing relevance of this tragic chapter in history in discussions about disability, worth, and societal perceptions of marginalized communities.

DISPOSABLE HUMANITY follows Cameron Mitchell's family, who are Disability Studies scholars and filmmakers that have researched the Nazi Aktion T4 program since the 1990s. Through conversations with memorial directors, disabled people, and relatives of T4 victims, they uncover the horrifying truth: that the Nazi Aktion T4 program, was in fact the program where the Nazis trained killing staff and designed the apparatus of mass murder that led to the Holocaust. Disabled people were the first victims to be killed under the Third Reich and in this investigative documentary, the Mitchells reveal how this history has been covered over and erased from international public memory.

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

# NJ SYMPHONY PRESENTS BRAHMS & CHOPIN AND OPENS WITH ARTISTIC PARTNER'S CREATION 'CAN YOU SEE?'

BY MABEL PAIS



Allison Loggins-Hull Credit : njsymphony.org

The New Jersey Symphony presents new Resident Artistic Partner Allison Loggins-Hull's 'Can You See?,' as opening piece, with three performances in NJ locations (see program below) of Brahms and Chopin with Christoph König conducting.

The program opens with 'Can You See?' In 2021, Loggins-Hull was commissioned to write the piece for the New Jersey Symphony Chamber Players. This weekend's performances mark the East Coast premiere of Hull's expanded version for full orchestra.

The program continues with Frédéric Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1, a favorite around the world. Tony Siqi Yun, the 23-year-old Canadian-born pianist who was Gold Medalist at the First China International Music Competition (2019) and recipient of the Rheingau Music Festival's 2023 Lotto-Förderpreis, is set to appear in this part of the program as soloist. Yun made his debut with the Symphony last year at the 2024 Lunar New Year Celebration Concert.

The second half of the program features Johannes Brahms' Symphony No. 1. Following its premiere in 1876, Brahms' First quickly garnered the nickname 'Beethoven's Tenth,' particularly for the fourth movement's simple hymn-like melody that reminded some listeners of Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy.' To this day, it remains beloved by concertgoers for its emotional power.

## PROGRAM

Brahms and Chopin

New Jersey Symphony Classical  
**Christoph König conductor**  
Tony Siqi Yun piano  
New Jersey Symphony  
Newark - Thursday, February 20,  
1:30 pm, NJPAC

Red Bank - Saturday, February 22, 8  
pm, Count Basie Center for the Arts  
New Brunswick - Sunday, February  
23, 3 pm, State Theatre New Jersey

*A Classical Conversation will take place on Sunday, February 23, at 2 pm at State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick before the performance. Concertgoers will be able to learn more about the music from Symphony musicians, guest artists, and other engaging insiders.*

For more information on concerts and tickets, visit [njsymphony.org/events](https://njsymphony.org/events).

**CHRISTOPH KÖNIG**



Christoph König Credit : njsymphony.org

Christoph König began his tenure as chief conductor of the Spanish Radio Television Symphony Orchestra (RTVE) in Madrid with the 2023-24 season and has been music & artistic director of the Solistes Européens Luxembourg since 2010. Starting with the 2024-25 season he takes on the position of principal guest conductor of the Warsaw Philharmonic. Celebrated for his clarity, precision, and elegant approach, König is in high demand as a guest conductor all over the world. Since his debut in the US in 2010, he has conducted many symphony

orchestras like Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, New Jersey, Houston, Oregon, and Toronto, as well as the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

König has been affiliated with many of the leading opera houses of the world such as Zurich Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Bonn Oper, Semper Oper Dresden, Staatsoper Stuttgart, and Teatro Real in Madrid.

"König offered a fresh, sensitive, elegant, and totally unmannered interpretation. Beethoven's full textures were uncommonly well balanced." Pittsburgh Tribune, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (Symphony No. 6)

König was born in Dresden where he sang in the famous Kreuzchoir. He studied conducting, piano, and singing at the Musikhochschule Dresden and furthered his studies in masterclasses with Sergiu Celibidache and Sir Colin Davis, whose assistant he later became with the Sächsische Staatskapelle at the Semper Oper Dresden. Connect with König @facebook.com/ccckoenig.

**TONY SIQI YUN**



Tony Siqi Yun Credit : njsymphony.org

The Canadian-born pianist Tony Siqi Yun, Gold Medalist at the First China International Music Competition (2019) and the award recipient of the Rheingau Music Festival's Lotto-Förderpreis (2023), is quickly becoming a sought-after soloist and recitalist. At the age of 23, he

has been hailed as a "poet of the keyboard" (Pianist Magazine), and The Philadelphia Inquirer noted his thrilling performance and "interpretive flashes that point to an emergent big personality: moments of grandness or deep expressivity."

In 2024-25, he appears with the Nashville Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, and Colorado Springs Philharmonic orchestras, among others. He also returns to China this season, appearing with orchestras in Shanghai and Guangzhou. Major recital debuts this season are with Washington Performing Arts, San Francisco Symphony's Shenson Spotlight Series, and Friends of Chamber Music Denver.

He made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2023-24 under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin with Orchestre Métropolitain, following his 2022-23 debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Yun has appeared recently with the Toronto Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Buffalo Philharmonic, Hamilton (ON) Philharmonic, and Rhode Island Philharmonic; outside North America, he has recently appeared with Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, and Shanghai Symphony Orchestra.

Yun is a 2024 graduate of The Juilliard School, where he was a recipient of the Jerome L. Greene Fellowship and studied with Professors Yoheved Kaplinsky and Matti Raekallio. Follow Tony on Instagram @tonysiqiyun.

## THE NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

The New Jersey Symphony is a GRAMMY and Emmy Award-winning orchestra. Under the direction of the Music Director Xian Zhang, the Symphony performs more than 60 concerts at mainstage venues across the state, including Newark, Princeton, New Brunswick, Red Bank, and Morristown as well as schools and public spaces statewide. Programming at the Symphony reflects an unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion while providing students across the State unparalleled opportunities to achieve musical excellence through its Youth Orchestra and other outreach programs.

For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit the website at [njsymphony.org](https://njsymphony.org).

Connect with the NJ Symphony Follow NJ Symphony on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, and YouTube

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

# TRAVEL BACK TO TURKEY, WITHOUT LEAVING THE USA, WITH CEM YILMAZ

BY MABEL PAIS



Cem Yilmaz

Credit: njpac.org

**Turkish Comedian CEM YILMAZ** will enthrall audiences at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) on February 16, 2025 at 8:30 pm.

Get ready to laugh! After a long wait, famous comedian Cem Yilmaz is back on stage with his brand new show CMXXIV. Following his European tour, Yilmaz is bringing his hilarious comedy to North America. The North American leg of his tour will kick off in Toronto, Canada on February 12, followed by shows across Chicago, New York, New Jersey, Washington D.C. and Miami. Fans can look forward to experiencing fresh material on this original tour.

**Cem Yilmaz (Turkish pronunciation: [d?em j??maz] is a Turkish actor, stand-up comedian, musician, filmmaker, screenwriter, and cartoonist. He has four franchise film series G.O.R.A., Karakomik Fimler, Organize ??ler, Vizonte.**

## AWARDS

Along his professional career, he has won numerous awards and appeared in more than 4000 stand-up comedy shows, took part in 10 movies and contributed as a dubbing performer in 4 movies.

## TURKEY'S CELEBRITY

**C**em Yilmaz is a household name in Turkey. He is widely regarded as the face of Turkey's stand-up comedy scene and is arguably Turkey's most in-demand celebrity. His anecdotal humor and observational comedic style won him critical acclaim in his stand-up comedy act 'Fundamentals.' Since then, his career has blossomed into one of the most successful in entertainment. He is also widely respected as a filmmaker and actor.

Cem Yilmaz' target audience runs the gamut from university students to taxi drivers - an achievement that cannot be overstated in a country all too often known for its deep cultural divide. This unique reach has undoubtedly been pivotal to his success. As a result, the Turkish box offices have been very kind to him; the vast majority of his films are instant blockbusters.

While Cem Yilmaz' stand-up material is often Turkey-centric, his films have a considerable following abroad. Cem Yilmaz' films are also popular in Germany, where a large Turkish-German expatriate community flock to his newest releases.

## COMEDY

While studying at the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management of Bogazici University, he started drawing comics for the Turkish humor magazine 'Leman.' In August 1995 he did his first stand-up comedy show in Leman Culture Center in Istanbul, Turkey performing with no serious career intentions as a comedian. However, after the positive response of the audience, he continued his show to attract larger crowds in Besiktas Cultural Center, Istanbul where he has appeared in over a thousand stand-up comedy shows since, becoming so popular that tickets have sold for the equivalent of US\$140.

## FILM

His movie career started in 1998 with a co-starring role in the comedy 'Everything's Gonna Be Great' (1998), directed by Ömer Vargi, and continued with a role in 'Vizonte' (2001), directed by Yilmaz Erdogan and Ömer Faruk Sorak. He achieved his greatest success by starring

in and writing big-budget science-fiction parody G.O.R.A. (2004), also directed by Ömer Faruk Sorak, which became a box-office hit and described by Rekin Teksoy as a strong sign that showed that popular cinema was successful in appealing to wide audiences. He maintained this success with a starring role in the comedy feature movie 'Magic Carpet Ride' (2005) AKA 'Magic Carpet Ride', also directed by Yilmaz Erdogan, for which he won Best Supporting Actor at the 11th Sadri Alisik Awards, and his directorial debut with 'The Magician' (2006), co-directed by Ali Taner Baltaci, for which he won Best Actor at the 34th Brussels International Independent Film Festival and 12th Sadri Alisik Awards.

He has since repeated his box office success with a sequel to 'G.O.R.A.' (2004) called 'A.R.O.G.' (2008), also co-directed by Ali Taner Baltaci, and comedy Western parody called 'Yahsi Bati - The Ottoman Cowboys' (2009), directed by Ömer Faruk Sorak. That same year, he co-starred, alongside veteran actor Sener Sen, in the police drama 'Hunting Season' (2010), written and directed by Yavuz Turgul, and made a special appearance in drama 'Zefir' (2010), written and directed by Belma Bas. After two years he also acted in Ferzan Özpetek's 'A Magnificent Haunting' (2012). After he filmed his last stand-up comedy show 'CM101MMXI Fundamentals' (2013) directed by Murat Dünder, he took a break from stand-up comedy.

## TICKETS

For tickets to witness Cem Yilmaz, visit [NJPAC.org](http://NJPAC.org) or the box office, or call 888.GO.NJPAC.

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC)  
FOLLOW NJPAC ONLINE:

Website: [njpac.org](http://njpac.org) | Twitter: @NJPAC

Instagram: @NJPAC

Hashtag: #NJPAC

Facebook: [facebook.com/NJPAC](https://facebook.com/NJPAC)

YouTube: NJPACtv

Follow NJPAC's Standing in Solidarity Series Online:

Website: [njpac.org/takeastand](http://njpac.org/takeastand)

Hashtag: #NJPACTakeAStand

Youtube: Standing in Solidarity playlist

# NJYS HOSTS OPEN MUSIC REHEARSALS

BY MABEL PAIS

**T**he New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS), a program of Wharton Arts, will host a week of free open rehearsals, February 23-27, at 570 Central Avenue in New Providence. Registration and more information can be found online at [NJYS.org](http://NJYS.org).

Young musicians in grades 2-11 from around the state are welcome to join this behind-the-scenes look at any of the 15 ensembles of NJYS. Participants can expect to experience the joy of making music in an ensemble setting, meet the passionate NJYS conductors, and immerse themselves in a live rehearsal.

## 2025 OPEN REHEARSALS WEEK SCHEDULE

### FEBRUARY 23

Jazz Orchestra 1:00-3:30 PM

Jazz Workshop 3:00-4:00 PM

Big Band 3:00-4:00 PM

Faculty Concert 3:00 PM Parents

Welcome!

### FEBRUARY 24\*



Open Rehearsals students

Credit: whartonarts.org

Flute Choir 5:00-5:40 PM

Flute Forum 6:30-7:10 PM

Fortissimo Flutes 8:00-8:40 PM

\*Location: Wharton Performing Arts

School 60 Locust Avenue, Berkeley Heights

### FEBRUARY 25

Percussion Ensemble III 4:00-4:45 PM

Sinfonia 5:00-6:00 PM

Youth Symphony 6:30-8:00 PM

### FEBRUARY 26

Philharmonia 6:15-7:15 PM

Clarinet Ensemble 6:30-7:00 pm

### FEBRUARY 27

Primo Strings 4:30-5:15 PM

Percussion Ensemble II 4:30-5:15 PM

Percussion Ensemble I 6:30-7:15 PM

Concertino Strings 6:15-7:00 PM

Youth Orchestra 6:15-7:45 PM

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



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## When Sanjay Dutt's dying fan left Rs 72 crore property for him

In 2018, a die-hard Sanjay Dutt fan, Nisha Patil, left her entire property, valued at Rs 72 crore, to the actor. This grand gesture of the fan left Dutt shocked. Nisha, a 62-year-old homemaker from Mumbai, had reportedly battled a terminal illness and instructed her bank to transfer all her property to the actor.

The police shared news with Sanjay Dutt, which had left him overwhelmed. Despite the grand gesture, Sanjay Dutt chose not to accept the property.

He expressed his gratitude but clarified that he did not know Nisha Patil personally. His lawyer confirmed that the actor had no intention of claiming the Rs 72 crore property and he would follow legal procedures to return it to Nisha's family.

Sanjay Dutt stated, "I will not be claiming anything. I did not know Nisha and I am very overwhelmed by the entire incident to speak about it."

On the professional front, Sanjay Dutt was last seen in Telugu film Double iSmart. He was seen in a pivotal role in Thalapathy Vijay-starrer Leo. He will next be seen in upcoming project, Baaghi 4, where he will star with Tiger Shroff. The action film is expected to hit theatres on September 5, 2025.

