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Trump imposes sanctions on International Criminal Court



The International Criminal Court in The Hague

FEBRUARY 7, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): US President Donald Trump on Thursday, February 6, authorized economic and travel sanctions targeting people who work on International Criminal Court investigations of US citizens or US allies such as Israel, repeating action he took during his first term, a Reuters report says.

ICC condemned the sanctions on Friday, February 7, and called on its 125 member states to support its staff.

"The court stands firmly by its personnel and pledges to continue providing justice and hope to millions of innocent victims of atrocities across the world, in all situations before it," it said in a statement.

Trump's move coincided with a visit to Washington by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who - along with his former defense minister and a leader of Palestinian militant group Hamas - is wanted by the ICC over the war in the Gaza Strip.

It was unclear how quickly the US would announce names of people sanctioned. During the first Trump administration in 2020, Washington imposed sanctions on then-prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and one of her top aides over the ICC's investigation into

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Lotus blooms in Delhi after 27 years

DELHITES REJECT AAP, SHUN CONGRESS KEJRIWAL ACCEPTS HIS PARTY'S DEFEAT, CONGRATULATES THE BJP



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gestures at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters as BJP celebrates its win in the Delhi state assembly elections, in New Delhi, India, February 8, 2025

Photo Credit: Reuters

I.S. SALUJA FEBRUARY 8, 2025

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is all set to form the government in Indian capital Delhi after 27 years as it scripted an impressive election victory over the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which commanded a formidable majority in two 5-year terms.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has won or is leading in 48 seats in the 70-member legislative assembly, while the incumbent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has won or is ahead in 22 seats, according to data from the Election Commission of India (EC).

A party that wins 36 seats can form the government.

"Development wins, good governance triumphs," Modi wrote on X,

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PM Modi to pay 2-day working visit to US from February 12; Focus likely on Trade

FEBRUARY 7, 2025

NEW DELHI / NEW YORK (TIP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay a two-day working visit to the US from February 12 during which he will meet President Donald Trump, the external affairs ministry announced on Friday, February 7.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi Photo: BJP via Twitter

Addressing a press conference, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said Modi's visit will give further impetus and direction to India-US bilateral relationship.

Prior to his US visit, Modi will be in France from February 10-12 to co-chair the AI Action Summit with French

President Emmanuel Macron.

He will also visit Cadarache, the site of International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor of which India is a partner, Misri said.

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487 presumed Indians face 'final removal orders': Foreign Secretary Misri

FEBRUARY 7, 2025

NEW DELHI (TIP): Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said on Friday said that India has raised concerns with the United States over the treatment of Indian migrants deported earlier this week. The deportees, 104 in total, were sent back on a US military aircraft and were reportedly shackled throughout the journey before being freed upon arrival in Amritsar.

"We flag issues of mistreatment of illegal migrants deported to India, will continue to do so in future," Misri said.

He noted that while deportation flights have taken place for years, this particular case was different.

"The deportation that happened day before yesterday is somewhat different from the earlier flights that have been taking place for many, many years. It is of a slightly different nature. It was described as a national security operation, that is perhaps one of the reasons why military aircraft was used," he said.

Misri also revealed that the US has informed India about 487 presumed Indian citizens who have received "final removal orders."

"We have been in close communication with the United States on this matter. As soon as the information is provided to us, we do the due

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India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said 487 presumed Indians face 'final removal orders', and added that India has raised concerns with US over treatment of Indians on deportation flight



H-1B visa initial registration period to commence on March 7 and close on March 24

FEBRUARY 7, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The initial registration period for the H-1B visas, the most sought-after by Indian IT professionals, for fiscal 2026 will commence on March 7 and close on March 24, a federal agency has said. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that

CONTD ON PAGE 40

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Photo for representation only



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COMMENT**The Recent Delhi Assembly Elections: A Shift in Power Dynamics**

In any democratic election, one of the most consistent patterns observed globally is the desire for change. Voters often seek a fresh government, hoping for a better deal, more responsible leadership, and greater responsiveness to their needs. This trend is universal, whether in the US, UK, Canada, India, or any other democracy. As a result, the incumbency factor - the tendency of voters to vote against the party in power - plays a significant role in shaping electoral outcomes. The longer a government remains in power, the greater the chances it will face defeat unless it has consistently delivered exceptional governance.

This pattern was evident in the recent Delhi Assembly elections, which saw a significant shift in the political landscape of the capital. For years, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has been in power in Delhi, having won a historic majority in 2015 and retaining power in 2020. However, in the latest election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had been out of power in Delhi for over 30 years, managed to achieve a sweeping victory, ending AAP's reign.

