



:- NOTICE :-

The INDIAN PANORAMA

Will bring out a profusely illustrated special edition to mark Vaisakhi- the Harvest Festival of Punjab and the Birth of the Khalsa (the Sikhs) on April 11, 2025.

Articles and advertisements may please be emailed to salujaindra@gmail.com by April 2, 2025.

For any questions, please call +1 646-247-9458, or email to editor@theindianpanorama.news

Trump plans tariffs on Mexico and Canada on March 4, while doubling existing 10% tariffs on China



Mr. Trump said illicit drugs such as fentanyl are being smuggled into the United States at "unacceptable levels" and that import taxes would force other countries to crack down on the trafficking

File photo

FEBRUARY 28, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):

President Donald Trump plans to impose tariffs on Canada and Mexico starting Tuesday, March 4, 2025, in addition to doubling the 10% universal tariff charged on imports from China.

In a Truth Social post Thursday, February 27, Mr. Trump said illicit drugs such as fentanyl are being smuggled into the United States at "unacceptable levels" and that import taxes would force other countries to crack down on the trafficking.

"We cannot allow this scourge to continue to harm the USA, and therefore, until it stops, or is seriously limited, the proposed TARIFFS scheduled to go into effect on MARCH FOURTH will, indeed, go into effect, as scheduled," the Republican President wrote. "China will likewise be charged an additional 10% Tariff on that date."

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India, EU hold bilateral cluster meeting, discuss connectivity, IMEC, security



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Union Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jozef Sikela, EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Marta Kos, EU Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration Magnus Brunner and EU Commissioner for Mediterranean and Demography Dubravka Suica participated in the meeting.

Photo credit: (@DrSJaishankar/ X

February 28, 2025

NEW DELHI (TIP): India and the EU held a bilateral cluster meeting in New Delhi on Friday, February 28, and discussions focused on connectivity, India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), green and clean energy, mobility and talent, security, Mediterranean and the expansion of the European Union.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Union Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jozef Sikela, EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Marta Kos, EU Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration Magnus Brunner and EU Commissioner for Mediterranean and Demography Dubravka Suica participated in the meeting.

In a post on X, Jaishankar stated, "Pleased to participate in the India-EU bilateral cluster meeting this morning alongside Commissioners @JozefSikela,

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Former defense chiefs denounce Trump's 'reckless' Pentagon firings



US Defense Chief James Mattis who Quit Over Trump's Syria, Afghanistan Move, is among the former defense chiefs to criticize Trump's dismissal of defense chiefs. File photo

FEBRUARY 27, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Five former defense secretaries on Thursday, February 27, denounced President Donald Trump's firing last week of the Joint Chiefs chairman and several other senior military officials, urging Congress to hold hearings and declaring they have concluded the officers were "fired for purely partisan reasons", says a Washington Post report. The extraordinary public appeal was signed by Lloyd Austin, Jim Mattis, Chuck Hagel, Leon Panetta and William Perry - who served in Republican and Democratic administrations dating back to the 1990s - after Trump's Friday night firings caused an uproar on Capitol Hill and among many military veterans.

CONTD ON PAGE 36

US judge halts Trump Administration's mass firing of federal workers; rules White House personnel office lacks power to order firings



A person displays a sign as labor union activists rally in support of federal workers during a protest, with the US Capitol in the background on Capitol Hill in Washington, US, on February 11, 2025.

File photo

FEBRUARY 27, 2025

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): A California federal judge on Thursday, February 27, temporarily blocked the Trump administration from ordering the US Department of Defense and other federal agencies to carry out the mass firings of thousands of recently hired employees.

US District Judge William Alsup in San Francisco said during a hearing that the US Office of Personnel Management lacked the power to order federal agencies to fire any workers, including probationary employees who typically have less than a year of experience.

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Advertisement for Manhattan Reproductive Medicine, featuring a pregnant woman and text about fertility treatments.

Advertisement for OMNI MORTGAGE CORP., featuring photos of Andy Singh and Herman Singh and contact information.

THE 1984 ANTI-SIKH POGROM AND THE DELAYED JUSTICE: THE CASE OF SAJJAN KUMAR

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The 1984 anti-Sikh riots remain one of the darkest stains on India's history. The fact that it took 34 years to convict a single leader and that many others died without facing trial is a testament to the failures of the justice system. While the sentencing of Sajjan Kumar provided a small measure of justice, it came far too late for many victims.

The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984, by her Sikh bodyguards, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, set off a horrific chain of events that led to one of the darkest chapters in India's post-independence history. In the days following her killing, a pogrom was unleashed against the Sikh community in Delhi and other parts of India. Mobs, reportedly orchestrated and incited by political leaders, targeted Sikh homes, businesses, and gurudwaras. More than 3,000 Sikhs were brutally murdered, and thousands more were displaced. The violence, marked by extreme brutality, was widely seen as a state-sponsored massacre.

Despite the scale and nature of the violence, justice remained elusive for the victims and their families for decades. Successive governments failed to take decisive action, and many of those accused, including prominent political leaders, continued to hold positions of power. One such figure was Sajjan Kumar, a senior leader of the Congress Party, who was finally sentenced to life imprisonment in 2018-34 years after the pogrom, and he remained behind bars as the legal system slowly caught up with those responsible. His sentencing was a momentous but long-overdue step, illustrating the maxim that "justice delayed is justice denied."

The anti-Sikh riots that erupted in Delhi and other parts of India from November 1-4, 1984, were not spontaneous acts of mob violence. They were widely believed to be organized, with Congress Party leaders allegedly directing the rioters and police standing by as Sikhs were killed. Eyewitnesses testified that the mobs were armed with voter lists to identify Sikh households. The rioters used petrol, kerosene, and tires to burn Sikh men alive, while women were assaulted and children killed mercilessly.

The violence was most pronounced in Delhi, where over 2,700 Sikhs were killed. Other affected areas included Kanpur, Bokaro, and other parts of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar. The police were accused of being complicit, either refusing to register complaints or actively supporting the rioters. The central government, led by Rajiv

By Indrajit Saluja



Gandhi, failed to intervene effectively, with the infamous justification that "when a big tree falls, the earth shakes."

Over the years, multiple commissions and committees were formed to investigate the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom. However, justice remained elusive due to deliberate delays, political interference, and lack of willpower to hold the powerful accountable. Some of the most prominent inquiries included: **MARWAH COMMISSION (1984):** The first inquiry, led by Ved Marwah, was abruptly stopped by the government before it could complete its report.

MISRA COMMISSION (1985): This commission, led by Justice Ranganath Misra, was widely criticized for its bias in favor of the Congress Party. It absolved many top leaders of wrongdoing, further eroding Sikh trust in the system.

JAIN-BANERJEE COMMITTEE (1987): This committee recommended the prosecution of several Congress leaders, including Sajjan Kumar, but its findings were ignored.

POTI-ROSHA COMMITTEE (1990) AND JAIN-AGGARWAL COMMITTEE (1991): These commissions recommended further investigation but faced obstruction from political forces.

NANAVATI COMMISSION (2000-2005): After nearly two decades, this commission confirmed that Congress leaders such as Sajjan Kumar and Jagdish Tytler were involved. However, the government took little action.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION TEAM (SIT) (2015): In 2015, the Narendra Modi government appointed an SIT to reopen cases, leading to the conviction of several perpetrators, including Sajjan Kumar.

Sajjan Kumar, a former Congress MP, was accused of inciting mobs to kill Sikhs in multiple locations in Delhi, including Sultanpuri, Mongolpuri, and other Sikh-dominated areas. Survivors and witnesses testified that he was seen directing the mobs and instructing them to attack Sikh homes and businesses.

Despite overwhelming evidence, he evaded justice for decades due to political patronage and a lack of prosecutorial effort. It was only in December 2018, after sustained pressure from Sikh advocacy groups and the reopening of cases by the SIT, that the Delhi High Court found him

guilty of murder, rioting, and conspiracy. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, a landmark ruling that finally held a senior politician accountable. The judgment noted that the killings were "crimes against humanity" and emphasized the failure of law enforcement agencies in protecting Sikhs.

The 41-year delay in convicting Sajjan Kumar reflects the broader failure of India's legal and political system in delivering justice for the 1984 victims. Many perpetrators, including prominent Congress leaders, never faced trial and died without punishment. Jagdish Tytler, another accused leader, continued to serve in various political capacities despite being named in multiple reports. Similarly, Kamal Nath, who was alleged to have played a role in the violence, went on to become a cabinet minister and Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh.

For the Sikh community, the 1984 massacre remains an open wound. The lack of timely justice has deepened their sense of alienation and betrayal. Sikhs across the world, particularly in Canada, the UK, and the US, have consistently demanded accountability and recognition of the pogrom as an act of state-sponsored genocide. Many believe that the wounds of 1984 will never heal until every perpetrator is held accountable.

While Sajjan Kumar's conviction was a symbolic victory, it was far from sufficient. Thousands of affected families continue to live with the trauma of 1984, knowing that many of those responsible escaped justice. The episode underscores the importance of independent investigations, judicial reforms, and political accountability to ensure that such massacres never recur.

Sikhs worldwide continue to remember and mourn the events of 1984, keeping the memories alive through protests, literature, and advocacy. The lessons from this tragic chapter serve as a reminder that justice delayed is indeed justice denied. India must ensure that such atrocities are never repeated and that those responsible, regardless of their political stature, are held accountable in a timely manner.

The delayed justice in the 1984 pogrom case raises critical questions about India's legal system and political accountability. It exposes how powerful individuals can manipulate institutions to escape punishment. The lessons from 1984 are relevant even today, as instances of communal violence and political complicity continue to occur in India.

Suozzi Leads Letters Demanding Transparency on Private Taxpayer Information Accessed by DOGE

FEBRUARY 20, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-NY), on Thursday, February 20, led two letters to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO). These letters request investigations into whether DOGE's access to payment systems has compromised sensitive and confidential taxpayer information.

The letters also express concern that members of the DOGE team were granted access to the Treasury Department's payment systems on January 31st, 2025, in a "read/write"

capacity and "may have occasionally included screenshots of payment systems data or records" in correspondence with other DOGE employees.

Suozzi's letter mimics the exact same language used by Republican Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith when he wrote a similar letter on February 16th, 2023, raising the same concerns about unauthorized use of private taxpayer data.

Fourteen Ways and Means members joined Suozzi's letter as co-signers.

"A lack of transparency has resulted in widespread confusion regarding the safety of taxpayers' sensitive private

data," the members collectively wrote. "The American people still have no idea of the extent of DOGE's access to and use of confidential taxpayer information. This must be addressed to ensure it complies with 26 U.S.C. § 6103."

"The American people deserve full transparency when it comes to the security of their private information," Suozzi also said. "The fact that DOGE employees may have had unauthorized access to sensitive taxpayer data is deeply troubling. We need answers on what data was accessed, how it was used, and whether taxpayer confidentiality was compromised."



"The American people deserve full transparency when it comes to the security of their private information," Suozzi said.

New York City based Youngest South Asian Girl Shreya Goyal becomes Multi-Billion-Dollar Dealmaker & Highest Earner at Wall Street

BY DR YASH GOYAL

FEBRUARY 26, 2025

NEW YORK / JAIPUR (TIP): Hailing from Rajasthan, Shreya is the Youngest South Asian Girl Investor in the Flagship Private Equity Buyout fund at Apollo Global at just 21 years. She has evaluated 35+ investments, gaining reputation within TMT and Consumer & Retail, and overseeing Apollo Funds' multi-billion-dollar discretionary retail portfolio company.

She also spearheads Apollo Women Empowers Speaker Series, having hosted Indra Nooyi (Former PepsiCo Chairman & CEO), Betsy Atkins (multi-time Board member), Karlie Kloss (supermodel), among others.

Ms. Nooyi remarked to Shreya personally: "You are the future of the world. Dream Big & Aspire".

Growing up in a small town in India as a single girl child, her parents ensured her to receive a quality education. At 15, she became President of Rajasthan's first MIT LaunchX program and was accepted into Columbia University's Entrepreneurship Summer Immersion Program, sparking an unattainable dream of seeking a world-class education abroad.

"These experiences shaped my dream into a reality, leading me to the University of Chicago, where I was the only Indian national recipient awarded the \$300k+ merit-based Odyssey Scholarship. At UChicago, I studied



Shreya(left) moderates a conversation with Jamie Dimon, JPMorgan Chairman & CEO
Photo provided by Shreya

Economics & Computer Science, and earned the Dougan Scholars certificate from Chicago Booth MBA. I graduated at just 19 with Latin Honors, Harper's Excellence Scholar Award, and Dean's List. During my time, I served as the President of the Women in Business Finance and chaired the Student Government's RSO committee. I was also a Teaching Assistant for distinguished graduate-level courses, such as Scott Meadow for Entrepreneurial Finance & Private Equity, and Complex Deals", she told TIP.

At 17, she secured a Sophomore Investment Banking

internship at JPMorgan in NYC, becoming the youngest Investment Banker in history. "At JPM, within 8 months, I covered high-profile transactions, including Take-Two's \$13bn acquisition of Zynga (largest video-game transaction ever), Getty Images' going public via SPAC (\$5bn), and NielsenIQ's cross-border acquisition of GfK," she said.

She also served as the Engagement and Philanthropy Chair for the JPMorgan Women in Banking (largest women's affinity network), hosting luminaries such as Jamie Dimon (JPMorgan Chairman & CEO). Mr. Dimon complimented her for doing a "fabulous job moderating the conversation," mentioning as "poised, polished, and personable" and "wishing all the best for my future endeavors."

She is engaged to serve as a Board Member for the UChicago NYC Alumni Chapter, co-launching the first-ever 5+ fully sold-out Young Alumni Brunch Series. Shreya is involved in leadership positions with Global Female Investors Network, OneFinnet Finance Network, and The Program NYC, coaching and providing mentorship to 10,000+ aspiring students across panels & conferences over the years.

(Dr Yash Goyal is The Indian Panorama Special correspondent in Jaipur)

Nassau County Alternate Deputy Minority Leader Mulé Honors 28 Nassau Corrections Officers on Recent Promotions

FEBRUARY 26, 2025

UNIONDALE, N.Y. (TIP): Nassau County Alternate Deputy Minority Leader Debra Mulé (D - Freeport) proudly joined leaders in law enforcement and her colleagues in government at the David S. Mack Center for Training and Intelligence on Friday, Feb. 14 for the Nassau County Sheriff's Department Promotions Ceremony.

There, 28 outstanding law enforcement professionals, including three residents of Legislative District 6, were officially promoted, including Correction Lieutenant Miriam Robinson, of Roosevelt; Correction Sergeant Enrique Sewer, of Roosevelt; and Correction Corporal Pamela Lemke, of Baldwin.

"The men and women of the Nassau



With Mulé by his side, Nassau County Executive Bruce A. Blakeman Honors Enrique Sewer.

County Sheriff's Department are consummate professionals who work diligently behind the scenes to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the Nassau County Jail. Their efforts keep



With Mulé by his side, Nassau County Executive Bruce A. Blakeman Honors Miriam Robinson

us all safe, and they are truly deserving of our gratitude," Alternate Deputy Minority Leader Mulé said. "It was a privilege to be on hand at this ceremony to congratulate all of the honorees and



With Mulé by his side, Nassau County Executive Bruce A. Blakeman Honors Pamela Lemke
Photo credit : Office of Alternate Deputy Minority Leader Debra Mulé

wish them continued success in the latest chapters of their careers in a form of public service that is far too often underappreciated."

ASHLEY JUDD, LAWMAKERS, SURVIVORS AND ADVOCATES DEMAND END TO COMMERCIAL SEX TRADE AND JUSTICE FOR SURVIVORS

New Yorkers for the Equality Model Call for Passage of Sex Trade Survivors Justice & Equality Act at NYS Capitol

FEBRUARY 25, 2025

ALBANY, NY (TIP): Celebrity activist and survivor Ashley Judd stood with lawmakers and dozens of advocates and survivors of sex trafficking from New Yorkers for the Equality Model (NYFEM), a survivor-led alliance seeking to shrink the exploitative sex trade industry, at the New York State Capitol today calling for the passage of the Sex Trade Survivors Justice and Equality Act (STSJEA) S2005/A1465. Aimed at dismantling the mechanisms of the sex trade, the STSJEA bolsters protections and essential support services for survivors while holding the people who exploit them accountable.

"This legislation will advance the humane, ethical, and just imperative of better protecting women, girls and LGBTQ individuals in the sex trade by increasing services and holding the sex buyers and pimps who are exploiting their economic, social, and other vulnerabilities accountable," said Ashley Judd, actor and global humanitarian. "The harms will continue to impact the most marginalized in our society until we finally hold sex buyers accountable. The demand for our bodies will continue to be met by coercion, violence, force, and exploitation until the Equality Model becomes both law and norm. As a survivor of commercial and private sexual assault, I know well that recovery is a long road, and I'm grateful that this bill accounts for these traumas and the survivors' lived realities."

Sponsored by New York State Senator Liz Krueger (SD-28) and Assemblymember Pamela Hunter (AD-128), the internationally recognized "Equality Model" has seen successful adoption in countries such as Sweden, Norway, France, Canada, Ireland, and Israel. The STSJEA would end the arrests and incarceration of individuals in prostitution, while maintaining strict penalties for buyers and third parties like traffickers and brothel owners.

"I believe the role of government is to champion those with less power against the systems of exploitation that seek to take advantage of their marginalization, and that is why I am proud to sponsor the Sex Trade Survivors Justice & Equality Act," said Senator Krueger. "This is smart, data-driven, progressive legislation crafted with the invaluable input of advocates and sex trade survivors. This bill will empower and support people currently or formerly in the sex trade, while holding pimps, brothel owners, and sex buyers accountable for the harms that they cause."

"While some might believe that sex trafficking is predominantly a New York City issue or a national border issue, the intersection of interstate highways 90 and 81 in my district are also thruways for trafficking victims," said Assemblymember Hunter. "This issue is pervasive throughout the state and for far too long, efforts have been focused on punishing the people who are bought and sold in this multi-billion-dollar industry when they should be on targeting the traffickers, pimps, and sex buyers that perpetuate and uphold this destructive market. My bill, the Sex Trade Survivors Justice & Equality Act, protects the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals who are frequent targets in the sex trade such as members of Black



Ashley Judd backs New York bill to protect survivors, target traffickers

& Brown communities, the LGBTQ+ population, run away and foster youth, individuals experiencing homelessness, and undocumented immigrants."

The bill seeks to significantly reduce the demand for prostitution which fuels the commercial sex industry, thereby interrupting the cycle of gender-based violence. Furthermore, the STSJEA is designed to enhance New York State's legal measures around sex trafficking, including eliminating loopholes that have previously allowed traffickers, such as Jeffrey Epstein, who trafficked people for themselves, to evade prosecution.

Co-sponsors for the STSJEA include Cordell Cleare (SD-30), Nathalia Fernandez (SD-34), John Liu (SD-16) and Zellnor Myrie (SD-20) in the Senate with Amy Paulin (AD-88), Andrew Hevesi (AD-28), Rodneyse Bichotte-Hermelyn (AD-42), Chris Burdick (AD-93), Maritza Davila (AD-53), Alicia Hyndman (AD-29) and Crystal Peoples-Stokes (AD-141) in the Assembly.

"Upon my first election to the Senate, I pledged to end the scourge of Human Trafficking. I have passed several bills in the interim that are now law," said Senator Cleare. "The Sex Trade Survivors Justice and Equality Act is a necessary step to protect survivors and hold traffickers accountable. I stand with survivors and advocates in demanding justice now!"

"The commercial sex trade is a form of modern-day slavery, and we must break this abusive cycle that continually blames the victims," said Senator Liu. "The Sex Trade Survivors Justice and Equality Act is the right way forward that shifts the focus from punishing survivors to holding traffickers, pimps, and buyers accountable. It's a crucial step toward delivering justice to those who have been trapped in a cycle of manipulation and exploitation."

"As a longtime advocate for survivors, I know that true justice means shifting the burden away from those who are exploited and toward those who exploit," said Assemblymember Paulin. The STSJEA will provide essential protections and services to those who need them most."

"The time to act is now, said Assemblymember Burdick. "By passing the STSJEA, we can send a clear message that New York values the dignity of survivors and will not tolerate the continued exploitation of vulnerable individuals."

The STSJEA also commits to providing comprehensive support services for those wishing to leave the life of prostitution, including undocumented immigrants. These trauma-informed services include housing, legal and immigration assistance, health and mental health services, employment placement, education and training.

"I was coerced into prostitution as a preteen, a time when I should have been protected, not exploited," said Melanie Thompson, Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator for the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. "Studies have shown that up to 90% of people in prostitution are pimp controlled. The Sex Trade Survivor Justice and Equality Act recognizes the plight of survivors like me and gives us a voice and a path to justice and recovery."

"Survivors like me live with the trauma of exploitation every day, while pimps and sex buyers, the true perpetrators, often escape accountability," said Cristian Eduardo, Co-founder of United Immigrants of New York. "Prostitution is not merely an occupation; it is a form of violence, a pseudo-solution to poverty, and certainly not a path to liberation for the LGBTQIA+ community. The Sex Trade Survivors Justice and Equality Act recognizes this reality by criminalizing those who exploit our vulnerabilities."

"This pivotal legislation cuts the demand that fuels human trafficking, providing comprehensive social services that go beyond immediate legal needs," said Sonia Ossorio, President at National Organization for Women New York City. "It offers medical and legal aid, and immigration assistance, crucial for the recovery and integration of survivors. Crafted from the voices and experiences of survivors, the STSJEA is not just legislation, but a commitment to healing, and a declaration that exploitation has no place in a just society."

"In criminalizing the buyers and pimps who profit from the suffering caused by the sex trafficking industry, this legislation directly targets those responsible for perpetuating its cycle of exploitation," said Alexi Meyers, Director of Anti-Trafficking Policy at Sanctuary for Families. "This is more than just changing laws. It's about restoring dignity and prosperity for those who have been unjustly stripped of it by this abusive and manipulative industry."

ABOUT NYFEM

New Yorkers for the Equality Model is a survivor-led alliance made up of a diverse group of advocates, prostitution and sex trafficking survivors, and organizational partners seeking to implement the Equality Model, decriminalizing only individuals in prostitution, in New York State.

Find out more at equalitymodelny.org, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

GOPIO Announcers 2025 Convention and Conference Sessions to be Held in Brisbane, Australia, Seeks Nominations for Awards

FEBRUARY 19, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): GOPIO's 2025 Convention will take place in Brisbane, Australia from March 28-30, 2025 at the Brisbane Marriott. The Convention theme is "The Indian Diaspora's Role in Shaping Future Technologies." The convention will be inaugurated on March 28th evening. Discussion topics on March 29th will include Artificial

GOPIO International Convention 2025
Theme: The Diaspora's Role in shaping Future Technologies
JOIN US FOR AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE ALONG WITH GLOBAL INDIAN DIASPORA NETWORKING
March 28th to 30th, 2025 Location: Brisbane Marriott

Intelligence (AI), Quantum Computing and Internet of Things (IoT); Nanotechnology, Advanced Materials and Electronic/Photonic Devices; Pharmaceutical and Food Supplements; Medical Devices and Biomedical Innovations and Energy Generation and Storage Devices. A second track of

conference sessions will cover NRIs and PIOs Working Closer to Achieve Common Goals; Diaspora Women and their Growing Contributions in Various Sectors; GOPIO Academic Council Roundtable; and Diaspora Youth & Young Achievers: The role they can play in the Diaspora Movement.

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US-based researcher identifies 100 monuments at Lahore Fort dating back to Sikh Empire

To provide a comprehensive understanding of Lahore Fort and its historical significance during the Sikh Empire, the Walled City of Lahore Authority has engaged Dr Tarunjit Singh Butalia to write a tour guidebook

FEBRUARY 27, 2025

LAHORE/ NEW YORK (TIP): A US-based researcher has identified some 100 monuments at the Lahore Fort from the era of the Sikh Empire (1799-1849) detailing its historical significance. Of them around 30 monuments do not exist today.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of Lahore Fort and its historical significance during the Sikh Empire, the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA), a government body, has engaged Dr Tarunjit Singh Butalia to write a tour guidebook - Lahore Fort during the Sikh Empire.

"The Lahore Fort, a sentimental monument deeply ingrained in the Sikh psyche, served as the seat of power for the Sikh Empire for nearly half a century.

"It holds a special place in my heart, as my ancestors held esteemed positions within the Sikh court as per Umdat ut Tawarikh - the Persian records of the court," Dr Butalia said in an interview to PTI on Thursday.

"It is very important for Sikhs in India to recognize that 1947 divided Sikh heritage and places of worship into two parts of the world. For a very long time, Sikhs in India were cut off from their historical sites in Pakistan," he said.

Things have changed now with visa liberalization and the presence of a large number of diaspora Sikhs settled in Western countries who are able to visit Pakistan, he said.

The Lahore Fort's rich Mughal history, dating back to the 16th century when Emperor Akbar first constructed it, forms the cornerstone of its importance.



Tarunjit Singh Butalia, a US-based researcher, who identified some 100 monuments at the Lahore Fort, Pakistan, maintained during the Sikh-era (1799-1849) detailing its historical significance.

Photo : PTI

Furthermore, the fort's documented Sikh involvement for half a century adds another layer to its historical narrative.

The expansive Royal Lahore Fort, constructed upon a mud fort by Mughal Emperors Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, was acquired by the Sikh Empire in 1799 and remained under their control until 1849 when the British Empire transformed it into an army garrison.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharaja Kharak Singh, Kanwar Naunihal Singh and Maharaja Sher Singh preserved many of the fort's structures and constructed several new ones, including the Hazuri Bagh and its magnificent Baradari.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh also

constructed the Gurdwara Dera Sahib, commemorating the site of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru.

"During my first visit in 2019 to Lahore from the US, I experienced a profound connection with the fort. At the Athdhara (pavilion), I could almost sense the footsteps of Sher-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Ganda Singh Butalia. However, the experience was tinged with sadness, as I was surprised to discover that many of the narratives imparted by tour guides here were predominantly negative when discussing the Sikh era," he said.

Dr Butalia said going through the records, it was revealed that during the Sikh era, the fort was commonly referred

to as Shahi Qila, with occasional instances of being designated as 'Qila Mubarak'.

"During a restful night in Columbus, Ohio, USA, I was captivated by visions of Lahore and its iconic fort. Driven by this inspiration, I embarked on a global quest, delving into libraries, archives, and museums.

"Through my relentless pursuit, I secured over 20 meticulously crafted maps and sketches of the Lahore Fort and its surrounding walled city, dating back to 1825," he said, also crediting the Panjab Digital Library in Chandigarh for his research.

Citing some known books about the history of Lahore Fort, he said "these are the source of much of the misinformation about the Sikh Empire that is disseminated in Pakistan".

He said he has compiled a comprehensive map of Lahore Fort as it stood during the Sikh Empire along with an index of monuments.

This index covers approximately 100 monuments, each identified by its Sikh-era name and detailing its historical significance.

A proposed tour pathway has been devised that commences and concludes at the Bastion Café. "Additionally, historical photographs and sketches have been included for no longer extant monuments, providing a visual representation of the fort's former glory and allowing visitors to experience the long-lost sites as they existed during the Sikh period," Dr Butalia said.