# Shraddha Kapoor to star in all 8 films of horror comedy universe

In January this year, moviebuffs got a pleasant surprise when filmmaker Dinesh Vijan announced 8 new films in the Maddock Horror Comedy Universe along with their release dates. This was great news for fans, most of whom were still under the spell of Shraddha Kapoor and Rajkummar Rao's blockbuster hit film Stree 2 (2024). 2025 will begin with Ayushmann Khurrana and Rashmika Mandanna-starrer Thama and Shakti Shalini, followed by Bhediya 2, Chamunda, Stree 3, Maha Munjya, Pehla Mahayudh and Doosara Mahayudh. While there have been rumours about the star cast of all films, recent buzz suggests that all the horror comedies will have one star in common— Shraddha.

So far, the Maddock Horror Comedy Universe has released 4 films, out of which Munjya (2024) was the only horror comedy which did not star Shraddha Kapoor. The actor was the leading lady of Stree (2018) as well as Stree 2, and even joined Varun Dhawan for a song in Bhediya (2022). Last year, Varun won hearts with his cameo in Stree 2 when he saved Shraddha in the climax of her film. So fans were obviously expecting Shraddha to reunite with Varun in Bhediya 2, before stepping in the shoes of her beloved character for Stree 3. But a report shared by The Nod, which recently took the actor's interview, mentioned that Shraddha will be a part of all 8 films in the horror comedy universe.



## Kriti Sanon, rumored boyfriend Kabir Bahia make rare appearance

Bollywood actor Kriti Sanon made a rare appearance with rumoured boyfriend Kabir Bahia in Mumbai on Friday as they stepped out for dinner at Bastian.

The duo was accompanied by Kriti's sister, Nupur Sanon.

For the outing, Kriti opted for a chic, strapless denim dress, while Kabir kept it casual in a sweatshirt, jacket, and denim jeans.

The rumoured couple arrived at the restaurant in the same car. Kriti, who was wearing a face mask, walked straight inside and didn't pose for the paparazzi.

While returning, Kabir looked shy as he tried to avoid attention from the paparazzi.

While Kriti and Kabir refrained from posing for pictures, Nupur Sanon

stopped to get her photos clicked.

Rumours of Kriti dating UK-based businessman Kabir Bahia began when the two went for a vacation to Greece on her birthday. Photos of them partying together on the Greek island of Mykonos went viral. Later, they celebrated Christmas and New Year together.

Kabir is the founder of Worldwide Aviation and Tourism Limited and the son of Kuljinder Bahia, owner of Southall Travel, a UK-based travel agency.

Born in 1999, he studied at Millfield School and graduated in 2018. His family background and professional achievements have made him a notable figure in business circles.

Kriti Sanon is yet to comment on her relationship status publicly. She was last seen in the Netflix film Do Patti.



# Tom Cruise's 'punishing' Mission Impossible stunt had him breathe carbon dioxide

Hollywood star Tom Cruise's 'physically punishing' stunt for Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning required him to wear a specially designed suit and mask, usable for only 10 minutes at once. He also revealed that he breathed his own carbon dioxide during the stunt.

During his interview with Empire magazine, Tom Cruise said, "I'm breathing in my own carbon dioxide. It builds up in the body and affects the muscles. You have to overcome all of that while you're doing it, and be present." For the action scene, Tom Cruise's Ethan Hunt explores a sunken submarine, filmed in an "8.5 million-litre water tank on a gimbal that rotates on command," reported Empire.

Mission: Impossible franchise's director Christopher McQuarrie narrated the scene as "challenging, terrifying and really physically punishing" for Tom Cruise. "He's in a rotating structure filled with debris, and you had to find a way to make that environment look as chaotic and unhinged as humanly possible. But in a way that you could repeat, and that Tom could navigate, and survive", said McQuarrie.

This underwater sequence is not the first time Tom Cruise has dived deep for the franchise. In Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation (2015), the actor performed another underwater stunt where he held his breath for about six-and-a-half minutes.



In an earlier interview with Empire, Tom Cruise revealed that he frequently passed out while filming another action sequence for the upcoming film, which required him to dangle off the side of a flying aeroplane.

He said, "When you stick your face out [of an aeroplane], going over 120 to 130 miles an hour, you're not getting oxygen. So I had to train myself how to

breathe. There were times I would pass out physically; I was unable to get back into the cockpit."

Helmed by Christopher McQuarrie, the final installment of the Mission: Impossible franchise, Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning, is set for a worldwide release on May 23, 2025. The film also stars Hannah Waddingham, Nick Offerman, Katy O'Brian, and Tramell Tillman.



## Justin Bieber shuts down divorce rumors

Canadian pop sensation Justin Bieber has put to rest swirling rumours about his marriage to model Hailey Bieber with a heartfelt Instagram post that showcases the couple enjoying a cosy dinner date together.

In a series of pictures shared on his social media, Justin and Hailey are seen laughing and relishing their time together, dispelling any concerns regarding their relationship.

The photos, which feature the couple in a candid moment, have reassured fans about the strength of their bond, especially after recent speculation about their marriage.

Other photos in the series hinted at Justin's ongoing music projects, with some glimpses of what could potentially be new music in the works.

Hailey, who is no stranger to being in the public eye, showed her support by liking the post, further fueling the message that their relationship remains strong and unshaken by external speculation.

For a while now, the 30-year-old artist has been at the centre of numerous headlines not related to his music career, but rather his personal life.

One of the most prominent subjects of discussion has been his marriage to Hailey Bieber, particularly after the couple faced a wave of divorce rumours that left fans concerned. Recently, Justin Bieber addressed the issue directly, denying any involvement in the decision to unfollow Hailey on Instagram.

## Kanye West's wife defends him amid hate posts. Internet says 'this isn't Bianca'

Bianca Censori recently defended her husband, Kanye West, after his string of hate-filled and controversial posts on X. She wrote a note on the social media platform where she shared thoughts on Kanye's rant and also defended him.

Expressing concern for Kanye, Bianca wrote, "Lord, I lift up my husband to You with love & concern. Soften his heart, guide his words, and fill him with wisdom and kindness. Protect him from trouble & lead him toward understanding & respect for all people (sic)."

She also wrote that she loves him unconditionally despite all their differences and issues, "Despite our differences, I love him unconditionally. Strengthen our bond & help me be a source of patience & encouragement. I trust in Your grace to work in his heart. God Bless Israel and All The Good Jewish Pple. Amen (sic)."

While some fans expressed their scepticism, other supported her. A fan wrote, "Well, this

confirms it's him writing everything (sic)." However, another fan wrote, "I've followed ye for years and have loved his music, I hope he finds his way back to god, sorry you're going through this (sic)."

Earlier, Friends star David Schwimmer also reacted to Kanye's hate-filled posts on Instagram. The veteran TV star wrote, "We can't stop a deranged bigot from spewing hate filled, ignorant bile... but we CAN stop giving him a megaphone, Mr. Musk. Kanye West has 32.7 million followers on your platform, X. That's twice as many people than the number of Jews in existence. His sick hate speech results in REAL LIFE violence against Jews (sic)."

Kanye and his wife Bianca made headlines at the Grammys, where she stepped out in a sheer, see-through, almost nude outfit. The former then defended his wife's look on X saying that he was proud to have a 'smart, talented, brave, and hot' wife.



## VIRUS DISINFORMATION DRIVES ANTI-CHINA SENTIMENT, LOCKDOWN FEARS

**CHICAGO (TIP):** A deluge of disinformation about a flu-like virus called HMPV is stoking anti-China sentiment across Asia and spurring unfounded concerns of renewed lockdowns, despite experts dismissing comparisons with the Covid-19 pandemic five years ago.

AFP's fact-checkers have debunked a slew of social media posts about the usually non-fatal respiratory disease human metapneumovirus after cases rose in China. Many of these posts claimed that people were dying and that a national emergency had been declared.

Garnering tens of thousands of views, some posts recycled old footage from China's draconian lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic, which originated in the country in late 2019, as well as of crowded hospitals and medics in hazmat suits.

The falsehoods and fearmongering, which researchers warn could jeopardise the public response to a future pandemic, surged even as the World Health Organization said China's HMPV outbreak was "within the expected range" for this season.

Philip Mai, co-director of the Social Media Lab at Toronto Metropolitan University, told AFP that the authors of some of these posts were "trying to scare people".

Mai said there was "an uptick in anti-Chinese rhetoric", with many on online platforms unfairly trying to blame HMPV cases "on an entire community or culture".

One video, shared by hundreds of users, showed a confrontation between Chinese citizens and police in medical suits, claiming that the country had begun to isolate the population to tackle HMPV.

AFP fact-checkers found that the sequence portrayed an unrelated altercation that occurred in 2022 in Shanghai.

- 'Monetising panic' -

Other posts claimed that HMPV and Covid-19 had "cross-mutated" into a more severe disease. But multiple virologists told AFP the viruses are from different families and impossible to merge.

Adding to the wave of disinformation were sensational, "clickbait" headlines in some mainstream media outlets that described HMPV as a "mystery illness" overpowering the Chinese healthcare system.

In reality, it is a known pathogen that has circulated for decades and generally causes only a mild infection of the upper respiratory tract.

"It's an example of monetising panic in an already bewildered public right on the heels of the Covid-19 pandemic," Katrine Wallace, an epidemiologist at the University of Illinois Chicago, told AFP.

"The truth is that the HMPV is not a mystery illness." (AFP)

# 124 killed, most by Israel, in deadliest year for reporters: Committee to Protect Journalists

12 FEB 2025

**GAZA (TIP):** Last year was the deadliest for journalists in recent history, with at least 124 reporters killed -- and Israel responsible for nearly 70 percent of that total, the Committee to Protect Journalists reported Wednesday.

The uptick in killings, which marks a 22 percent increase over 2023, reflects "surging levels of international conflict, political unrest and criminality worldwide," the CPJ said.

It was the deadliest year for reporters and media workers since CPJ began keeping records more than three decades ago, with journalists murdered across 18 different countries, it said.

A total of 85 journalists died in the Israeli-Hamas war, "all at the hands of the Israeli military," the CPJ said, adding that 82 of them were Palestinians.

Sudan and Pakistan recorded the second highest number of journalists and media workers killed, with six each.

In Mexico, which has a reputation as one of the most dangerous countries for reporters, five were killed, with CPJ reporting it had found "persistent flaws" in Mexico's mechanisms for protecting journalists.

And in Haiti, where two reporters were murdered, widespread violence and



political instability have sown so much chaos that "gangs now openly claim responsibility for journalist killings," the report said.

Other deaths took place in countries such as Myanmar, Mozambique, India and Iraq.

"Today is the most dangerous time to be a journalist in CPJ's history," said the group's CEO Jodie Ginsberg.

"The war in Gaza is unprecedented in its impact on journalists and demonstrates a major deterioration in global norms on protecting journalists,"

she said.

CPJ, which has kept records on journalist killings since 1992, said that 24 of the reporters were deliberately killed because of their work in 2024.

Freelancers, the report said, were among the most vulnerable because of their lack of resources, and accounted for 43 of the killings in 2024.

The year 2025 is not looking more promising, with six journalists already killed in the first weeks of the year, CPJ said. (AFP)

## A decade after Fukushima disaster, Japan decides to bank on nuclear power

12 FEB 2025

**OKUMA TOWN (TIP):** Japan is turning to nuclear power more than a decade after the triple meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

Japan is ditching plans to lessen its reliance on nuclear power amid struggles to reach its emissions targets and bolster its energy security.

In a draft strategic energy plan due to be approved by the cabinet this month, according to The Guardian, the trade and industry ministry signalled it was ditching attempts to lessen Japan's reliance on nuclear power in the wake of the Fukushima disaster -- the world's worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl 25 years earlier.

The document dropped a reference to "reducing reliance" on nuclear energy that had appeared in the three previous plans, and instead called for a "maximisation" of nuclear power, which will account for about 20% of total energy output in 2040, based on the assumption that 30 reactors will be in full operation by then.

The plan envisages a share of between 40% and 50% for renewable energy -- compared with just under a third in 2023 -- and a reduction in coal-fired power from the current 70% to 30-40%.



In the meantime, the US Energy Information Administration, (eia) a principal agency of the US Federal Statistical System, said that Japanese utilities restarted two additional nuclear reactors in 2024 that had been suspended from operations in response to the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi accident, taking the total number of restarted reactors to 14 since the accident.

In November, Tohoku Electric Power Co. restarted its 796-megawatt (MW) Onagawa Unit 2 reactor, and in December Chugoku Electric Power Co. restarted its Shimane Unit 2 (789 MW). Onagawa is the

nuclear power plant located closest to the epicenter of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Most of the restarted reactors have been pressurized water reactors (PWR) located in western Japan.

The suspension of Japan's nuclear fleet after the Fukushima accident significantly increased dependence on natural gas, oil, and coal imports to make up for lost domestic nuclear generation. It also significantly increased the installed capacity of solar photovoltaic generation in the country, according to data from Japan's Ministry of Economy. (AP)



# Doctoral student freed after sentence reduction in Saudi Arabia



11 FEB 2025

**RIYADH (TIP):** A Saudi doctoral student at Leeds University in Britain, who was sentenced to 34 years in prison over her Twitter activity, has been released after her sentence was drastically reduced, a rights group announced on Monday.

Salma al-Shehab, a mother of two, had been imprisoned as part of a broader crackdown on dissent in the kingdom under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The London-based Saudi rights group ALQST confirmed her release and called for her full freedom, including the right to travel to the United Kingdom to complete her studies.

In January, ALQST and other rights organizations reported that al-Shehab's sentence had been reduced to four years in prison, with an additional four years suspended. Amnesty International also

confirmed her release.

"She spent almost 300 days in prolonged solitary confinement, was denied legal representation, and was then repeatedly convicted on terrorism charges and handed a decades-long sentence," said Dana Ahmed, a Middle East researcher at Amnesty International.