AAP's victory in the 2015 election was nothing short of an upset. The party defeated the Congress, a long-standing political powerhouse, and emerged as a major force in Delhi politics. AAP's success was fueled by a combination of factors: a public sentiment against the Congress, the party's promise of corruption-free governance, and its focus on improving basic services like education and healthcare. AAP's leader, Arvind Kejriwal, became a prominent figure and Delhi's Chief Minister, with the party securing a resounding 67 out of 70 seats in the Delhi Assembly.

By Indrajit Saluja



However, by the time of the most recent elections, the political climate had shifted. AAP's time in power had led to some degree of complacency, and many voters began to feel that the promises made by the party were no longer being fulfilled. The incumbency factor began to work against them. Despite having delivered several significant reforms, such as improvements in education and healthcare, AAP faced growing criticism over issues such as the cost of living, unfulfilled promises, and its inability to deal with the rising challenges in governance.

On the other hand, the BJP, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had been steadily building its influence in Delhi. The party's rise to power was not just about local issues but also about its increasing prominence at the national level. The BJP's success was bolstered by its image as a party that promotes Hindutva and its commitment to creating a Hindu nation, which resonated with a significant portion of the electorate. The consolidation of Hindu votes worked strongly in the BJP's favor, helping it win over a large section of the population that felt disconnected from AAP's secular rhetoric.

One of the significant factors behind BJP's victory was the party's ability to promise financial allurements and freebies. While AAP had initially made its mark in the 2020 elections with promises of free electricity and water, the BJP capitalized on this by offering even more

attractive schemes. Voters, often swayed by such promises, found these assurances hard to resist, despite the fact that the BJP had not always delivered on its past promises, such as the return of black money from abroad or providing a "pucca house" for every family by 2022. Nonetheless, the allure of "Acche Din" (Good Days) continued to hold strong among many voters, echoing Modi's 2014 slogan that resonated with the hopes of millions.

The BJP's victory in Delhi can also be attributed to the diminishing influence of the Congress party, which has been in disarray in recent years. Once a dominant force in Indian politics, the Congress has now been relegated to irrelevance in Delhi. With the Congress struggling to find its footing, voters turned to the BJP as the only viable alternative to AAP, despite any reservations they might have had about the BJP's past record.

The electoral outcome in Delhi serves as a reminder of the fickle nature of politics and the complex dynamics at play. While AAP's defeat signals the end of an era of governance in Delhi, it also presents a challenging future for the party. With leaders like Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia facing legal battles, the AAP may struggle to regain its footing in the short term.

For the Congress, this defeat of AAP could serve as an opportunity to rebuild itself. The party once ruled Delhi for many years and has a deep-rooted connection with the electorate. While it may currently be on the backfoot, it still holds the potential to regroup and emerge as a force in the future.

However, how the BJP governs Delhi will play a crucial role in determining the next chapter in Delhi's politics.

GUEST COMMENT**Following the law of the jungle**

Donald Trump's vicious assault on the international criminal court is no surprise. His last administration slapped sanctions on it over its investigations into potential war crimes in Afghanistan, including by the US, and into the actions of Israeli forces. But his new executive order goes even further, attacking the fundamentals of the court and endangering its functioning.

The US never joined the ICC, fearing scrutiny of its own actions and those of its allies. Joe Biden damaged both the court and US claims of commitment to the "rules-based international order" when he justified the arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin while attacking as "outrageous" the one issued for Benjamin Netanyahu.

But for Mr Trump it is not just about expedience. His loathing for the court speaks to something fundamental about this president. Ultimately, the law he believes in is that of the jungle. Naked transactionalism and coercion replace diplomacy and alliances. The biggest beasts are hungry and the rest must flatter or flee.

This credo can be seen at work again in the destruction of USAID. The callous

disregard for life is sickening. As Gordon Brown laid out powerfully in the Guardian, this decision will kill. It is also shortsighted and stupid. USAID has been a shrewd, low-cost foreign policy tool. It cost less than 1% of the federal budget in the 2023 fiscal year - and much of the money went back to the United States. US foreign aid spending as a percentage of gross national income is far below that of most advanced economies. USAID helped to stabilize countries, contain diseases, and foster goodwill in places which will now look to other patrons.

Mr Trump's "might-is-right" doctrine can be seen most clearly in his reckless and immoral call to ethnically cleanse Gaza, so that the US could "own" a new "Riviera of the Middle East". This is the most disturbing element of his unexpected and repeated proposals for American territorial expansion, in place of the anticipated isolationism. He has even declared his willingness to use military force in other places.