The WCLA will also train its tour guides to use this book. (Source: PTI)

US grants emergency visa interview to father of critical Indian student



A Master of Science student in her final year, Nilam Shinde suffered multiple fractures and severe injuries to her chest and head after being hit by a four-wheeler

FEBRUARY 27, 2025

MUMBAI / NEW YORK (TIP): The United States has scheduled an emergency visa interview for the father of Nilam Shinde, a 35-year-old Indian student who has been in a coma at a California hospital following a road accident on February 14. The interview will take place at 9 a.m. on Friday.

The development came after the

American division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reached out to the US government. While emergency travel permits for medical reasons are usually granted swiftly, it remains unclear what caused the delay in this case, NDTV reported, citing sources.

Shinde's family had made a desperate plea to the Centre for assistance after struggling to secure a visa for her father, Tanaji Shinde, who has been trying to travel to the US since learning about the accident on February 16.

A Master of Science student in her final year, Shinde suffered multiple fractures and severe injuries to her chest and head after being hit by a four-wheeler. The hospital treating her sought immediate family consent for brain surgery, according to the family. "We got to know about the accident on February 16 and have been trying for a visa since then. But we haven't got it yet," her father had told NDTV.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

5 Indian-origin men sentenced to jail, canded over brawl at Singapore hotel

FEBRUARY 26, 2025

SINGAPORE (TIP): Five Indian-origin men were sentenced to jail terms between two and three years and caning for being part of a riot that led to the death of a former bouncer at a Singapore hotel.

Sridharan Elangovan was given 36 months in jail and six strokes of the cane; Manojkumar Velayanatham was given 30 months in jail and four strokes; Sashikumar Pakirsamy was given 24 months in jail and two strokes; Puthenvilla Keith Peter was given 26 months' jail and three strokes; and Raja Rishi was given 30 months' jail and four strokes.

Each of them pleaded guilty to a charge of rioting at Singapore's Concorde Hotel and Shopping Mall in 2023, a Channel News report said.

Sridharan, 30, Manojkumar, 32, and Sashikumar, 34, were members of a secret society group.



Photo for representational purpose only

Photo : iStock

Another man, Asvain Pachan Pillai Sukumaran, 30, was earlier handed a murder charge after he allegedly killed former bouncer Mohammad Isrrat Mohd Ismail, 29. The Indian-origin man's case is pending.

Six other men, between 25 and 33 years old, were named in court documents as co-accused who took part in the riot.

Isrrat and his friend Muhammad Shahrulnizam Osman, 30, were former bouncers at Club Rumours and members of another secret society.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

GOPIO Announcers 2025 Convention and Conference Sessions to be Held in Brisbane, Australia, Seeks Nominations for Awards

CONTD FROM PAGE 4

Anyone interested to be a speaker/panelist in any session may write to gopio@optonline.net.

The convention will end with an awards banquet on March 29th evening where NRIs and PIOs who have excelled in various professional fields such as sciences, engineering, technology, medicine, legal, arts and letters, performing arts, public service and business as well as entertainers and entrepreneurs will be honored. Also, those who done outstanding community service will also be

honored. Please send in a bio listing outstanding achievements, awards and contact details to gopiointl.awards@gmail.com by March 1st.

Early Registration is open now. Visit <https://brisbane.gopioqueensland.org/brisbanehome>. After registration is complete, one will receive a letter for Australian visa, if needed.

After the GOPIO convention, from March 31st to April 6th, a tailored group trip is planned to visit Fiji, New Zealand and Sydney with sightseeing

and meeting with our GOPIO communities. Register your interest at the link below. <https://tinyurl.com/GOPIOConventionBrisbane>

For more information on the GOPIO convention, contact its Convener Umesh Chandra, ceo@chantex.com.au.

ABOUT GOPIO

Founded in 1989, GOPIO is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, secular organization with Individual Life Members and chapter delegates from 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, the countries they live in and India.

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A Lighthearted Grievance Regarding Air India Flight AI 144 from Newark to Mumbai on February 12, 2025

BY ATUL HUCKOO

"I hope this note finds all Air Indians well, and that they are comfortably seated with ample legroom, unlike my recent experience on Flight AI 144 from Newark to Mumbai on February 12, 2025. Allow me to regale you with the tale of my airborne adventure.

THE AIRCRAFT: A BLAST FROM THE PAST:

Upon boarding, I couldn't help but notice that the aircraft, seemingly on loan from Etihad Airways, boasted an interior that could best be described as "retro chic," with upholstery in shades reminiscent of a melancholy raincloud. The seats were so snug that I half-expected a flight attendant to hand me a can of sardines as a welcome gift. Navigating the aisles required the agility of a seasoned gymnast, lest one risk an inadvertent game of bumper cars with fellow passengers.

CULINARY CAPERS AT 35,000 FEET:

The in-flight dining experience was a journey in itself. Presented with the choice between Hindu vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals, I embarked on a gastronomic expedition. Lunch featured



chicken masala accompanied by rice that had all the zest of a damp sponge. The salad was so dry it might have been auditioning for a role in a desert documentary, and the dessert was as inspiring as a Monday morning without coffee.

Dinner's pièce de resistance was a chicken biryani that seemed to have misplaced its invitation to the flavor party. The rice appeared to be plain white grains in disguise, with chicken pieces playing a game of hide and seek. The chickpea salad, adorned with coconut, offered a single bite's worth of adventure before I waved the white flag.

The pre-landing snack was a chicken kati roll, completing the poultry parade. My vegetarian neighbor, meanwhile, was treated to an all-paneer extravaganza, leading me to believe that Air India might be in cahoots with a paneer surplus warehouse.

BEVERAGE BROUHAHA:

Turning to the beverage service, I was introduced to a whisky brand that was as unfamiliar to me as a snowstorm in Mumbai. The absence of a single malt option left my spirits as low as the economy cabin's legroom. The red wine, a Concha y Toro Merlot, is available in

liquor stores for the price of a fancy cup of coffee. When the cabin crew attempted to serve this vintage in a paper cup, I felt as though I were at a college frat party rather than on a transcontinental flight. Only after a polite protest was, I granted the luxury of a glass.

ASPIRATIONS AND REALITIES:

If Air India aims to soar alongside the eagles of the airline industry, such as Qatar Airways and Emirates, there is a considerable journey ahead. This experience was a far cry from the golden days when flying with your airline was synonymous with exceptional service.

While I understand that the airline has weathered turbulent times under previous management, I had high hopes that the Tata acquisition would herald a renaissance. Alas, this voyage was more "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" than "Around the World in 80 Days."

I trust that Air India will take this feedback in the spirit intended and consider the necessary enhancements to restore Air India's reputation to its former glory.

(Story / courtesy Rishikant Singh)

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Sajjan jailed, but 1984's wounds remain open



---> By Rahul Bedi

Media reports continue to refer to it as the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, ignoring the reality that the state machinery had wantonly turned vigilante in seeking vengeance against an entire community for Indira Gandhi's murder.

"But, unfortunately, Kumar is the only prominent Congress politician to be thus sentenced despite the culpability of numerous others in organizing Hindu mobs to hunt down droves of Sikhs, including women and children, on streets, in their homes and workplaces during these 72 hours and slaughtering them. Many victims were brutally 'necklaced' by pinioning their chests and arms with car tires soaked in petrol and setting them alight."

It has taken 40 years to convict former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar for his murderous role in the anti-Sikh pogrom, that raged unchecked across New Delhi after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was shot dead by her two Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984, ending only with her cremation three days later.

But, unfortunately, Kumar is the only prominent Congress politician to be thus sentenced despite the culpability of numerous others in organizing Hindu mobs to hunt down droves of Sikhs, including women and children, on streets, in their homes and workplaces during these 72 hours and slaughtering them. Many victims were brutally 'necklaced' by pinioning their chests and arms with car tires soaked in petrol and setting them alight.

By the time some semblance of order was enforced in the city by the Army, the organized massacres by the State-turned-avenger for the first time in independent India's history, had left some 2,733 Sikhs dead in Delhi alone. Human rights organizations, however, put this number in the capital close to 4,000.

Over decades thereafter, around 15 inquiry commissions, committees and special investigation teams (SITs) determined variously beyond reasonable doubt that these killings were engineered by Congress party loyalists like Kumar and his fellow MPs Kamal Nath, Dharam Dass Shastri, Jagdish Tytler and HKL Bhagat, who died in 2005 without even being tried.

These multiple probes also determined that the extended slaughter was executed by a cross-section of largely Congress party members, sympathizers and bands of hired criminals, all of who carried voter lists to identify Sikh households across Delhi's neighborhoods. Armed

with crude swords, cleavers, scythes, kitchen knives and even scissors and an 'inflammable white powder', these mobs executed their retribution relentlessly, assured immunity from arrest.

Justice SN Dhingra, who was appointed in 2018 to head the SIT to relook at the 186 cases related to the 1984 pogrom, stated in 2022 that the entire endeavor of the Congress government was to ensure that none of the major perpetrators of violence was punished.

Consequently, it appointed Justice Ranganath Misra to head the commission inquiring into the unrest, fully aware that he was in line to become the 21st Supreme Court Chief Justice - which he did in 1990 - and, therefore, would be 'cautious' in his findings. Expectedly, Justice Misra indicted 19 Congress workers, who, ironically, were charged by the People's Union for Civil Liberties with having abetted the massacres, but blatantly absolved the Congress party of all blame.

Subsequently, the Nanavati Commission - the 10th such inquiry committee in 16 years - instituted in 2000 and headed by GT Nanavati, a retired SC judge, recommended prosecutions in 2005 only against Kumar and Tytler. This was despite several witnesses, including this writer, accusing several other Congress MPs and party cadres of their involvement in the violence. Criminal proceedings against Nath are underway, albeit proceeding at a glacial pace.

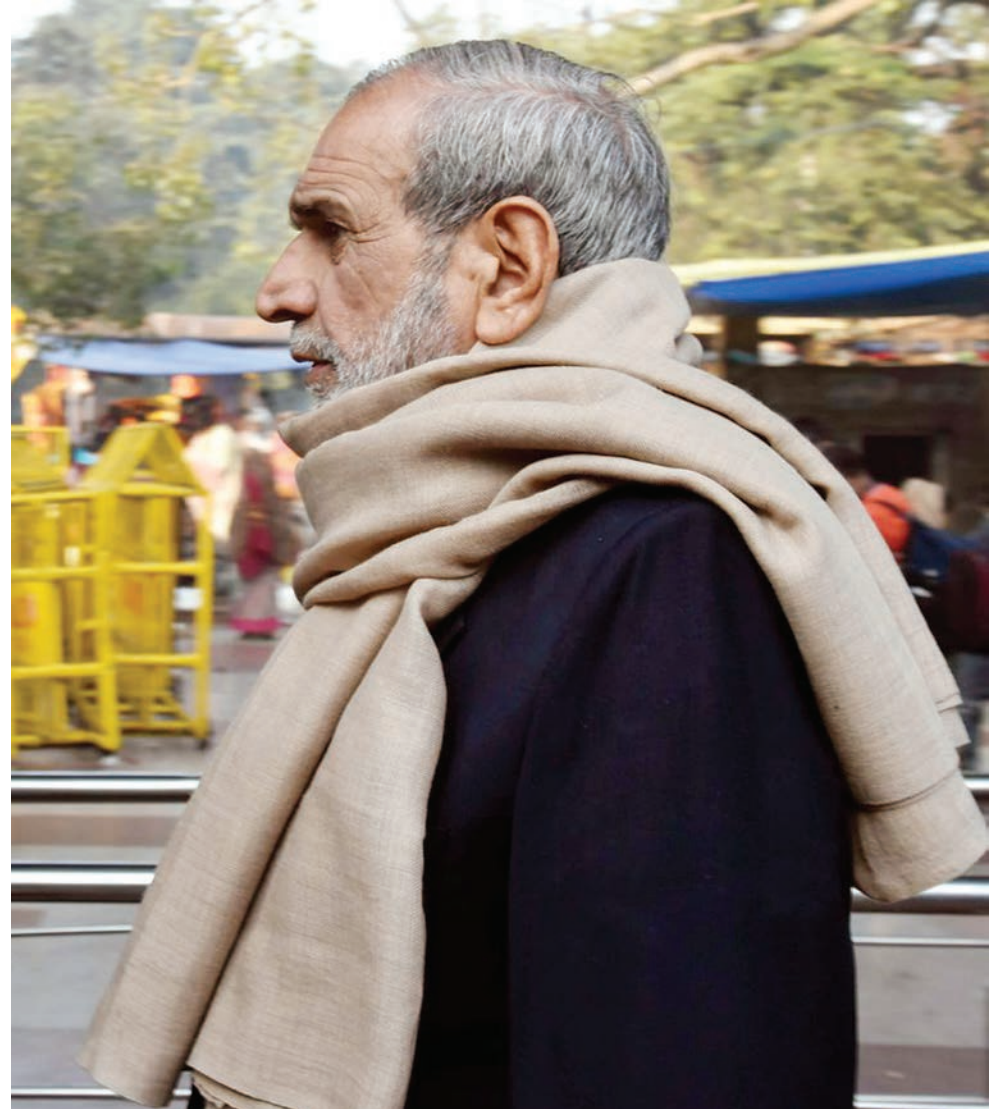
The Nanavati Commission also revealed that of the original 587 FIRs registered after the 1984 violence, only 25 had resulted in convictions, of which just 12 were for murder. And, of the 440 overall convictions, many cases featured the same person being found guilty of as many as seven counts each. Subsequently, the SC-monitored SIT was formulated in 2018 and continues to ramble on.

Meanwhile, Indira Gandhi's son and successor Rajiv Gandhi justified the pogrom, declaring at a public rally in Delhi's Boat Club on November 19, 1984 that 'Jab bhi koi bada ped girta hai, to dharti thodi hilti hai' (When a big tree falls, the earth shakes a little).

The new PM had fittingly delivered the Congress party's metaphor for the pogrom, even though officialese and media reports at the time, and even now, continue to refer to it as the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, ignoring the reality that the state machinery, including the local police, had openly and wantonly turned vigilante in seeking vengeance against an entire community for Indira Gandhi's murder.

Once Gandhi's funeral pyre was lit, the State stirred itself into action by empowering the Army to restore order, even though the force had been summoned several days earlier.

But the little-known reality regarding



Former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar has been sentenced to life imprisonment for his murderous role in the anti-Sikh pogrom in 1984

the Army's deployment in Delhi was more complex and sinister. The force, which four months earlier had seamlessly cordoned off Punjab during Operation Bluestar, was provided vague instructions on its deployment by the Central authorities to control Delhi's unmitigated chaos. All it knew was that it was authorized to act in conjunction with the Delhi Police, which itself was rudderless and, for all practical purposes, leaderless and in many instances, as emerged later, conniving in the killings by bloodthirsty mobs.

Using decades-old maps of Delhi colonies, particularly of the killing fields like Trilokpuri in the trans-Yamuna belt, where many roads and colonies were not even marked, the Army was expected to end the violence, detect, evacuate and safely billet Sikh refugees in camps. Further complicating matters was the delineation of its jurisdiction. It merely had loose sanction to impose a curfew, but not enough force, or more importantly, the authorization to implement it.

To his credit, PM Manmohan Singh attempted, in 2005, to mitigate his party's role in the 1984 violence, declaring emotionally in Parliament that he bowed

his head in shame over the massacres and apologized for them. But his party loyalties prevailed, when he declared that the horrific incidents needed to be viewed from a 'wider perspective' as past events could not be undone. He also failed miserably in ensuring that guilty Congressmen, like Kumar, were duly punished. This has only transpired two decades later.

Compensation to pogrom survivors, too, fell prey to officialdom, which required the production of certificates and proof from an uncooperative, almost-hostile administration, loath to either register cases of murder, arson or looting or even to issue death certificates. It seemed that being a Sikh was reason enough to not comply and, consequently, hundreds of illiterate widows, who comprised the bulk of compensation seekers, simply added penury to their overwhelming losses. And, despite the grandiosely announced compensation schemes, hundreds of pogrom survivors were handed cheques for Rs 1,000 and dismissed.

(Rahul Bedi is a New Delhi-based journalist reporting for over 30 years on strategic, military, and security matters for overseas journals)

Note to Europe: Stay Calm and Don't Retaliate

DONALD TRUMP'S TARIFFS RAMPAGE WILL ONLY HURT AMERICANS



---> By Agathe Demarais

It is hard to keep track of all the tariffs that U.S. President Donald Trump is announcing or enacting these days. On top of the 10 percent tariffs that he imposed on China on Feb. 4, Washington has announced across-the-board steel and aluminum tariffs effective March 12 and plans to discuss reciprocal tariffs on all countries on April 2. On the same day, a 25 percent tariff on Canada and Mexico could come into effect, in addition to a tariff specifically targeting U.S. car imports. Yesterday, to round things off, Trump said that he will "very soon" announce a 25 percent tariff on imports from the European Union.

Trump's fixation on tariffs is odd, since such duties make up just about 2 percent of U.S. federal revenues, in line with the average in other high-income economies. Average tariffs also move in a similar range, with the U.S. trade-weighted rate of 2.2 percent not much different from Japan's 1.9 percent and the EU's 2.7 percent.

Seen from Europe, Trump's obsession with tariffs looks alarming. On paper, four of the five proposed measures—the blanket tariff on imports from the EU, the steel and aluminum tariffs, the reciprocal ones, the measures targeting cars—could hit the bloc hard. In turn, over the past weeks, EU officials have been at pains to outline that that tariffs are "bad for business, worse for consumers" and "harmful to the global trading system."

From that perspective, it may seem a little strange that the mainstream assumption appears to be that the EU should retaliate with the same poison and raise tariffs on the United States. This stance makes little sense. Europe has little to gain and possibly a lot to lose from responding to Trump's tariffs.

Economists like to disagree, but they typically see eye to eye on at least one thing: In developed economies, tariffs—a tax that domestic firms and consumers pay on imports—are more often than not a poor idea.

Trump's tariffs do not tick any of these boxes: They are across-the-board, random measures that appear to come and go depending on the presidential mood. In turn, it may not come as a surprise that the tariffs that Trump imposed in 2018 resulted in an estimated net welfare loss of \$7.2 billion in the United States, even after accounting for increased tariff revenues and the gains to some domestic producers benefiting from protection.

This data illustrates an inconvenient truth for tariff fans: Even if some industries benefit a little from the new tariffs (for instance, U.S. steel producers), a wide array of downstream manufacturers face higher costs because of them, which weighs on employment, investment, and exports. In such a scenario, the only option for Washington to mitigate the inflationary impact of



tariffs would be to subsidize costlier U.S. production.

This is not going to happen. Even at high rates, Trump's tariffs will not generate enough money for the U.S. government to splurge-let alone replace income taxes, like Trump fantasized during his election campaign last year.

The issues with tariffs do not end there. Firms typically pass on higher costs to consumers, who eventually shoulder most of the tariff burden. The figures are far from a rounding error: The Peterson Institute for International Economics calculated that if enacted, the proposed tariffs on Mexico and Canada (on top of the 10 percent tariff already imposed on China) could cost a typical U.S. household at least \$1,200 per year.

Retaliatory tariffs on the United States would be just as bad an idea for Europe. If the EU goes down that road, European manufacturers would face higher input costs at a time when many sectors already struggle amid high energy prices and growing Chinese competition. (German carmakers come to mind as a particularly good example of firms that would be most affected.)

And just like U.S. tariffs will hurt American households, EU tariffs would also act as a tax on European consumers, fueling inflation at a time when the cost of living is already their top concern, according to a survey conducted by the European Parliament last year. By contrast, estimates suggest that avoiding retaliation to U.S. tariffs would result in minimal hit to EU GDP, a reduction of just 0.1 percent. (This modeling assumes a U.S. tariff rate of 60 percent on China and a rate of 10 percent on other economies).

Beyond economics, it is not hard to see how Europeans could end up in bitter political fights over the shape of retaliatory tariffs. Many EU economies have deep trade ties to the United States in one way or another. Some of them (such as Austria, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Portugal) ship more than 20 percent of their extra-EU exports to the United States, suggesting that their willingness to risk triggering an unpredictable transatlantic trade war could be low.

And many EU economies (including

Belgium, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) rely on the United States as a top source of imports, meaning that EU tariffs would fuel domestic inflation. Add the fact that yet other member states, such as Sweden, want any prospective retaliation to conform to World Trade Organization rules, which is virtually impossible. Arriving at an EU-wide consensus on how to respond to Trump will clearly be hard.

The issues with EU coordination would not end there, for at least two reasons. First, Trump's insistence on treating EU countries on a case-by-case basis means that EU governments face a prisoner's dilemma. Game theory suggests that going it alone and trying to cut bilateral deals with Trump, instead of collaborating with EU neighbors, could leave them better off. Some member states, such as Hungary, appear keen to cozy up to Trump anyway, making it unlikely that they would be on board with anything more than a symbolic EU tariff. Second, the risk of fragmentation is also high when it comes to the European Commission's package of carrots that are supposed to convince Trump to spare the EU from tariffs; proposals include pledges to buy more U.S. weapons (a nonstarter for France) and get tougher on China (good luck with that in Germany).

This begs the question of how, if not with tariffs, Europeans should respond to Trump's actions. Looking in the mirror and addressing the EU's own trade weaknesses would be a good start. Intra-EU trade costs and barriers are so high that on average, they are equivalent to a tariff of 44 percent on shipments of goods (excluding agriculture) and 110 percent for services exchanges across EU member states—far more than any tariff Trump will ever impose on the bloc.

Such barriers include poor border infrastructure, the lack of regulatory harmonization, and the coexistence of many national procurement regimes. Europe's willingness to impose de facto tariffs on itself comes with serious consequences: Trade across EU member states is less than half the level of trade among U.S. states.

And in the area of trade, completing the European Union's "Single Market" is

not the only item that should be at the top of the bloc's to-do list. Inking trade agreements with developing economies, starting with the Mercosur bloc, also comes to mind at a time when EU firms worry that tariffs will weigh on their exports to the United States.

If doing nothing in retaliation is not an option for political reasons, then EU leaders could do worse than looking at China for tips on smart retaliation. Following the imposition of Trump's 10 percent tariff on all U.S. imports of Chinese goods, Beijing's response has been remarkably muted. China enacted a 15 percent tariff on imports of U.S. liquefied natural gas and coking coal, in addition to a 10 percent tariff on crude oil. Altogether, these cover only \$13.9 billion of annual imports from the United States, or just 0.5 percent of China's total imports.

In doing so, Beijing has adopted a sensible strategy of imposing surgical retaliatory tariffs that will support its long-stated goal of boosting energy security. This is exactly what Europeans should do: use Trump 2.0 as an opportunity to turbocharge the adoption of policies that they need to implement anyway in order to boost their economic prospects.

All things considered, Europeans may be better off being the adults in the room and letting Trump hurt the U.S. economy if he so wishes. Retaliatory tariffs enacted by the EU would not only fail to solve the issue (no, Trump will not back down), but they would also create a slew of new problems for Europeans.

By contrast, avoiding retaliation means that the economic costs of tariffs would be borne mostly by American businesses and households. At a time when all the talk in Europe is about narrowing the growing gap between the EU and U.S. economies, this would not be an entirely bad thing.

(Agathe Demarais is a columnist at Foreign Policy, a senior policy fellow on geoeconomics at the European Council on Foreign Relations, and the author of Backfire: How Sanctions Reshape the World Against U.S. Interests. X: @AgatheDemarais)

(Source: FP)

GREAT POWERS DON'T BLUFF

"Rather than pulling Moscow away from Beijing, as former President Richard Nixon and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once divided the Sino-Soviet alliance, the concessions Trump offers to the Russian dictator will likely be pocketed. Then, those favors will be used as negotiating leverage to improve, but nonetheless deepen Russia's increasingly unbalanced relationship with China. Just read the press release from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang-Li at the G20 meeting last week."

Instead of speaking softly and carrying a big stick, as former President Theodore Roosevelt once advocated, President Donald Trump has threatened to turn Canada into the 51st state, to annex Greenland from Denmark, and to forcibly displace 2 million Palestinians to create the Gaza Riviera.

By doing so, Trump is continuously breaking one of the cardinal rules of international relations—great powers don't bluff. Though bluffing might work in poker or business, it has profound but often unintended consequences in international relations.

Like former Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Joe Biden before him, Trump is attempting to reset America's relationship with Russia—again. Not only does this take his bluffing to new heights, but he is also sacrificing his political capital, and driving a wedge between Washington and its allies—namely, but not exclusively,



Great power competition doesn't change just because the head of state is sympathetic to the other party, as Trump is toward the war criminal Putin. File photo

under the pretext of pulling Moscow away from Beijing.

Moral reprehensibility aside, Trump's rehabilitation of Russian war criminal Vladimir Putin is destined to fail for at least two reasons. First, though China and Russia are not allies in the western sense of the word, they have spent more than a decade collaborating to undermine America's credibility and reduce its primacy in the international system—steering them in a separate direction is almost impossible.

Second, Vladimir Putin cannot be bought or replaced. He fears Russian society revolting against his rule, but also being murdered in a palace coup orchestrated by the Siloviki, being prosecuted by his successors, or being hunted by his enemies if he were ever granted exile. Like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin before him, a dictator of his stature has no choice but to remain in power, and therefore to continue his crusade against Ukraine and the West, until he dies, is defeated, or deposed.

Rather than pulling Moscow away from Beijing, as former President Richard Nixon and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once divided the Sino-Soviet alliance, the concessions Trump offers to the Russian dictator will likely be pocketed. Then, those favors will be used as negotiating leverage to

improve, but nonetheless deepen Russia's increasingly unbalanced relationship with China. Just read the press release from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang-Li at the G20 meeting last week.

To say that Trump is overplaying America's hand with regard to Russia is an understatement. Worst of all, this sends the wrong signals to all relevant actors and interested observers. To America's allies, it serves as a warning to reduce dependence on Washington and look for partners elsewhere. To America's adversaries, it reveals that it's bad to be Washington's enemy, but far worse to be its ally.

Europe holds the strongest hand against Russia—not Washington. While commerce between Moscow and America has always been insignificant, that was not the case for European trade flows with Russia before the Russian war criminals invaded peaceful Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The overwhelming majority of Russia's estimated \$300 billion in frozen assets are also held in Europe, not in America.

Trump is overplaying his hand against Ukraine too. America has some 100,000 troops deployed across Europe. In the event of a land war against Russia, NATO might be able to deploy another



By George Monastiriakos

half a million at best. Meanwhile, Ukraine's Armed Forces stand at 1 million soldiers strong, and they serve no other purpose than to defend European civilization against Russian barbarism.

Instead of supporting Ukraine's resolution commemorating the third anniversary of Russia's invasion at the United Nations—or committing to permanently deploy a contingent of American troops at "Fort Trump" in Poland, to be built and paid for by the Polish government—Trump is simply teaching Europe to learn to live without America.

Old habits die hard, and Trump's negative perception of NATO is decades old. His commitment to America's European allies is shaky at best, and nobody in their right minds still believes that Trump would endanger New York or Washington to attack—let alone to nuke—Moscow or Saint Petersburg in defense of Warsaw or Paris. That will never happen, so Europe must make adjustments.

Power abhors a vacuum. As America reduces its commitment to the old continent, Europe will simply forge closer ties with Ukraine and Turkey, the two most powerful armies in the region, for protection against Moscow. Britain and France allied with the Ottoman Empire against Russia (and Greece) during the Crimean War, and Europe will seek a similar arrangement in the next era of European geopolitics. Such is the nature of the balance of power.