Al-Shehab was initially detained on January 15, 2021, during a family vacation in Saudi Arabia, just days before she was scheduled to return to Britain. According to an official charge sheet, she was accused of disturbing public order and destabilizing the social fabric due to her social media activity. Authorities alleged that she followed and retweeted dissident accounts and spread false rumors on Twitter, now known as X.

Both the Washington-based Middle East Democracy Center and Freedom

House welcomed her release.

"Al-Shehab's unjust and arbitrary punishment is emblematic of a fundamentally broken Saudi justice system, where trials are not fair, defendants have alarmingly few rights, and allegations of torture and abuse by police and prison officials are commonplace," said Brian Tronic of Freedom House.

Saudi officials have not acknowledged her release and did not respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press.

Al-Shehab belongs to Saudi Arabia's Shiite Muslim minority, which has long complained of systemic discrimination in the Sunni-ruled kingdom. Her trial took place in a special court originally established to try terror suspects but which has since broadened its mandate to include cases linked to political dissent.

Prince Mohammed's leadership has seen significant social reforms, including the lifting of the ban on women driving in 2018. However, his tenure has also been marked by a harsh crackdown on dissent. U.S. intelligence found that he likely approved the 2018 killing of prominent Saudi dissident and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, a claim the crown prince denies.

Other women have also been caught in the crackdown. Nourah bint Saeed al-Qahtani, for example, was sentenced to 45 years in prison for her social media activity. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has classified both al-Qahtani and al-Shehab's detentions as arbitrary. (AP)

## ROMANIA PRESIDENT RESIGNS BEFORE ELECTION RE-RUN



**BUCHAREST (TIP):** Romanian President Klaus Iohannis on Monday announced he would resign following pressure for him to step down ahead of the re-run of an election that was voided over allegations of Russian interference.

Pressure had been growing on pro-European Iohannis, leader of liberals who had said he would remain in office until his successor is elected in May.

Romania's top court decided to cancel the presidential elections in December amid allegations of Russian meddling and after a previously little-known, far-right candidate won a surprise first-round victory.

"In order to spare Romania and the Romanian citizens from crisis... I resign from the office of president of Romania," Iohannis said, adding that he would officially stand down on Wednesday.

MPs on Monday launched a procedure to suspend Iohannis, following two previous attempts by the opposition to start the process.

"In a few days, the Romanian Parliament will vote on my suspension and Romania will go into crisis.... This whole endeavour will have effects internally and unfortunately also externally," Iohannis said.

Far-right AUR party leader George Simion welcomed Iohannis's resignation.

"It's your (the people's) victory! Now it's time to get back round 2," Simion posted on Facebook.

Last month, tens of thousands of Romanians took to the streets in several protests called by the far-right to protest the vote cancellation, with some demanding for Iohannis to resign.

The far right gained an unprecedented third of the votes in the December parliamentary elections.

Senate president and liberal leader, Ilie Bolojan, is expected to replace Iohannis.

The decision -- rare in the EU -- plunged the eastern European country bordering war-torn Ukraine into crisis, with Georgescu denouncing the annulment as a "formalised coup d'etat".

A fresh first round of presidential elections will take place on May 4, with a second on May 18 if no first-round candidate wins more than 50 percent of the vote.

Iohannis, 65, has been Romania's president since 2014 navigating several political crises in the past. (AFP)

# Violence-hit Ecuador chooses next president

09 FEB 2025

**QUITO (TIP):** Some 14 million Ecuadorans began voting under tight security Sunday, choosing who will lead their violence-wracked Andean nation through its worst crisis in half a century.

Sixteen candidates are vying to become president for a four-year term, including hawkish young incumbent Daniel Noboa and his leftist rival Luisa Gonzalez.

The campaigns have been dominated by concerns about a moribund economy and cartel turf wars that have transformed Ecuador from one of the safest countries in the world into one of the most dangerous.

"The country is collapsing. The only thing I ask the new president is that they fix this mess," said 28-year-old businessman Luis Jaime Torres as he prepared to vote in Quito.

Heavily armed soldiers stood watch at polling stations across the country as state emergency services cited "grave warnings" of an unspecified "possible attack against democracy" and election officials.

On the campaign trail both main

candidates were shadowed by a phalanx of special forces and bodyguards, hoping to avoid a repeat of the 2023 election when a leading candidate was assassinated.

"We're only human, of course, you feel afraid," 47-year-old Gonzalez told AFP from her childhood home on the eve of the vote.

"There are intelligence reports that say there are risks and that they want to take my life, but there is a bigger challenge here. There is a challenge to transform the country."

The former lawmaker will have to dramatically outperform pre-election polls to beat Noboa -- the son of a banana billionaire who himself ran for president five times without success.

At 37 years old, Noboa is one of the world's youngest leaders. He has bet his political future on a hardline approach to tackling crime.

As US drug users have shifted to opioids, Latin American cocaine cartels have turned to supplying fast-growing markets in Europe, Australia and Asia via Ecuador's ports.

That trade has brought record rates of

murder, kidnapping and extortion.

Noboa has responded by declaring a state of emergency, deploying the army across the country and gathering extraordinary executive powers to curb the violence. He ordered the country's land borders with Colombia and Peru to be closed over the election period and the military has even been tasked with distributing ballot papers to 466 polling stations across the country.

Human rights groups believe the aggressive use of the armed forces has led to abuses, including the murder of four boys whose charred bodies were recently found near an army base.

"Ecuador is in a very difficult moment, I think in the worst crisis since we returned to democracy," said Leonardo Laso, a local political analyst, referring to a period of deep crisis almost half a century ago.

Voting is compulsory. Polls opened at 7:00 am local time and will close at 5:00 pm (1200 to 2200 GMT).

There will be an April 13 second-round runoff if no candidate gathers 50 percent of the vote, or 40 percent and is 10 points ahead of their nearest rival. (AFP)

## NEPAL'S SOCIAL MEDIA BILL FACES PROTEST FROM RULING PARTY'S STUDENT UNION

FEB 12 2025

**KATHMANDU (TIP):** The Nepal Students' Union (NSU), student union of the ruling Nepali Congress hit the streets of Kathmandu on Wednesday against the draconian social media bill tabled in the National Assembly earlier this week.

Standing against the provisions stated in the bill regarding operation, use and regulation of social network, the student union held a demonstration about how the bill will curtail basic human rights.

The demonstrators tied themselves to the supposedly human form of the bill in action imprisoning youths for making comments against the government on social media amongst others.

"Homonymous words have been used in the Social Media Bill. The word 'libel and defamation' has been used in the bill, but the parameters to identify it hasn't been mentioned. In absence of it, anyone can be jailed depending on the power of the person who gets offended. Another contrasting provision in the bill is the formation of council to decide about these things, that too by officials from the Secretary or joint secretary level, it is the court who should be sending the convicted to jail but the mechanism is being granted this right to convict someone or give the term for jail," Kiran Khanal, one of the members of the NSU who took part in the protest told ANI.

The protestors held placards that read, "One star of Congress is missing", "Dear KP Ba, can't we speak in a prosperous Nepal?", "Regulation is necessary, not control", among others.

Several provisions in the bill contradict Nepal's constitution, while vague and incomplete terminologies raise concerns. Critics fear the government will exploit these loopholes to interpret the law in its favor. Another major concern is the government's direct role as the plaintiff in all related cases, giving authorities greater control over how they define and enforce the law.

The bill requires a Rapid Response Team to handle such proceedings. Typically, authorities form these teams when immediate action is needed in the public interest, such as during natural disasters. However, the government has introduced a provision to create one specifically for this purpose.

The bill directly violates Articles 17 and 19 of the Constitution of Nepal. Article 17 guarantees the right to freedom, stating, "No person shall be deprived of personal Liberty."

However, the bill does more than restrict personal freedom—it actively penalizes individuals for posting, sharing, liking, reposting, live streaming, subscribing, commenting, tagging, using hashtags, or mentioning others on social media.

(ANI)

# Bangladesh crackdown on ex-regime loyalists

09 FEB 2025

**DHAKA (TIP):** Bangladesh on Sunday launched a major security operation after protesters were attacked by gangs allegedly connected to the ousted regime of ex-leader Sheikh Hasina.

A government statement said the operation began after gangs "linked to the fallen autocratic regime attacked a group of students, leaving them severely injured".

Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, head of the interior ministry in the interim government that took over after Hasina was ousted in the August 2024 student-led revolution, has dubbed it "Operation Devil Hunt".

"It will continue until we uproot the devils," Chowdhury told reporters.

The sweeping security operations come after days of unrest.

On Wednesday, six months to the day since Hasina fled as crowds stormed her palace in Dhaka, protesters smashed down buildings connected to her family using excavators.

Protests were triggered in response to reports that 77-year-old Hasina -- who has defied an arrest warrant to face trial crimes against humanity -- would appear in a Facebook broadcast from exile in neighbouring India.

Buildings destroyed included the museum and former home of Hasina's late father, Bangladesh's first president Sheikh



Mujibur Rahman.

The interim government blamed Hasina for the violence.

On Friday, interim leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus also pleaded for calm.

"Respecting the rule of law is what differentiates the new Bangladesh we are working together to build, from the old Bangladesh under the fascist regime," Yunus said in a statement.

"For the citizens who rose up and overthrew the Hasina regime ... it is

imperative to prove to ourselves and our friends around the world that our commitment to our principles -- respecting one another's civil and human rights and acting under the law -- is unshakable."

Hours later, members of the Students Against Discrimination -- the protest group credited with sparking the uprising against Hasina -- were attacked in the Dhaka district of Gazipur.

The vocal and powerful group -- whose members are in the government cabinet -- had since demanded action. (AFP)

## Pak media crisis: Country's rights body calls for immediate payment of arrears to journalists

FEB 12 2025

**ISLAMABAD (TIP) :** Pakistan's media industry has been grappling with significant financial challenges, leading to widespread salary delays and, in some cases, non-payment.

This crisis has adversely affected journalists' livelihoods and the overall health of the media sector.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has expressed grave concern over the ongoing issue of unpaid dues for media personnel employed by Bol Network.

In a post on X, the commission stated, "HRCP is greatly concerned by reports from the Karachi union of journalists that 375 media personnel, earlier employed by Bol Network, have still not received their outstanding dues despite repeated directions from PEMRA since August 2024 to settle all such payments. Some have waited as long as nine years for their arrears to be paid."

The HRCP has pointed out that the right to fair and timely wages is enshrined in Pakistan's labour laws, and failure to uphold this right reflects poorly on the country's commitment to protecting workers' interests. The HRCP emphasised that such instances of non-payment have become unfortunately common within the media industry, posing a threat to the

standard of journalism.

HRCP stated, "While the right to receive fair wages and on time is protected under the country's labour laws, such instances have become regrettably common in the media - to the detriment of journalistic standards. The Bol News management and all other media houses that have withheld current and former employees' payments must settle all dues immediately".

In December of last year, a parliamentary panel urged the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) to ensure that media houses provide their employees with a minimum monthly salary of Pakistani Rupees (PKR) 37,500, as reported by Dawn.

According to the report, the sub-committee of the National Assembly's standing committee on information and broadcasting had proposed measures to safeguard the rights of media workers, including halting advertisements to media houses in case of non-compliance, expanding the number of Implementation Tribunals for Newspaper Employees (ITNE) to five, and abolishing third-party contracts in media organisations. (ANI)

## Tibetans, Japanese mark 112th anniversary of Tibetan independence declaration

**TOKYO (TIP) :** The Shinjuku Historical Museum Hall in Tokyo hosted a gathering of Tibetans and Japanese sympathizers recently, to commemorate the 112th anniversary of the Declaration of Tibetan Independence Day.

The event was organized on Tuesday by the Tibetan Community in Japan (TCJ) and Students for Free Tibet (SFT) to dispel the Chinese assertion that Tibet has been a part of China since antiquity and to educate the public about the significance of this historic day according to a report by Central Tibet Administration (CTA).

Participants were greeted and given an overview of the significance of the event by SFT President Tsering Dorjee and TCJ President Dorjee Shiota. The national anthems of Japan and Tibet were played, and a minute of silence was observed in memory of Kazur Gyalo Dhondup, who passed away recently at the age of 97, and the victims of the earthquake in Tibet, CTA reported. The two guest speakers invited by the organizers are Tsewang Gyalpo Arya of the Liaison Office of the Dalai Lama for Japan and East Asia and Prof Ishihama Yumiko of Waseda University. CTA reported that a talk about Tibetan history, the Dalai Lamas, and early 20th-century Japanese travelers to Tibet was given by Professor Ishihama Yumiko. (ANI)

# Sikh History This Week

## FEBRUARY 14 TO FEBRUARY 20

### 14th February

1983: 11 Sikhs killed in a strike observed by the Hindus of Punjab.

### 15th February



1605 Guru Hargobind married Mata Damodari, daughter of Narian Das, a Julka Khatri of the village of Dall, 6 Kilometers southeast of Sultanpur Lodhi in Kapurthala district of the Punjab. This marriage resulted in a son, Baba Gurditta born in 1613 and a daughter, Bibi Viro born in 1615.

1762 Ahmad Shah Abdali traveled from Sirhind to Lahore with 50 bullock-carts filled with heads of Sikh.

1809 The East India Company established a cantonment in Ludhiana. This cantonment was specifically established to check the advance of Khalsa forces beyond the Sutlej.

1984 Feb. 15-20, the Hindus of Haryana under the guidance of the Chief Minister Bhajan Lal and senior police officials, attacked innocent Sikhs in the cities of Panipat, Rohtak, Kaithal Karnal, Ambala, Jind and other parts of Haryana province and killed 20 Sikhs, burnt six Sikh shrines and looted 200 Sikh houses and shops. The hair and beards of more than 12 Sikhs were shaved off by the Hindus in the presence of heavy contingents of police and Central Reserve Police CRP.