No one expects US troops to march into Canada. His Gaza proposal is not realizable. At least some of his suggestions are surely wielded as the

crudest available threat to achieve concessions on other issues. Yet a worrying consistency in the theme suggests that observers may need to take him literally as well as seriously, however ludicrous these ideas sound. He does not need to enact them exactly for them to prove hugely damaging. And whether or not the US expands its borders, there seems every prospect that Mr Trump will approve of Israel and Russia annexing land, emboldening others to use force to remake borders.

In the past, some have wondered how effective the ICC can really be: the work of bringing war criminals to justice has been slow, painful and often unsuccessful at the best of times. Mr Trump's attack is a perverse recognition of the importance of the court, and of international law more generally. It is alarming that influential voices within the British government appear inclined to lament the rigor of international law as an obstacle to domestic priorities, rather than celebrate its place in the architecture of a civilized world. Recoiling at Mr Trump's excesses is not enough. The UK and others have rightly expressed their "unwavering" support for the ICC. They must now defend it, and the values for which it stands, by whatever means they can.

(The Guardian)

Hope For Tomorrow Fundraiser: A World Without Childhood Blindness Campaign Launched

The Eye Foundation of America Raises Over USD 1 Million During Fundraiser to End Childhood Blindness in India



AJAY GHOSH
FEBRUARY 3, 2025

NEW DELHI / NEW YORK (TIP): "I was born in a rural village in India, poor and legally blind, with no opportunity to exist," Sam Maddula, Pharm.D., a distinguished leader, visionary entrepreneur, and dedicated philanthropist, said. Sam went on to add, how his life turned from darkness to light as his parents stumbled upon an Eye Camp that the Eye Foundation of America had set up in 1987 in rural Andhra Pradesh. "It is this organization that rescued me from a life of darkness. The Eye Foundation of America helped me get a visa to the United States. The esteemed Dr. VK Raju himself, performed dual corneal transplant surgery on me two weeks after my second birthday in the United States. He did it, working with the Eye Foundation for free. He cured me just like that, with the magic of his hands. I could see my life went from literal darkness to pure sunlight."

Sam shared his life story with the audience during a Fund Raiser organized by The Eye Foundation of America, Grant Thornton, the Gautami Institute, The Rotary Club District - 3011 (Delhi) in collaboration with the Young Rotarians, with the theme, "Hope for Tomorrow" at the prestigious India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on Friday, January 31, 2025.

This life-changing miracle is one of the millions of Eye Surgeries that The Eye Foundation of America, led by the legendary Dr. Vadrevu K. Raju, a world-renowned ophthalmologist, philanthropist, and the founder of the Eye Foundation of America (EFA) and the Eye Foundation of UK, Chairman of Goutami Eye Institute has done in the past half a century, transforming the lives of millions of children, who are born every year with vision impairment.

The Fund Raiser, a pan-India Roll-out Program helped raise over \$500,000, which was matched by the Eye Foundation of America, totaling over a \$ 1 Million US Dollars. In addition, Sam Maddula offered to match two times, the funds that were raised on January 31st, adding the total amount raised at the fundraiser even more.



Dr. Raju promised that the funds raised will be utilized towards establishing 100 ROP screening centers across India, training 500 healthcare professionals in Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) screening and treatment, and Treating 10,000 ROP-affected babies annually across India.

Offering an overview of childhood blindness and its impact on children, Dr. Raju told an enthusiastic audience, who had come from across India and the United States to support the noble cause, that childhood blindness has far-reaching consequences. Three-fourths of the children with visual impairment never attend school. Blindness reduces employability by 50%. Blindness increases poverty and social

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

Dr. Raju has dedicated his entire life to helping make "the world where every child can see, learn, and thrive without the shadows of blindness." Describing it as "God's work" that he and the Eye Foundation are doing, Dr. Raju urged "everyone to join in the mission to eradicate childhood blindness, a tragedy, we can prevent it. Every child deserves to see the world with clarity and purpose. Let's join hands to eradicate childhood blindness and unlock a brighter future for generations to come. Today, we make a new beginning in our concerted efforts to prevent and eradicate childhood blindness with the resources and the modern technology that are available today," Dr. Raju said.



Lord Rami Ranger, a well-known philanthropist, and successful businessman from the United Kingdom, while echoing the mission of EFA said, "Childhood blindness is a solvable problem, but it requires our collective action." According to Lord Ranger, a Board Member of the Eye Foundation of America and Eye Foundation of UK, who has been honored by Her Majesty the Queen on Eight occasions for his business leadership in and for community services, "Together, we can ensure that every child has access to quality eye care and a chance to reach their full potential."