From the Punic Wars to the Napoleonic Wars to the Cold War, the rules of geopolitics have been consistent for thousands of years. Great power competition doesn't change just because the head of state is sympathetic to the other party, as Trump is toward the war criminal Putin. I fear that both Trump and America are going to learn that lesson the hard way. Sooner rather than later, in the Indo-Pacific.

(George Monastiriakos is a professor of law at the University of Ottawa)

The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.

(Source: Newsweek)

OPEN LETTER

Open Letter to Rahul Gandhi

No problem is intractable; the key question is do we have the will to solve them in everyone's interest? And that too quickly.



---> By Sanjay Jha

Dear @rahulgandhi

I am writing to you publicly here because no one within the Congress is probably going to tell you this. So as usual, let me bell the cat.

Leadership (corporate or political or any other) is about having difficult conversations. It is about trouble-shooting. It is not about living in denial; problems have to be addressed, they cannot be wished away.

You and I both know that Shashi (Tharoor) is an outstanding

parliamentarian. He is probably among the only few in the country to whom the cliché, "He needs no introduction" truly applies. It is therefore disappointing that once again a great asset of the party is being forced to talk to the media to get his message through to you or the Congress leadership. Almost five years to the date, I was compelled to write an article in a national newspaper when facing a similar predicament. No problem is intractable; the key question is do we have the will to solve them in

everyone's interest? And that too quickly.

The Congress must be focused on taking on the BJP, but a prerequisite for that is to first get the house in order. This cannot become an ongoing unresolved challenge for years as it paralyses the energy and drive of the Congress workers and supporters. A challenger party has to be swift, desperate, risk-taking, hungry and on a constant prowl. It cannot be business as usual, for sure.

We need to hit the nail on the head going forward, but right now, we seem to be hitting our head on the nail.

I am sure the party and you will sort this out pronto. Good luck!

Sanjay Jha



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Roopam Maini (516) 302-5185	Vandana Govil (516) 314-5927	Anju Sharma (516) 582-5888
Mohinder Taneja (516) 840-7968	Nilima Madan (516) 603-6022	

Dirty Dozen tax scams for 2025: IRS warns taxpayers to watch out for dangerous threats

FEBRUARY 27, 2025

WASHINGTON D.C. (TIP): The Internal Revenue Service today announced its annual Dirty Dozen list of tax scams for 2025 with a warning for taxpayers, businesses and tax professionals to watch out for common schemes that threaten their tax and financial information.

Ranging from email schemes to misleading tax credits, many of the Dirty Dozen items peak during filing season as people prepare their tax returns. In reality, these scams can occur throughout the year as fraudsters look for ways to steal money, personal information and data.

The IRS' annual Dirty Dozen campaign lists 12 scams and schemes that threaten taxpayers. While the Dirty Dozen is not a legal document or a formal listing of agency enforcement priorities, the education effort is designed to raise awareness and protect taxpayers and tax pros from common tax scams and schemes.

"Scammers are relentless, and they use the guise of tax season to try tricking taxpayers into falling into a variety of traps. These red flags can lead to everything from identity theft to being misled into claiming tax credits for which they're not entitled," said Terry Lemons, IRS communications senior adviser. "For more than two decades, the IRS has highlighted the Dirty Dozen through far-reaching communications and education campaigns as part of a wider effort by the agency to protect taxpayers from being scammed."

Under Lemons' leadership, the IRS created the Dirty Dozen campaign in 2002 to counter emerging scams being seen across the country. Combined with related efforts by the Security Summit, the IRS has worked for a decade with state tax agencies and the nation's tax software and financial industry as well as tax professionals to educate taxpayers about scams and fraudulent schemes.

The Dirty Dozen list often has cautioned taxpayers about tax-related identity theft, in support of the Security Summit's ongoing efforts in this area, that have led to protecting millions of taxpayers and billions of dollars from refund fraud.

Last year, the tax community launched a related effort called the Coalition Against Scam and Scheme Threats (CASST) following a surge in social media-fueled scams.

As part of these continuing efforts to protect taxpayers against constantly evolving scams, the 2025 IRS Dirty Dozen list highlights the following 12 pervasive threats:

EMAIL PHISHING SCAMS: The IRS continues to see a barrage of email and text scams targeting taxpayers and others. Taxpayers and tax professionals should be alert to fake communications from entities posing as legitimate organizations in the tax and financial community, including the IRS, state tax agencies and tax software companies. These messages arrive in the form of unsolicited texts or emails to lure unsuspecting victims into providing valuable personal and financial information that can lead to identity theft. There are two main types:

PHISHING: An email sent by fraudsters claiming to come from the IRS. The email lures the victims into the scam with a variety of ruses such as enticing victims with a phony tax refund or threatening them with false legal or criminal charges for tax fraud.

SMISHING: A text or smartphone SMS message where scammers often use alarming language such as, "Your account has now been put on hold," or "Unusual Activity Report," with a bogus "Solutions" link to restore the recipient's account. The promise of unexpected tax refunds is another potential tactic used by scam artists.

As a reminder, never click on any unsolicited communication claiming to be from the IRS as it may surreptitiously load malware. This may also be a way for malicious hackers to load ransomware that keeps the legitimate user from accessing their system and files.

The IRS has special information available to help people understand and report email scams.

BAD SOCIAL MEDIA ADVICE: Another growing

concern in 2025 continues to involve incorrect tax information on social media that can mislead honest taxpayers with bad advice, potentially leading to identity theft and tax problems. Social media platforms routinely



circulate inaccurate or misleading tax information, including on TikTok where people share wildly inaccurate tax advice. Some involve urging people to misuse common tax documents like Form W-2.

The IRS and CASST warn people not to fall for these scams, and urge them to follow trusted social media advice from the IRS, tax professionals and other reputable sources. The IRS reminds taxpayers who knowingly file fraudulent tax returns that they could potentially face significant civil and criminal penalties.

IRS INDIVIDUAL ONLINE ACCOUNT HELP FROM SCAMMERS: Swindlers can pose as a "helpful" third party and offer to help create a taxpayer's IRS Individual Online Account at IRS.gov. In reality, no help is needed, and the agency offers tips on how to sign up and avoid scams. The IRS Individual Online Account provides taxpayers with valuable personal tax information. But watch out: Third parties making these offers will try to steal a taxpayer's personal information and try to submit fraudulent tax returns in the victim's name to get a big refund.

FAKE CHARITIES: Bogus charities are a perennial problem that can intensify whenever a crisis or natural disaster strikes. Scammers set up these fake organizations to take advantage of the public's generosity. They seek money and personal information, which can be used to further exploit victims through identity theft.

Taxpayers who give money or goods to a charity might be able to claim a deduction on their federal tax return if they itemize deductions, but charitable donations only count if they go to a qualified tax-exempt organization recognized by the IRS.

FALSE FUEL TAX CREDIT CLAIMS: A major concern during the past year involved taxpayers who were misled into believing they were eligible for the Fuel Tax Credit. The credit is meant for off-highway business and farming use and is not available to most taxpayers. However, unscrupulous tax return preparers and promoters, including people on social media, continue enticing taxpayers into inflating their refunds by erroneously claiming the credit. The IRS has seen an increase in the promotion of filing certain refundable credits using Form 4136, Credit for Federal Tax Paid on Fuels. The IRS urges people to get more information and ensure they are properly claiming this credit.

CREDITS FOR SICK LEAVE AND FAMILY LEAVE: This specialized credit is available for self-employed individuals for 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic; the credit is not available for later tax years. The IRS is seeing repeated instances where taxpayers are using Form 7202, Credits for Sick Leave and Family Leave for Certain Self-Employed Individuals, to incorrectly claim a credit based on income earned as an employee and not as a self-employed individual.

BOGUS SELF-EMPLOYMENT TAX CREDIT: Social media advice continues to circulate about a non-existent "Self-Employment Tax Credit" that's misleading taxpayers into filing false claims. Promoters market it as a way for self-employed people and gig workers to get big payments for the COVID-19 pandemic period. Similar to misleading marketing around the Employee Retention Credit, there is inaccurate information being circulated that suggests many people qualify for the tax credit and payments of up to \$32,000 when they actually do not.

In reality, the underlying credit being referred to in social media is not called the "Self-Employment Tax Credit," it's a much more limited and technical credit called the Credits for Sick Leave and Family Leave. Many people simply do not qualify for these credits, and the IRS is closely reviewing claims coming in under this provision, so taxpayers filing claims do so at their own risk.

IMPROPER HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYMENT TAXES: Taxpayers "invent" fictional household employees and then file Schedule H (Form 1040), Household Employment Taxes, to claim a refund based on false sick and family medical leave wages they never paid.

THE OVERSTATED WITHHOLDING SCAM: This is a recent scheme circulating on social media encouraging people to fill out Form W-2, Wage and Tax Statement, or other forms like Form 1099-NEC and other 1099s with false income and withholding information.

In this overstated withholding scheme, scam artists suggest people make up large income and withholding amounts as well as the fictional employer supplying those amounts. Scam artists then instruct people to file the bogus tax return electronically in hopes of getting a substantial refund due to the large amount of fraudulent withholding.

If the IRS cannot verify the wages, income or withholding credits entered on the tax return, the tax refund will be held pending further review. Taxpayers should always file a complete and accurate tax return. They should only use legitimate information returns, such as an employer issued Form W-2, to complete returns correctly.

There are multiple variations of the overstated withholding credit scheme, including those involving Forms W-2 and W-2G; Forms 1099-R, 1099-NEC, 1099-DIV, 1099-OID and 1099-B; as well as the Alaskan Dividend Fund, Schedule K-1 with Withholding Reported, and Unspecified Source of Withholding Credit Claimed.

MISLEADING OFFERS IN COMPROMISE: The Offers in Compromise (OIC) program is an important program that helps people settle their federal tax debts when they are unable to pay in full. But "mills" can aggressively promote Offers in Compromise in misleading ways to people who clearly don't meet the qualifications, frequently costing taxpayers thousands of dollars. A taxpayer can check their eligibility for free using the IRS Offer in Compromise Pre-Qualifier tool.

GHOST TAX RETURN PREPARERS: Most tax preparers provide outstanding and professional service. However, people should be careful of shady tax professionals and watch for common warning signs, including charging a fee based on the size of the refund. A major red flag or bad sign is when the tax preparer is unwilling to sign the return. Avoid these "ghost" preparers, who will prepare a tax return but refuse to sign or include their IRS Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN) as required by law. Taxpayers should never sign a blank or incomplete return. Instead, the IRS reminds taxpayers to turn to a trusted tax professional for help.

NEW CLIENT SCAMS AND SPEAR PHISHING: In 2025, the IRS continues to see the "new client" scam, which involves spear phishing attempts that target tax pros. Cybercriminals impersonate new, potential clients to trick tax professionals and other businesses into responding to their emails. Once the tax pro responds, the scammer sends a malicious attachment or URL that can compromise the preparer's computer systems and allow the attacker to access sensitive client information.

Phishing is a term given to emails or text messages designed to get users to provide personal information, and spear phishing is a phishing attempt tailored to a specific organization or business.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

JAINA Convention with the theme “Unity in Diversity, A Path to Peace” scheduled for July 3 to 6, 2025

FEBRUARY 20, 2025

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): CHICAGO, ILLINOIS: The Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA), representing 72 Jain Centers across the United States and Canada, is pleased to announce its 23rd biennial Convention in collaboration with the Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago (JSMC). This significant event, scheduled to take place from July 3rd to July 6th, 2025, in Chicago, Illinois, is expected to bring together about 5,000 community members from around the world to foster spiritual growth and unity.

The JAINA Convention is held bi-annually and is essential for spiritual development, community engagement, and cultural exchange. It aims to unite Jains and non-Jains across North America and beyond, celebrating the richness of Jain heritage and diverse traditions. Participants can engage in spiritual discourses, attend insightful lectures, participate in interactive workshops, and enjoy inspiring keynote presentations from distinguished speakers. Light entertainment will also enhance the overall experience and promote a sense of connection among attendees.

Mr. Atul Shah, JAINA's first Vice President and Convention Convenor, along with Co-Convenors Mr. Vipul Shah and Mr. Jignesh Jain, have reported that over 4,500 individuals registered shortly after the launch of registration, with expectations to exceed 5,000 participants. Dedicated volunteer teams are diligently working to ensure a well-organized Convention for all attendees. The event will feature several motivational speakers and distinguished social reformers, including Shri Abhay Firodia, Chairman of Force Motors and Jaya Hind Industries, who will speak on philanthropy, Dr. Gyanvatsal Swami from Akshardham, who will address spirituality; Jessica Cox, the world's first licensed armless aviator, who will provide an inspirational perspective, and Sagar Seth, who will inspire the youth.



Shri Abhay Firodia



Dr. Gyanvatsal Swami



Jessica Cox



Sagar Seth

The theme for the JAINA Convention 2025, inspired by the profound Jain saying “_Parasparopagraho Jivanam_,” warmly reflects our commitment to inclusivity with the guiding principle of “Unity in Diversity: A Path to Peace.” This convention is a heartfelt celebration of the beautiful tapestry of traditions within our Jain community. It emphasizes how our differences can bring us closer together, nurturing a sense of unity and shared purpose. We can create a welcoming space that honors each unique perspective while fostering compassion and understanding.

The convention offers a platform for Jains to connect and build lasting relationships. Each day features motivational speeches by inspirational speakers, insightful lectures from renowned Jain scholars on topics like philosophy, health, and sustainability, and cultural performances showcasing Jain heritage. Among Jain Scholars and dignitaries, Acharya Dr. Lokesh Muni of Ahimsha Viswa Bharti, New Delhi, Saman Shrutprajna ji of Peace of Mind Foundation, Rajkot, Dr. Devendrakeerti Bhattaraka Swamiji of Belur, Karnataka, H.H. Sadhvi Shilapiji and Sadhvi Sanghamitrajji of Veerayatan, Samani Prathibha Pragya ji, Samani Punya Pragya ji, Samani Aarjav Pragya and, Samani Swati Pragya a disciples of Acharya Mahashraman are attending the convention.



Dr. Lokesh Muni



Saman Shrutprajna



Dr. Devendrakeerti Bhattaraka Swamiji



Sadhvi Shilapiji



Sadhvi Sanghamitrajji



Samani Pratibha Pragyajji



Samani Punya Pragyajji



Samani Arjav Pragyajji



Samani Swati Pragya

We invite attendees to join heartwarming workshops focused on Ahimsa, nurturing environmental consciousness, fostering youth development, and promoting health and wellness. Together, we will explore how to incorporate Jain principles into our daily lives.

The 2025 JAINA Convention in Schaumburg, Illinois, promises to be a landmark event for the Jain community, offering a dynamic and engaging experience for youth from across North America. The convention will feature a variety of activities focused on education, networking, and personal growth.

One of the main highlights will be the keynote address by Sagar Sheth, CEO of Roth, who will inspire attendees with his insights on leadership and success, encouraging them to embrace their potential and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Additionally, the Jain Academic Bowl (JAB) will showcase 20 teams from across North America, competing in a spirited celebration of academic excellence and Jain traditions.

This year's convention is a wonderful opportunity to empower and uplift youth, inspiring them to embrace Jain values while navigating the modern world and shaping their leadership journeys. The convention will also provide a unique platform for Jain Matrimonial activities, offering young adults an opportunity to connect, network, and explore potential life partners within the Jain community. With 475 members from Young Jain America (YJA) and Young Jain Professionals (YJP) attending, the event will foster connections among the next generation of Jain leaders and professionals. Participants will engage in discussions, workshops, and networking sessions designed to help shape their future endeavors.



Cultural drama presented in 2023 Convention at Lakeland, Florida

In addition, there will be exhibitions showcasing Jain literature, art, and artifacts, providing a meaningful glimpse into our rich heritage. Don't miss the marketplace, where you can find products embody Jain values and reflect our commitment to compassion and mindfulness.

Mr. Manish & Shailja Gandhi, Dr. Chandra Varia, the Jagdish & Renuka Mehta family as Mahasanghpati, and Dr. Parag & Dulari Doshi, Mr. Vasant & Charulata Shah, and Mr. Atul & Dharmi Shah, as Sanghpati of the JAINA Convention 2025, invite the global Jain community to join and engage in an event centered on Jain philosophy and community bonds.

For more details and registration, visit: www.jainaconvention.org. For Further Information, don't hesitate to contact Public Relations and Press-Media Committee of JAINA Convention 2025, at pr@jaina.org.

ABOUT JAINA

The Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA) is the preeminent organization representing Jains outside India, encompassing over 200,000 members across 72 Jain Centers in the United States and Canada. Established in 1981, JAINA is committed to preserving, practicing, and promoting Jain Dharma and the Jain way of life. The organization supports unity among Jains from diverse sects and regions, striving towards global peace and harmony. Through its various programs and initiatives, JAINA collaborates with different organizations for disaster relief and humanitarian aid, disseminating the message of peace globally.

ABOUT JAINISM

Jainism is a religion and lifestyle that has been followed primarily in India for over five thousand years. Jains value meditation, yoga, nonviolence, vegetarianism, environmentalism, gender equality, and cultural respect. Lord Mahavir, born in 599 BC, is revered as the last perfect Jain soul to achieve Nirvana. The core principles of Jainism are Right Faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct. It advocates for kindness, tolerance, and the equality of all life forms.

Jainism has contributed to world peace through its teachings of nonviolence and forgiveness. Mahatma Gandhi incorporated these teachings into the 'Ahimsa' movement, which played a role in India's independence from colonial rule. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. also drew on this principle in his efforts for equality and civil rights for minorities in the US.

Snap winter election a challenge, but Elections Ontario says it is ready for a freezing voting day



FEBRUARY 27, 2025

TORONTO (TIP): When Shafoli Kapur, an immigration consultant, moved to Canada in 2009, she couldn't have imagined that she would be running for a seat in the Ontario Provincial Assembly in 2025. Her journey to becoming a dedicated community leader and advocate is rooted in her strong educational foundation and relentless drive to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

It is after 143 years that provincial elections are being held in February. Incumbent Conservative Premier Doug Ford called the election on January 28, launching a 31-day campaign with voting on February 27. It is also more than a year early. Ford already had a commanding majority and had time until June 2026 to hold the polls.

The short campaign and the wintery weather have thrown wrenches into election planning. Still, Dave Allston, returning officer for Ottawa Centre and a veteran Elections Ontario employee, says the province is ready for election day. Ontario in general and GTA in particular witnessed unprecedented snowstorms last week. The weather has tossed another curveball thanks to the snowiest February in Ottawa in nearly a decade. The snow has made it difficult to put up election signs, so candidates have chosen to zip-tie signs to fences and poles. City bylaw officers and Elections Ontario workers must use wire cutters to remove signs that have been placed illegally, particularly those that were too close to advance polling stations. "We were going out today buying salt. My biggest worry was snow on election day, but now it's looking like two or three days of thaw followed by a flash freeze," says Dave Allston.

"Then there are the stations themselves. We will have 2,000 people walking through with slush on their boots that create a slipping hazard. We're hiring extra people to clean."

Snowbanks and narrow streets might also cause parking woes around some polling stations, "but that's not something Elections Ontario can control," he said. Fortunately, in urban ridings like Ottawa Centre, no one should be more than five or six blocks from their polling station.

The weather has failed to dampen the spirit of the contestants. Despite a fall in several contestants and the ongoing tariff war with the neighboring US - Donald Trump has once again deferred the new tariffs until the first week of April - the battle of the ballot involving four major political parties, including the ruling Conservatives, New Democrats, Liberals and Greens, there are new entrants to the political scenario, including New Blue Party.

Nearly three dozen candidates of Indian descent are in the fray. If Shafoli Kapur is representing Liberals, who are trying to wrest back a major share in the political domain of the biggest province of Canada, young Indo-Canadians are representing all major political parties. A few of them are contesting as Independents as well.

After completing her degree in Electrical Engineering, Shafoli Kapur embraced the entrepreneurial spirit and, over the past 12 years, has built a thriving business from the ground up.

As a successful business owner and a respected regulated Canadian immigration consultant, Shafoli has worked closely with newcomers, witnessing first-hand how immigrants strengthen local economies and enrich communities. Her deep understanding of the challenges they face-coupled with her expertise in guiding them toward success-has fueled her commitment to policies that foster inclusion, economic growth, and opportunity for all.

In addition to her work in business, Shafoli is an unwavering advocate for women's rights, mental health awareness, and social justice. She has dedicated much of her time to volunteering with women's shelters, supporting survivors of abuse, and advocating for accessible and effective mental health resources. She is deeply committed to addressing the stigma surrounding



By Prabhjot Singh

mental health and ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their circumstances, have access to the support they need to live fulfilling lives.

Her belief in the power of advocacy extends to her role on the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC), where she fought for greater inclusion of families from diverse cultural backgrounds. As a strong voice for many families, she worked tirelessly to ensure their concerns were reflected in school decision-making processes, helping to create a more equitable and inclusive educational environment for all students.

Beyond her advocacy work, Shafoli is a passionate mentor and community leader. She has provided guidance to small business owners and entrepreneurs, empowering them to overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Recognizing the vital role that small businesses play in local economies, she has dedicated herself to fostering an environment where entrepreneurs can flourish, create jobs, and contribute to the prosperity of their communities.

As an immigrant, entrepreneur, and advocate, Shafoli symbolizes accomplished new immigrants and understands the importance of building strong, inclusive communities where everyone-regardless of their background-has access to the opportunities and resources they need to succeed. As MPP, she is committed to ensuring that Niagara Falls remains a place where residents can access high-quality healthcare, affordable housing, and economic opportunities.

With a deep understanding of the economic and social forces that shape communities, Shafoli is ready to be a strong voice for Niagara Falls at Queen's Park. She will work tirelessly to improve healthcare, make life more affordable, and support small businesses so the region can thrive. With her leadership, determination, and passion for real change, Shafoli is prepared to build a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future for all.

And in the February 27 Ontario Provincial elections, she will have several others, including first and second-generation immigrants of Indian descent in the fray.

If Shafoli represents the new generation of immigrants, then Ranjit Singh Bagga, also a Liberal candidate, is a dedicated long-time resident of Brampton and a successful Canadian businessman with over 30 years of experience in the hospitality, entertainment, recreation, and leisure sectors. As the owner and operator of a successful chain of 10 golf courses, he has created countless jobs and made significant contributions to the local economy.

Another candidate of Indian descent is Vicky Dhillon who is a business professional with an abundance of personal and political experience in serving the public.

He served his community of Wards 9 and 10 for eight years as a City Councillor in Brampton. During his time as a Councillor, Vicky played a pivotal role in policy development which included Brampton's budget approvals and long-term planning. He was the Chair of Community Services, Vice-Chair of Planning Design and Development, and was elected by his colleagues to represent the City of Brampton at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Vicky consistently worked hard on behalf of his constituents and advocated for the issues that mattered most.

He has deep roots in the community where he works, raises his family and continues to proudly call Brampton East his home for over 15 years.

Gurwinder Dosanjh, a Liberal candidate for Sault Ste.

Marie, is another candidate of Indian descent. He is deeply committed to addressing the pressing concerns of his community, including healthcare access, housing affordability, and economic development. As the owner and operator of a gas station and convenience store, he transformed them into award-winning establishments, enhancing local services and contributing to economic revitalization.

Recognizing the critical housing shortage in his area, where homelessness has risen by over 72% since 2021, Gurwinder established Pioneer Park. This land-lease community offers modular homes with essential services, providing affordable housing options and addressing the community's urgent needs.

In his role as a senior customer service representative for BMO Financial Group, Gurwinder has honed his expertise in financial services and customer relations, equipping him to navigate complex economic challenges. His decade-long commitment to his riding is evident through his service as Vice-President of the Algoma University Students' Union and as a Walk-Safe attendant on campus. He has actively participated in initiatives such as the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast and founded the Algoma Sikh Association, leading charitable efforts like One-Billion-Rising donations to Women-in-Crisis Algoma and Pauline's Place.

Representing NDP is Martin Singh. He is a licensed pharmacist and a partner in the Precision Health Group company which has over 300 employees and owns care facilities in Ontario and Nova Scotia. In terms of his education, Martin has four university degrees in chemistry, chemical engineering, pharmacy, and a Master's in Business Administration.

Martin has a strong history of supporting environmental protection and reproductive rights at the national level where he was a board member for the Sierra Club of Canada and Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada. Martin is very active in Brampton where he works to improve the opportunities for Brampton youth. Martin is the former Commanding Officer of the 557 Lorne Scots which is Brampton's only army cadet corps with approximately 220 cadets. During his time in command, the 557 Lorne Scots were the largest Duke of Edinburgh award center in all of Canada. For this achievement, Martin received a Commanding Officer's Commendation from the Army General in charge of all cadets in Canada.

Martin also works to get the cadets in the 557 Lorne Scots their First Aid qualification as well as keeping them physically fit with a long-distance hiking program on the Bruce Trail. Most recently, Martin has been nominated for King Charles III's Coronation Medal. Other awards and recognition include being a delegate from Canada for the International Planned Parenthood Federation Conference in Mexico City in 2008 and the Nova Scotia Department of Health Award of Recognition for the Community Medication Management Program that Martin designed and implemented.

Another NDP candidate Sukhamrit Singh is a graduate of the University of Waterloo and is currently studying law at the University of Western looking to pursue a career in union-side labor law fighting for working people.

"I have seen and lived the struggle that afflicts working people in Brampton. Whether from inadequate healthcare or ever-increasing housing/rental prices, the people of Brampton deserve better," he says. Sukhamrit Singh has served the community of Brampton through his time at Seva Food Bank and Credit Valley Conservation, but recently through his service as a reservist with the Canadian Armed Forces.

(Prabhjot Singh is a Canada based senior journalist. He can be reached at prabhjot416@gmail.com)



Dattatray Ramdas Gade, the accused

Man accused of raping woman inside bus at Pune depot arrested after 2-day manhunt

The man accused of raping a 26-year-old woman inside a bus at Pune's Swargate depot has been arrested in Maharashtra's Shirur during a midnight operation following a massive manhunt, police said on Friday, February 28.

The accused, Dattatray Ramdas Gade (37), was hiding at a farm in Shirur. Since Feb 27, 13 teams of Pune Police had been searching for him. Late at night, he visited someone's house for a meal, and that person immediately alerted the police, leading to his arrest, officials said.

Gade allegedly raped the woman while she was waiting for a bus to Satara district at one of the platforms around 5.45 am on Tuesday. He misled her by saying that the bus for Satara had arrived at another platform.

He then took her to an empty 'Shiv Shahi' AC bus parked elsewhere on the premises. As the lights inside the bus were off, she hesitated to get in, but he convinced her that it was the right vehicle. Once inside, Gade followed her and raped her, the woman, who works in the medical field, told the police.

The incident triggered a widespread outrage, with people across society, including political leaders, demanding strict action and justice.

Gade, a resident of Gunat village in Pune, has been named in half a dozen cases of theft, robbery, and chain-snatching in Pune and Ahilyanagar districts. He had been out on bail since 2019 in one of the cases.

As Gade remained at large for over two days, a reward of Rs1 lakh was announced for anyone providing information about his whereabouts. A hotline number was also released for tip-offs.