### 16th February

1892 Prof. Sahib Singh, a renowned scholar of GurSikhism, was born.

1923 Waryam Singh of Dhugga and Dalipa of Dhammian join the Babbar Khalsa.



1986 Foundation stone was laid for the reconstruction of Akal Takht after Operation Bluestar. Sri Akal Takht was severely damaged in this operation. Although the Government of India forcibly repaired the building under curfew, through Baba Santa Singh, main leader Budha Dal, this is not accepted by Guru Khalsa Panth. This building repaired by Government of

India was torn down and Baba Santa Singh punished for his cooperation with the government in this matter.

### 17th February



1984: The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) fired indiscriminately upon Sri Darbar Sahib complex at Amritsar. As a result three visiting devotees were killed.

### 18th February



1850 Maharaja Dalip Singh reached Fatehghad, Uttar Pradesh, India. Maharaja Dalip Singh was forcibly separated from his mother Maharani Jind Kaur and sent to Fatehgarh, (Farrukhabad, district of Uttar Pradesh in India) by Lord Dalhousie.

1921 Khadur Sahib Gurudwaras were brought under control of SGPC.

### 19th February

1848: Jathaedar Ganda Singh and two associates were hanged until death in Lahore. On January 30, 1848 Jathaedar Ganda Singh (Jathaedar of Sri Akal Takhat), Akali Kharak Singh, Bibek Singh, Hira Singh, Mastan Singh, Muhar Singh, and Hukam Singh protested the entry of some British officers into the Darbar Sahib without removing their shoes. This resulted in a clash between the Akalis and the government officials. One official (subedar) was killed and a company commander got injured. Some Sikhs also got injured. The tyrant Mr. Lawrence arrested the Sikhs. Jathaedar Ganda Singh and his two of his companions were hanged. Six more

Sikhs were sent to the jails of Barailey, outside Punjab.

1921 Mahants and Pujaris of various historical Gurdwaras, held a convention to express themselves against Singh Sabha reformers and call on the government to restore the status quo ante at the Golden Temple, Amritsar. Because of the resolve of the reformers and unity within Guru Khalsa Panth, the reformers were victorious in their efforts.

1949 Master Tara Singh was arrested at Narela, under sedition charges. He was on his way to Delhi to attend a Conference.

### 20th February

1921 Shaheedi Saka of Sri Nankana Sahib took place. Nankana Sahib is the birth place of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. At the time of this incident, this place was being managed by Mahant Narayan Dass. A Jatha of 150 GurSikh reformers, led by Bhai Lahshman Singh, were visiting Nankana Sahib to seek Gurdwara reforms and it's liberation, through non-violent and peaceful means. However, the managing Mahant had hired 28 Pathans and goondas from Majha, collected arms and ammunition besides other weapons, which caused a scare in the surrounding areas. He attacked the unscheduled Jatha, fired upon them without any warning and hounded them from room to room. At least one of them was tied to a tree and burnt alive. When a massacre inside the shrine was on, a group of Sikh devotees arrived outside. Mahant Narain Das on horseback ordered the killing of each and every long haired Sikh, and his men pursued some of them in the fields up to the railway station, killing and burning most of them. He also tried to burn down the dead bodies in a group inside the shrine. Those struck outside were thrown into kilns or burnt alive. The Guru Granth Sahib was riddled with bullets. This incident sent a wave of indignation among the Sikhs and other people throughout the world. The holy shrine of Nankana Sahib was eventually liberated. Additionally, this single incident triggered off a Gurdwara liberation movement throughout Punjab. The main objective of this movement was to consolidate the management of all historical Sikh Shrines under a single elected body which came to be known as the Sharomani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee or SGPC for short.

1924 1st Shaheedhi Jatha of 500 Akali Sikhs, under the command of Jathedar Udharn Singh of village Verpal, that marched from Sri Akal Takhat for Jaito, reached jaito Nabha territory. 1949 In spite of the arrests of hundreds of GurSikhs, the Sikhs held a Conference. All the participants were arrested and jailed for different terms. Participation in religious functions was banned and the Sikh shrines were sealed. Such were the rewards for their sacrifices towards India's independence.



# Castor oil pack for gentle detox, pain and inflammation

A bottle of organic castor oil, non-organic oils may contain residues of pesticides and chemicals used to cultivate it. The toxins will be absorbed from the oil to the body.

Get your hot water bottle or heating pad/ water bottle ready.

Take a piece of flannel and place it in the bowl or glass container and pour enough castor oil over it to soak it (make sure it's saturated, but it doesn't need to be dripping in oil).

Place an old towel on a flat surface (either a couch, bed or the floor). For added protection, you can put down a garbage bag underneath the towel so that your bed or couch won't get stained from any oil that may escape from the plastic cover.

Place the saturated flannel over the affected area of your body and cover the pack with plastic.

Place the heating pad or hot water bottle over the pack, cover with a towel and let it sit on the treated area such as the liver for at least 30-60 minutes. During this time you can rest, read a book, listen to music, meditate, or do your healing affirmations. If treating the liver, you can lie on the right side over the pack.

When the time is up, remove the pack and clean the area with water and a bit of baking soda to get the stickiness off.

You can keep the pack for reuse for a few months), stored in a plastic bag in a cool place. Just add another 2-3 tablespoons of castor oil for the next session.



It is recommended to have having 2-3 castor oil packs per week for liver detox over 2-3 weeks but if you have time for more (to do them daily), that would greatly enhance healing and repair. To boost the liver detox have 1 tablespoon of olive oil just before you apply the pack.

If you'd like to watch how to make and apply castor pack, here is a great YouTube video that shows how to do it.

## Contraindications and cautions

Castor oil packs should not be used over open wounds or ulcers, during pregnancy or heavy menstrual bleeding, or over areas of malignancy, numbness or weakness.

# Chicken Tandoori Wrap

## Ingredients

- Chicken Fillets - 4, chopped, boneless, skinless,
- Onion - 1/4 cup, sliced, Tomatoes - 2, sliced/chopped,
- Green Chilli - 1, chopped, Garlic - 2 cloves, chopped,
- Ginger - 1 tblsp, peeled, chopped, Plain Yogurt - 125 gms,
- Coriander Leaves - handful, chopped, Curry Powder - 1/2 tsp,
- Plain Rotis as required (leftovers or fresh), Salt as per taste

## Method

- Coarsely grind the garlic, ginger and green chillies.
- Combine this with the yogurt and small handful of coriander leaves.
- Grind again until well mixed.
- Sprinkle some salt and mix well.
- Add the curry powder and mix well. Reserve some of this mixture.
- Add the chopped chicken pieces and mix well until evenly coated.
- Keep aside for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Heat a nonstick pan over medium flame.
- Cook the chicken until slightly browned and cooked through, turning from time to time.
- Alternatively you can place it in a baking tray lined with foil and bake for 15 to 20 minutes in a preheated oven at 170C.
- To the reserved yogurt mixture add the onions, tomatoes and some coriander leaves.
- Mix well.
- Warm the chapatis and place them on a flat surface.
- Divide the chicken and the salad between the chapatis.
- Roll them up tightly and serve at once.
- Cut them in halves if desired.



# Bengali Fish Fingers

## Ingredients

- White Fish Fillets - 300 gms, skinless, boneless, Eggs - 2,
- Fennel Seeds - 1 tsp, Cumin Seeds - 1 tsp, Mustard Seeds - 1 tsp,
- Nigella Seeds - 1 tsp, Fenugreek Seeds (Methi) - 1/2 tsp,
- Maida - 1 1/2 tblsp, Besan Flour - 1/2 tblsp, Red Chilli Powder - 1 tsp,
- Garlic - 3 cloves, crushed, Ginger - 1 inch piece, grated,
- Oil as required, Breadcrumbs - 1 to 2 cups, Coriander Leaves - handful, chopped,
- Salt as per taste

## Method

- Combine the cumin seeds, fennel seeds, mustard seeds, nigella seeds and methi in a mixer jar. Grind them together and transfer to a bowl. Add the maida, besan, red chilli powder, garlic, coriander leaves, ginger and enough salt. Beat the eggs in a bowl and add to the flour. Gently whisk until combined. Chop the fish fillets into small bite-sized pieces or strips. Heat oil in a deep frying pan. Dip the fish fillets into the batter and remove. Allow any excess to drip off and dredge it in the breadcrumbs, coating it fully. Gently slide them into the hot oil and fry until cooked through or crisp and golden brown.

# Ways to Make Any Relationship Last

Love that lasts is the result of partners embedding themselves in each other's brains in a positive way. Memory circuits and pleasure get all wound up together so that the other person becomes integral to the very structure of your brain, and you become part of the structure of theirs. Here's more on what happens to your brain when you're in love.

## Take your partner's breath away

Do something amazingly thoughtful and out of the ordinary and try to incorporate an element of surprise to it: a loving note tucked into a pocket. A special dinner on an otherwise ordinary night. A playlist made up with his favorite songs. These thoughtful acts will embed you in your partner's memory.

## Do something special

Call them every day just to touch base for a few minutes. Make their favorite meal once a week. Once they begin to expect these things, you will always be close to their awareness.

## Engage in lots of eye contact

New couples seem to do this naturally, but don't drop this strong bonding behavior just because the relationship has progressed. This is one way to keep the "romance



alive", as they say, and is especially powerful when making love.

## Teach your partner what you like

Likewise, making you happy will make your partner feel good. And research shows that the sexual pleasure of one partner increases the pleasure of the other partner.

## Do something edgy

If you get your partner's heart rate up, they may associate the feeling of excitement with you and may develop more powerful feelings for you. Going on a roller-coaster ride, taking a balloon trip, shooting the rapids—anything with a touch

of danger to it—can make them fall more deeply in love with you.

## Do something great for someone your partner loves

If you show kindness and love for someone they love, you'll earn major points. When you enter a relationship, you also enter a relationship with all their family and friends. Show them that the people who are important to them are important to you.

## Summarize and immortalize loving moments

Don't be afraid to give voice to your love. Tell them how you feel. Write a loving note or poem. Lovers have been doing this from the beginning of time because it works.

## Boost the love chemicals

There are many brain chemicals that go into the feeling of love and attachment. Oxytocin is known as the bonding, trust, and cuddle hormone. Oxytocin is enhanced by watching romantic movies together, holding hands, cuddling, and long, loving eye contact. (And kissing, which has a bunch of other health benefits!) Women usually have more oxytocin than men, but according to one study, a man's level of oxytocin goes up 500 percent after making love. Being too busy to make love pushes couples apart.

# Carbohydrate cravings may be related to overall severity of depression

People struggling with depression may crave for carbohydrate-rich foods, which could be “related to the overall severity” of their mental condition, according to a study.

Even though patients of depression, marked by a persistent low mood, tend to have less appetite, researchers, including those from the University of Bonn, Germany, said those with severe depression can sometimes develop food cravings.

“These changes can then lead to a change in body weight”, corresponding author Nils Kroemer, a professor of medical psychology at the University Hospital Bonn, University of Bonn, said.

For the study, published in the journal Psychological Medicine, a group of 117 participants—54 with depression and 63 healthy—were asked to complete a ‘food cue reactivity task’, by rating 60 food and 20 non-food items for whether they ‘wanted’ or ‘liked’ it.

The researchers found that people with depression showed lower levels of ‘wanting’ food, but not of ‘liking’ it. Further, “compared to carbohydrate-rich foods, patients with (major depressive disorder) reported lower liking and wanting ratings for high-fat and high-protein foods,” the authors wrote.

They also found that such patients also had an increased craving for foods combining fat and carbohydrates, such as milk chocolate.

While a craving for carb-rich foods is generally related with a higher appetite, the study showed that “carbohydrate cravings are more related to the overall severity of depression, especially anxiety symptoms,” first author Lilly Thurn, currently a postgraduate student at Maastricht University, the Netherlands, said.

Given that these energy-dense foods appeal to the brain’s reward system, the findings could help with developing better treatments for depression, the authors said.

“Since carbohydrate-containing foods control the



reward response in the brain via different signalling pathways than fat and protein-rich foods, it may be possible to derive better treatment approaches from this,” Kroemer said.

## How to Beat Carb Cravings

Keep your brain busy. It’s hard to think about cravings when your mind is occupied with fun. In one experiment, volunteers who played the video game Tetris for a few minutes found that it curbed their craving for food, drugs, and other pleasures. The researchers think that’s because your brain has limited capacity to juggle competing images.

## Eat mindfully

Sometimes you reach for carbs not out of hunger but boredom. Or it’s your habit to indulge in a bowl of ice cream after dinner. Mindful eating may help. Practice paying attention to why you’re eating, slow down to savor the taste of your food, and focus on the moment. This helps your brain get in sync with your stomach and get the signal that you’re full. Studies show a strong link between mindful eating and lower body weight.



## New treatment offers quick cure for common cause of high blood pressure

Doctors at Queen Mary University of London, Barts Health NHS Trust, and University College London have led the development of Targeted Thermal Therapy (Triple T), a simple, minimally invasive procedure that has the potential to revolutionise medical management of a common but often overlooked cause of high blood pressure.

This breakthrough could with additional testing, benefit millions of people worldwide who are currently undiagnosed and untreated.

In the UK, Triple T, known scientifically as endoscopic ultrasound-guided radiofrequency ablation, was rigorously tested, in collaboration with researchers from University College London, University College Hospital NHS Trust, Cambridge University NHS Trust, and the University of Cambridge.

High blood pressure affects one in three adults, of whom a hormonal condition called primary aldosteronism accounts for one in twenty cases. However, fewer than one per cent of those affected are ever diagnosed.

The condition occurs when tiny benign nodules in one or both adrenal glands produce excess aldosterone, a hormone that raises blood pressure by increasing salt levels in the body. Patients with primary aldosteronism often do not respond well to standard blood pressure medications and face higher risks of heart attacks, strokes, and kidney failure.