Earlier on Friday, Pune City and Pune Rural Police launched a search operation in Gunat village, including sugarcane fields, using drones and dog squads, officials said. More than 100 police personnel were deployed in the village, they added.

Swargate in Pune is one of the largest bus depots of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC).

India criticises secrecy in UNSC listing rejections, calls it a 'disguised veto'

NEW FELHI (TIP)

India's UN envoy P Harish, at a debate on working methods, stressed the urgent need for reform in the 15-member UNSC and its functioning on Thursday, February 27.

Underlining the need for more transparency in workings of the UN Security Council's subsidiary bodies, India said details about rejecting or putting on hold requests to blacklist terror entities are not made public and are the exclusive preserve of a select few, calling it a "disguised veto".

India's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador P. Harish spoke at the Inter-Governmental Negotiations Plenary - Cluster Debate on Working Methods here Thursday and underscored the need for urgent reform of the 15-nation Security Council and its working methods - from more transparency in the working of the subsidiary bodies to implementation of peacekeeping mandates.

"The demand in this Chamber for reforms is loud and clear. This call gains greater significance at a time when the world is expressing apprehensions at the ability of the United Nations to deliver, to meaningfully intervene on issues of key importance to humanity in different parts of the globe, particularly in the realm of peace and security - which remains the core mandate of the Council," Harish said.

Highlighting specific areas with regard to working methods for the Council that call for urgent reforms, Harish said there



Highlighting specific areas regarding the Council's working methods that call for urgent reforms, India's Permanent Representative at the UN, Ambassador P. Harish, said there needs to be more transparency in the workings of the subsidiary bodies of the UNSC. (Permanent Mission of India to UN)

needs to be more transparency in the working of the subsidiary bodies of the Council.

Citing a specific example, he said, "While decisions on listing are made public, details pertaining to rejection or putting on technical hold of listing requests are the exclusive preserve of a select few. This is indeed a disguised veto."

India has repeatedly voiced concern over the manner in which the Council's subsidiary bodies such as the 1267 Al Qaida Sanctions Committee operate while dealing with requests to blacklist terror entities and individuals.

Delhi has drawn the attention of the world body to the fact that genuine, evidence-based listing proposals for globally sanctioned terrorists are blocked without giving any due justification, saying this is uncalled for

and smacks of double speak when it comes to the Council's commitment in tackling the challenge of terrorism. On various occasions in the past, the Council's veto-wielding member China, an all-weather friend of Pakistan, has placed holds and blocks on bids by India to list Pakistan-based terrorists.

India lamented that while an overwhelming number of Member States acknowledge that reforms are indeed an imperative, there has been practically no progress along this direction.

"We have had numerous discussions and debates. We speak passionately but we continue to be where we are," the Indian envoy said.

Calling on the UN membership to act on the long-delayed UNSC reforms, Harish said Member States cannot be losing anymore time in exchanging ideas and engaging in discussions alone.

Prayagraj saw over 2,000 flights, 100 business jets during Maha Kumbh

NEW DELHI (TIP)

In its original form, Maha Kumbh is considered a gathering of saints, mystics and devotees. This year's congregation was significant in at least one more aspect: it turned out to be a 'kumbh' of aircraft as well. The domestic airport in Prayagraj welcomed a record number of flights during this period.

As per data verified by India Today's Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) team, the domestic airport in Prayagraj saw more than 2,000 flights during the Maha Kumbh between January 13 and February 26. Before its start, the Prayagraj Airport handled around 15 daily flight movements. Cut to February 18, this number surged to a record 120.

On average, the Prayagraj Airport handled over 100 flights per day, a seven-



fold jump from its pre-Kumbh daily average. Open-source flight tracking data reveals 2,158 flight movements during the Maha Kumbh.

The daily maximum of 49 flights landed at Prayagraj Airport on February 22-23, ahead of Maha Shivratri on February 26 and the festival's

conclusion. A similar trend of spike in flight arrivals was observed before other Shahi Snan days, with 15 flights on Makar Sankranti (January 14), 22 on Mauni Amavasya (January 29), 22 on Basant Panchami (February 3), and 27 on Maghi Purnima (February 12).

Delhi was the biggest source of flights to Prayagraj during the 45-day period, with 383 flights originating from the national capital. It was followed by Mumbai (159), Bengaluru (101), Ahmedabad (92), Hyderabad (78), and Kolkata (76).

Beyond metros, domestic airports such as Agra (2), Varanasi (3), Kochi (1), Guwahati (11), Bhopal (2), Pune (6), Dehradun (4), and Bilaspur (5) also ferried passengers to Prayagraj. Additionally, 18 flights arrived from Jaipur, while nine originated from Indore.

Source: India Today

Central govt opposes life ban on convicted lawmakers

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Asserting that it was a matter “within the legislative policy of Parliament”, the Centre on Wednesday, February 26, opposed before the Supreme Court a PIL seeking to debar convicted lawmakers for life from contesting polls, forming political parties and holding any post in a political party.

“The question whether a lifetime ban would be appropriate or not is a question that is solely within the domain of the Parliament,” the Centre said in an affidavit filed in response to a PIL filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay in 2016, seeking life ban on convicted persons from contesting polls.

Under the current election law, a convicted person is immediately disqualified and he/she is also debarred from contesting election for six years from the date of completion of his sentence. But the disqualification disappears after the expiry of six years from the date of completion of his/her sentence. The affidavit came barely two weeks after the Supreme Court expressed serious concern over criminalisation of politics and asked the Centre and Election Commission to spell out their respective stand on the contentious issue.

A bench of Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Manmohan had on February 10 wondered how a person convicted of crime can be permitted to come back to the Parliament and state assemblies. “Once he is convicted, and the conviction is upheld...and after that how can such people come back to Parliament and (state) legislatures?... that they (Centre and EC) have to answer. There is also an apparent conflict of interest. They would be making the laws,” the bench had said. “Criminalisation of politics is a serious concern. The Election Commission must have deliberated on this and proposed a better solution than what has been presented before us,” it had



said, posting the matter for further hearing on March 4.

The top court had also sought the assistance of Attorney General R Venkataramani as the PIL also challenged the validity of Sections 8 and 9 of the Representation of People’s Act (RPA) 1951, which disqualified convicted politicians from holding elected positions for a limited period only.

“Today, the law allows a person convicted of murder to serve as the chairman of a nationally recognised political party. This is a serious issue that requires judicial scrutiny,” senior counsel and amicus curiae Vijay Hansaria had pointed out.

On behalf of the petitioner, senior counsel Vikas Singh had said, “What we are seeing is 46 to 48 per cent people with kidnapping, rape, murder charges coming back to the Parliament, where the sentences are for lesser period of time. This could never have been the intention of the Parliament, while drafting this section.”

Hindi, Sanskrit destroyed 25 North Indian languages: Stalin targets Centre

Upping the ante against alleged Hindi imposition by the Centre, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Thursday, Feb 27, once again said the state will not allow the “imposition” of the language and vowed to protect Tamil and its culture.

“Will oppose Hindi imposition. Hindi is the mask, Sanskrit is the hidden face,” he said in a letter to partymen.

The ruling DMK has been alleging Hindi imposition by the Centre through the 3-language formula as part of the National Education Policy (NEP), a charge denied by the Union Government. In the letter, Stalin claimed many North Indian languages spoken in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh such as Mythili, Brajbhasha, Bundelkhandi and Awadhi “have been destroyed by the hegemonic Hindi.” “More than 25 north Indian native languages have been destroyed by the invasion of hegemonic Hindi-Sanskrit languages. The century-old Dravidian movement safeguarded Tamil and its culture because of the awareness it created and the various agitations,” the ruling DMK chief said. Tamil Nadu is opposing NEP because the Centre is trying to impose Hindi and Sanskrit through the education policy, he added.

LAHORE (TIP)

A US-based researcher has identified some 100 monuments at the Lahore Fort from the era of the Sikh Empire (1799-1849) detailing its historical significance. Of them around 30 monuments do not exist today.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of Lahore Fort and its historical significance during the Sikh Empire, the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA), a government body, has engaged Dr Tarunjit Singh Butalia to write a tour guidebook — Lahore Fort during the Sikh Empire.

“The Lahore Fort, a sentimental monument deeply ingrained in the Sikh psyche, served as the seat of power for the Sikh Empire for nearly half a century.

“It holds a special place in my heart, as my ancestors held esteemed positions within the Sikh court as per Umdat ut Tawarikh – the Persian records of the court,” Dr Butalia said in an interview to PTI on Thursday, February 27.

“It is very important for Sikhs in India to recognise that 1947 divided Sikh heritage and places of worship into two parts of the world. For a very long time, Sikhs in India were cut off from their historical sites in Pakistan,” he said.

Things have changed now with visa liberalisation and the presence of a large number of diaspora Sikhs settled in Western countries who are able to visit Pakistan, he said.

The Lahore Fort's rich Mughal history, dating back to the 16th century when Emperor Akbar first constructed it, forms the cornerstone of its importance. Furthermore, the fort's documented Sikh involvement for half a century adds another layer to its historical narrative.

The expansive Royal Lahore Fort, constructed upon a mud fort by Mughal Emperors Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, was acquired by the Sikh Empire in 1799 and remained under their control

US-based researcher identifies 100 monuments at Lahore Fort dating back to Sikh Empire



Dr Tarunjit Singh Butalia.

until 1849 when the British Empire transformed it into an army garrison.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharaja Kharak Singh, Kanwar Naunihal Singh and Maharaja Sher Singh preserved many of the fort's structures and constructed several new ones, including the Hazuri Bagh and its magnificent Baradari.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh also constructed the Gurdwara Dera Sahib, commemorating the site of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru.

“During my first visit in 2019 to Lahore from the US, I experienced a profound connection with the fort. At the Athdhara (pavilion), I could almost sense the footsteps of Sher-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Ganda Singh Butalia. However, the experience was tinged with sadness, as I was surprised to discover that many of the narratives imparted by tour guides here were predominantly negative when

discussing the Sikh era,” he said.

Dr Butalia said going through the records, it was revealed that during the Sikh era, the fort was commonly referred to as Shahi Qila, with occasional instances of being designated as ‘Qila Mubarak’.

“During a restful night in Columbus, Ohio, USA, I was captivated by visions of Lahore and its iconic fort. Driven by this inspiration, I embarked on a global quest, delving into libraries, archives, and museums.

“Through my relentless pursuit, I secured over 20 meticulously crafted maps and sketches of the Lahore Fort and its surrounding walled city, dating back to 1825,” he said, also crediting the Panjab Digital Library in Chandigarh for his research.

Citing some known books about the history of Lahore Fort, he said “these are the source of much of the misinformation about the Sikh Empire that is disseminated in Pakistan”.

He said he has compiled a comprehensive map of Lahore Fort as it stood during the Sikh Empire along with an index of monuments.

This index covers approximately 100 monuments, each identified by its Sikh-era name and detailing its historical significance.

A proposed tour pathway has been devised that commences and concludes at the Bastion Café. “Additionally, historical photographs and sketches have been included for no longer extant monuments, providing a visual representation of the fort's former glory and allowing visitors to experience the long-lost sites as they existed during the Sikh period,” Dr Butalia said.

Source: PTI

India in history this Week

FEBRUARY 28 TO MARCH 6

28 FEBRUARY

- 1712 Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah I died.
- 1928 CV Raman invented the Raman effect for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize.
- 1936 Jawaharlal Nehru's wife Kamala Nehru died in Switzerland.



1943 Kolkata's Howrah bridge (Ravindra Setu) started.

163 The first President of India, Rajendra Prasad passed away.

29 FEBRUARY



1896 The Sixth Prime Minister of India, Morarji Desai was born on 29th February 1896 in Gujarat.

01 MARCH



1983 Mary Kom was born to make the country proud by winning medals in the Olympic and Commonwealth Games.

1928 In 1928, Indian scientist CV Raman ji presented his research on diffraction of light to the world.

2009 In 2009, President Pratibha Patil announced

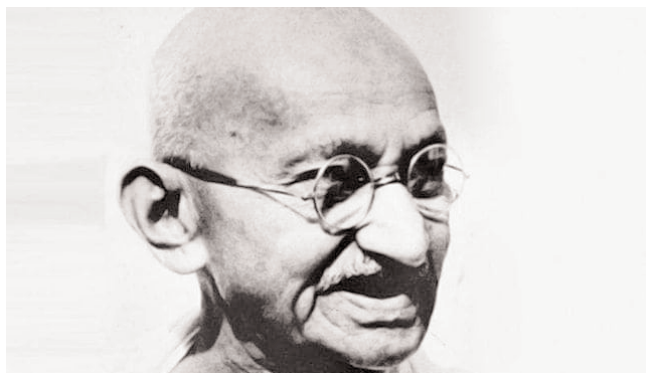
Chawla to be the next Chief Election Commissioner.

2010 Former Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh made an extradition treaty between the two countries during his visit to Saudi Arabia on 1 March 2010. With this, 10 signed in many fields including sci-tech and business.

2010 India beat Pakistan in the first match of the Hockey World Cup on 1 March 2010. India defeated Pakistan 4-1 in this match.

1872 The world's first Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872.

02 MARCH



1930 Gandhiji wrote a letter to British Viceroy on Salt Law.

1982 Indira Gandhi inaugurated the Mahatma Gandhi Road Bridge.

1984 Mother Teresa University was inaugurated in Tamil Nadu.

1994 Presidential rule in Jammu and Kashmir was extended.

1997 The first indigenous HIV detection kit was built in Bangalore in 1997.

1986 The great painter Kashinath Ghanekar died.

03 MARCH

1885 The Indian Appropriation Rule was implemented by the Congress Party on this day in 1885.

1930 The movement started by Harijans to enter the Kala Rama Temple.

1931 Delhi Pact was signed by Mahatma Gandhi and Viceroy Irving.

1967 The International Space Treaty was signed by India in Moscow.

1993 Sharad Pawar was elected as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra.



1839 World famous businessman (Jamsetji Tata) was born.

04 MARCH

1879 Bethune College of Calcutta was established in 1879.

1906 Hakim Abdul Majeed started the Hamdard dispensary in Delhi in 1906.

1924 In 1924, Shyam Lal Gupta composed the song Raising the Flag.

1951 Eleven countries participated in the first Asian Games in Delhi in 1951.

1961 In 1961 I.N.S. Vikrant was brought to Belfast.



05 MARCH

1931 Mahatma Gandhi ended the Civil Disobedience Movement.

1905 Sushila Didi, a freedom fighter who was instrumental in the revolutionary activities of Bhagat Singh, was born in Punjab.

2010 GP, one of the famous entrepreneurs of India, Birla died.

1783 Establishment of Geological Survey of India.

2009 Indian industrialist Vijay Mallya bought Bapu's legacy for Rs 18 lakhs

1949 The Jharkhand Party was founded in India in 1949.

1990 The government announced an interim relief of Rs 360 crore for the five lakh victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy.

2002 The Commonwealth Summit was held in 2002.



2008 India successfully test-fired the BrahMos missile from the sea into the ground.

2009 IFFCO (Indian Farmers Fertilizer Co-operative Limited) became the first company in the world to make annual sales of 10 million tonnes of fertilizer in 2009.

06 MARCH

1915 Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore had their first meeting in Shantiniketan in 1915.

1947 The Economic Times started editing from Bombay.

1962 The great revolutionary Ambika Chokrovarti died in 1962.

1971 Sunil Gavaskar started his Test career in 1971.

1990 India won the Indira Gandhi Gold Cup hockey tournament.

1991 Chandrasekhar resigned as Prime Minister in 1991.

2000 India and China first spoke in Beijing on the security issue.

CELEBRATE CULTURE TREE & PARTNERS' COMING OF SPRING ACTIVITIES WITH FAMILY

BY MABEL PAIS

HOLI PARTY DILLI STYLE

WHAT: HOLI CELEBRATION

WHERE: DILLI Restaurant, 250 West 47th Street, NYC 10036

WHEN: March 8, 2025, 12-2 pm

Get ready for a truly unforgettable celebration of the Festival of Colors!

Celebrate Holi with your family the way it is celebrated in Delhi with delicious Holi inspired food, Puppet Show, Art, Cooking class, face painting and festive music.

This will be a unique culinary experience for the entire family, where Chefs Gaurav Anand and Vipul Gupta will cook up delicacies from Old and New Delhi popular during the festival of Holi.

Anu Sehgal, author and founder of 'The Culture Tree' will read from her award winning Holi book 'Kahaani Rangeeli' (Colorful Story) and there will be a puppet show with Krishna, Sudama and Radha.

Kids art session will include Holi inspired art by



DILLI DILLI RESTAURANT PARTNERS - Left to Right: Owner-Chef Gaurav Anand, Brand Director Abla Atoubi, Chef Vipul
Credit : cgacatering.com

Buzy Bugs.

TICKETS

Ideal for kids 3+.

Tickets can be purchased at handstamp.com/e/holi-party-dilli-style-9uubksaf



HOLI DISH at Dilli Dilli

Credit : cgacatering.com

Everyone will have to purchase a ticket since there is limited capacity.

Walk-ins will not be accepted since Culture Tree's events are sold out.

Please do not get strollers since there is no space for them.

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT

Video link at theculturetree.com

WHAT: HOLI CELEBRATION

WHERE: South Street Seaport, 19 Fulton Street, Fulton & Water Streets, New York 10038 (theseaport.nyc)

WHEN: March 15, 2025, 11am-2pm

ENTRANCE: FREE

Dances. Music. Drummers. Stories. Delicious food and powder play. The annual Holi celebration lets us shake off the winter blues and celebrate the arrival of spring. This year, the Seaport in partnership with The Culture Tree and the South Street Seaport Museum invite you to join the celebration of the traditional Indian festival of colors on Saturday, March 15, from 11:00am-2:00pm.

ACTIVITIES

Bring the kids, bring your friends, and join us for a colorful day, which will include interactive dance performances and workshops, literary festival, delicious tastings, art activity, a puppet storytime, music and, of course, spirited fun with brightly colored powder.

Visitors can also sample traditional Indian cuisine enjoyed during this annual holiday, purchase Holi's signature colored powders and shop at the outdoor Indian market at Pier 16 featuring nearly a dozen Indian owned-businesses.

Please purchase your colors from Kulture Khazana at kulture-khazana.square.site.

In celebration of Holi, guests are encouraged to wear an all-white outfit to help amplify the Powder Play experience.

If you are a brand that wants to participate in the celebration, email info@theculturetree.com.

COMEDY SENSATION PINKY PATEL PERFORMS AT NEW JERSEY'S NJPAC

BY MABEL PAIS



PINKY PATEL

Credit: Courtesy njpac.org

The PTA mom turned creator, comedy sensation, and social media personality with over 5 million Tik Tok followers, PINKY PATEL, is coming to Newark's New Jersey Performing Arts Center with her '#isaidwhatisaid' Tour on Friday, March 14, at 8 PM.

Pinky Patel, a comedy sensation,

will return to NJPAC with her candid stand-up comedy show. She gained widespread popularity in 2020 with her exaggerated characters and brutally honest rants, quickly amassing a large online following. If you're a fan, don't miss the opportunity to see Pinky's live show, where she'll showcase her humor beyond her usual online presence. And don't forget to wear your shiny crown, just like Pinky's signature!

Originally from Illinois, Pinky Patel is a PTA mom turned creator, comedian, and social media personality with over 5 million TikTok followers. She rose to fame on TikTok, bringing laughter to millions of people. When Pinky isn't busy spreading joy, she's living the life of an everyday PTA mom to her two young children and trying to find creative ways to eliminate the extra eight-legged "roommates" in her glam cave. She is best known for her humorous commentary and viral videos from her glam cave, which have earned millions of likes on social media. Additionally, she has collaborated with brands such as Clorox, Pfizer, Pure Leaf Tea, and many more.

TICKETS

Tickets to see Pinky Patel are available by visiting the NJPAC Box Office or NJPAC.org or calling 888. GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

KID'S HOLI - AARTI AND CELEBRATION

WHAT: HOLI PUJA

WHERE: Ganesha Temple, 430 Broome St, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10013

WHEN: April 26, 2025, 10-11 am

Join Culture Tree for a special Holi Puja at the Broome Street Ganesha Temple, where the morning will be filled with beautiful prayers, rituals, and blessings that you won't want to miss. It's a rare chance to connect with your community, immerse yourself in the joy of Holi, and experience the magic of this auspicious day together.

The event will include an interactive aarti, meditation, storytime (by author Anu Sehgal), and prasaad from TAGMO. This will be a beautiful celebration that is interactive and will bring the community together.

April 26, 10-11am

TICKETS : Tickets can be purchased at handstamp.com/e/kids-holi-aarti-and-celebration-yehhjqr9

NEARLY THOUSAND CHILDREN ATTEND WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH EDUCATION CONCERT

BY MABEL PAIS

The New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS), a program of Wharton Arts, will perform a free Education Concert for Women's History Month. Nearly 1,000 elementary and middle school students will attend the free Education Concert on Wednesday, March 5 at 10:00 a.m. at the Union County Performing Arts Center in Rahway. Students from Union, Essex, Morris, and Passaic counties will attend this special event celebrating Women's History Month, with music selections by Louise Farrenc, Florence Price, Chen Yi, and Gabriela Lena Frank. Led by Helen H. Cha-Pyo, the NJYS Youth Symphony will perform a one-hour concert that offers an opportunity for young audiences to engage with music, history, and culture in a meaningful way.

Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Helen Cha-Pyo said, "Music has the power to tell stories, preserve history, and shape the future. As we celebrate Women's History Month, the New Jersey Youth Symphony is excited to present 'Raise Their Voices!,' a special educational concert highlighting the works of four trailblazing women composers who have made a lasting impact on classical music. Spanning over 200 years, the program features composers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, each with a unique voice that has contributed to the evolution of orchestral music and the advancement of women's equality in the arts."

As NJYS honors the voices of remarkable women composers, they invite students, educators, and audiences of all backgrounds to join in celebrating their legacy. Their music speaks to the enduring impact of women in the arts. Young audience members can expect to experience a variety of symphonic dances and festival music and enjoy a special segment introducing various orchestral instruments with visual presentations. For more information, visit NJYS.org.

WHARTON ARTS : Learn more at whartonarts.org.

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

NJS PRESENTS 'THE FIREBIRD'

WITH XIAN ZHANG
FEATURING NIMBUS DANCE

BY MABEL PAIS



Xian Zhang, NJ Symphony's music conductor



Qasim Naqvi



Nimbus dancers

Credit for all pics : njsymphony.org

The New Jersey Symphony presents three performances of 'The Firebird' (see program for details) with Music Director Xian Zhang conducting, March 7-9, 2025.

PROGRAM

'The Firebird' with Xian Zhang

Featuring Nimbus Dance | New Jersey Symphony
Classical

Xian Zhang conductor
Jonathan Spitz cello
Nimbus Dance | Samuel Pott, artistic director & choreographer

New Jersey Symphony

Newark - Friday, March 7, 8 pm, NJPAC
Red Bank - Saturday, March 8, 8 pm, Count Basie Center for the Arts

Newark - Sunday, March 9, 3 pm, NJPAC

Johann Sebastian Bach - Prelude from Cello Suite No. 2

Caroline Shaw - 'Valencia'
Qasim Naqvi - 'God Docks at Death Harbor' (Piano Quintet Version)

Igor Stravinsky - Divertimento from 'The Fairy's Kiss'

Igor Stravinsky - Suite from 'The Firebird'

The program opens with Bach's Prelude from Cello Suite No. 2 with the Symphony's Principal Cello Jonathan Spitz soloing. The first half continues with Pulitzer Prize winner Caroline Shaw's 'Valencia.' This short chamber work mixes harmonics, glissandi, minimalism, and rhythmic games throughout. The first act closes with the United States premiere of Qasim Naqvi's 'God Docks at Death Harbor' (Piano Quintet Version) as Nimbus Dance joins the stage with choreography titled, 'Dark Water' in Newark and Red Bank.

The program continues with Stravinsky's Divertimento from 'The Fairy's Kiss,' which was drawn from a neoclassical ballet based on 'The Ice Maiden,' a tale by author Hans Christian Andersen. The second half of the program concludes with Stravinsky's Suite from 'The Firebird' with Nimbus Dance appearing on center stage for both performances in Newark. Originally performed in Paris in 1910 by Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, the piece was then reduced for solo piano and extracted as a concert suite in 1911 and was ultimately re-orchestrated by Stravinsky in 1919.

Estimated Concert Duration: 1 hour 45 minutes

CLASSICAL CONVERSATION

Friday, March 7, at 7 pm and Sunday, March 9, at 2 pm at NJPAC in Newark

Enjoy a lively Classical Conversation before the performance. Learn more about the music from New Jersey Symphony musicians, guest artists and other engaging insiders.

PRE-CONCERT PERFORMANCE

Saturday, March 8, at 7 pm at Count Basie Center for the Arts in Red Bank

Experience the New Jersey Symphony Youth Orchestra's outstanding Academy Wind Quartet's special pre-concert performance.

TICKETS & MORE INFORMATION

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

XIAN ZHANG

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

The 2024-25 season sees Zhang return to the Metropolitan Opera in New York to conduct David McVicar's acclaimed production of Puccini's Tosca.

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

Following a successful collaboration at Tanglewood Festival 2023, Zhang returns to the Boston Symphony Orchestra this season.

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

JONATHAN SPITZ

Jonathan Spitz has established himself as a leading cellist in the United States with his performances as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral principal. He is the recently appointed head of string studies at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University and serves as professor of cello. He has been principal cello of the New Jersey Symphony since 1991, and he is a member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and principal cello of the American Ballet Theater Orchestra.

He has performed recitals at Carnegie Hall and at colleges and universities throughout the US. A graduate of the Curtis Institute, he was a student of David Soyer.

SAMUEL POTT AND NIMBUS DANCE

Samuel Pott (founding artistic director) founded Nimbus in 2005 in support of a vision for dance, creativity, and the arts as a stimulus for growth and unity, both personal and communal. Pott's work as a performer, choreographer, educator, and arts leader is dedicated to the authentic, humanistic, and equitable engagement that emerges in individuals and in communities through deep exploration and learning in the dance and the arts.

Under his direction, the organization has toured nationally, built the Nimbus Arts Center at 'The Lively' in Downtown Jersey City, developed the School of Nimbus which serves over 400 students onsite and many thousands in offsite community programs annually, and became the largest contemporary dance organization in the State of New Jersey.

As a performer, Pott danced as a soloist with the Martha Graham Dance Company, performing in iconic roles. Prior to joining the Graham company, Mr. Pott performed as a lead dancer with American Repertory Ballet, Oakland Ballet, and Savage Jazz Dance Company, in a wide range of new and classical repertory.

A recipient of Choreography Fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts in 2008, 2017, and 2023, and named a Distinguished Teaching Artist by the Council in 2012, Pott was one of 25 arts leaders nationally selected for the Association of Performing Arts Presenters' (APAP) inaugural Leadership Fellows Program, serves on the Dance Advisory Council for New Jersey Performing Arts Center, and is a co-founder of the Jersey City Arts Council.

Nimbus reaches over 16,000 people annually, performing throughout the NJ/NY area and nationally, including recently with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood. The School of Nimbus and outreach programs reach over 4000 youth each year, with scholarships available to ensure that no student is turned away for lack of funds.

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.

CONNECT WITH 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)

SRFFNY 2025 UNVEILS ITS TWELFTH EDITION

BY MABEL PAIS

The SR Socially Relevant™ Film Festival NY on February 6 unveiled its 12th edition narrative and documentary features.

The festival opens March 11 at the National Arts Club (15 Gramercy Park S, New York, NY 10003 - 212 475-3424). The festival resumes Uptown at the Maysles Documentary Center (343 Malcolm X Blvd, New York, NY 10027 - 646 853-1296) on March 12, The Forum (601 W 125th St, New York, NY 10027 - 212 853-6786 and MRHS (100 La Salle St, New York, NY 10027 - 212 666-4000 on March 13, and Cinema Village (22 E 12th St, New York, NY 10003 - 212 924-3364) on March 14-16. The Closing Awards Night occurs on March 16 at the Tenri Cultural Institute (43A W 13th St, New York, NY 10011 - 212 645-2800). The online section of the festival starts on March 17.

The SRFF 2025 Competition Categories are Narrative Feature, Documentary Feature, Narrative Short, Documentary Short, Rejoice Resist: BIPOC Films and Filmmakers, and scriptwriting.

Founding Artistic Director Nora Armani presented the films and synopses. The trailers and film details are posted on the website (ratedsrffilms.org) under SRFF 2025. The website also offers press and media accreditations and sponsorship opportunities. The festival's YouTube channel (youtube.com/channel/UCTSz55oZhoPPlhJos82RoSw) has trailers and posts live interviews from Meet the Filmmakers sessions. A BIPOC Filmmakers' Panel will be held on March 13, followed by networking events and happy hours.

"Twelve years have speeded by. We are proud to have had the opportunity to present over 750 socially relevant



SRFF 2025, Poster

Credit: ratedsrffilms.org

films from 40 countries. The work of talented and dedicated filmmakers has offered us the bonus of

learning about the human condition and filmmaking while engaging with an audience as a first step toward raising awareness of social issues. We could not have done it without the valuable support of our sponsors, partners, and friends." Festival Founding Artistic Director Nora Armani.

TICKETS

Early Bird \$5 tickets are available for a limited time only @ (filmfreeway.com/SRFF25/tickets). Tickets purchased online at full price are \$15, and tickets at the door are \$20. Students have FREE access with valid student ID.

SRFF FOUNDER, ORIGIN AND MISSION

SRFF was founded by Actress/ Filmmaker Nora Armani in 2013 in response to the proliferation of violence and violent forms of storytelling in media and entertainment. Following a family tragedy that cost the lives of two of her dearest and nearest, namely her cousin Vania and uncle Jack Exerjian, Armani founded the festival to commemorate them meaningfully.

This new edition addresses Aging, Art and healing, Climate Change, Disability, Healthcare, LGBTQ, Memory and Identity, The Prison System, Women, and Voices of Canada.

The Mission of the SR Film Festival is to spotlight filmmakers who tell compelling, socially relevant, human-interest stories without resorting to violence or violent forms of storytelling. SRFF believes in the power of film to raise awareness of social problems.

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

MEERA IYER FINALIST AMONG TWO AT REGIONAL 'POETRY OUT LOUD' CONTEST

BY MABEL PAIS

At the New Jersey 'Poetry Out Loud,' Region 4, 2025 Regional Finalists competition, two of the contestants were named finalists. Meera Iyer from Morristown Beard School in Morristown, and Bianca Diez, from Morris County School of Technology in Denville were named the Region 4 Finalists. This regional contest is part of the National 'Poetry Out Loud' recitation program. The contest took place on February 10, 2025 at the Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown.

Meera Iyer and Bianca Diez will represent Region 4 at the 'Poetry Out Loud' State Finals on March 12, 2025, at Count Basie Center for the Arts in Red Bank. Participants from 6 regions throughout the state will compete for the title of State Champion. The State Champion will move on to represent New Jersey at the National Finals in Washington D.C. later this spring.

POETRY OUT LOUD

'Poetry Out Loud' is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition for high school students across the country. 'Poetry Out Loud' is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, Poetry



POL Region 4 winners: (extreme left) Meera Iyer, extreme right (Bianca Diez) pose with Kevin O'Brien, New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Credit: Courtesy, mayoarts.org

Foundation, and the 55 state and jurisdictional arts agencies.

New Jersey 'Poetry Out Loud' is a project of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the Count Basie Center for the Arts. Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program, led by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, in partnership with the state and jurisdictional arts agencies across the

country. In New Jersey, the State Arts Council and the Basie work with a growing network of regional partners to implement the program statewide. Learn more at poetryoutloud.org.

For more information about New Jersey 'Poetry Out Loud,' the State Finals, and more, visit njpol.org/what-is-pol.

THE MAYO PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (MPAC)

Website: mayoarts.org
Facebook: facebook.com/MayoPerformingArtsCenter
Instagram: instagram.com/mayopac/
Twitter: twitter.com/MayoCenter
YouTube: youtube.com/user/MayoCenter

THE NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts, created in 1966, is a division of the NJ Department of State and a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. To learn more about the Council, visit artsCouncil.nj.gov.

THE COUNT BASIE CENTER FOR THE ARTS

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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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Govinda reacts to divorce rumors with Sunita, prefers talking 'business'

Actor Govinda has reacted to the rumours of his divorce with Sunita Ahuja. Several media reports have been suggesting that the couple is headed for a divorce after 37 years of marriage. In an interview with Times of India, the 61-year-old chose not to answer a question about divorce and shifted the focus of the conversation to his upcoming films.

When asked about the divorce reports, he said, "There are only business talks going... I am in the process of starting my films."

The report further mentioned that Ahuja had given a 'separation notice' to Govinda a few months ago, but there has been no new development since then.

It also quoted the actor's manager, Shashi Sinha, confirming that the couple is struggling with a few issues due to "certain statements" made in the media earlier.

"There have been issues between the couple due to certain statements made by certain members of the family. There is nothing more to it and Govinda is in the process of starting a film for which artists are visiting our office. We are trying to resolve it," he said.

Kriti Sanon has a packed 2025; no wedding plans this year

Several speculations have been making the rounds about Kriti Sanon getting married this year. She has been rumoured to be dating UK-based businessman Kabir Bahia.

Just a few days ago, they were clicked arriving together at the Delhi airport. Last year, the rumoured couple was also seen celebrating Christmas together with friends. Not only this, they have been spotted out and about many times, further adding fuel to the assumptions.

However, amid speculation about her personal life, a source from the industry has set the record straight by saying marriage is not on the cards for Kriti this year. She has a packed schedule for 2025 and is busy shooting for the same.

A source from the industry shared, "Where does Kriti even have the time this year? She's in Delhi right now, fully focused on shooting for Aanand L Rai's film for the next few months. And as soon as that's done, she's straight onto her next project, there's barely a break in between."

Tere Ishk Mein, where she plays Mukti, is one of the most anticipated projects by Aanand L Rai. The film's announcement video has already sparked interest among fans.

The source further revealed, "One of her biggest commitments right now is Tere Ishk Mein, where she plays Mukti. The film announcement video has already created a lot of buzz, and Kriti is completely invested in bringing Mukti to life. Once she wraps that up, she's set to start work on a highly anticipated sequel, but it's too early to share details. With so much going on work-wise, marriage is not on the cards this year."



Preity slams Kerala Congs over Rs 18 cr loan claim: 'Shame on you'

A political storm erupted after the Kerala Congress alleged that Bollywood actress Preity Zinta had an Rs 18 crore loan written off and had handed over her social media accounts to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The actress swiftly refuted the accusations, slamming both the party and media outlets for spreading misinformation. Reacting strongly, Preity Zinta expressed her shock over what she called a political party's attempt to promote fake news. She clarified that the loan in question was fully repaid over a decade ago.

"No, I operate my social media accounts myself, and shame on you for promoting FAKE NEWS! No one wrote off anything or any loan for me. I'm shocked that a political party or their representative is indulging in vile gossip & clickbaits using my name & images," Zinta wrote on X.

She further stated: "For the record, a loan was taken and FULLY PAID BACK over 10 years ago. Hope this clarifies and helps so there are no misunderstandings in the future."

The actress also criticized media houses for failing to verify facts before publishing reports. "So much misinformation going around, but thank God for social media and thank God for X!" she added.

Calling for greater accountability in journalism, Zinta urged reporters to fact-check before naming public figures in controversial stories.

"Next time, please call me and find out if the story is true or not before mentioning my name," she wrote.

Following Zinta's rebuttal, the Kerala Congress responded on X, stating that they had merely shared information reported by media outlets.

Blake Lively, Anna Kendrick reunite for more drama

The teaser for *Another Simple Favour* was released on February 26. The film stars Anna Kendrick, Blake Lively, Henry Golding, and Michele Morrone.

In the teaser of one minute 38 seconds, we see that *Another Simple Favour* takes place after the events of the first film, and will follow Stephanie Smothers (Kendrick) and Emily Nelson (Lively) as they reunite on the Italian island of Capri for Emily's lavish wedding to a wealthy businessman, played by Michele Morrone. However, the event takes a dark turn, with "murder and betrayal" set to unfold.

The film is directed by Paul Feig, who also helmed *A Simple Favour*, the first installment in the series. Written by Jessica Sharzer and Laeta Kalogridis, *Another Simple Favour* is bankrolled by Paul Feig and Laura Fischer. The film's cinematography is done by John Schwartzman and the music is by Theodore Shapiro.

Anna Kendrick was most recently seen in *Woman of the Hour*, which was also directed by her. Blake, on the other hand, was last seen in *It Ends With Us*, opposite Justin Baldoni and Brandon Sklenar.

Stephanie (Anna Kendrick) has written a book on all the incidents that took place with her mysterious friend (Emily played by Blake Lively), in the first part. The revenge plot is about to get all the more intense, as Emily invites Stephanie to her wedding.

When Stephanie feels suspicious about Emily's return and the intentions she has on her mind, Emily asks her, "Do you think I invited you to get revenge? For stealing my life and taking my kid away from me."



Henry Golding, Andrew Rannells, Bashir Salahuddin, Joshua Satine, Ian Ho, and Kelly McCormack, are all reprising their roles in the sequel.

The excitement around *Another Simple Favour* is quite high, the first

part received a positive response with Blake's sinister onscreen personality leaving the audience impressed.

Currently in post production, *Another Simple Favour* arrives on May 1 on Prime Video.



Kylie Jenner wants to 'hang on to' Timothee Chalamet 'for life'

Sources revealed to *Life & Style* that Kylie Jenner is completely smitten with Oscar-nominated actor Timothee Chalamet and is eager to take their relationship to the next level. The couple's chemistry has been undeniable, and it seems they're ready to embrace a new chapter together as things continue to heat up between them.

The insider dished about the couple, "Kylie swears she's never been in love like this before, they connect in every way, and she's completely in awe of him. You just have to look at the way her style, and even her body, has changed in the two years that they've been together. She's doing everything she can to be his perfect woman because she wants to hang on to him for life." The source also claimed that Jenner is "so happy with" the *Dune* actor that she "lives in constant fear that it might end, so her solution to that is getting him to marry her."

Since the two have made their relationship more public with their recent appearances, Jenner wants to make things official between them. The source shared with the media outlet, "She's been dropping hints and he does talk about things like they have a future, so it's not like it's totally out of the question."

Ellen Pompeo says she heard about 'horrible things' about her weight issues

Hollywood star Ellen Pompeo has been looking back on past remarks made about her weight and physique. In an exclusive interview with *People*, she recalled the "brutal" criticism she faced from tabloids when she was a young actress.

"The tabloids would say horrible things. I just remember being so anxious on red carpets, and the comments about my weight and my body. I'm so glad, maybe, hopefully things have changed, because it was much, much more brutal 20 years ago," the *Grey's Anatomy* star shared.

Ellen went on to explain that during that time, she was extremely thin and disliked it, yet many assumed she had an eating disorder. "It was a whole situation with how skinny I was, and there was so much negative attention. Girls today can be gorgeous and thin and thank God we're not allowed to comment on women's bodies, even though people do. But I just had so much anxiety and lacked self-esteem because

people were so critical of my physicality," she said.

Ellen's acting career took off when she was cast as Dr Meredith Grey in *Grey's Anatomy*, a role she played since the show's debut in 2005. She departed as a series regular in its nineteenth season but has remained involved as both a producer and narrator.

Having established herself in the entertainment industry, Ellen expressed her commitment to advocating for women to speak out against inequalities. "I sit in a seat of enormous privilege," she said. "As a White woman, as a working actress, as a person who's super well-compensated. If people that sit with privilege can't use it to better the lives of others, you really don't deserve it."

Pompeo is set to star in the forthcoming limited series, *Good American Family*, which is inspired by the true-crime case of Natalia Grace, a girl born with a rare form of dwarfism.



RUSSIAN TOURIST DIES AFTER BEING ATTACKED BY SHARKS IN PHILIPPINE DIVING SPOT, ANOTHER DROWNS

MANILA (TIP): Two Russian tourists died when they were swept away by strong undercurrents while scuba diving in waters south of Manila, with one believed to have drowned and the other attacked by sharks, a Philippine coast guard official said February 28.

Two other Russian tourists managed to swim back safely to their dive boat Thursday off Verde Island, a popular diving destination in the province of Batangas, Philippine coast guard provincial commander Capt. Airland Lapitan said.

The four Russian tourists traveled by boat to the waters off Verde Island from the nearby town of Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro province with a Filipino dive instructor. While diving, the five were swept away by strong undercurrents, Lapitan said.

Two of the Russians managed to surface with the dive instructor but the two other Russians, who were identified as Ilia Peregudin, 29, and Maksim Melekhov, 39, went missing. The dive instructor and other divers in the area, along with Philippine coast guard personnel, immediately launched a search, according to Lapitan.

"The other Russian diver was found while being attacked by sharks. His right arm, unfortunately, had been severed and the sharks were moving around him," Lapitan told The Associated Press. "They somehow managed to pull him away." (AP)

Israel and Hamas have begun negotiating next phase of Gaza ceasefire: Egypt

28 FEB 2025

KHAN YOUNIS (TIP): Negotiations between Israel and Hamas on the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire began February 27, Egypt said, averting a collapse ahead of Saturday's expiration of the agreement's first phase.

Officials from Israel, Qatar and the United States started "intensive discussions" on the ceasefire's second phase in Cairo, Egypt's state information service said.

"The mediators are also discussing ways to enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, as part of efforts to alleviate the suffering of the population and support stability in the region," its statement said.

Phase 2 talks are meant to negotiate an end to the war, including the return of all remaining hostages in Gaza who are alive, and the withdrawal of all Israeli troops from the territory.

Return of remaining deceased hostages would happen in Phase 3.

According to Israel, there are 59 remaining hostages — 24 of whom are still believed to be alive.

It will be difficult to reconcile a deal with the war objectives of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has called for dismantling Hamas' governing and military capabilities. After suffering heavy losses in the war, Hamas has nonetheless emerged intact during the ceasefire, and the group says it will not give up its weapons.

Hours before talks began, an Israeli



official said the country would not withdraw from a strategic corridor in the Gaza Strip as called for under the ceasefire, a refusal that could severely complicate negotiations with Hamas and key mediator Egypt at a sensitive moment for the fragile truce.

Overnight, Hamas released the remains of four hostages in exchange for over 600 Palestinian prisoners, the last planned swap of the ceasefire's first phase.

U.S. President Donald Trump's Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff, was expected in the region in the coming days.

Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said the army needed to remain in the so-

called Philadelphi corridor, on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt, to prevent weapons smuggling.

Hamas said any Israeli attempt to maintain a buffer zone in the corridor would be a "blatant violation" of the ceasefire agreement. Hamas says that sticking to the agreement is the only way for Israel to secure the release of dozens of hostages still held in Gaza.

Israel was supposed to begin withdrawing from the Philadelphi corridor on Saturday, the last day of the first phase, and complete it within eight days.

There was no immediate comment about the corridor from Egypt, which is opposed to any Israeli presence on the Gaza side of its border. (AP)

Vatican says Pope Francis continues to improve but his prognosis remains guarded

28 FEB 2025

ROME (TIP): Pope Francis continued to improve from double pneumonia February 27, the Vatican said, working from his hospital room and going to his private chapel to pray, though doctors said he needs more days of "clinical stability" before they revise their guarded prognosis.

The 88-year-old pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, was able to begin alternating high-flow supplemental oxygen, delivered by a nasal tube, with a mask in a sign of his improved respiratory condition, the Vatican said in a late update.

For the second day in a row, doctors avoided saying Francis was in critical condition. But they said that given the complexity of his lung infection, "further days of clinical stability are needed" before they revise their prognosis and decide he is out of danger.

Francis has been in Rome's Gemelli hospital since Feb. 14 after a bout of



bronchitis worsened.

He has shown steady, albeit slight improvements since a respiratory crisis

and kidney trouble over the weekend sparked fears for his life. The improvements, as he nears the two-week

mark on Friday, beat back speculation of an imminent death, resignation or conclave and signaled that he was still very much in charge.

Nevertheless, his near-term upcoming calendar of events was being changed: The Vatican cancelled a Holy Year audience scheduled for Saturday, and it remained to be seen if Francis would skip his Sunday noon blessing for the third week in a row. Longer term, Ash Wednesday loomed on the horizon March 5, the start of the church's Lenten season leading up to Holy Week and Easter, which this year falls on April 20.

In past years, when Francis has battled bronchitis and influenza in winter, he has had to cut back his participation in Ash Wednesday and Holy Week events, which call for the pope to be outdoors in the cold leading services, participating in processions and presiding over prayers in the solemn period in which the faithful commemorate Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. (AP)

North Korea appears to have sent more troops to Russia to back its war against Ukraine, Seoul says

27 FEB 2025

SEOUL (TIP): South Korea's spy agency said February 26 that North Korea appears to have sent additional troops to Russia, after its soldiers deployed on the Russian-Ukraine fronts suffered heavy casualties.

The National Intelligence Service said in a brief statement it was trying to determine exactly how many more troops North Korea has deployed to Russia.

The NIS also assessed that North Korean troops were redeployed at fronts in Russia's Kursk region in the first week of February, following a reported temporary withdrawal from the area.

The NIS also assessed that North Korean troops were redeployed at fronts in Russia's Kursk region in the first week of February, following a reported temporary withdrawal from the area.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in an address on Feb. 7, confirmed a new Ukrainian offensive in Kursk and said North Korean troops were fighting alongside Russian forces there.

North Korea has been supplying a vast amount of conventional weapons to Russia, and last fall it sent about 10,000-12,000 troops to Russia as well, according to US, South Korean and Ukraine intelligence officials.

North Korean soldiers are highly disciplined and well trained, but observers say they've become easy targets for drone and artillery attacks on



Russian-Ukraine battlefields due to their lack of combat experience and unfamiliarity with the terrain.

In January, the NIS said about 300 North Korean soldiers had died and another 2,700 had been injured. Zelenskyy earlier put the number of killed or wounded North Koreans at 4,000, though US estimates were lower at around 1,200.

Earlier Wednesday, South Korea's JoongAng Ilbo newspaper, citing unidentified sources, reported that an additional 1,000-3,000 North Korean soldiers were deployed to Kursk between January and February.

South Korea, the US and their partners worry that Russia could reward North Korea by transferring high-tech weapons

technologies that can sharply enhance its nuclear weapons program. North Korea is expected to receive economic and other assistance from Russia as well.

During talks in Saudi Arabia last week, Russia and the US agreed to start working toward ending the war and improving their diplomatic and economic ties. Ukrainian officials weren't present at the talks.

That marked an extraordinary shift in US foreign policy under President Donald Trump and a clear departure from US-led efforts to isolate Russia over its war in Ukraine.

Observers say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un could send more troops to Russia to win further Russian assistance before the war ends. (AP)

FRANCE SAYS DISCUSSING ACCESS TO UKRAINE MINERALS FOR MILITARY USE

PARIS (TIP): France is in discussions with Ukraine to access its mineral wealth, including for military use, Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu said February 27.

"We are discussing this question for France's needs," he told the Franceinfo broadcaster, a day before Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is to meet US President Donald Trump to finalise a deal on US access to Ukraine's mineral wealth.

The French-Ukraine talks started in October and were led by both countries' defence ministries, Lecornu said.

Unlike Trump, France was not seeking any payback in the form of minerals from Ukraine for aid granted in support of Kyiv's war against Russia, he said.

"We're not looking to be reimbursed," Lecornu said. "But our defence industry will need a certain amount of raw materials that are absolutely key to our own weapons systems. Not next year, but in the coming 30 or 40 years."

France needed to "diversify" its sources for such commodities, he said, without identifying the minerals he hoped to obtain from Ukraine.

He said Zelenskyy himself had launched the idea "of including minerals in his plan for victory" last autumn, starting discussions "not just with the United States, but also with France." (AFP)

TWO MEN PUBLICLY FLOGGED 80 TIMES IN INDONESIA FOR SAME-SEX RELATIONS UNDER SHARIAH LAW

BANDA ACEH (TIP): Two men were publicly flogged in Indonesia's conservative Aceh province on February 27 after they were found guilty of sexual relations by a court operating under strict Islamic law.

While gay sex is not illegal elsewhere in Indonesia—the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation—it is outlawed in Aceh, which imposes a version of sharia, the Islamic legal code.

The flogging began before midday at a park in provincial capital Banda Aceh, with one man accused of instigating the relationship lashed 82 times and the second man 77 times. Both were caned with a rattan stick as dozens watched on, according to an AFP journalist present.

The men's sentences were reduced by three lashes for three months spent in detention.

In November, locals raided a rented room in Banda Aceh and found the two men—both students at a local university—together. They were taken to sharia police for the alleged crime of sexual relations. (AFP)

46 killed, 10 injured in Sudan military plane crash in residential area

26 FEB 2025

PORT SUDAN (TIP): Forty-six people were killed when a Sudanese military transport plane crashed into a residential neighbourhood on the outskirts of Khartoum, the regional government said February 26.

The Antonov aircraft went down on Tuesday night near Wadi Seidna air base, one of the army's largest military hubs in Omdurman, northwest of the capital.

The army, which has been at war with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since April 2023, said the plane crashed during takeoff, killing and injuring both military personnel and civilians.

"After a final tally, the number of martyrs reached 46, with 10 injured," the Khartoum regional government's media office said in a statement.

The army-aligned health ministry had previously reported at least 19 dead.

Witnesses described hearing a loud explosion and seeing several homes damaged in the area. The crash also caused power outages in nearby neighbourhoods.



The ministry said emergency teams rushed injured civilians, including children, to a nearby hospital.

A military source cited a technical malfunction as the cause of the crash, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to comment to the media.

The crash came a day after the RSF

claimed responsibility for shooting down a Russian-made Ilyushin aircraft over Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. The paramilitary group said the plane was destroyed with its crew onboard.

The recent escalation follows significant advances by the army in central Sudan and the capital Khartoum in its multi-front offensive against the RSF. (AFP)

29 DEAD DUE TO HAIL, RAIN IN AFGHANISTAN: OFFICIALS

HERAT, AFGHANISTAN (TIP):

Twenty-nine people died in two provinces in Afghanistan due to hail and heavy rain, officials said February 25.

"Twenty-one people were killed and six others were injured" because of hail in western Farah province, said Mohammad Israel Sayar, head of the province's Disaster Management Department.

The victims are members of two families who had gone for a picnic, he said.

In southern Kandahar, the local disaster management department said in a statement that eight people - including women and children -- were killed in several locations due to heavy rain.

"Today, four women who were busy washing clothes were swept away by floodwaters... and only one woman survived," the statement said.

It added that a child drowned in Kandahar while a roof collapsed on a family killing one woman and three children. Among the poorest countries in the world after decades of war, Afghanistan is particularly exposed to the effects of climate change, which scientists say is spurring extreme weather.

It is ranked as the country sixth most vulnerable to climate change.

Drought, floods, land degradation and declining agricultural productivity are key threats, the UN development agency's representative in Afghanistan, Stephen Rodriques, said in 2023.

Flash floods in May last year killed hundreds and swamped swaths of agricultural land in Afghanistan, where 80 percent of people depend on farming to survive. (AFP)

BANGLADESH ARMY CHIEF WARNS COUNTRY 'AT RISK' FROM INFIGHTING

DHAKA (TIP): Bangladesh's army chief on February 25 blamed infighting for deteriorating law and order, warning that the gains of the student-led revolution that toppled the government last August were at risk.

The South Asian nation has been struggling to stem a surge in violent crime, with the security forces arresting thousands this month targeting gangs allegedly connected to the party of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina. "If you can't move beyond your differences and continue meddling and fighting among yourselves, the independence and integrity of the country will be at risk - I warn you," said General Waker-Uz-Zaman, without singling out any group by name. "Since stakeholders are busy accusing each other, miscreants find the situation favourable. They believe they can get away with anything," he said at an army memorial event. "I just want to bring the country and the nation to a stable point and then take a vacation", he said. "After that, we will return to our barracks." (AFP)

Bangladesh students who led anti-Hasina protests launch new party 'Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsad'

27 FEB 2025

DHAKA (TIP): Bangladeshi students who played a key role in overthrowing the government last year have announced a new political party, the latest grouping in heated political jostling ahead of expected elections.

The new Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsad, or Democratic Student Council, includes key organisers from the powerful Students Against Discrimination (SAD) group that spearheaded the uprising that overthrew iron-fisted former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in August.

Politics in Bangladesh are notoriously fractious and other students then accused them of undermining the revolution.

Disputes over representation led to physical clashes among members of the new group when its name was unveiled on February 26.

Other SAD leaders - including members who were included in the interim government that took over after Hasina fled to India -- are expected to launch another separate party on Friday.

The Ganatantrik Chhatra Sangsad also includes students formerly allied to the youth wing of Hasina's Awami League.

"While accommodating students from



the Awami League, we ensured that none of them were involved in mass murder or torture during the revolution," Zahid Ahsan, a leader of the new group, told AFP.

"We are dedicated to protecting student rights," he said, adding they wanted to "uphold the spirit" of the mass movement that rallied to end Hasina's autocratic grip.

Hasina, who remains in self-imposed exile in India, has defied an arrest warrant from Dhaka to face charges that include accusations of crimes against

humanity.

More than 150 people were injured in clashes between rival student groups this month.

Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel Prize-winning microfinance pioneer who heads the caretaker government, has said that general elections will take place in late 2025 or early 2026.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Hasina's long-time opponent, is widely expected to dominate the elections. (AFP)

Pakistan security forces kill 10 terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province

25 FEB 2025

PESHAWAR (TIP): Pakistani security forces killed 10 terrorists in an intelligence-based operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the military's media wing said on February 24.

According to a statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the operation took place in the Bagh area between Sunday night and early Monday, based on intelligence about terrorist activity.

Security forces engaged the militants, killing 10. A sanitisation operation is underway to clear any remaining threats in the area.

This operation follows two separate raids in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan district, where security forces killed seven terrorists a day earlier.

Last week, 30 terrorists were killed in an operation in South Waziristan district.

Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terrorist activities, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, since the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in 2022.

A recent security report by the Islamabad-based think-tank Pak



Institute for Peace Studies highlighted a rise in terror attacks, with 2024 levels comparable to those of 2014.

While terrorists no longer control territories as they did in 2014, insecurity in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan remains a major concern.

The report noted that 95 per cent of terror attacks in 2024 were concentrated

in these two provinces.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded the highest number of incidents, with 295 attacks.