Until now, the only effective cure for primary aldosteronism has been surgical removal of the entire adrenal gland, requiring general anaesthesia, a two-to three-day hospital stay, and weeks of recovery. As a result, many patients go untreated.

Triple T offers a faster, safer alternative to surgery, by selectively destroying the small adrenal nodule without removing the gland. This is made possible by recent advances in diagnostic scans, using molecular dyes that accurately identify and locate even the smallest adrenal nodules. Those in the left adrenal gland are seen to be immediately adjacent to the stomach, from where they can be directly targeted.

Source: ANI

# Mitochondria may hold key to curing diabetes: Study

Mitochondria are responsible for creating energy, which fuels cells and keeps them functioning. However, mitochondrial abnormalities have been linked to the development of disorders like type 2 diabetes. Patients with this illness are unable to produce enough insulin or use the insulin produced by their pancreas to maintain normal blood sugar levels.

Researchers at the University of Michigan used mice to show that dysfunctional mitochondria trigger a response that affects the maturation and function of b-cells.

Several studies have shown that insulin-producing pancreatic b-cells of patients with diabetes have abnormal mitochondria and are unable to generate energy. Yet, these studies were unable to explain why the cells behaved this way.

“We wanted to determine which



pathways are important for maintaining the proper mitochondrial function,” said Emily M. Walker, Ph.D, a research assistant professor of internal medicine and first author of the study.

To do so, the team damaged three components that are essential for mitochondrial function: their DNA, a pathway used to get rid of damaged mitochondria, and one that

maintains a healthy pool of mitochondria in the cell.

“In all three cases, the exact same stress response was turned on, which caused b-cells to become immature, stop making enough insulin, and essentially stop being b-cells,” Walker said. “Our results demonstrate that the mitochondria can send signals to the nucleus and change the fate of the cell.”

The researchers also confirmed their findings in human pancreatic islet cells.

Their results prompted the team to expand their search into other cells that are affected by diabetes.

Losing your b-cells is the most direct path to getting type 2 diabetes. Through our study we now have an explanation for what might be happening and how we can intervene and fix the root cause,” said Scott A. Soleimanpour, M.D.

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## 65 percent of Indians use AI, more than double the global average: Microsoft

A Microsoft study, reflecting the rapid adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in India, has found that 65 per cent of surveyed Indians have used AI—more than double the global average.

Microsoft on Tuesday unveiled the Global Online Safety Survey, which studies the growing influence of AI. The survey is based on responses from 15,000 teenagers (13-17) and adults that was conducted in 15 countries between July 19 and August 9, 2024.

"65 per cent of respondents have used AI (+26 per cent from 2023). This is more than double the global average of 31 per cent in the same time period.

"India is most excited about using AI for translations, answering questions, increasing efficiency at work and helping students with schoolwork," the report said. The report showed that millennials (people aged 25-44) lead adoption, with 84 per cent reporting usage. Indian parents are more aware of their children's digital challenges, showing increased awareness compared to the previous year, it said.

However, India also has some reservations about AI, including concerns about online abuse, deepfakes, scams, and AI hallucinations, mirroring global trends. Online abuse was among the top worries regarding AI.

## Earth's inner core is shifting and it's messing with time itself

While we continue to live our lives, the length of the day on Earth is quietly being altered by a mysterious force that is the most powerful phenomenon on the planet.

The changes are to be blamed on Earth's inner core, which is going through a structural change, as discovered by scientists from the University of Southern California.

The team noticed changes at the planet's centre and the findings shed light on the role that topographical activity plays in rotational changes in the inner core — including changes that have minutely altered the length of a day. "We didn't set out to define the physical nature of the inner core. What we ended up discovering is evidence that the near surface of Earth's inner core undergoes structural change," John Vidale, principal investigator of the study said. Earth has four main layers: the solid inner core; the liquid outer core, which generates the magnetic field; the viscous mantle, with convection currents driving plate tectonics; and the thin, solid crust, where life exists and geological activity occurs.

# How to block your phone from tracking your location

Smartphones are useful tools for everyday life, but they're privy to nearly everything about you, including all the places you've been — if you let them.

When you use a map app to find the new restaurant your friend recommended, or your phone's browser to check the price of something you saw while window shopping, you could be unwittingly allowing your phone to track your location and share that information with others.

Phones use various signals to find your location, including cell tower pings, Wi-Fi access points, Bluetooth and GPS.

Sometimes your phone needs to know your location to provide a useful service, like telling the Uber driver where to pick you up. But in other cases, there's little justification for tracking your whereabouts, which then can be exploited by apps, ad services or even hackers.

"From fitness tracking to navigation, every location ping potentially reveals details about our routines and movements — which could be risky in the wrong hands," said Darren Guccione, CEO of Keeper Security.

"Users should turn on location tracking only when necessary, such as during navigation, emergencies or sharing updates with trusted contacts, and disable it immediately afterward."

Experts warn location data could be used to track people who visit abortion clinics. Or "a disgruntled ex could use location sharing as a means of control," said David Ruiz, senior privacy advocate at cybersecurity company Malwarebytes.

### tips to make sure location tracking is kept to a minimum:

#### App permissions

Head to your phone's control panel to check permissions.

iPhone users can go to the Privacy & Security tab, and then to Location Services to check settings for individual apps. It's not a good idea to let apps always use your location in the background, according to cybersecurity experts. Instead, get the app to either ask first before using your location, use it only while you've got the app open, or even never let it use your location.

While you're in Location Services, you might notice little arrows that indicate which apps have used your location. Purple means recently, while grey indicates the past 24 hours.

It's a little different for Android phones because there are so many different versions by various device manufacturers. In general, go to settings, and then tap the Location icon, which lets you turn it on or off for all apps.

To tweak settings for individual apps,



tap App location permissions, where you'll get choices similar to those in iOS.

#### iPhone privacy

Apple has other tools to cut down on third-party tracking that might include location information. On the iPhone's Privacy & Security setting, under the Tracking tab, there's a toggle to Allow Apps to Request to Track. With this switched off, any new app requests will be automatically denied and they will also be stopped from accessing your phone's ad identifier.

#### Advertising ID

Privacy experts recommend blocking your Google or Apple device's in-house ad identifier, which enables third-party tracking on most devices for better ad targeting.

On iPhones, go to the Privacy setting then scroll down to Apple Advertising, and then switch off Personalized Ads. On newer Android phones, go to the Privacy setting, then to Ads, where you can tap Delete Advertising ID.

#### Pinpoint or general

Whether you use Android or iOS, they both have settings to allow precisely pinpointing your location by combining wireless signals with data from onboard sensors such as the gyroscope, accelerometer and barometer. This helps to estimate the phone's position if, for example, you're inside a building blocking a GPS signal.

One reason to use this function is to show someone you're meeting exactly where you are. Google says its signals are randomized so they can't be associated with a specific person or account. In any case, you might not want every app to know this, so you can tell your phone to only share its general location.

On Android phones, turn off the Location Accuracy setting for all apps. On iPhones, switch it on or off for

individual apps.

#### Your Google account

Along with app permissions for your device, it's also a good idea to check your Google account. Google was forced to be more transparent about its location tracking practices after a 2018 Associated Press story that found the company continued to track people's location data even after they opted out of such tracking by disabling a feature the company called "location history." Go to myaccount.google.com and then to the Data & Privacy section, where you'll find the Location History controls. Under recent changes, the history will be deleted after three months, though you can change that default setting.

#### Browsers

Popular smartphone web browsers like Safari or Chrome could give away your location, so try using one that doesn't store information about you, like DuckDuckGo, Firefox Focus or Ecosia.

If a privacy-focused browser needs to access your location through your IP address, they will ask first. It will also let you easily delete your cookies and other web browsing data.

#### Find my device

Phones or tablets can also be tracked with Apple's Find My or Google's Find My Device features for recovering lost devices. You can turn this feature off if you think someone has gained access to your Apple or Google account.

#### Block the signal

Some cybersecurity websites recommend using airplane mode, but it doesn't always shut off all signals so you shouldn't rely on it.

A signal-blocking Faraday pouch would be a better bet, but be sure to test it to make sure it's actually jamming all signals. And, keep in mind, you'll need to take the device out of the bag to use it.

# US inflation rises by most since August '23, dims rate cut chances

US consumer prices increased more than expected in January, reinforcing the Federal Reserve's message that it was in no rush to resume cutting interest rates amid growing uncertainty over the economy.

The consumer price index jumped 0.5% last month after gaining 0.4% in December, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) said on Wednesday, February 12.

In the 12 months through January, the CPI increased 3.0% after advancing 2.9% in December. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the CPI gaining 0.3% and rising 2.9% year-on-year.

The BLS updated weights and seasonal adjustment factors, the model that the government uses to strip out seasonal fluctuations from the data to reflect price movements in 2024.

Some of the rise in the CPI last month probably reflected businesses pushing through price increases at the start of the year. Businesses could also have pre-emptively raised prices in anticipation of higher and broad tariffs on imported goods.

President Donald Trump early this month suspended a highly telegraphed 25% tariff on goods from Canada and Mexico until March. But a 10% additional tariff on Chinese goods went into effect this month. Economists expect that those tariffs, when they are eventually enforced, will lift inflation.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell told



lawmakers on Tuesday that "inflation moderated a little further last year," adding that "recent progress has been bumpy."

Inflation remains above the US central bank's 2% target. Chances of a rate cut this year are diminishing amid rising uncertainty over the economic impact of the Trump administration's trade, immigration and fiscal policies.

Consumers' one-year inflation expectations surged to a 15-month high in early February as households perceived that "it may be too late to avoid the negative impact of tariff policy," a University of Michigan survey of consumers showed last week.

Combined with a stable labor market, Bank of America Securities continues

to believe that the Fed policy easing cycle is over. The central bank left its benchmark overnight interest rate unchanged in the 4.25%-4.50% range in January, having reduced it by 100 basis points since September, when it embarked on its policy easing cycle.

The policy rate was hiked by 5.25 percentage points in 2022 and 2023 to tame inflation.

Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the CPI climbed 0.4% in January. The so-called core CPI increased 0.2% in December. The core CPI has tended to print higher in January, which economists said suggested that seasonal effects lingered in the data even after seasonal adjustment.

## As food prices decline, India's retail inflation slows to 5-month low of 4.31%

The retail inflation in January fell to a five-month low of 4.31 per cent, mainly due to a decline in the prices of vegetables, eggs, cereals and pulses.

Measured by the Consumer Price Index, the retail inflation stood at 5.22 per cent in December and 5.1 per cent in January 2024, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

On a decline since October, the previous low inflation was in August 2024 at 3.65 per cent. It stood at 5.48 per cent in November, 6.21 per cent in October and 5.49 per cent in September.

The rural inflation in January was slightly higher at 4.64 per cent while it was 3.87 per cent in urban areas.

There has been a sharp decline of 237 basis point in food inflation in January at 6.02 per cent compared to 8.39 per cent in December 2024. It stood at 9.04 per cent in November, 10.87 per cent in October, 9.24 per cent in September and 5.66 per cent in August. Rural areas experienced a food inflation rate of 6.31 per cent while urban parts saw a slightly lower rate of 5.53 per cent. The top five items showing the highest year-on-year inflation in January were coconut oil (54.20 per cent), potato (49.61 per cent), coconut (38.71 per cent), garlic (30.65 per cent) and peas (30.17 per cent).

## India's Index of Industrial Production records 3.2% growth in December

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew 3.2 per cent in December which was 5.2 per cent the month prior, quick estimates released by the statistics ministry showed Wednesday, Feb 12.

The growth rates of the three sectors, mining, manufacturing and electricity for December 2024 were 2.6 per cent, 3.0 per cent and 6.2 per cent, respectively.

The quick estimates of IIP stands at 157.2 against 152.3 in December 2023. The Indices of Industrial Production for the mining, manufacturing and electricity sectors for December 2024 stand at 143.1, 156.2 and 192.8 respectively. Within the manufacturing sector, 16 out of 23 industry groups at NIC 2 digit-level have recorded a positive growth in December 2024 over December 2023. The top three positive contributors for December 2024 are - "Manufacture of basic metals" (6.7 per cent), "Manufacture of electrical equipment" (40.1 per cent) and "Manufacture of coke and refined petroleum products" (3.9 per cent).

# China consumer inflation picks up as holiday boosts spending

Inflation picked up in China last month, official figures showed Sunday, as the Lunar New Year holiday boosted January spending.

China has struggled to raise consumption and stave off deflation for months as sluggish spending, a property slump and ballooning local government debt all weigh on growth.

The consumer price index (CPI), a key measure of inflation, rose 0.5 percent last month, up from a 0.1 percent rise in November, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

The reading from January, which coincided with the start of the long Lunar New Year holiday this year, is the highest since August's reading of 0.6 percent. Last month's reading exceeded the 0.4 percent rise predicted by Bloomberg analysts.

The NBS reported a rise in prices for goods associated with the holiday, where millions of people travel to their hometowns and celebrate with feasts and drinking. Fresh vegetable prices rose by 2.4 percent year-on-year and the price of



pork rose by 13.8 percent.

The boost in prices last month is "mainly due to higher food prices and tourism-related services prices on an earlier-than-usual Lunar New Year holiday," Goldman Sachs analyst Xinquan Chen wrote in a note on Sunday.

"But the boost is likely to become a drag in February as seasonal demand fades," Chen said.

China suffered its sharpest fall in prices for 14 years in January 2024, at the end of a four-month period of deflation.

Inflation stayed below 0.5 percent for

nine months of 2024.

While deflation suggests the cost of goods is falling, it poses a threat to the broader economy as consumers tend to postpone purchases under such conditions, hoping for further reductions.

A lack of demand can then force companies to cut production, freeze hiring or lay off workers, while potentially also having to discount existing stocks -- dampening profitability even as costs remain the same.

Beijing unveiled a slew of measures to boost the economy last year, including cutting interest rates and cancelling restrictions on homebuying.