Meanwhile, attacks by Baloch insurgent groups, particularly the Balochistan Liberation Army, surged by 119 per cent, with 171 incidents reported in Balochistan. (PTI)

Opened by Vice President Dhankhar, meditation meet appeals to leaders to promote the practice for public good

THE 2ND GLOBAL CONFERENCE OF MEDITATION LEADERS IN DELHI MADE A CASE FOR INTEGRATING MEDITATION INTO GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, AND HEALTHCARE.



In his inaugural address, Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankhar emphasized the transformative power of meditation.

**BY PARVEEN CHOPRA
FOUNDING EDITOR, ALOTUSINTHEMUD.COM**

NEW DELHI (TIP): For me, a long-time meditator, it was heart-warming to participate in the Global Conference of Meditation Leaders (GCML) and witness meditation getting the attention it deserves and to note that it is spreading fast the world over just like yoga has in recent times.

I was representing ALotusInTheMud.com as Digital Media Partner at the mega event organized by the Buddha-CEO Quantum Foundation at India's most prestigious venue of Bharat Mandapam in Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

Inaugurated by the Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, the 2nd GCML presented an array of spiritual masters and eminent speakers on February 21-22. Aiming for social change and world peace through Project Meditation, the conference advocated integrating meditation into governance, leadership, education, and healthcare.

In his inaugural address, Vice President Dhankhar emphasized the transformative power of meditation, calling it "not just an ancient practice, but food for the soul and a necessity for peace and well-being." Quoting the Bhagavad Gita, he urged, "???? ??" (Become a Yogi) and highlighted India's role in championing meditation on global platforms, aligning with the United Nations' recognition of World Meditation Day (December 21).

KAMLESH PATEL 'DAAJI' - MEDITATE TO CONNECT TO THE 'SUPER HEART'



Heartfulness guru Kamlesh Patel 'Daaji' said that meditation serves as the vehicle to ultimate wisdom.

Padma Bhushan honoree Kamlesh Patel 'Daaji', spiritual guide of the Heartfulness Movement, said that meditation serves as the vehicle to ultimate wisdom, allowing us to transcend superficial thinking and access profound inner guidance. Quoting the Gayatri Mantra, he invoked the divine source of all wisdom, urging the audience to embrace meditation as a path to self-transformation and harmony.

Pointing to the unique perceptive ability of women

that bypasses intellect and connects directly to the "super heart", Daaji said men have to meditate to connect to this super heart.



Former CBI chief and director general of NHRC D.R. Kaarthikeyan read out the Resolution adopted by the conference encouraging meditation in educational institutions, organizations, and governments.

Other highlights of Day 1 of the conference included Padma Shri honoree D.R. Kaarthikeyan's welcome address as Chairman of the Conference. Dr. H.R. Nagendra, founder of S-VYASA Yoga University, said meditation is a measurable science. Chandra Pualamarasetti, founder of Buddha-CEO Quantum Foundation based in Bangalore, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Science of Meditation.

SISTER SHIVANI - MEDITATION TO RAISE PLANETARY VIBRATION



Founding Editor, ALotusInTheMud.com Parveen Chopra greeted Sister BK Shivani before her engaging talk at the conference.

Rajyogini Sister BK Shivani, the Spiritual Mentor of Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organization, shared tips to deepen our meditation and contribute towards a more peaceful world.

She said that meditation means mastering our mind and our sense organs, not just while meditating, but being peaceful even in a crisis, being compassionate and forgiving even when the other person is hurting.

She strongly suggested switching off screens as they are affecting our meditation, and affecting our lives as we get addicted to them.

Referring to Covid years' fear and anxiety dipping

collective consciousness, Sister Shvani invoked millions of people meditating worldwide to raise the vibration of the planet.



Eminent New York attorney Ravi Batra with family while visiting Bharat Mandapam stopped by to say hello to Parveen Chopra

Shri Bhikkhu Sanghasena, Founder of the Mahabodhi International Meditation Center in Leh, Ladakh, exhorted the young generation to take to meditation. "We see Indian youths achieving great things in IT, now let us motivate them to become yoga and meditation masters to spread spirituality around the world."

Arguing that only the ancient wisdom of India can save the world, the Buddhist master pointed out, "America and Western countries have done great things in science and technology, but they have failed to bring peace and harmony in the world. This is the century of Asia. Within Asia, it is the century of India. Within India, it is the century of meditation and yoga."

ON THE POLICY FRONT

Dr Vinod Paul, Niti Aayog Member overseeing public health in India, discussed interventions needed to scale meditation in the country. He recalled being a student at AIIMS, New Delhi, in the 1970s, when pioneering research on the neurophysiology of meditation was conducted there.

Dr Gopala Krishna, Founder of Spiritual Tablets Research Foundation in London, discussed the miraculous effects of meditation on physical vitality and mental well-being in his presentation.

MEDITATION RESOLUTION TO BE PRESENTED TO GOVERNMENTS

In his closing remarks, D.R. Kaarthikeyan, former CBI chief and director general of National Human Rights Commission, and ambassador for many spiritual organizations said that while the Buddha-CEO Quantum Foundation is inspired by Brahmarsi Patriji, who promoted AnaPana Sati, or Breath Awareness meditation, "Our objective is to spread meditation - of any type - all over the world to fulfill Patriji's mission."

He read out the Resolution adopted by GCML2. In part it says, "There is a need to promote the practice of meditation in the universal public. It should be encouraged in all forms, in educational institutions, organizations, governments, and other sectors." He said the Resolution will be submitted first to the President of India, the Prime Minister of India and then the leaders around the world.

Buddha-CEO Quantum Foundation hosted GCML 2025 with PMC Hindi TV channel, S-VYASA University, and Heartfulness Institute. Spiritual web magazine ALotusInTheMud.com was the Digital Media Partner.

For more information: <https://gcml.buddhaceo.org/>

Styling tips for plus-size fashion with a body-positive attitude

When it comes to plus-size fashion, finding the perfect balance between style, comfort, and confidence is key. Priyanka Kankaria, co-founder and design head, Fashor shares some styling tips on how to wear these versatile pieces to create a chic and comfortable look:

Play with Layers and Proportions

KURTA SETS: A well-tailored kurta set is a timeless addition to any plus-size wardrobe. Look for sets with an A-line or empire waist cut to create a flattering silhouette. Pair with wide-leg trousers or straight-cut pants for a balanced look. If you're feeling bold, experiment with a long, open-front cardigan or a jacket to add depth and texture without compromising on comfort.

STYLING TIP: If you're wearing a long kurta, try pairing it with a cropped jacket to break up the length and add an element of structure.

Maxi Dresses: Effortless Elegance

Maxi Dresses: Maxi dresses are ideal for adding a touch of glamour while ensuring maximum comfort. "Fashor's plus-size maxi dresses often feature flattering waistlines (like empire or high-waisted) that accentuate curves beautifully. A cinched waist or wrap-style maxi dress can create a more defined shape without feeling restrictive," says Kankaria.

STYLING TIP: Pair your maxi dress with a statement belt or a long,



flowing scarf to add dimension. Don't shy away from bold prints and colors—patterns can help create a sense of movement and balance.

Coordinate Sets for Effortless Style

Coord Sets: Coord sets are the epitome of easy, chic dressing. Kankaria adds, "Fashor's plus-size co-ord sets, whether it's a top and pants combination or a skirt and blouse pairing, are designed to be both flattering and fashionable. Opt for high-waisted bottoms to elongate your legs, and choose tops with interesting details like peplum cuts or asymmetrical hems to add visual interest."

STYLING TIP: You can mix and match coord sets with other wardrobe staples like a denim jacket or blazer to create a versatile look for any occasion, whether casual or semi-formal.

Choose Flattering Fabrics

Fabric Choice: When selecting clothing, fabric is just as important as fit. Choose kurtas, kurta sets, and maxi dresses that are made from breathable, flowy fabrics and provide comfort while enhancing the drape of the garment. Soft cottons, jersey, rayon, and silk blends are great options that allow you to move freely while staying stylish.

STYLING TIP: Opt for fabrics with a slight stretch for added comfort and flexibility. Fabrics like rayon or cotton blends are not only breathable but also give garments a smooth, flattering drape that enhances your shape.

Accessorize to Elevate Your Look

Accessories: Adding the right accessories can elevate any outfit. For kurtas and maxi dresses, consider pairing your look with bold jewelry like chunky earrings, layered necklaces, or oversized rings. Statement handbags and scarves can also add an extra touch of elegance or personality to your ensemble.

STYLING TIP: When wearing coord sets, try adding a wide belt to accentuate your waist or a pair of stylish heels to add some height and confidence.

Women experience more neck pain than men

Shedding new light on how differently men and women experience pain, researchers, including one of Indian-origin, have found that women are 1.38 times more likely than men to report neck pain due to cervical degenerative disc disease.

Cervical degenerative disc disease is a common cause of neck pain. Symptoms include stiff or inflexible neck, burning, tingling and numbness. Pain is most prevalent when the patient is upright or moving the head.

The study by Meda Raghavendra and Joseph Holtman from Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine included 3,337 patients who were treated at Loyola's Pain Management Centre.

The findings were presented at



the annual meeting of the American Academy of Pain Medicine in Palm Springs, California, US.

The study adds to the growing body of research on the differences in which men and women experience pain.

Previous studies have found that females are more likely to be treated at pain clinics for chronic pain and that certain painful conditions, such as migraine headaches and fibromyalgia, are more common in women.

Various explanations have been proposed, including hormonal differences and the belief that men may be less willing to report pain.

Raghavendra and Holtman also conducted a similar study of patients who were treated at Loyola's Pain Management Centre for lumbosacral degenerative disc disease or lower back pain. The prevalence in females was slightly higher than the prevalence in males, but this difference was not statistically significant, the researchers said.

Gulab Jamun

Ingredients

For the Gulab Jamun Balls:

- 1 cup milk powder, ¼ cup all-purpose flour (maida), ¼ tsp baking soda, 2 tbsp ghee (clarified butter), ¼ cup milk (warm), Oil or ghee (for frying)

For the Sugar Syrup:

- 1 ½ cups sugar, 1 ½ cups water, 4-5 cardamom pods (crushed), 1 tsp rose water (optional), A few saffron strands (optional)



Instructions:

- In a pan, mix sugar, water, and crushed cardamom.
- Bring to a boil and let it simmer for 5 minutes.
- Add rose water and saffron strands (if using). Keep warm.
- In a bowl, mix milk powder, flour, and baking soda. Add ghee and mix until crumbly.
- Slowly add warm milk and knead into a soft, smooth dough. Do not over-knead.
- Cover and let the dough rest for 10 minutes.
- Divide the dough into small, smooth balls (avoid cracks). Heat oil or ghee on low-medium heat.
- Fry the balls until golden brown, stirring gently for even cooking.
- Remove and drain excess oil.
- Add the fried jamuns to the warm syrup.
- Let them soak for at least 2 hours.

Mix Vegetable Curry

Ingredients:

For the Vegetables:

- 1 cup cauliflower florets, ½ cup carrots (chopped), ½ cup beans (chopped), ½ cup green peas, ½ cup potatoes (diced), ½ cup capsicum (chopped),

For the Gravy:

- 1 large onion (finely chopped), 2 tomatoes (pureed), 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste, 2 tbsp cashew paste (soak cashews in warm water and blend), ½ tsp turmeric powder, 1 tsp red chili powder, 1 tsp coriander powder, ½ tsp garam masala, ½ tsp cumin seeds, 1 tbsp oil or ghee, ½ cup fresh cream (optional), Salt to taste, Fresh coriander for garnish

Instructions

- Boil or steam the cauliflower, carrots, beans, potatoes, and peas until slightly tender.
- Keep the capsicum aside to be sautéed later.
- Heat oil or ghee in a pan, add cumin seeds and let them splutter.
- Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown. Add ginger-garlic paste and cook until the raw smell disappears.
- Add tomato puree and cook until the oil separates. Mix in turmeric, red chili powder, coriander powder, and salt. Stir well.

- Add cashew paste and cook for another 2 minutes.
- Add the boiled vegetables and capsicum to the gravy. Mix well. Pour in ½ cup water (adjust consistency) and simmer for 5 minutes.

- 3. Add fresh cream and garam masala. Garnish with fresh coriander and serve hot.



Prevent heart blockages and keep your arteries clear

Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death worldwide, and artery blockages play a significant role in this condition. Blocked arteries can lead to heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiovascular issues. Fortunately, there are natural ways to prevent plaque buildup and maintain healthy arteries. By adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle, you can improve circulation, reduce inflammation, and lower your risk of developing heart disease. Here's how:

Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet

A nutritious diet is crucial for keeping your arteries clear and your heart functioning properly.

Increase Fiber Intake

Fiber helps lower bad cholesterol (LDL) levels and reduces plaque buildup. Include:

- Whole grains (oats, brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat)
- Fruits (apples, berries, oranges, pears)
- Vegetables (leafy greens, carrots, broccoli, bell peppers)
- Legumes (lentils, beans, chickpeas)

Choose Healthy Fats

Not all fats are bad for your heart. Choose unsaturated fats, which help reduce cholesterol and inflammation:

- Olive oil, avocado, and nuts (almonds, walnuts, flaxseeds, chia seeds)
- Fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and sardines, which are rich in omega-3 fatty acids
- Avoid trans fats found in processed foods, fried foods, and hydrogenated oils

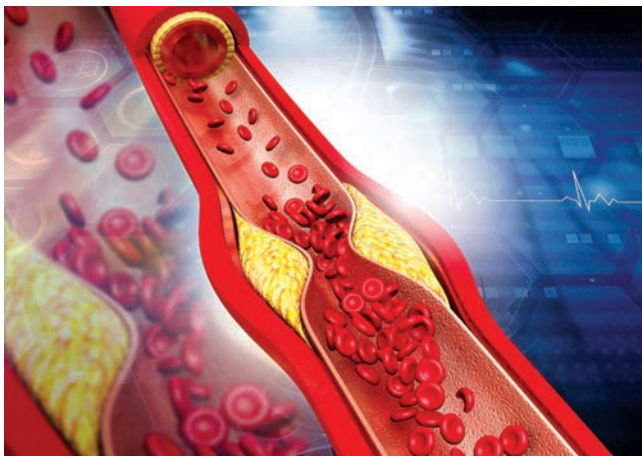
Reduce Sugar and Processed Foods

Excess sugar and processed foods contribute to inflammation and high cholesterol. Instead of:

- Sugary drinks, opt for water or herbal teas
- Processed snacks, choose fresh fruits or homemade snacks

Control Sodium Intake

Too much salt raises blood pressure, which can damage arteries over time. Reduce sodium by:



- Choosing fresh, unprocessed foods
- Using herbs and spices instead of salt

Stay Physically Active

Exercise strengthens the heart and improves circulation, preventing plaque buildup.

Aerobic Exercises

Engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week, such as:

- Walking or jogging
- Cycling
- Swimming
- Dancing

Strength Training

Incorporate strength training exercises twice a week to maintain muscle mass and boost metabolism.

Stay Active Throughout the Day

- Avoid prolonged sitting; take breaks to walk around
- Use stairs instead of elevators
- Stretch regularly to improve circulation

Manage Stress Effectively

Chronic stress can lead to high blood pressure and arterial damage. Reduce stress through:

- Meditation and deep breathing exercises
- Yoga and tai chi
- Spending time in nature
- Engaging in hobbies and social activities

How diabetes increases heart disease risk

Diabetes is a chronic disease that involves an elevated level of blood sugar. It has a high risk of causing heart disease due to the effects of high blood sugar levels, which damage blood vessels and nerves controlling the heart.

This damage makes it more likely for plaque to build up in the arteries (atherosclerosis), increasing the risk of heart attacks, stroke, and high blood pressure. The complex relationship between these two conditions makes vigilant diabetes management essential.

The link between diabetes and heart disease is due to the damage that high blood sugar does to blood vessels.

Over time, high glucose can:

Damage to blood vessels: High blood sugar weakens and narrows blood vessels, making it difficult for blood to flow to the heart and other vital organs. This can lead to atherosclerosis, where fatty deposits, known as plaque, build up inside the arteries.

Nerve damage: Diabetes can damage nerves responsible for the heart and blood vessels, affecting the heart's rhythm and the regulation of blood pressure.

Increase blood pressure: High levels of blood sugar can cause an increase in blood pressure, a significant risk factor for heart disease.

Raise cholesterol: It may push up the levels of cholesterol, which can lead to an increase in plaque creation within the arteries.

TYPES OF HEART PROBLEMS CAUSED BY DIABETES

Individuals suffering from diabetes have an increased risk for a number of heart-related problems, such as:

Coronary artery disease: This is the most common form of heart disease; it is brought about by narrowing of the arteries supplying blood to the heart.

Heart attack: Complete blockage of a coronary artery may cause heart attack, an event that might prove fatal in many cases.

Stroke: A stroke is a condition that results from the interruption of blood flow to the brain, usually caused by a blood clot.

Heart failure: This is a condition in which the heart muscle becomes weak and cannot pump enough blood to meet the body's needs.

By proactively managing your diabetes and modifying those and other risk factors, you can reduce your risk of heart disease immensely and live a much healthier, more energetic life.

Source: India Today

One sleepless night can impact immune function

A single sleepless night can significantly impact the immune system, leading to increased inflammation and a higher risk of chronic diseases. The study conducted by scientists at Kuwait's Dasman Diabetes Institute, published in The Journal of Immunology, sheds light on the specific mechanisms behind this phenomenon.

The study reveals alarming insights into the effects of sleep deprivation on the immune system. One key takeaway is that sleep deprivation triggers an increase in nonclassical monocytes (NCMs), immune cells that amplify inflammation.

Another is that it leads to inflammation regardless of weight, as these changes occur regardless of a person's weight, suggesting that even lean, healthy individuals may face inflammatory consequences from poor sleep. What's more? Sleep deprivation disrupts the balance between pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory immune responses, leading to a dominant pro-inflammatory state.

How were samples for the research collected? The research team recruited 237 healthy Kuwaiti adults across a spectrum of body weights and carefully monitored their sleep patterns using advanced



wearable activity trackers.

Though previous research established connections between obesity and poor sleep, this new study goes further by identifying specific immune mechanisms that may explain how sleep disruption contributes to chronic inflammatory conditions.

The implications of a sleepless night – from chronic disease risk and immune system vulnerability to cognitive and mood impairment – highlighted how we need to take proactive steps to prioritise sleep and mitigate the risks associated with poor sleep.

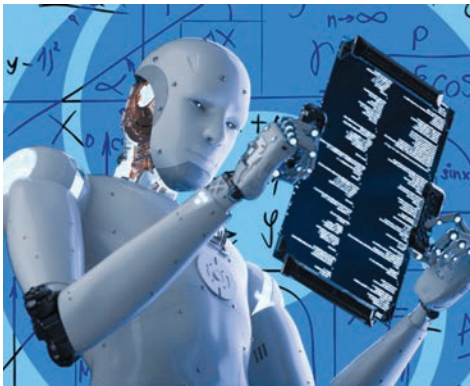
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Google Claims Its AI Tool Can Beat Math Olympiad Gold Medalists

Google has developed an artificial intelligence (AI) math system that can outwit human gold medalists at the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO). AlphaGeometry2, the AI problem solver is capable of solving 84 per cent of geometry problems posed in the IMO where the gold-medal winners can only solve 81.8 per cent of the problems on average. IMO problems are known for their difficulty, and solving them requires a deep understanding of mathematical concepts -- something which the AI models had not been able to achieve up until now.

Engineered by DeepMind, AlphaGeometry managed to perform at the level of silver medallists in January last year when it was unveiled. However, a year later, Google claims the performance of its upgraded system had surpassed the level of average gold-medalists.

To enhance the system's abilities, the California-based company said it extended the original AlphaGeometry language to tackle harder problems involving movements of objects, and problems containing linear equations of angles, ratios, and distances.

"This, together with other additions, has markedly improved the coverage rate of the AlphaGeometry language on IMO 2000-2024 geometry problems from 66 per cent to 88 per cent."

Using its state-of-the-art Gemini AI tool, Google also improved the search process of AlphaGeometry2 to make it better at language modelling.

"The team also introduced the ability for the AI to reason by moving geometric objects around a plane - allowing it to move a point along a line to change the height of a triangle, for instance - and for it to solve linear equations."

Despite achieving an incredible 84 per cent efficiency rate in solving tricky math problems, Google said there is still room for improvement.

"Our domain language does not allow talking about variable number of points, non-linear equations and problems involving inequalities, which must be addressed in order to fully solve geometry," Google explained.

Scientists call for open access to X's data for academic research

Researchers are calling for free access to social media platform X's data for academic analyses, insights from which can help understand trends in political engagement.

Efforts of a research group from Saarland University, Germany, were halted abruptly when X's owner Elon Musk blocked free access to X's data for academic research purposes in June 2023. The US-based entrepreneur acquired the platform, then known as Twitter, in October 2022.

The team wanted to know whether Twitter prioritised tweets from politicians from the right of the political spectrum between 2021 and 2023.

"It is simply not acceptable that access to these vast amounts of data is either unaffordable or provided so selectively that no meaningful analyses can be conducted," lead researcher Ingmar Weber, a professor of artificial intelligence (AI) and chair for societal computing at Saarland University, said.

The researchers called for implementation of legislation to ensure that academic researchers can regain access to social network data.

Over a period of two years, before the abrupt end, the team analysed tweets from 6,550 Twitter accounts associated with about 8,600 politicians from twelve countries known to have the highest user activity on X, including India, Argentina, Germany and the US.



The findings, published in the Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media, revealed no significant difference between the dissemination of content from left-leaning or right-leaning politicians across the countries analysed.

However, the team observed a considerable increase in the number of likes, a slight increase in the likes-per-retweet ratio and a significant reduction in the number of retweets post Musk acquisition.

"We believe that this is because early followers of a Twitter account are more politically engaged and tend to support content more actively. But as the political message gets spread to a broader audience, it becomes more likely that the number of likes will go up, while the retweet rate declines," study author and computer scientist Brahmani Nutakki, a PhD scholar at Saarland University, said.

However, the team faced challenges while analysing data, many of which were related to changes introduced between November 2022 and June 2023 following Musk's takeover -- one of them being the removal of rules prohibiting hateful conduct. The rules were aimed at preventing attacks on individuals.

"Changes to Twitter's functionality also resulted in changes in the user population, which made it difficult for us to attribute the changes we observed to a single specific cause," Nutakki said.

Further, "political content on the platform reached a wider audience following these changes," according to the study's findings.

"In the period before June 2023, we found no evidence of a significant difference in engagement patterns between users on the left and those on the right of the political spectrum," Weber said.

While there are media reports of instances such as posts of Republican politicians receiving greater engagement than those made by Democrats or hate content spiking, an academic analysis of X's data is needed for "continuous scrutiny".

"These worrying changes to social media platforms such as Twitter/X are jeopardising the democratic structures in many countries and require continuous scrutiny by academic researchers," Weber said.

Meta reportedly in talks to build a massive AI data centre campus that would cost over \$200 billion

Meta is reportedly exploring plans to build a massive data centre campus to support its artificial intelligence projects, with costs potentially exceeding \$200 billion, according to The Information. The company is said to be considering locations in Louisiana, Wyoming, and Texas, with senior executives visiting potential sites this month. Meta has been transparent about its growing commitment to the development of AI. However, a Meta spokesperson dismissed the report, stating that the company's data centre plans and spending have already been disclosed and that anything beyond that is "pure speculation."

Last month, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg revealed plans to invest up to \$65 billion in 2025 to expand AI infrastructure. In comparison, Microsoft is set to spend around \$80 billion in fiscal 2025 on data centres, while Amazon expects its 2025 investment to surpass the \$75 billion estimated for 2024.

The report comes days after Apple announced that it will invest \$500 billion in the US. That will cover its partnerships with thousands of



suppliers nationwide, direct employment, Apple Intelligence infrastructure, data centers, corporate offices, and Apple TV+ productions across 20 states. Apple plans to expand its data center capacity in North Carolina, Iowa, Oregon, Arizona, and Nevada.

Last month, OpenAI, along with SoftBank, launched a new company called the Stargate Project, which is aimed at "building a new AI infrastructure" through an ambitious investment of \$500 billion over the next

four years. OpenAI announced that the Stargate Project will begin deploying an initial \$100 billion immediately to build AI data centres for OpenAI in the United States.

Microsoft also made a similar commitment earlier this year in India. Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella announced a \$3 billion investment in India over the next two years towards AI and cloud infrastructure and training initiatives. The announcement was made during Nadella's visit to India in January.

Bitcoin slides under \$90,000, erasing some of the gains made under Trump

The price of bitcoin fell below \$90,000 and other cryptocurrencies saw large drops Tuesday morning, erasing some of the gains digital assets have made since President Donald Trump took office on a pro-crypto agenda.

Bitcoin, the world's most popular cryptocurrency, was trading at about \$89,000 as the U.S. stock market opened. That's down from about \$106,000, which was the price around Trump's inauguration. The decline in bitcoin and other crypto assets accelerated after a report showed a bigger-than-expected drop in consumer confidence for this month.

Cryptocurrency is highly volatile, and prices can change rapidly. Even with Tuesday's drop, bitcoin is still up significantly since Trump won last year's election. Supporters said the price drops represent a good investment opportunity.

"Buy the dips!!!" Eric Trump, the president's son, said on the social media platform X. He replaced the letter B with the symbol for bitcoin.

It's been a mixed bag for the cryptocurrency industry in recent weeks. The president and pro-crypto members of Congress have promised to usher in a golden age for the industry and pledged quick action to craft friendly regulations. And in recent weeks, regulators at the Securities and Exchange Commission have signaled plans to drop enforcement actions against key industry players, like Coinbase and Robinhood.

But a large hack of a major cryptocurrency exchange -- one of the biggest thefts of all time -- and a major scandal involving the president of Argentina and a meme coin have highlighted some of the vulnerabilities in a relatively still nascent industry.

Last week the Dubai-based cryptocurrency exchange Bybit announced it was a victim of a sophisticated hack that stole about \$1.5 billion worth of digital currency. A number of security researchers believe North Korea, which authorities have blamed for several other major crypto hacks, was behind the theft.

Argentine President Javier Milei is facing a corruption



probe into his promotion of a meme coin, called LIBRA, whose price soared then quickly crashed after Milei posted about it on X. Milei has distanced himself from the meme coin and denied any wrongdoing.

Meme coins are a highly speculative form of cryptocurrency that are mostly minted as jokes and have no intrinsic value but can sometimes soar in price.

One of the crypto developers involved in the LIBRA coin said meme coins are essentially a rigged game that benefits a small group of people at the expense of retail investors in a recent interview with an independent journalist.

That developer, Hayden Davis, also revealed he was involved in the launch of First Lady Melania Trump's meme coin just before her husband took office. The Melania meme coin was trading at about 90 cents on Tuesday, down from more than \$13 when it first launched. The president also helped launch a meme coin just before he took office that's seen a similar price trajectory.

Solana, a major cryptocurrency that's a key player in the meme coin ecosystem, has seen its price roughly cut in half since Trump's inauguration.

Amazon India hit with \$39 million penalty for apparel trademark violation

The Delhi High Court has ruled against Amazon, directing one of its units to pay \$39 million, which is over Rs 337 crores, in damages for violating trademark rights.

The lawsuit was filed by Lifestyle Equities, the owner of the Beverly Hills Polo Club (BHPC) horse trademark. It claimed that Amazon India was selling apparel with a similar logo at lower prices. The court mentioned that stated that the infringing brand belonged to Amazon Technologies and was sold on Amazon India platform.

Legal experts regard this as a landmark ruling in Indian trademark law against a US company. The Delhi High Court, in its 85-page order, stated that the logo on the infringing product was almost identical to BHPC's trademark and issued a 'permanent injunction' against Amazon.

The court said that Amazon had indulged in deliberate and wilful infringement.

It also mentioned that Amazon runs its apparel trade under the 'SYMBOL' brand, and the infringing horse logo was used on 'Symbol' branded apparel.

It is pointed out that Amazon is widely recognised as one of the key players in the e-commerce industry. As a result, it has the capacity and resources to utilise its strong presence to promote its own products and also those which it chooses to promote.

Apple to invest in Indonesia in bid to end iPhone sales ban in country

One of the world's largest smartphone manufacturers, Apple, has signed an agreement with Indonesia to invest \$1 billion in the southeast Asian nation in a bid to end the ban on iPhone sales in the country.

The agreement was announced by Industry Minister Agus Gumiwang Kartasasmita in a media briefing in Jakarta on Wednesday, as reported by Bloomberg Technoz. The process to issue a sale permit to Apple will begin, which will allow the company to sell its latest iPhone 16 series models in Indonesia.

Indonesian government had refused to issue a sale permit to Apple in October. The country's government had cited Apple's failure to comply with domestic manufacturing requirements for smartphones and tablets. Apple had then promised to invest \$1 billion in Indonesia, which President Prabowo Subianto had asked his ministers to accept.

The ban was upheld by Indonesia's Industry Ministry in January as it sought better terms to the agreement. Apple agreeing to the country's terms will help Indonesia in attracting local



manufacturing and boosting government had previously said that investments by a foreign company. The Apple had invested only about \$95

million in Indonesia.

The agreement also comes at an opportune time for Prabowo, according to Bloomberg. The optics of a US tech giant yielding to his administration could be used to boost his domestic standing, which has taken a hit following multiple policy U-turns that have generated confusion. On top of that, his plan for sweeping spending cuts that threatened jobs and scholarships triggered days of protests last week.

For Apple, the deal gives it access to Indonesia's massive consumer market at a time when sales in China have slowed. Though Apple ranks outside the top five smartphone brands in Indonesia, the country's population of 278 million people — more than half of whom are under the age of 44 and tech-savvy — is too good an opportunity to miss.

The agreement includes the establishment of a plant on the island of Batam to produce AirTags, a device that allows users to track their luggage, pets or other belongings, Bloomberg Technoz cited the minister as saying. Apple is bringing on board one of its significant suppliers, Luxshare Precision Industry Co., to operate the plant.

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - MAR 3 TO MAR 9, 2025

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA

**ARIES**

Ganesha says this week is a time of new possibilities for Aries natives. You will be full of enthusiasm and energy, which will make you ready to face any challenge. This is the right time to unleash creativity at work. Also, pay some attention to your relationships. Spend time with family and friends and strengthen those relationships. Your feelings and desires will be clear, so it is important to maintain honesty in communication. If you are thinking of starting a new project or business, this week is favorable for you. Believe in yourself and move towards your dreams. Take care of your health; a balanced diet and regular exercise will bring energy and freshness to your life. Overall, this week brings you the message of progress and positive change. Make your plans in a comfortable and positive environment and do not hesitate to implement them.

**TAURUS**

Ganesha says this week indicates important changes for Taurus natives. Your hard work and determination will bear fruit, which is likely to bring you success in your professional life. This is the time to focus on your goals. Positivity will also come in social life, staying connected with friends and family will give you mental peace. You may experience a new connection in an old relationship, which will fill you with happiness. It is important to be health conscious; a balanced diet and regular exercise will help maintain your energy. From a financial point of view, it will be necessary to control expenses this week. So, decide wisely before spending. Overall, this week will bring positive results from your hard work. Maintain confidence and move forward with positivity.

**GEMINI**

Ganesha says this week will be very positive for Gemini natives. It is time for you to make social contacts and new relationships. You will attract people's attention due to your brightness and communication skills. Mental stimulation will increase this week and new perceptions will come into your thoughts. This is the time for you to unleash your creativity. Express your ideas clearly, especially when it comes to your career. Be cautious in financial matters. Make a

thoughtful decision while investing. Any major financial decision needs to be thought about a little now. In terms of health, focus on regular exercise and a good diet. This will also strengthen your mental health. Love relationships may also be turbulent this week, but if you communicate openly you can strengthen the relationship with your partner. Overall, this week will open the door to opportunities and new possibilities for you. Be alert and move forward with positivity.

**CANCER**

Ganesha says for Cancer, this week you will get an opportunity to dive into the depths of your emotions. It is time to focus on family and close relationships. People close to you may expect support from you, so be ready to help them. Some new challenges may come your way in work life, but with your hard work and perseverance, you will be able to face them. Maintaining cooperation with your colleagues will be important. It is advisable to be health-conscious this week. Give priority to your mental and physical health, exercise regularly, and have a balanced diet. Be cautious in financial matters, where some expenses may be unplanned. Invest wisely and avoid wasteful expenditure. This is also a time for self-analysis. You will get a chance to redefine your goals and desires, which will give you a new path forward. This week is a time of intense self-building and empowerment for you.

**LEO**

Ganesha says this week you will be full of energy and enthusiasm. You may face new challenges, but your confidence will help you overcome them. During this time, relationships with your close ones will become even stronger. You will get an opportunity to spend some time with your family, which will give you mental peace. In the professional field, you will remain dedicated to your work and get support from colleagues. This is the time to work on new projects, which can bring out your creativity and potential. In terms of health, do not forget to include exercise in your daily routine. It will make you mentally and physically strong. Overall, this week is a time of growth and dedication for you. Move forward with positivity, and channel the energy around you into good work.

**VIRGO**

Ganesha says this week your focus will be on work and personal development. You will work very hard to fulfill your plans. Your discretion and analytical ability will again be in your favor, allowing

you to make decisions with great ease. During this time, there is a need to be a little careful in relationships. This is a good time to resolve any old differences or situations. Keep the communication open and honest, so that you can strengthen your relationships. It is also important to pay attention to your health. Regular exercise and a balanced diet will be beneficial for you. Mentally, this time will also bring positive results for you, so focus on meditation and self-reflection. This week you may get some new opportunities that can prove to be helpful in your career. Be prepared, and do not let any opportunity go by. Prioritize your tasks and manage your time properly. Overall, this week will give you an inspiring opportunity to move toward your goals. Believe in yourself and keep moving forward.

**LIBRA**

Ganesha says this week you will feel that new energy is being infused into your relationships. Communication with your colleagues and friends will improve, which will show you positive results. This is the time to share your thoughts and understand the feelings of others. Your creativity will be at its peak this week. You will get new inspiration in art, music, or any other creative work. This is the right time to implement your ideas on a project, so do not forget to work on a new idea. On the health front, a little attention is required. It is important to maintain regularity and balance in daily activities. A little yoga or meditation will also help keep your mind calm. Keep an eye on your financial matters this week. Try to avoid unnecessary expenses and follow a budget. Such caution will give you financial stability in the future. Overall, this week will bring positive changes and new possibilities for you. This is the right time to understand your relationships deeply and recognize your creative side.

**SCORPIO**

Ganesha says this week your hard work and dedication are going to be rewarded. There are signs of success in whatever work you put your hands on. This time will also prove to be positive for your relationships. Spending time with family and friends will give you mental peace. This is also a time for self-analysis. Pay attention to your feelings and thoughts, this will give you more clarity towards your goals. Take care of your health; regular exercise and a balanced diet will keep you refreshed. If you are considering any financial matter, then it will be beneficial to make a well-thought-out decision. Try to bring warmth back to an old relationship; light conversation can revive the bond you once had. Moving

towards spirituality will be beneficial for you. Meditation or yoga can give you energy and mental clarity. Overall, this week will bring you satisfaction and positivity.

SAGITTARIUS

Sagittarius

Ganesha says this week brings a sign of prosperity and new possibilities for Sagittarius natives. Clarity and energy in your thoughts will increase, which will enable you to make better decisions toward your goals. This week, try to spend time with your friends and family. You will spread positivity by participating in group activities. It is important to maintain harmony with colleagues at the workplace, note that proficiency in communication will be beneficial for you. Your creativity will be at its peak this week, which is why you have the opportunity to start new projects. Financial conditions are also likely to remain stable, but expenses have to be controlled. Take care in terms of health, a little rest and self-care are necessary. Regular exercise and a proper diet will keep your mental and physical health strong. In summary, this week brings a message of new beginnings, harmony, and positive relationships for Sagittarius. Channel your energy in the right direction and move forward!



Capricorn

CAPRICORN

Ganesha says this week some special opportunities may come your way. Your hard work in the field of job and career will pay off, which can give you new responsibilities. Focus on new techniques or skills to increase your efficiency. Your relationships will remain harmonious, but you will need dedication and understanding. Spending time with family members will bring you happiness, and a chance to increase your emotional depth. The financial situation will remain stable, but some extra expenses are likely. Be careful in budgeting and avoid unnecessary shopping. In terms of health, a little exercise and a proper diet will help improve your health. Practice meditation and yoga to relieve mental stress. This week is a time of positive changes for you, just maintain patience and stability.



Aquarius

AQUARIUS

Ganesha says this week new possibilities and opportunities will appear in your life. You will get the best time to focus on your ideas and plans. Try to spend more time with your friends and family, as their support will give you energy and inspiration. From a financial point of

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BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : MARCH 3 TO MARCH 9 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

MARCH 3

Ganesha says don't pursue a career because of fame or money. Doing what you love can help you achieve success. You may be in a positive frame of mind, which may help you recognize proper growth opportunities coming your way. You may commit to multiple tasks at the same time, which is likely to improve your productivity in all aspects of life. This day may bring important events for you.

MARCH 4

Ganesha says today may be the best day for you. Your boss may be supportive today. You are likely to get a promotion for your consistent hard work. You may plan to go somewhere with the family. Your enthusiasm may be at its peak today and you may try something new at the workplace. Your communication with your colleague may be good, which may make you learn new things. Today you may witness a lot of changes, which may give you more time to relax and channel your positive energy. This is the right time to plan for the future.

MARCH 5

Ganesha says that today can be a very auspicious day for you. You may be in a good position as far as professional and personal success is concerned. Peace and harmony may bring good progress in all areas of your life. Your happiness levels may make solid progress in areas of concern today. Today you may enter a new phase of life. This phase may motivate you to work hard and make you competitive. You may get a lot of success today. Your hard work may impress your boss. Today you may show interest in spiritual activities.

MARCH 6

Ganesha says that today can be a very promising day for you. Your communication skills may be able to impress everyone around you. Today you may be in a sociable mood, ready to network with people who can help both professionally and personally. Today you may lead the project at the workplace. You may start new tasks and show great ease in executing them. Plan an outing with your friends today.

MARCH 7

Ganesha says that today can be the best day for you. This day can bring a lot of opportunities at the workplace that can lead you to a good plan. Today your energy level may be at an all-time high, which will help you move forward. May this day bring a lot of happiness and joy in your life. Your day may begin with a lot of positivity. You may dedicate your entire day to yourself and your interests. A changed attitude towards work may keep you ahead of your competitors.

MARCH 8

Ganesha says that today can be the best day for you. You may be able to solve a problem at the workplace, which may make your boss happy. You may plan a business trip with your colleague. Today can be a good day, you may meet some new people in the office. You may learn something new from them and share different stories related to work. You may

travel to a place where the weather is completely different.

MARCH 9

Ganesha says that today you may get good mental strength. You may enjoy working in the office. You are likely to implement new ideas in the family business. Today your hard work may help you implement the plan successfully. Today you may choose to work hard and the financial gains you get today will remain with you for a long time. Today your love life can also be as great as your professional life.

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view, this week can be full of ups and downs. Some unexpected expenses may come up, so take care of your budget. Shared ideas and plans made with friends can bring financial benefits. There will be warmth and clarity in equations in personal relationships. If you are thinking of sharing your feelings with someone, then this is the right time. The proper way of communication will help you strengthen your relationships. In terms of health, you will need to remain physically and mentally active. Yoga and meditation will give peace to your mind and keep you away from stress. This week you will see an increase in your creativity. Consider working on new projects that incorporate your past experiences. This is the time to awaken the talent within you. Remember, stay true to yourself, and do not give up your basic principles. This will keep your life balanced and happy.



PISCES

Ganesha says this week the door to new possibilities opens for you. Due to your creativity and imagination, you will be able to realize many important ideas. You will get excellent results through cooperation with your team at the workplace. The depth of emotions will increase in personal relationships. You will get an opportunity to spend time with your loved ones, which will make your relationship even stronger. There will be romance and excitement in love life. It is important to be cautious in terms of health. Give priority to regular exercise and a balanced diet. Take the help of meditation and yoga

for mental peace. From a financial point of view, this is the time to control expenses. Try to implement financial plans effectively. You can consider a long-term investment. Overall, this week is set to take you to new heights, just maintain a positive attitude and take advantage of the opportunities.

AUTHOR BIO

Chirag Daruwalla is the best astrologer and one of the most famous names in the astrology world. He has more than 18 years of experience. Readers may seek his advice related to career, health, finance, business, money, love and marriage. He has complete knowledge, solutions, and guidance to all the problems related to life. Visit his website chiragdaruwalla.com. He is available for consultations on WhatsApp number +91 8141566266 or by email: info@chiragdaruwalla.com

|| SHREE GANESHAY NAMAH ||



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Nastur Bejan Daruwalla

Sikh History This Week

FEBRUARY 28 TO MARCH 6

28th February



1712: Bahadur Shah died. A war broke out among his sons. Baba Gurbakhash Singh, alias Banda Bahadur, took advantage of the situation and appeared once again in the plains. His first victory was against Islam Khan, the Governor of Lahore. The next to fall was the zone of Sirhind. But this victory was again, short lived.



1921: Gurudwara Rori Sahib was forcibly taken over and brought under the control of SGPC.

1924: All India Congress passed resolution, condemning the killings of Sikhs devotees at Gangsar, Jaito.

1st March

1923 Assa Singh of Phakrudi was arrested from Kiratpur Sahib.

1925 15th Shahidi Jatha of 500 valiant Akali Satyagrahies started their march from Sri Akal Takhat, Amritsar, towards Gangsar, Jaito.

2nd March



1909: Kapur Singh, the Sikh scholar, statesman and

administrator, was born at Mannan Kalan Chakk. The Sikh scholar, statesman and administrator, was born on 2 March 1909 at Mannan Kalan Chakk. His parents (father: Sardar Didar Singh, and mother: Harman Kaur) were upper middle class peasants at Lyallpur, now known as Faisalabad in the modern-day Pakistan. Young Kapur Singh spent his early childhood at Faisalabad where the environment was saturated with the Sikh renaissance movement spearheaded by the Singh Sabha ideology.

1928: Nehru Committee accepted Sikhs right to bear Kirpan.

3rd March

1644 Sixth Patshah, Guru Hargobind Ji departed from this planet at Kirtapur. This is the actual date of Joti Jot, although it is observed on a different date by Guru Khalsa Panth.

1762 Ahmad Shah Abdali, upon reaching Lahore, displays the heads of Sikhs by hanging them on doors and walls.

1921 Speaking at Shaheedi Diwan, Gandhi sought to integrate the Gurudwara reform movement into the national movement against colonialism. He wanted them "to dedicate their martyrdom to Bharat mata and believe that the Khalsa can remain free only in a free India." With this event Gandhi, in his immitable style took politics into religion which the Central Sikh League, a political organisation, had carefully avoided by leaving the reform movement to the SGPC. Gandhi was a "Hindu holy man with political cloak" in quest for power. Siks weren't immediately taken in. However, the damage had been done. Gandhi had sown the seeds of division in the Tat Khalsa which sprouted only a few months later.

1923 Dacoity at Jamser railway station ius committed by the Babbar Akalis.

1924 3rd Shahidi Jatha of 500 valiant Akali Satyagrahies, led by Sardar Santa Singh of Chuck No. 133, Sargodha, courted arrest at Jaito.

1947 Muslim League asked to form government in the Punjab. Sikh leaders met in the chamber of Assembly, Lahore. A mammoth crowd raised provocative slogans. At this point, Master Tara Singh came out, unleashed his sword and said "we shall lay down our lives but won't concede Pakistan." With this, it became famous that Master Tara Singh had cut off the Pakistan Flag. In actuality, Master Tara Singh did not tear any flag. However, being a fiery speaker, it was perceived that he did.

4th March

1716 Marked the killing of Sikhs in Delhi, under the protection of Sarabrah Khan. 100 Sikhs were killed on the first day.

1953 Akali led government of PEPSU province dismissed without any ground.

1988 Jasbir Singh Rode, a nephew of Jarnail Singh



Bhindrawalae, who had been nominated as the Chief Granthi of Sri Akal Takhat, was won over by Rajiv Gandhi, while he was in jail. Under a secret agreement he was released on this day. He tried to confuse the Sikh masses as planned but the Sikh nation rejected him in the same manner as Ragi Darshan Singh. He called a meeting of Sarbat Khalsa at Talwandi Sabo on April 13, 1988. Even this congregation declated that the Sikh nation would not compromise its freedom.

5th March

1716 Marks the begining of systematic execution of 740 Sikh soliders. After their surrender at the fort of Gurdas Nangal, Banda Singh Bahadur, the valiant Sikh General and his 740 solidiers were taken to Delhi. From Mar. 5 through Mar. 11, these solidiers along with Banda Bahadur were executed in groups of 100. They were given the option to adopt Islam and escape execution. However, each one of these solidiers refused the offer and instead willingly accepted shahadet with unflinching faith and fortitude.

1748 Khalsa Panth gathered at Anandpur Sahib for Holla Mehla observations and resolved to gather in Amritsar for Vaisakhi celebrations.

1892 The foundation stone for Khalsa College, a Shiromani education institution for Sikhs, was laid in Amritsar by J.B. Loyal. Prof. Gurmukh Singh was instrumental its establishment after more than a decade of tireless efforts. The College Council was controlled by its Vice-President Sit Attar Singh Bhadaur with Jawahar Singh serving as General Secretary.

1921 Gurudwara Sach Khand (Chuharkana) Sahib was forcibly taken over and brought under the control of SGPC.

1948 Khalsa Panth gathered at Anandpur Sahib for Holla Mehla observations and resolved to gather in Amritsar for Vaisakhi celebrations.

1955 Punjabi Suba Conference was held at Patiala.

1971 Elections to Indian Lower House were held. Akali Dal won 1 of the 13 Punjab seats.

6th March

1752 The cooperation between Sikhs and Mir Mannu snapped as a result of Kaura Mal's death. This was evident from action during Abdali's third invasion. The Sikhs under the patronage of Diwan Kaura Mal, a Khulasa Sikhs, had cooperated with Mir Mannu. henceforth, Mir Mannu as a nominee of Afghans pursued the policy of extirpating Sikhs. If nothing else, their women and children were taken to Nakhas, Lahore, in hundreds, and were subjected to gruesome torture and martyred. In 18 months, he killed about 30,000 Sikhs. The peasentry crushed, because of the Afghan depredations and roving provincial troops in search of the Sikh families, joined the Khalsa fold in large numbers who offered them protection.

1752 Diwan Kodha Mal, also known as Mitha Mal, died while fighting in Lahore.

1834 Peshawar occupied by Sikhs. Ranjit Singh sent a force under Hari Singh Nalwa, Ventura and Court under nominal command of Prince Nau Nihal Singh. Pathan chiefs sent their families away as they were aware of the duplicity Of Shah Shujah and Ranjit Singh's intention to occupy Peshawar. They agreed to enhance the tribute but the Sikh army occupied Peshawar on the pretext that the Prince wanted to see the town and the Pathan chiefs left the city. Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed Governor of Peshawar along with the Governorship Of Hazara. British did not appreciate Sikh occupation of Peshawar. Sikh coins struck from Peshawar.

1921 Gurudwara Manak Sahib was forcibly taken over and brought under the control of SGPC.

Nanda Vrat: A sacred Hindu observance for prosperity and well-being

Nanda Vrat is a significant Hindu religious observance that is performed with deep faith and devotion. It is a special vrat (fast) dedicated to Goddess Nanda, who is believed to be an incarnation of Goddess Durga or Parvati. Devotees undertake this vrat to seek the blessings of the goddess for prosperity, happiness, and well-being. The vrat is especially popular in certain regions of India and is observed with great reverence by both men and women.

This article provides a comprehensive understanding of Nanda Vrat, including its history, significance, rituals, benefits, and the best way to perform it.

Meaning and Significance of Nanda Vrat

The word "Nanda" signifies joy, bliss, and happiness in Sanskrit. It is believed that observing Nanda Vrat removes obstacles in life and brings peace, wealth, and good fortune. It is also considered highly beneficial for those facing difficulties in marriage, health, or financial stability.

Spiritual Significance

- Connection with Goddess Durga/Parvati
- Goddess Nanda is often regarded as an aspect of Goddess Durga or Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva.
- Devotees believe that by worshipping Goddess Nanda, they receive her divine grace, which removes negativity and ensures protection.

Fulfillment of Desires

- Those who undertake the Nanda Vrat with sincerity are believed to be blessed with good fortune, prosperity, and the fulfillment of their desires.

Symbol of Inner Peace and Strength

- Observing this vrat is believed to cleanse one's mind, body, and soul, leading to inner peace and spiritual growth.

Mythological Origins

The origins of Nanda Vrat can be traced back to Hindu mythology. It is believed that Goddess Parvati herself observed this vrat to attain Lord Shiva as her husband. She performed intense penance and observed fasting with utmost devotion, which ultimately led to her divine union with Shiva.

Another legend associates Nanda Vrat with King Harishchandra, who is known for his truthfulness and unwavering commitment to dharma. According to the legend, he was able to overcome extreme hardships by observing this vrat with devotion.

Reference in Scriptures



Important information

Nanda Vrat, Phalgun Krishna Paksha Chaturdashi

Thursday, 27 February 2025

Chaturdashi Begins - 26 February 2025 at 11:08 am

Chaturdashi Ends - 27 February 2025 at 08:55 am

Though specific references to Nanda Vrat in ancient Hindu texts may not be explicitly found, similar fasting rituals dedicated to Goddess Durga, Parvati, or Lakshmi are widely mentioned in scriptures like the Devi Bhagavata Purana and Skanda Purana. These texts emphasize the power of divine feminine energy in bringing success and removing obstacles.

When is Nanda Vrat Observed?

Nanda Vrat is usually observed on Ashtami Tithi (eighth day) of the lunar month, especially during Shukla Paksha (waxing phase of the moon). The vrat is particularly significant when it falls during Navaratri, the nine-day festival dedicated to Goddess Durga.

Many devotees also perform this vrat

for 16 consecutive weeks to seek divine blessings.

How to Perform Nanda Vrat?

- Wake up early in the morning, take a bath, and wear clean clothes.
- Maintain a clean environment and set up a small altar or puja space.
- Arrange an idol or image of Goddess Nanda (or Durga/Parvati) on a clean altar.
- Gather Puja Samagri (Essential Items)
- Fresh flowers (preferably red or yellow)
- Fruits and sweets
- Incense sticks (Agarbatti)
- A lamp (Diya)
- Coconut and betel leaves
- Kumkum, turmeric, and

sandalwood paste

- Panchamrit (a mixture of milk, curd, honey, sugar, and ghee)
- Sacred thread (kalawa)

Step-by-Step Rituals

- Sankalp (Taking the Vow)
- Sit in front of the deity and take a vow (sankalp) to observe the vrat with devotion.
- Mentally pray for the fulfillment of your desires.
- Offer Prayers and Aarti
- Light a lamp and incense sticks.
- Offer fresh flowers, fruits, and sweets to the goddess.
- Recite mantras such as:
"Om Dum Durgaye Namah"
"Om Hreem Nanda Devyai Namah"
- Sing the Nanda Vrat Katha (story of the vrat) if available.
- Perform abhishekam (ritual bathing) of the idol with Panchamrit.
- Offer coconut, sweets, and food prepared for the goddess.
- Giving food or donations to the poor is considered highly auspicious.

Fasting Guidelines

- The fasting can be nirjala (without water) or phalahar (fruits and milk only), depending on the devotee's ability.
- Some people consume only one meal in the evening after completing the puja.
- Avoid consuming non-vegetarian food, alcohol, onions, and garlic.

Evening Aarti and Conclusion of the Vrat

- Perform an evening aarti with diya and bhajans.
- Conclude the vrat by distributing prasada (sanctified food) among family members and devotees.

Benefits of Observing Nanda Vrat

- Blessings of Goddess Nanda
- Removes obstacles and brings peace, happiness, and prosperity.

Marital Bliss

- Women seeking a good husband or wishing for harmony in their married life observe this vrat with devotion.

Health and Longevity

- The vrat is believed to bring good health and longevity to the devotee and their family.

Financial Stability

- Those facing financial troubles or business losses observe this vrat for success and wealth.

Spiritual Growth

- Increases faith, devotion, and inner peace, bringing one closer to divine consciousness.

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

India, EU hold bilateral cluster meeting...

@dubravkasuica, @MartaKosEU, @magnusbrunner of @EU_Commission and my colleagues @KVSinghMPGonda & @nityanandraibjp."

"Our conversation focused on connectivity and IMEC, green and clean energy, mobility and talent, security, Mediterranean and EU expansion," he added.

Pleased to participate in the India-EU bilateral cluster meeting this morning alongside Commissioners @JozefSikela, @dubravkasuica, @MartaKosEU, @magnusbrunner of @EU_Commission and my colleagues @KVSinghMPGonda & @nityanandraibjp.

Our conversation focused on connectivity and...
pic.twitter.com/nFEMJAWKDj

- Dr. S. Jaishankar (@DrSJaishankar) February 28, 2025

Yesterday, EAM Jaishankar called on the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and lauded her views on reenergizing India's engagement with Europe.

"Pleased to call on @EU_Commission President @vonderleyen today in Delhi. Appreciate her thoughts on reenergizing India's engagement with Europe. The wide-ranging participation of Indian Ministers and EU College of Commissioners during this visit stands testimony to the importance we place on deeper India-EU ties," Jaishankar said in a post on X.

The European Commission President is on a two-day bilateral visit to India, accompanied by members of European College of Commissioners. Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel received Ursula von der Leyen at the airport.

Upon her arrival in Delhi, European Commission President in a post on X wrote, "Touchdown in Delhi with my team of Commissioners. In an era of conflicts and intense competition, you need trusted friends. For Europe, India is such a friend and a strategic ally. I'll discuss with @narendramodi how to take our strategic partnership to the next level."

This is Ursula von der Leyen's third visit to India. She previously visited India for a bilateral official visit in April 2022 and to attend the G20 Leaders' Summit in September 2023. PM Narendra Modi and President Ursula von der Leyen have also met regularly on the sidelines of multilateral meetings. (Source: ANI)

Trump plans tariffs on Mexico and...

The prospect of escalating tariffs has already thrown the global economy into turmoil, with consumers expressing fears about inflation worsening and the auto sector and other domestic manufacturers suffering if Trump raises import taxes. But Mr. Trump has also at times engaged in aggressive posturing only to give last-minute reprieves, previously agreeing to a 30-day suspension of the Canada and Mexico tariffs that were initially supposed to start in February.