Last month, policymakers expanded a subsidy scheme for common household items, from water purifiers to laptops and electric vehicles.

During the holiday period, sales of household appliances and communication equipment at "key monitored retail enterprises" were up more than 10 percent year-on-year, the Chinese commerce ministry said on Thursday, Feb 13.

## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - FEB 17, 2025 TO FEB 23, 2025

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA

**ARIES**

Ganesha says this week brings new energy and enthusiasm for Aries. You will see an increase in your confidence, which will help you achieve success in your efforts. Your hard work and commitment at work will attract everyone's attention, and you may receive appreciation from your colleagues. This week will bring opportunities to learn and experience something new. Prepare yourself for new challenges, as this will help in your personal and professional growth. If you are working on a project, your ideas and views will be recognized, which will create a positive atmosphere in the team. In my personal life, relationships will deepen. If you feel like contacting an old friend or relative, this is the right time. They can bring happiness and joy into your life. Sweetness will also be seen in love relationships, which will allow you to spend time with each other. Taking care of health will also be important. You can maintain your energy level by doing a little exercise and meditation. This week will give you a sense of balance and satisfaction, which you will benefit from. Resolve that you will maintain your positivity and remain determined towards the goal this week. This will be a time of introspection and self-improvement for you.

**TAURUS**

Ganesha says this week indicates you to pay special attention to different aspects of life. You will try to balance your personal and professional life this week. At the beginning of the week, your relationship with your colleagues and friends will strengthen. Your hard work and dedication are likely to yield results. At the workplace, your ideas will be appreciated, which will increase your confidence. In your personal life, try to spend more time with your loved ones. This week is suitable for strengthening relationships. Interacting with family and sharing feelings will increase mutual understanding. In terms of health, a little caution is necessary. If you have not paid attention to your health for some time, now is the time to take steps toward proper diet and exercise. In financial matters, act smartly. Think well before making a new investment. It would be better to be cautious instead of making serious decisions. Finally, focus on your goals and dreams. This week you will experience inner strength and stability, which will help you move toward your goals. Remember, your determination and hard work are the keys to your success.

**GEMINI**

Ganesha says this week is a time of new energy and opportunities. During this period, your communication skills will improve, allowing you to express your ideas with clarity and impact. This is a time to strengthen relationships with friends and family, so try to spend more time with loved ones. This week, some new projects or opportunities may come your way in the work sphere. Your inventiveness and creativity will help you succeed. Be tactful when communicating with colleagues; sometimes, your sharp intelligence and sense of humor can help you solve difficult situations easily. Taking some time out for your health will also be important. Practicing yoga or meditation will bring mental peace. Take care of your mental health; this week is a time to connect with yourself and introspect. By getting involved in social activities, you will meet new people and possibly make new friends. These new connections will inspire you to bring positive changes in your life. The importance of this week lies in the fact that you should have faith in your abilities and promote self-sovereignty. This is the time to embrace new opportunities and move in new directions in life.

**CANCER**

Ganesha says this week is very special for Cancer. A wave of thoughts running in emotional and mental depths can become a source of inspiration for you. Try to increase communication with your close ones this week; the experiences you have shared will make your relationships stronger. In terms of health, this is the time to take some care. It is necessary to negate stress and fill your mind with peace. Meditation and yoga can provide you with mental peace. In professional life, this is a good time to implement new plans. Your ideas can be inspirational for others. If you are working on a new project, do not hesitate to seek help from colleagues. On the financial front, keep an eye on your expenses. Avoid unnecessary spending and give priority to your savings. This week listen to your inner self and try to spread positivity in your life. Happy and balanced relationships will make your life even more beautiful.

**LEO**

Ganesha says this week is going to be very special for Leo natives. Your energies will be at their peak at this time, and you are expected to succeed in your tasks. This is the right time to elevate your creativity. Your confidence will lead you to new possibilities, be it in the workplace or your personal life. Positive changes can also be seen in your relationships. Spending time with family and friends will make you happy. If the time has

come to resolve any old differences, then talk openly and clarify things. It is also important to take care of your health this week. A little stretching or yoga will give a boost to your mental and physical health. Remember to do whatever you do with joy. Your leadership qualities will attract everyone at this time, so do not hesitate to share your ideas and plans. This is the time to shine.

**VIRGO**

Ganesha says this week will be especially busy for Virgo natives. Your daily tasks and responsibilities may increase, but through that, you will get closer to your goals. It will be necessary to stay organized at work and use managerial skills. Your communication skills will also emerge during this time, allowing you to express your ideas and plans better. Personal relationships need some grounding, so try to spend time with your loved ones. In terms of health, a little exercise and yoga will help keep your mental and physical health better. This will help you maintain balance. You may encounter some surprising opportunities this week, so be prepared and make the most of your opportunities. Develop self-confidence within yourself, and you will surely be successful in your endeavors.

**LIBRA**

Ganesha says this week is a time of harmony and balance for Libra natives. It is necessary to create harmony in your personal and professional life. While you will discover better understanding and cooperation in relationships, your hard work and dedication in the workplace will get you recognition. Your thoughts will deepen, which will help you understand the point of view of others. This is the time to spend with your friends and family, as their emotional support will motivate you to move forward. Take a well-thought-out decision in financial matters. Avoid small purchases and focus on long-term investments. Be careful about health, regular exercise and a balanced diet will be important for you. This is a good time for social interaction, you will get a chance to meet new people and expand your network. Expressing your thoughts clearly will remove your emotions and hesitations. This week, be in search of happiness and satisfaction and try to make people around you happy.

**SCORPIO**

Ganesha says this week, positive changes are likely for Scorpio people. You may face new opportunities in your career, and your hard work will start paying off. This is the right time to share your ideas and play your role in teamwork. Negativity will also start reducing in personal relationships. Communication with the family will increase and mutual understanding will improve. If you are

thinking of taking a special relationship forward, then this week can prove to be very good for you. Financial matters will be stable, but it would be better to make a brief plan. Take decisions wisely in matters of investment. There is a need to be alert about health. Doing meditation and yoga will keep your mental health fine. Be careful of your limitations this week and avoid getting depressed. Therefore, consider this time to strengthen your development and relationships. Move forward with positivity and keep moving towards your goals with morale.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Ganesha says this week, you will see a flow of positive energy. During this time, you will be seen moving towards new achievements in your professional life. Your ideas will be creative and you will feel inspired to bring your plans into action. Your social life will also be hot this week. Spending time with friends and family will give you happiness and an opportunity to strengthen important relationships. There may be a conversation with a close friend, that will change your thinking. From a health point of view, you need to pay attention to your lifestyle. Regular exercise and a balanced diet will give you energy. Do meditation and yoga, which will give you mental peace. It is necessary to make wise decisions in financial matters this week. There is a possibility of sudden financial gain, but it is important to handle it properly. Keep flexibility in plans and be ready to take advantage of opportunities. Overall, this week has brought unique opportunities for you. Move forward towards your goals and maintain a positive attitude.

**CAPRICORN**

Ganesha says this week is expected to be positive in general. During this time new possibilities may open up in your field of work.

Due to your hard work and dedication, incomplete tasks are now likely to be completed. You will establish good relations with colleagues in your office, which will improve collective efforts. There will be harmony in personal relationships this week as well. You will get an opportunity to spend time with family, which will deepen your emotional attachment. Try to move forward with dialogue and understanding in relationships, this will strengthen mutual relations. From a health point of view, this week can be a time of restraint for you. There is a need to focus on a balanced diet and regular exercise. Meditation and yoga can also improve your mental health. It is also advisable to be cautious in financial matters. Be patient while making business decisions. It will be useful to think before making a big investment. Organize your plans this week and keep an open mind for new possibilities. Due to your stability and

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## BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : FEBRUARY 17 TO FEBRUARY 23 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

### FEBRUARY 17

Ganesha says that as dawn breaks on the 11th, the universe holds its breath, waiting for you to sync up with its frequency. In their infinite wisdom, the celestial bodies suggest an intense day of introspection. This is not just about surface-level reflection; it is about diving into the core of your being. Perhaps there is a memory you have suppressed or an ambition you have put off thinking it was too big. Today is the day to face these hidden aspects of yourself. The stars indicate revelations that can reshape your journey and your sense of purpose.

### FEBRUARY 18

Ganesha says that the last day of the month comes packed with electric-like energy that can be felt in every gust of wind and every rustling leaf. It seems that the universe is playing a game of fate, and you are at the center of it. While the day may seem like any other day, a whirlwind of opportunities is swirling around you. A conversation with a stranger, a book on a park bench, or even a song on the radio could be the key that unlocks a new realm of possibilities. The universe encourages you to be receptive,

curious, and most importantly, fearless in facing the unknown.

### FEBRUARY 19

Ganesha says that as the new month begins, the stars align again, emphasizing the importance of staying grounded. In the relentless rush of life, it's easy to lose yourself. But today, the universe reminds you of the power of stillness. It is in these moments of quiet contemplation that you will find clarity. Whether it's meditating by the side of a calm lake, rereading old journals, or simply sitting quietly, today is the day to reconnect with your essence. The celestial energies indicate profound insights that can only be achieved when you are truly present.

### FEBRUARY 20

Ganesha says that the second day brings with it a symphony of collaboration. The universe isn't just suggesting teamwork; it is emphasizing the magic that is created when different minds meet. Today, look for people who challenge you, who offer a new perspective, who see the world from a different angle. It is in these meetings of ideas that innovation is born. The stars point to a project or endeavor that, when

embraced collectively, has the potential to be revolutionary.

### FEBRUARY 21

Ganesha says change is the theme of this day. The universe, in its infinite expanse, witnesses countless cycles of birth, death, and rebirth. Today, you are on the cusp of such a transformational phase. While change can be unsettling, it is also the universe's way of pushing you forward, of telling you that you are ready to shed the old skin and adopt a new avatar. It is not just about external changes; it is about inner growth. Embrace this metamorphosis with grace and courage.

### FEBRUARY 22

Ganesha says on the fourth day, the celestial tapestry weaves a tale of introspection. This is not a passive contemplation of days gone by; it is an active engagement with your deeper self. The universe inspires you to ask tough questions, challenge your beliefs, and face your fears. Today, let your soul be your guide. Dive deep, explore uncharted territories of your psyche, and emerge with a renewed sense of purpose.



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR  
BEJAN DARUWALLA

### FEBRUARY 23

Ganesha says that as this period comes to an end, the stars shine with a special brilliance. They speak of realizations, moments of crystal-clear clarity, and epiphanies that have the power to redefine your path. Today, the universe seems to be in perfect harmony, singing a song of hope, resilience, and destiny. Trust this cosmic dance, lean into the rhythm of life, and know that every twist and turn is leading you to your true north.

*Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at [www.bejandaruwalla.com](http://www.bejandaruwalla.com) | [info@bejandaruwalla.com](mailto:info@bejandaruwalla.com) | +91 81412 34275*

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patience, you will be able to face every challenge.

### AQUARIUS



Aquarius

Ganesha says this week will be very important. Your creativity will increase, which will inspire you to implement new ideas. You may get to see new possibilities in your career, so share your ideas with your fellow workers. Social relations will also improve this week. Your friends and family will be eager to spend time with you. You can participate in social events, which will be beneficial for your mental peace. It is important to be cautious in terms of health. Keep some restraint in your routine and consume a balanced diet. Take the help of meditation and yoga to reduce mental stress. From a financial point of view, some new investment plans can prove beneficial for you. However, think well before taking any major decision. Thus, this week can bring positive changes for you. Trust your intuition and show courage in facing your problems.



### PISCES

Ganesha says this week, positivity will flow for the people of Pisces. Your sensitivity and creativity will prove to be important for you at this time. Maintain good relations with colleagues at work, as it can lead you to new opportunities. Your emotional depth will further strengthen your relationship at this time. This is the right time to communicate with a loved one. Mutual understanding will improve and problems will seem to be solved automatically. From a health point of view, it is important to maintain mental peace. A little meditation or yoga can

boost your confidence. In financial matters, focus on better planning. Consider all aspects before investing, so that losses can be avoided. This week, be conscious of your intentions and goals. Remember, your inner voice will help you follow the right path. Stay positive and be good to the people around you.

### 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](http://chiragdaruwalla.com). He is available for consultations on WhatsApp number +91 8141566266 or by email: [info@chiragdaruwalla.com](mailto:info@chiragdaruwalla.com)

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Nastur Bejan Daruwalla

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## India's Prime Minister Modi to hold talks with President Trump

shockwaves across the world, PM Modi's key priority is likely to be to pre-empt any punitive trade action by Washington against India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is hoping that his gifts in the form of concessions on tariffs, fresh business deals and the prospect of cooperation on China will win the U.S. President's favor.

Mr. Trump, not yet one month into his presidency, has wielded the threat of tariffs against friend and foe alike to try to extract new trade deals, investment or law enforcement help.

India may not be an exception: Although Mr. Trump had a warm relationship with PM Modi in his first term, he has called India a "very big abuser" on trade and his levies on steel and aluminum hit India particularly hard.

Ahead of his White House meeting, PM Modi has readied promises including increased liquefied natural gas, combat vehicle and jet engine purchases, according to Indian government officials who declined to be named.

It's a "gift" for Mr. Trump, said one of the sources, who declined to be named as they previewed a private meeting.

U.S. President Donald Trump and visiting Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a press conference when they meet, the White House said.

"Their joint press conference with Trump is set for 1710 ET [2200 GMT]," the White House said.

Prime Minister Modi will meet Elon Musk during his visit to the United States and Starlink's entry in the South Asian Market could be discussed during the meeting, Reuters reported, citing two people familiar with the plans.

Starlink wants to start operations in India. The Indian government has backed Mr. Musk's idea that spectrum should be assigned rather than auctioned. However, Starlink's license application is still being reviewed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi kicked off the series of bilateral interactions with a meeting with U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard on Wednesday, February 12. The two leaders discussed enhancing intelligence cooperation and counter-terrorism efforts. (With inputs from agencies)

## 'Are we not creating a class of parasites?' Supreme Court of India says on freebie culture

schemes --- people are not willing to work. They are getting free rations, amounts without doing any work! I am telling you from personal experiences...because of these freebies, some states give free ration, so the people do not want to work," a Bench of Justice BR Gavai and Justice AG Masih said, while hearing a petition on the right to shelter of homeless persons in urban areas.

"Rather than permitting them to be a part of the mainstream society by contributing to the development of the nation, are we not creating a class of parasites?" a Bench of Justice BR Gavai and Justice AG Masih wondered even as it appreciated the government's concern for homeless people.

On behalf of the Centre, Attorney General R Venkataramani submitted that the government was in the process of finalizing the urban poverty alleviation mission, which would address various issues, including shelter for the urban homeless.

Asking the Attorney General to spell out how much time it would take to make the urban poverty alleviation mission applicable, the Bench posted the matter for further hearing after six weeks.

As petitioner's counsel Prashant Bhushan said there was no one in the country who didn't want to work if they had some work, Justice Gavai shot back, "You must be having only one-sided knowledge."

Narrating his personal experience, Justice Gavai said, "I come from an agricultural family. Because of the freebies in Maharashtra which they just announced prior to the (assembly) elections, the agriculturists are

not getting laborers. Everybody is getting free (ration and money) at home."

It said everybody, including the Attorney General, was on the same page that providing shelter to the homeless merited due attention. "But at the same time, should it not be balanced?" it asked.

The top court had on July 5, 2013 declared that freebies promised in poll manifestos vitiated the electoral process and asked the Election Commission to frame guidelines to check it in consultation with political parties. However, no substantive progress has been made on the issue.

Acting on a PIL filed by Delhi BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay, the top court had on August 3, 2022 asked the Centre, Niti Aayog, Finance Commission, Law Commission, RBI and members of ruling and opposition parties to give constructive suggestions to address the issue of irrational poll-eve freebies to influence the electorate. The matter was pending before the top court.

As one of the advocates alleged that authorities showed compassion only for the rich, the Bench asked him not to make political speeches. "How do you say compassion is shown only for the rich? Even for the government, how can you say this?" it asked.

As on December 4, 2024, a total of 2,557 shelters were sanctioned by the states or union territories and 1,995 shelter homes were functional with a capacity of 1.16 lakh beds, Bhushan said, adding a survey showed there were about 3 lakh (300000) urban homeless in Delhi alone. As per Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, the total capacity of the shelters was 17,000 people of which only 5,900 such facilities had beds.

The Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board counsel said the Board had 197 shelter homes running in Delhi as on date with a total capacity of 17,000 people.

## Ex-Congress MP Sajjan guilty of double murder during '84 riots

Sajjan is already serving life term in another anti-Sikh riots case and the SC has refused to grant him bail

Besides murder, Sajjan has also been convicted of rioting, dacoity, attempting to cause death or grievous hurt, committing culpable homicide and burning of the victim's house as a member of an unlawful assembly.

"It has further been established that Sajjan, being a member of such unlawful assembly, is guilty of having committed the murder of Jaswant Singh and Tarundeep Singh, the husband and son of complainant PW-13, during the incident of rioting on November 1, 1984," Baweja said in her 139-page order.

The Special Judge posted the matter for hearing arguments on the quantum of the punishment to be awarded to the convict on February 18.

"Whatever time it might have taken, it's important to punish the perpetrators of such heinous crime to uphold the rule of law," senior advocate HS Phoolka told The Tribune, welcoming the order convicting the former Congress MP.

Sajjan (79) is already serving life imprisonment in another anti-Sikh riots case and the Supreme Court has refused to grant him bail. He has been in jail since December 31, 2018, when he surrendered after being convicted and awarded life imprisonment by the Delhi High Court in a case relating to the anti-Sikh riots in the Raj Nagar (Part I) area in Palam Colony of South West Delhi in which five Sikhs were killed on November 1 and 2, 1984, and a gurdwara was burnt down in Raj Nagar (Part II). His appeal against conviction and sentence order of the high court is pending in the Supreme Court.

On September 20, 2023, Special Judge Geetanjali Goel had acquitted Sajjan in a case related to the murder of a person during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in the Sultanpuri area of the national capital, giving him "the benefit of the doubt". The state's appeal against his acquittal is pending in the Delhi High Court.

The fourth case against Sajjan in connection with a culpable homicide in the Janakpuri area during the 1984 riots is listed before Special Judge Baweja for evidence on February 18.

This is the second conviction in a case reopened on the recommendations of a special investigation team (SIT) set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2015 to



reinvestigate the 1984 anti-Sikh riots cases.

Following the SIT's recommendations, the complainant in the case recorded her statement on November 23, 2016, leading to Sajjan's arrest in the case on April 6, 2021, while he was serving a life term in Tihar Jail in another 1984 riots case.

In 2018, one accused was given the death penalty and another life imprisonment in connection with the murder of three persons in the Mahipalpur area during the 1984 riots. The convicts' appeal is pending before the Delhi High Court.

Around 3,000 people, mostly Sikhs, were killed in the anti-Sikh riots that broke out following the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984, by her two Sikh bodyguards.

The case relates to the killings of Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh on November 1, 1984. The Punjabi Bagh police registered the case and the probe was subsequently taken over by a special investigation team.

After hearing additional submissions made by public prosecutor Manish Rawat, Special Judge Baweja had on January 31 reserved the verdict. On December 16, 2021, the court framed charges against Sajjan, finding a "prima facie" case against him.

## US to deport 2nd batch of illegal immigrants to India

Airport in Amritsar. However, there is no confirmation yet on where the second batch will land.

The US action comes as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Washington to hold wide-ranging talks with President Donald Trump.

Earlier this month, 104 Indian migrants were deported from the US.

While 30 of the deportees were from Punjab, 33 each are from Haryana and Gujarat, three each from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and two from Chandigarh. Earlier, a US military plane C-17 was used to bring back the illegal immigrants. The deportees are expected to be allowed to go home following verification and background checks. Police will focus on identifying any deportee with a criminal record.

(Source: Tribune)

Janaki Jayanti is a sacred Hindu festival that marks the birth anniversary of Goddess Sita, the divine consort of Lord Rama and an incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi. This auspicious day is observed on the eighth day of the Krishna Paksha (waning phase of the moon) in the Hindu month of Magha, primarily by devotees in Nepal and certain regions of India.

#### Significance of Janaki Jayanti

Goddess Sita, also known as Janaki, symbolizes purity, devotion, sacrifice, and resilience. She is revered as an epitome of ideal womanhood and unwavering dedication to righteousness (Dharma). Janaki Jayanti holds immense spiritual significance as it commemorates the birth of a goddess who exemplified virtues essential for a harmonious and righteous life.

According to Hindu mythology, Sita was discovered in a furrow while King Janaka of Mithila was plowing the land during a yajna (sacred ritual). Because of this miraculous birth, she was named Janaki, meaning the daughter of Janaka. As an incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi, Sita played a pivotal role in the Ramayana, standing as a symbol of endurance and feminine strength.

#### The Legend of Sita

Goddess Sita's life story is immortalized in the Hindu epic, Ramayana, revered as one of the greatest works of ancient literature. Born as the daughter of King Janaka of Mithila and Queen Sunayana, Sita emerged from the earth's womb, symbolizing her divine origins and purity. From a young age, she exemplified unparalleled virtues of humility, compassion, and unwavering devotion to righteousness.

Sita's life took a profound turn when she married Lord Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, in a grand ceremony that captivated the hearts of all who witnessed it. Her unwavering support and steadfast loyalty to Rama during times of exile and adversity exemplify her role as the ideal wife, epitomizing the concept of "Pati-Vrata" - devotion to one's husband.

Despite enduring trials and tribulations, including her abduction by the demon king Ravana, Sita remained resolute in her faith and purity. Her unwavering devotion to Rama, even in the face of adversity, serves as an enduring example of loyalty, sacrifice, and divine love.

#### Rituals and Celebrations

The celebration of Janaki Jayanti is marked by various religious and cultural activities:

- **Fasting and Devotional Prayers:** Devotees observe a fast to seek the blessings of Goddess Sita. They offer prayers at temples dedicated to Sita and Lord Rama.
- **Reading the Ramayana:** Recitations of the Ramayana, particularly passages describing the birth, virtues, and life of Sita, are held in temples and homes.
- **Special Pujas and Offerings:** Idols of Goddess Sita are adorned with flowers, and offerings such as fruits, sweets, and traditional dishes are

# Janaki Jayanti: Celebrating the birth of Goddess Sita



#### Important information

**Janaki Jayanti 2025**

**Friday, 21 February 2025**

**Ashtami Tithi Begins - 20 February 2024 at 09:55 am**

**Ashtami Tithi Ends - 21 February 2024 at 11:55 pm**

- **Bhajans and Kirtans:** Devotional songs praising Goddess Sita's virtues and devotion to Lord Rama are sung by devotees.
- **Processions and Dramas:** In regions with a strong Mithila tradition, cultural performances, including reenactments of Sita's life events, are organized.
- **Charity and Social Service:** Many devotees engage in acts of kindness, such as distributing food and clothing to the needy, in honor of Sita's compassionate nature.

#### Celebrating Janaki Jayanti

Janaki Jayanti is celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion across India and among Hindu communities worldwide. Devotees observe this auspicious day by offering prayers, reciting hymns, and organizing processions and cultural programs in honor of Goddess Sita.

Temples dedicated to Sita and Rama are adorned with colorful decorations, and special ceremonies are conducted to

commemorate the divine union of the celestial couple. Devotees fast, perform rituals, and participate in charitable activities as a mark of devotion and gratitude towards the goddess.

The occasion of Janaki Jayanti serves as a reminder of the timeless virtues embodied by Goddess Sita - her unwavering devotion to righteousness, resilience in the face of adversity, and boundless love and compassion towards all beings.

#### Relevance Today

In today's world, the life and teachings of Goddess Sita hold immense relevance, offering profound insights into the values of integrity, compassion, and devotion. Her story inspires individuals to uphold righteousness, stand against injustice, and cultivate unwavering faith in the face of challenges.

On Janaki Jayanti, as devotees gather to celebrate the birth of Goddess Sita, let us reflect on her timeless teachings and strive to emulate her virtues in our own lives. May her divine grace guide us

towards a path of righteousness, compassion, and inner peace, and may we find solace and strength in her eternal presence.

In essence, Janaki Jayanti serves as a joyous occasion to honor and celebrate the divine embodiment of purity, devotion, and resilience - Goddess Sita, whose life continues to inspire and uplift countless hearts across generations.

#### Janaki Jayanti in Mithila and Nepal

The festival holds special importance in the Mithila region (now in Nepal and Bihar, India), as it is believed to be the birthplace of Goddess Sita. In Nepal, Janaki Mandir in Janakpur hosts grand celebrations, attracting thousands of pilgrims and devotees. The temple is beautifully decorated, and a large number of rituals take place, making it a focal point for the festival.

#### The Role of Women in Janaki Jayanti

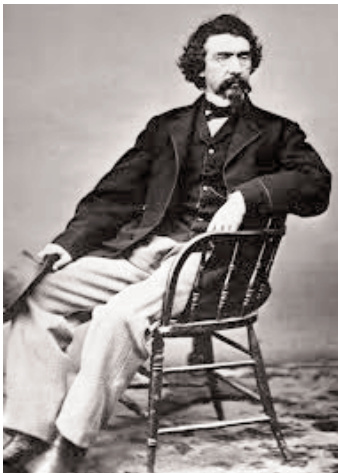
Janaki Jayanti is especially significant for women, as Goddess Sita is considered a role model for patience, chastity, and self-sacrifice. Women perform special prayers and rituals to seek blessings for a prosperous married life, family happiness, and inner strength. In some regions, mothers teach their daughters about the values embodied by Goddess Sita, ensuring the continuation of cultural traditions and moral teachings.

# History This Week FEB 14- FEB 20

**FEBRUARY 14**



February 14th - Celebrated as (Saint) Valentine's Day around the world, now one of the most widely observed unofficial holidays in which romantic greeting cards and gifts are exchanged.



February 14, 1849 - Photographer Mathew Brady took the first photograph of a U.S. President in office, James Polk.

February 14, 1929 - The St. Valentine's Day massacre occurred in Chicago as seven members of the Bugs Moran gang were gunned down by five of Al Capone's mobsters posing as police.

**FEBRUARY 15**

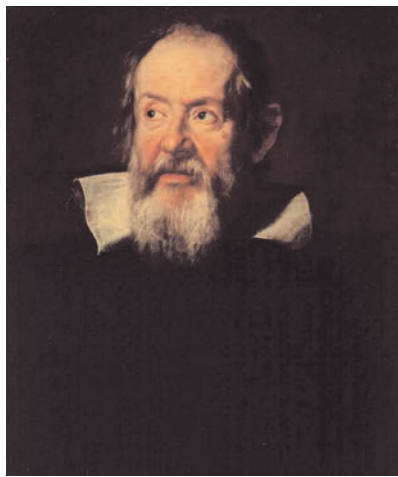
February 15, 1898 - In Havana, the U.S. Battleship Maine was blown up while at anchor and quickly sank with 260 crew members lost. The incident inflamed public opinion in the U.S., resulting in a declaration of war against Spain on April 25, 1898, amid cries of "Remember the Maine!"



February 15, 1933 - An assassination attempt on newly elected U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt occurred in Miami, Florida. A spectator deflected the gunman's aim. As a result, Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak was shot and killed instead. The gunman, an Italian

immigrant, was captured and later sentenced to death.

February 15, 1989 - Soviet Russia completed its military withdrawal from Afghanistan after nine years of unsuccessful involvement in the civil war between Muslim rebel groups and the Russian-backed Afghan government. Over 15,000 Russian soldiers had been killed in the fighting.