The threat of tariffs frightened the stock market with the S&P 500 index falling 1.6% on Thursday. The S&P 500 is now just 1.4% higher than it was after Mr. Trump won the election in November, giving up almost all of the gains that the president once cited as evidence of an economic revival.

Asked Thursday about the fact that tariffs are largely paid for consumers and importing companies, Mr. Trump dismissed any concerns by saying: "It's a myth." It's possible for a stronger U.S. dollar to offset some of the costs of tariffs, but Trump's statement goes against most economic modeling given the breadth of his planned taxes.

Mr. Trump intends to put 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada, with a lower 10% tax on Canadian energy products such as oil and electricity. The move, ostensibly about drug trafficking and immigration, led Mexico and Canada to respond by emphasizing their existing efforts to address these

issues. Canada created a fentanyl czar, and Mexico sent 10,000 members of its National Guard to its border with the United States.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Thursday that she hoped to speak with Mr. Trump after the Cabinet-level meetings occurring in Washington this week. Mexico's Foreign Affairs Secretary Juan Ramón de la Fuente was scheduled to meet with Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Thursday afternoon.

Mr. Trump, "as you know, has his way of communicating," Ms. Sheinbaum said. But she said that her government would stay "cool-headed" and optimistic about an agreement coming together to avoid the tariffs.

"I hope we are able to reach an agreement and on March 4 we can announce something else," she said.

She said Mexico's security chiefs were discussing intelligence sharing with their American counterparts that would allow for important arrests in the U.S. On the economic front, she said Mexico's goal is to protect the free trade pact that was negotiated during the first Trump administration between Mexico and the United States. That 2020 deal, which included Canada, was an update of the North American Free Trade Agreement from 1994.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country has invested more than 1 billion Canadian dollars to improve border security, adding that his government's ministers and officials are also in Washington this week.

"There is no emergency for the United States at the border with Canada when it comes to fentanyl, and that is exactly what we are demonstrating at this time," Mr. Trudeau said in Montreal. "If the United States goes ahead and imposes tariffs, we already shared the details of our plan. We have \$30 billion worth of U.S. products that will be subject to tariffs. And \$125 billion of tariffs that will be applied three weeks later. But we don't want to be in that position."

Mr. Trump did impose a 10% tariff on China for its role in the manufacturing of chemicals used to make fentanyl, and that tax would now be doubled, according to his social media post.

On Thursday, China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao wrote to Jamieson Greer, the newly confirmed U.S. trade representative, that differences on trade should be resolved through dialogues and negotiations. The 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada would amount to a total tax increase on the U.S. public of somewhere between \$120 billion to \$225 billion annually, according to Jacob Jensen, a trade policy analyst at the American Action Forum, a center-right think tank. The additional China tariffs could cost consumers up to \$25 billion.

The potential for higher prices and slower growth could create political blowback for Mr. Trump, who promised voters in last year's presidential election that he could quickly lower the inflation rate, which jumped during Democratic President Joe Biden's term. But, Mr. Trump also campaigned on imposing broad tariffs, which he plans to launch on April 2 by resetting them to match the taxes that he determines are charged by other countries on American goods.

"The April Second Reciprocal Tariff date will remain in full force and effect," Mr. Trump said as part of his new social media post.

In an interview with News Nation, Kevin Hassett, the director of the White House National Economic Council, said progress by Mexico and Canada on fentanyl "was not as impressive as the president had hoped." There are significant differences between Canada and Mexico on the scale of drug smuggling. U.S. customs agents seized 43 pounds (19.5 kilograms) of fentanyl at the Canadian border during the last budget year, compared with 21,100 pounds (9,570 kilograms) at the Mexican border.

Mr. Hassett stressed that the reciprocal tariffs would be in addition to the ones being placed on Canada and Mexico.

Mr. Trump indicated Wednesday that European countries would also face a 25% tariff as part of his reciprocal tariffs. He also wants separate tariffs on autos, computer chips and pharmaceutical drugs that would be levied in addition to the reciprocal

tariffs.

The President already announced that he's removing the exemptions on his 2018 steel and aluminum tariffs, in addition to planning taxes on copper imports.

The prospect of a broader trade conflict should other nations follow through with their own retaliatory tariffs is already spooking U.S. consumers, potentially undermining Trump's promise to unleash stronger economic growth.

The Conference Board reported on Tuesday that its consumer confidence index had dropped 7 points to a reading of 98.3. It was the largest monthly decline since August 2021, when inflationary pressures began to reverberate across the United States as the economy recovered from the coronavirus pandemic. Average 12-month inflation expectations jumped from 5.2% to 6% in February, the Conference Board noted.

"There was a sharp increase in the mentions of trade and tariffs, back to a level unseen since 2019," said Stephanie Guichard, a senior economist at the Conference Board. "Most notably, comments on the current administration and its policies dominated the responses." (Source: AP)

Former defense chiefs denounce...

"We are deeply alarmed by President Trump's recent dismissals of several senior U.S. military leaders," the letter opens. "We write to urge the U.S. Congress to hold Mr. Trump to account for these reckless actions and to exercise fully its Constitutional oversight responsibilities."

Among those ousted on Friday were Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., the Pentagon's top officer; Adm. Lisa Franchetti, the head of the Navy; Gen. James Slife, the Air Force's vice chief of staff; and the top military lawyers for the Army, Navy and Air Force. Trump's defense secretary, former Fox News personality Pete Hegseth, also removed his senior military assistant, Air Force Lt. Gen. Jennifer Short. The head of the Coast Guard, Adm. Linda Fagan, was fired the day after Trump's inauguration.

The Trump administration has sought to downplay the dismissals, noting that previous presidents also have fired prominent generals. Those dismissals, however, typically had a proximate cause.

"The President offered no justification for his actions, even though he had nominated these officers for previous positions and the Senate had approved them," the letter says. "These officers' exemplary operational and combat experience, as well as the coming dismissals of the Judge Advocates General of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, make clear that none of this was about warfighting." Brian Hughes, a spokesman for the White House's National Security Council, said in a statement Thursday that Trump is the commander in chief and his actions are "well within" his authority - a point that most critics have not disputed.

US judge halts Trump Administration's...

Republican President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk, who oversees the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, are spearheading an unprecedented effort to shrink the federal bureaucracy, including through job cuts.

Those efforts have resulted in a fierce pushback from Democrats, unions and federal workers, who argue the job cuts are illegal and could compromise government functions. Already, the administration has been forced to recall some personnel in critical roles. But Trump has backed Musk to the hilt and has embraced Musk's goal of slicing \$1 trillion from the nation's \$6.7 trillion budget.

Budget experts say Musk, the CEO of SpaceX and Tesla, is unlikely to reach his target by trimming jobs and reducing waste and fraud, and may have to slash government programs, including benefits.

On Thursday, hundreds of probationary workers at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which conducts climate science, were notified they were being let go, according to a source familiar with the situation.

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2nd Eikhoigi Imphal International Film Festival: A Cinematic Rebirth for Manipur



By Murtaza Ali Khan

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

IMPHAL (TIP) : The 2nd Eikhoigi Imphal International Film Festival (EIIFF), from February 6 to February 10, opened its doors to a global audience this year, bringing the cinematic world to Manipur, a state that has faced political unrest in recent years. The festival, launched as part of a broader effort to reassert Manipur's identity, has become a beacon of hope and change. Sunzu Bachaspatimayum, Festival Director and Secretary of the Manipur State Film Development Society (MSFDS), shared his vision behind this initiative that aims to use cinema and culture as tools for peace and reconciliation.

"We believe cinema is more than just entertainment," Sunzu explained. "It's a powerful medium to foster dialogue, build understanding, and rebuild our community's image. Despite the challenges, the festival is a statement that Manipur is not just a conflict zone, but a space where creativity and culture can thrive."

While Manipur has long been isolated in the broader film industry, Sunzu sees the EIIFF as a crucial step toward changing that narrative. He shared, "Our state is geographically positioned as India's gateway to Southeast Asia. We have a vibrant film industry, but it's been limited by resources and accessibility. We want to bring the world to us, to provide a platform for local filmmakers to showcase their talent and engage with the global cinematic community."

The festival's success has been a result of not only showcasing films but also creating spaces for learning and



A Still from a cultural performance

interaction. This year's festival introduced a series of masterclasses, pitching sessions, and panel discussions aimed at developing the skills of emerging filmmakers in the region. Sunzu highlighted the importance of these initiatives, saying, "Manipur lacks formal academic institutions for film studies, but we're compensating for this gap by bringing experts and professionals from across the world. This is essential for elevating our industry and creating opportunities."

Prominent filmmakers such as Umesh Kulkarni and Shyamal Sengupta offered

their expertise during the festival, providing invaluable insights into the nuances of short films, distribution, and marketing. "We want to shift the mindset here," Sunzu said. "Filmmakers often think that their market is limited to Manipur, but we need to teach them about the international market and how to pitch their stories to global audiences."

The festival also paid homage to Manipur's rich cinematic legacy. Sunzu reflected on the legacy of "Ishanou," a film that was recently restored and screened at Cannes. "This film

represents the golden era of Manipuri cinema, and now, films like Boong are representing the future of Manipur's film industry," he said, underscoring the transformation that has taken place.

The EIIFF is not just about film screenings; it is a celebration of Manipur's cultural heritage. The state, known for its scenic beauty, boasts landmarks like the Loktak Lake and the Keibul Lamjao National Park. These locations offer a unique backdrop for the films shown at the festival, adding to the region's cinematic appeal.

The festival's second edition, which took place in the face of adversity, is not just about films; it is about reasserting Manipur's place on the cultural map. Sunzu's passion for filmmaking and his commitment to the state's cultural revival are evident. "This is not just a festival. It is a mission to serve the community and uplift Manipur's cinematic presence," he said, reflecting on the future of the festival.

Despite facing financial limitations and staffing challenges, the MSFDS is committed to growing this festival into a global platform. "It's not going to be easy, but we are determined to continue," Sunzu concluded. "This festival is a small but significant step towards building a sustainable film ecosystem here."

The 2nd EIIFF marks a new chapter for Manipur, one where cinema and culture can heal and unite a state marked by conflict. As the festival continues to grow, it holds the promise of transforming Manipur into a thriving hub for filmmaking in Southeast Asia.

(Murtaza Ali Khan is an award-winning Film & TV critic and journalist)



Sunzu Bachaspatimayum, Festival Director and Secretary of the Manipur State Film Development Society

Western Ghats: A paradise of hill stations, waterfalls and wildlife

Hosting a huge number of tourists every year, hill stations like Ooty, Mahabaleshwar, Lonavala, Khandala, Munnar, Ponnudi, Coonoor and Vythiri are all situated in the Western Ghats. Other places of tourist interest like Kodaikanal, Lovedale, Mattupetty, Meghamalai and Valparai are also located in this region.

The Western Ghats mountain range is itself a major attraction in India along with its high hills, deep valleys, mountain grasslands, dense and rain forest. The 1,600 km long majestic Mountains of Western Ghats is one of the eight hottest biological diversity hotspots in the world. Western Ghats is one of the UNESCO World Heritage Site in India and paradise of various species of Flora and Fauna, Most of them are endemic to the region.

Hill Ranges

The Western Ghats contains major hill ranges starting from Sahyadri mountain ranges in Maharashtra Nilgiris hill ranges in Tamil Nadu. These hill ranges are home to most popular hill stations such as Ooty, Mahabaleshwar, Madikeri and the most famous Munnar. Famous hills of Western Ghats are Sahyandhris, Nilgiris, Palani Hills, Anaimalai Hills and Cardamom Hills.

Mountain Peaks

The hill ranges of Western Ghats are home to some of the highest mountain peaks of India. Anamudi or the Elephant Head is the highest peak of the Western Ghats with an elevation of 2,695 m (8,842 ft) located in the Indian state Kerala. The Anamudi mountain peak is also the highest point in India outside the great Himalaya-Karakoram mountain ranges. Other highest peaks of the Western Ghats are Meesapulimala, Doddabetta in Nilgiris hills, Kalsubai in Maharashtra and Mullayanagiri in Karnataka.

Forest

Western Ghats offers four type of tropical and subtropical forest ecoregions -North and South Western moist deciduous forests, North and South Western montane rain forests. The north part of the hill ranges is drier than the southern part of ranges and dominantly by teak. South Western Ghats montane rain forests offers very rich ecologic region for the wide variety of flora and fauna species. The wild forest of Western Ghats are distributed as National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuary, Tiger reserve, biosphere reserves and many protected areas.

Grasslands

The mountain valley of Western Ghats covered with shola-grassland, evergreen and semi-evergreen vegetation, and montane grasslands. Shola grassland are mainly found in the valleys and different



from montane grassland. The shola forest and grassland complex are distributed in the higher altitude hills of Nilgiris, Biligiriranga Hills and Agasthyamalai Hills.

Flora

The dense forests and evergreen valleys of rolling Sholas grassland of Western Ghats mountain ranges offers rich ecologic area for number of flowering plants. The major species of Flora in Western Ghats are present in the sholas of the Nilgiri Hills. Main species of flowering plants found here are Michelia niligarica, Eugenia, Toona

ciliata, Schefflera and Michelia. Kas Plateau in Maharashtra is best place to know about the numerous species of flowering plants also known as the valley of flowers of Western Ghats.

Lakes

The Western Ghats region has many natural and man made lakes. The famous lakes are beautiful Vembanad lake, Ooty avalanche lake, Pookode lake, Letchmi Elephant and Berijam Lake. The major reservoirs includes famous Krishna Raja Sagara, Mettur Dam, Koyna Dam, Parambikulam Dam and Linganamakki Dam. Arabian Sea also offers beautiful

lakes in Kerala known as backwaters of Kerala, one of the major tourist attraction.

Waterfalls

The majestic mountain ranges of Western Ghats form one of the four watersheds and feed the perennial rivers of India. Major rivers of Western Ghats are the Godavari, Krishna, Thamiraparani and Kaveri others tributaries to these long rivers, flow to the east and fall into the Bay of Bengal. During the monsoon season these rivers offers some of the spectacular waterfalls in India such as the most stunning Jog Falls by Sharavathi River, Astonishing Athirappilly Falls by Chalakudy river, Kunchikal Falls, Sivasamudram Falls, Unchalli Falls and famous Meenmutty Falls.

Fauna

The Fauna of Western Ghats is very unique and many of them are endemic to the mountains of monsoon only. Wildlife includes 139 species of mammal, Reptiles, Amphibians and at least 508 species of birds. The endemic animals of Western Ghats are Malabar large-spotted civet, endangered Lion-tailed macaque and the beautiful black panther. Couple of new species are also found here in the last few year one of the them is pogeyan cat, A wild cat which is larger than a leopard but smaller than a Tiger, More information about the pogeyan cat is yet to collect.

National Parks

There are 13 National parks situated in the Western Ghats along with two biosphere reserves, several wildlife sanctuaries and many Reserve Forests. These protected areas are home to thousands of animal species including globally threatened and critically endangered species. Famous National parks are deciduous forests of Bandipur National Park, Silent Valley National Park, Periyar National Park and Eravikulam National Park. The rainforest of majestic mountain is full of natural beauty and one of the must see place in India.

Avifauna

The Avifauna of western ghats are endemic to the forest and great hills, birds such as beautiful Rufous-breasted Laughingthrush, Nilgiri Flycatcher, Malabar Parakeet and Malabar Grey Hornbill are some of the most beautiful birds of Western Ghats. The evergreen forests of Kerala and deciduous forest Karnataka provided wild foods and natural habitats to these wild birds. The mountain ranges have many bird sanctuaries as well and offers one of the best place for bird watching in India.

History This Week FEB 28- MAR 06

FEBRUARY 26



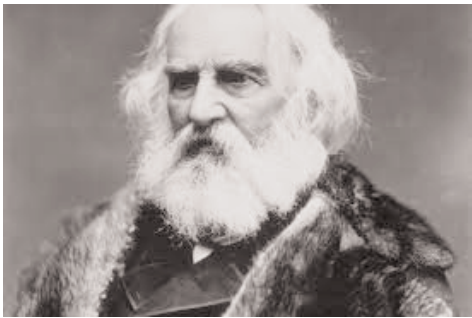
February 26, 1994 - Political foes of Russian President Boris Yeltsin were freed by a general amnesty granted by the new Russian Parliament.

Birthday - American frontiersman "Buffalo Bill" Cody (1846-1917) was born in Scott County, Indiana. He claimed to have killed over 4,000 buffalo within 17 months. He became world famous through his Wild West show which traveled throughout the U.S. and Europe for 30 years.

FEBRUARY 27

February 27, 1950 - The 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, limiting the president to two terms or a maximum of ten years in office.

February 27, 1991 - In Desert Storm, the 100-hour ground war ended as Allied troops entered Kuwait just four days after launching their offensive against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces.



Birthday - American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) was born in Portland, Maine. Best known for Paul Revere's Ride, The Song of Hiawatha, and The Wreck of the Hesperus.

FEBRUARY 28

February 28, 1844 - During a demonstration of naval fire power, one of the guns aboard the USS Princeton exploded, killing several top U.S. government officials on the steamer ship, and narrowly missed killing President John Tyler.



February 28, 1986 - Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme (1927-1986) was assassinated in Stockholm while exiting a movie theater with his wife.

February 28, 1994 - NATO conducted its

first combat action in its 45 year history as four Bosnian Serb jets were shot down by American fighters in a no-fly zone.

MARCH 1



March 1, 1932 - The 20-month-old son of aviation pioneer Charles A. Lindbergh was kidnapped from his home in Hopewell, New Jersey. The Lindberghs then paid a \$50,000 ransom. However, on May 12, the boy's body was found in a wooded area a few miles from the house.

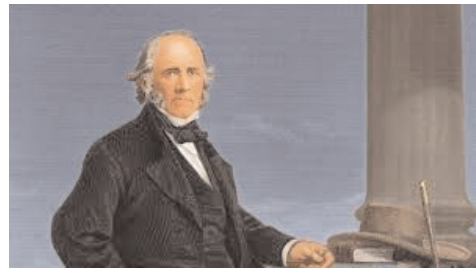
March 1, 1961 - President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps, an organization sending young American volunteers to developing countries to assist with health care, education and other basic human needs.

March 1, 1974 - Seven former high-ranking officials of the Nixon White House were indicted for conspiring to obstruct the investigation into the Watergate break-in. Among those indicted; former chief of staff H.R. Haldeman, former top aide John Ehrlichman, and former attorney general John Mitchell.

Birthday - American band leader Glenn Miller (1904-1944) was born in Carilinda, Iowa. His music gained enormous popularity during the 1940's through recordings such as Moonlight Serenade and String of Pearls. On December 15, 1944, his plane disappeared over the English Channel while en route to Paris where he was scheduled to perform.

MARCH 2

March 2, 1943 - During World War II in the Pacific, a Japanese convoy was attacked by 137 American bombers as the Battle of Bismarck Sea began. The convoy included eight destroyers and eight transports carrying 7,000 Japanese soldiers heading toward New Guinea. Four destroyers and all eight transports were sunk, resulting in 3,500 Japanese drowned, ending Japanese efforts to send reinforcements to New Guinea.



Birthday - American soldier and politician Sam Houston (1793-1863) was born in Rockbridge County, Virginia. As a teenager he ran away and joined the Cherokee Indians who accepted him as a member of their tribe. He later served as a Congressman and Governor of Tennessee. In 1832, he became commander of the Texan army in the War for Texan Independence, defeating the larger Mexican army in 1836 at the Battle of San Jacinto. He then served as Senator and Governor of the new state of

Texas but was removed in 1861 after refusing to swear allegiance to the Confederacy.

MARCH 3

March 3, 1913 - A women's suffrage march in Washington D.C. was attacked by angry onlookers while police stood by. The march occurred the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. Many of the 5,000 women participating were spat upon and struck in the face as a near riot ensued. Secretary of War Henry Stimson then ordered soldiers from Fort Myer to restore order.



Birthday - Railroad car builder George Pullman (1831-1897) was born in Brocton, New York. He improved railroad sleeping accommodations, developing the folding upper berth and lower berth designs. His company went on to become the biggest railroad car building organization in the world.

Birthday - Telephone inventor Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922) was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. Bell and his father were involved in teaching deaf persons to speak. Bell developed an interest in the vibrating membrane as a method of electrically transmitting sounds. His very first sentence spoken on the newly invented telephone on March 10, 1876, was to his assistant, "Mister Watson, come here, I want you."

MARCH 4



March 4, 1830 - Former President John Quincy Adams returned to Congress as a representative from Massachusetts. He was the first ex-president ever to return to the House and served eight consecutive terms.

March 4, 1933 - Newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office and delivered his first inaugural address attempting to restore public confidence during the Great Depression, stating, "Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself..." His cabinet appointments included the first woman to a Cabinet post, Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins.

Birthday - Revolutionary war hero Casimir Pulaski (1747-1779) was born in Poland. Before aiding in the American Revolution, he was a military leader in Poland's struggle against Imperial Russia. He joined the Americans in 1777 and fought alongside General Washington at Brandywine, then served at Germantown and Valley Forge. He was mortally wounded during a heroic

charge in the Siege of Savannah, Georgia.

Birthday - American football legend Knute Rockne (1888-1931) was born in Voss, Norway. He coached the Notre Dame Football team for 13 seasons, amassing an overall record of 105 wins, 12 losses and 5 ties. He became famous for his locker room pep talks and the saying, "Win one for the Gipper." He was killed in an airplane crash on March 31, 1931, in Kansas.

MARCH 5

March 5, 1933 - Amid a steadily worsening economic situation, newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed a four-day "Bank Holiday" to stop panic withdrawals by the public and the possible collapse of the American banking system.



March 5, 1946 - The "Iron Curtain" speech was delivered by Winston Churchill at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. Churchill used the term to describe the boundary in Europe between free countries of the West and nations of Eastern Europe under Soviet Russia's control.

MARCH 6



March 6, 1836 - Fort Alamo fell to Mexican troops led by General Santa Anna. The Mexicans had begun the siege of the Texas fort on February 23rd, ending it with the killing of the last defender. "Remember the Alamo" became a rallying cry for Texans who went on to defeat Santa Anna in the Battle of San Jacinto in April.



Birthday - Renaissance genius Michelangelo (1475-1564) was born in Caprese, Italy. He was a painter, sculptor, architect, poet and visionary best known for his fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and his sculptures David and The Pieta.

Afghanistan stun England; knock them out of Champions Trophy

LAHORE (TIP)

Ibrahim Zadran's majestic 177 and pacer Azmatullah Omarzai's fifer trumped Joe Root's masterful hundred, as the brave Afghanistan registered a thrilling 8-run win to knock a largely-insipid England out of the Champions Trophy here on Wednesday, February 26.

England are winless after two matches and in their last league match in Group B they will face South Africa, who already have three points along with Australia.

Afghanistan now have two points and will have to beat the Aussies in their final group match to entertain the hopes of reaching the last four.

For a long time, England's chase merely rattled along as the dismissal of Phil Salt and Jamie Smith jolted them early. They were 30 for two then, and eventually ended up at 317 all out with a ball to spare as pacer Omarzai (5/58) struck at crucial junctures.

But Root (120, 111b, 11x4, 1x6) brought stability to England's innings through two alliances, adding 68 runs with Ben Duckett (38), who was dropped on 29, for the third wicket and then an 83-run stand with skipper Jos Buttler for the fifth wicket.

They were not really blazing partnerships but kept England afloat, keeping them in the vicinity of the asking rate.

But the jettisoning of Duckett and Buttler prematurely curtailed those blossoming joint ventures, as Root had to shoulder the burden all by himself.

Root's was a clever innings, as he hardly hit any ball in anger but still managed a strike-rate close to 100, and at times above 100.

But there were those little flourishes which are so central to a Root innings such as a reverse sweep four off wrist



Ibrahim Zadran made 177, the highest individual score in ODIs for Afghanistan.

spinner Noor Ahmad or a scooped six behind wicketkeeper off Fazalhaq Farooqi.

He brought up his 17th ODI hundred with a single off Rashid Khan, and looked to stay on. But a rather tired ramp off pacer Omarzai ended in the gloves of keeper Rahmanullah Gurbaz.

But England had another willing soldier in Jamie Overton (32, 28b), who added precious 54 runs for the seventh wicket, but a feeble heave off Omarzai ended his stint.

It also marked the end of England's

journey in this tournament.

Earlier, Zadran's remarkable innings helped Afghanistan pile 325 for seven.

Zadran, whose hundred came off 146 balls (12x4, 6x6), had solid support from skipper Hashmathullah Shahidi (40, 67b, 3x4), with whom he raised 103 runs for the fourth wicket, and Azmatullah Omarzai (41, 31b) with whom he milked 72 runs for the fifth wicket.

Later, he plundered 111 runs for the sixth wicket with Mohammed Nabi (40, 24b) to put England through the wringer.



Dhawan reveals Dhoni's key role in Rohit's rise as opener

Former opener Shikhar Dhawan believes Rohit Sharma has matured as a leader over the years and shares a close bond with his teammates, which augurs well for the Indian team.

Dhawan, who was Rohit's opening partner for a considerable period of time, said the Mumbai batter is experienced enough to handle the team.

"From 2013 to 2025, 12 years of experience is a lot. Rohit has been through a lot. He knows how to work in a pressure situation, how to gather the boys.

"As a leader, he has become mature, he knows when to be lenient and when to pull back. It's a fine balance and Rohit's bond with the boys is amazing. We are in a great situation," Dhawan said in a special series titled 'The Shikhar Dhawan Experience' on Star Sports and JioHotstar.

Dhawan also spoke about his 2013 ICC Champions Trophy journey, and recollected his nine-year long opening partnership with Rohit, which also began at the same tournament.

The 39-year-old former left-hander said it was Mahendra Singh Dhoni's idea to promote Rohit as an opener alongside him.

Champions Trophy: Pakistan's campaign ends on winless note after tie vs Bangladesh called off due to rain

RAWALPINDI (TIP)

Pakistan's campaign in the Champions Trophy ended on a winless note after their match against Bangladesh was called off without a ball being bowled due to incessant rain here on Thursday, February 27.

The match was effectively a dead-rubber, with both teams already out of contention after failing to secure a win in their two previous matches. Pakistan, hosting an ICC tournament for the first time in 29 years, had hoped for a strong finish but ended their disastrous campaign without a victory.

Persistent downpour left the ground soaked, with covers in place and puddles forming around the field. With weather not improving, match officials called off the game nearly two hours after the scheduled start time. The gloomy weather prevented even the toss from taking place.

As a result, the two teams shared one point each,



though both Pakistan and Bangladesh finished the tournament winless.

This is the second match in Rawalpindi to be called

off without a ball being bowled, following the washout between South Africa and Australia earlier this week.

The rain-induced abandonment left the home fans frustrated, as they hoped for play at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Pakistan have faced criticism for their poor showing in the tournament, having suffered defeats to New Zealand (by 60 runs) and India (by six wickets).

"We wanted to do well and perform well in front of our nation. The expectations are very high. We didn't perform well and it is disappointing for us," Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan said.

Reflecting on the road ahead, Rizwan said: "You can learn from your mistakes. We have made mistakes in the last few games. Hopefully, we can learn from these.

"We are next going to New Zealand and, hopefully, we can perform there and the mistakes that we did against New Zealand here in Pakistan, we can learn from that. And we will do better in New Zealand."



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