**Birthday** - Astronomer and physicist Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was born in Pisa, Italy. He was the first astronomer to use a telescope and advanced the theory that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the solar system.

**Birthday** - Inventor Cyrus McCormick (1809-1884) was born in Rockbridge County, Virginia. He invented the horse-drawn mechanical reaper, a machine that freed farmers from hard labor and contributed to the development and cultivation of vast areas of the American Great Plains.

**Birthday** - Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) was born in Adams, Massachusetts. A pioneer in women's rights, she worked tirelessly for woman's suffrage (right to vote) and in 1872 was arrested after voting (illegally) in the presidential election. She was commemorated in 1979 with the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin, thus became the first American woman to have her image on a U.S. coin.

**FEBRUARY 16**



**Birthday** - Entertainer and politician Sonny Bono (1935-1998) was born in Detroit, Michigan. Following a career as a popular singer, he became mayor of Palm Springs, California, then became a Republican congressman, serving until his accidental death from a skiing mishap.

**FEBRUARY 17**

February 17, 1865 - During the American Civil War, Fort Sumter in

South Carolina was returned to the Union after nearly a year and a half under Confederate control. The fort had been the scene of the first shots of the war.



February 17, 1909 - Apache Chief Geronimo (1829-1909) died while in captivity at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He had led a small group of warriors on raids throughout Arizona and New Mexico. Caught once, he escaped. The U.S. Army then sent 5,000 men to recapture him.

**FEBRUARY 18**



**Birthday** - American politician Wendell Willkie (1892-1944) was born in Elwood, Illinois. He was the Republican nominee for president in 1940, running against Franklin D. Roosevelt.

**FEBRUARY 19**

February 19, 1942 - Internment of Japanese Americans began after President Franklin Roosevelt issued an Executive Order requiring those living on the Pacific coast to report for relocation. Over 110,000 persons therefore shut down their businesses, sold off their property, quit school and moved inland to the relocation centers.

**Birthday** - Astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) was born in Torun, Poland. Considered the founder of modern astronomy, he theorized that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the solar system.

**FEBRUARY 20**

February 20, 1943 - German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel broke through



American lines at Kasserine Pass in North Africa as inexperienced U.S. Troops lost their first major battle of World War II in Europe, with 1,000 Americans killed.



February 20, 1962 - Astronaut John Glenn became the first American launched into orbit. Traveling aboard the "Friendship 7" spacecraft, Glenn reached an altitude of 162 miles (260 kilometers) and completed three orbits in a flight lasting just under five hours. Glenn was the third American in space, preceded by Alan Shepard and Virgil "Gus" Grissom who had each completed short sub-orbital flights. All of them had been preceded by Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin who was the first human in space, completing one orbit on April 12, 1961 - a feat that intensified the already ongoing Space Race between the Russians and Americans. Glenn's successful flight showed the Americans had caught up and was followed in September 1962 by President John F. Kennedy's open call to land an American on the moon before the decade's end.

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# Sikkim: A Paradise in the Himalayas

Sikkim, the enchanting northeastern state of India, is a paradise for nature lovers, adventure seekers, and spiritual travelers. Nestled in the lap of the mighty Himalayas, Sikkim is known for its breathtaking landscapes, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality. Whether you are looking for serene monasteries, snow-capped mountains, or lush green valleys, Sikkim has something for everyone.

## Best Places to Visit in Sikkim

### Gangtok - The Heart of Sikkim

Gangtok, the capital city of Sikkim, is a bustling town that offers a mix of modernity and tradition. It is known for its stunning views of the Kanchenjunga range, vibrant markets, and Buddhist monasteries. Popular attractions include:

- MG Marg - A lively shopping street perfect for a leisurely walk, offering local delicacies, handicrafts, and souvenirs.
- Tsomgo Lake - A glacial lake surrounded by snow-clad mountains, known for changing colors with seasons and yak rides.
- Rumtek Monastery - One of the most significant monasteries in Sikkim, showcasing ancient Tibetan architecture and Buddhist relics.
- Nathula Pass - A high-altitude pass connecting India and China, requiring a special permit to visit and offering breathtaking views.
- Ganesh Tok and Hanuman Tok - Viewpoints providing panoramic views of the city and surrounding mountains.

### Pelling - Gateway to Kanchenjunga

Pelling is a serene hill station known for its breathtaking views of the Kanchenjunga peak. Some must-visit places in Pelling include:

- Pemayangtse Monastery - A 17th-century monastery offering peace and spirituality, adorned with ancient artifacts.
- Rabdentse Ruins - The remnants of Sikkim's ancient capital, offering a historical insight and mesmerizing scenery.
- Khecheopalri Lake - A sacred lake believed to fulfill wishes, surrounded by dense forests and prayer flags.
- Singshore Bridge - One of the highest suspension bridges in India, offering spectacular valley views and adventure opportunities.
- Rimbi Waterfalls and Kanchenjunga Falls - Beautiful waterfalls that serve as perfect spots for relaxation and photography.

### Lachung, Lachen, and Yumthang Valley - The Snowy Wonderland

Located in North Sikkim, these picturesque villages and valleys are famous for their natural beauty:

- Lachung - A charming village known for the Lachung Monastery, apple orchards, and pristine



- mountain scenery.
- Lachen - The base for the scenic Gurudongmar Lake, one of the highest lakes in the world, known for its crystal-clear waters.
- Yumthang Valley - Also called the "Valley of Flowers," famous for its rhododendron blooms in summer and hot springs in winter.
- Zero Point - A mesmerizing high-altitude destination covered in snow for most of the year.

### Zuluk - The Offbeat Himalayan Retreat

Zuluk is a hidden gem in East Sikkim, offering mesmerizing views of the Silk

Route and the snow-capped Himalayas. The winding roads and the Thambi Viewpoint provide spectacular sunrise views, making it a haven for photographers and adventure lovers.

### Ravangla - A Spiritual Getaway

Ravangla, a small town in South Sikkim, is a perfect place for peace lovers. Attractions include:

- Buddha Park - Featuring a grand statue of Lord Buddha with a panoramic Himalayan backdrop and serene ambiance.
- Ralang Monastery - A significant Buddhist site showcasing

traditional Tibetan architecture and vibrant festivals.

- Tathagata Tsal - A well-maintained Buddhist complex with meditation areas and scenic landscapes.

### Namchi - Land of Pilgrimage

Namchi is known for its religious significance and stunning landscapes. Top attractions include:

- Char Dham - A pilgrimage site with replicas of four famous Hindu temples, attracting devotees from all over India.
- Samdruptse Hill - Home to a towering statue of Guru Padmasambhava, the patron saint of Sikkim, offering spiritual solace.
- Temi Tea Garden - The only tea estate in Sikkim, known for producing high-quality organic tea with breathtaking views of tea plantations.

### Yuksom - The Historical Capital

Yuksom, the first capital of Sikkim, is a historical town and the starting point for the Goechala Trek. Other attractions include:

- Dubdi Monastery - The oldest monastery in Sikkim, offering a tranquil environment and historic significance.
- Norbugang Coronation Throne - A significant historical site marking the coronation of Sikkim's first king, Phuntsog Namgyal.
- Tashiding Monastery - One of the holiest monasteries in Sikkim, known for its spiritual vibes and ancient scriptures.

### Best Time to Visit Sikkim

Sikkim can be visited throughout the year, but the best time depends on the experience you seek:

- March to May - Ideal for springtime and blooming flowers, perfect for nature lovers and photographers.
- October to December - Best for clear mountain views and pleasant weather, offering spectacular sunrise and sunset vistas.
- January to February - Perfect for snowfall lovers, especially in North Sikkim, with opportunities for snow trekking and skiing.
- June to September - The monsoon season brings lush greenery but also landslides, making travel challenging.

### How to Reach Sikkim

- By Air - The nearest airport is Pakyong Airport, around 35 km from Gangtok, or Bagdogra Airport in West Bengal, which offers better connectivity.
- By Rail - The nearest railway station is New Jalpaiguri (NJP) in West Bengal, well-connected to major Indian cities.
- By Road - Sikkim is well connected by road from Siliguri, Darjeeling, and Kalimpong, with scenic drives through the mountains.

# India demolish England by 142 runs to complete a clean sweep

AHMEDABAD (TIP)

A robust batting show led by Shubman Gill's attractive century heralded India's 142-run hammering of England in the third and final ODI as the hosts completed a dominant 3-0 clean sweep to culminate preparations for the Champions Trophy, here on Wednesday.

India ticked all the remaining boxes with vice-captain Gill (112) following up his twin fifties earlier in the series with a seventh ODI ton of his career while middle-order mainstays Virat Kohli (52) and Shreyas Iyer (78) pushed India to a formidable 356 in the first half.

Indian bowlers then took over the mantle to complete the England demolition job, bundling out the visitors for a mere 214 in 34.2 overs to complete a comprehensive victory — their second largest in ODIs in terms of runs against a familiar opponent.

There was no change in the script for English, who came crashing down against spin after a sparkling start against pace, which was provided by the pair of Ben Duckett (34) and Phil Salt (24) in tow.

The slowness of the surface aided Indian bowlers as strike-making became difficult as the match progressed.

Duckett took charge of England's response early on but played one shot too many. After smacking Arshdeep Singh (2/33) for four consecutive boundaries around the park in the fifth over, he again went after the left-arm seamer but was deceived by the 'pace off' knuckle ball.

The mishit was collected cleanly by India skipper Rohit Sharma at mid-off and Arshdeep soon bounced out Salt, albeit off a slower one which the batter hit meekly to Axar Patel for a simple grab.

Tom Banton gave a good example of himself playing his first ODI against India, hitting a couple of attractive reverse sweeps against spinners but could not push on beyond a 41-ball 38 with four fours and two sixes.

Joe Root perished for just 24 when an inside edge off Axar (2/22) crashed into



his stumps and Harshit Rana (2/31) hastened the end of England's resistance by getting the rid of Harry Brook (19) and Jos Buttler (6) in quick succession.

From 84/2 after 10 overs, England's resolve petered out as Indian bowlers tightened the screws with regular strikes and the visitors also lacked gumption on a pitch which remained true in its nature.

Earlier, Gill led the way with a fluent 112 while Kohli and Iyer also cashed in on ideal conditions in their last outing before the Champions Trophy, helping India set a 357-run target.

Gill anchored India's innings en route to his seventh ODI ton — 112 off 104 balls (14x4s, 3x6s) which also took his average past 60 in the format — while putting on two century stands with Kohli and Iyer to consolidate for India.

The India vice-captain also achieved the unique feat of scoring a century each across the three international formats at the same venue. Gill, meanwhile, has also scored an IPL hundred here at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

Attacking the fast bowlers and spinners alike, Gill's knock was replete with rich

strokes particularly down the ground. The opener displayed immaculate footwork at the crease early on to take the attack to the opposition and remained resolute to score off spin, until he was cleaned up by Adil Rashid (4/64).

On his part, Kohli took his time to find the rhythm and when he did, the batting mainstay looked hitting his strides.

Kohli made the most of a juicy overpitched delivery from Mark Wood which he drove through the covers for his first four, then got on top of the ball from Saqib Mahmood to swat it for another boundary through mid-wicket and punished the England pacer for being wayward as he cut him for his third four.

While his stroke play was compelling in the run-a-ball fifty for his 73rd half-century, there were elements of struggle against leg-spinner Rashid.

Rashid continued to have wood over Kohli as soon after he raised his bat for fifty, the England spinner had him caught behind with a loopy leg-break that took an outside edge before settling in the wicketkeeper's gloves. This is the fifth time Rashid has dismissed Kohli in ODIs.



## Bumrah ruled out of Champions Trophy 2025, Harshit Rana named replacement

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been ruled out of the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy due to a lower back injury, the BCCI confirmed on Tuesday.

The senior men's team selection committee has named Harshit Rana as Bumrah's replacement for the mega event starting February 19 in Pakistan.

The development is a major setback for India going into the Champions Trophy, which they have won twice in 2002 and 2013. Bumrah's performances across formats since returning from his previous lengthy absence from back injury led to him being widely accepted as the best bowler in the world across formats. The 31-year-old was player of the tournament in India's successful 2024 T20 World Cup campaign, taking 15 wickets at a ridiculous average of 8.26.

The selectors have also included Varun Chakaravathy in the team. The 'mystery' spinner will replace Yashasvi Jaiswal, who was initially named in the provisional squad.

India will play all their matches of the tournament in Dubai under a hybrid model agreement.

Team: Rohit Sharma (Captain), Shubman Gill (Vice-captain), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (WK), Rishabh Pant (WK), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakaravathy.

## India thrash Macau 5-0 to seal quarterfinal berth at Badminton Asia

India made a sizzling start to their campaign, delivering a 5-0 thrashing to Macau in their opening group D tie of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship here on Wednesday, Feb 12.

Having won the bronze medal in the last edition in Dubai, India are now assured of a quarterfinal berth. They will next face Korea in their second and final group tie on Thursday, Feb 13.

The mixed doubles pair of Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath, the newly-crowned National Games gold medallists, gave India a rousing start, recording a 21-10, 21-9 win against Iok Chong Leong and Weng



Chi Ng in the opening match.

In men's singles, 2021 World

Championships bronze medallist Lakshya Sen then outwitted Pang Fong

Pui 21-16, 21-12, making it 2-0.

Malvika Bansod, the 2024 Hylo Open finalist, then sealed the tie for India with a dominant 21-15, 21-9 win over Hao Wai Chan in women's singles.

Chirag Shetty paired up with MR Arjun and prevailed 21-15, 21-19 over Chin Pon Pui and Kok Wen Vong in men's doubles.

The world number 9 women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand completed the demolition with a 21-10, 21-5 thrashing of NG Weng Chi and Pui Chi Wa in the final match.

Thursday's match against Korea will decide the group topper.



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