Dr. Leela Raju, an Organizing Chair of the event, delivered the welcome address. The chief guest at the event was Dr Radhika Tandon, Chairperson of Retinopathy of Prematurity Center, who delivered the keynote address. Richa Jain Kallra, a TV News Anchor & Host eloquently emceed the event.

In her welcome address, Dr. Leela Raju stressed the importance of ensuring that more people know about the causes and the means to reduce childhood blindness and eradicate it. Dr. Leela Raju stated that the discussions today focused on "not just glaucoma, but cornea and pediatric ophthalmology. And of course, regarding retinopathy and prematurity, which is our real push in both Delhi and around India to reduce the burden of childhood blindness."

Dr. Radhika Tandon, a global thought leader, who continues to inspire innovation and excellence in ophthalmology, shaping the future of visual care with her dedication and brilliance, in her keynote address, said, "A very, very big word of appreciation to the Eye Foundation of America, as well as the Gautami Eye Institute, for taking this initiative, of getting people together on this platform, and also for envisioning a world, where two countries across great continents and opposite sides of the globe can work together, to make a difference."

"Close your eyes for a moment. Now imagine never being able to open them to the vibrant colors of life, a loved one's smile, or the pages of a favorite story," said Sandeep Saxena, the chief organizer, who coordinated the efforts leading up to the fundraiser in India. "For millions of premature babies, this is their reality. Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) is a silent thief of sight, making it one of the leading causes of childhood blindness. In India alone, 3.5 million premature babies are at risk. But we refuse to accept this. And we know you won't either. Your kindness can save a child's sight, their future, and their dreams."

A day-long workshop on Empowering Vision Global Advances In Eye Care was organized, offering insights into the many aspects of vision impairment and ways to treat them. Dr. Thomas Johnson, a Specialist in Neuroscience at the Johns Hopkins Wilmer Eye Institute, Dr. Charles Cole, a dedicated educator, who is leading surgical training at the American Academy of Ophthalmology, Dr Karan Bhatia, Vice President of the Young Ophthalmologist Society of India (YOSI) were among those who addressed the audience.

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Outrage as US border patrol releases video of deported Indians in chains

FEBRUARY 6, 2025

NEW YORK / NEW DELHI (TIP): Outrage erupted after the United States Customs and Border Protection (USBP) released footage of 104 deported Indians in chains.

USBP Chief Michael W. Banks shared the video on Thursday, writing, "USBP and partners successfully returned illegal aliens to India, marking the farthest deportation flight yet using military transport. This mission underscores our commitment to enforcing immigration laws and ensuring swift removals. If you cross illegally, you will be removed."

The video shows Indians entering the US aircraft with their hands and legs cuffed. The deportees are seen boarding the C-17 Globemaster aircraft of the US Air Force that landed at the Amritsar airport on Wednesday.

Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said that New Delhi is engaging with the US to ensure that illegal Indian immigrants are not



The video shows Indians entering the US aircraft with their hands and legs cuffed

mistreated while being deported after opposition parties protested against the treatment of a group that was sent back this week.

Jaishankar told parliament that the process of deportation followed by US

authorities was not a new one and it allows for use of restraints on immigrants being returned to their home countries.

He also said that the women and children among the deportees were not

restrained, adding that India's focus should be on strongly cracking down on the illegal migration industry.

"It is the obligation of all countries to take back their nationals if they are found to be living illegally abroad," Jaishankar said, adding that hundreds of Indians have been deported every year for years.

"We are engaging the US government to ensure that the returning deportees are not mistreated in any manner during the flight," he said.

The US action came just days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington for wide-ranging talks with President Donald Trump.

The deportees were questioned inside the airport terminal building by various government agencies, including the Punjab Police, and state and central intelligence agencies to check if they had any criminal record.

(Source: TNS)

Trailblazing Punjabi-Canadian politician, Raj Pannu, passes away at 91



Raj Pannu passed away on January 30, in Edmonton, Alberta, at the age of 91.

FEBRUARY 4, 2025

EDMONTON (TIP): Raj Pannu, a renowned Punjabi-Canadian educator, politician, and community leader, passed away on January 30, in Edmonton, Alberta, at the age of 91. Born in Punjab, India, in 1934, Pannu immigrated to Canada in 1962 and settled in Whitecourt, Alberta, where he taught high school until 1964.

Pannu's academic career spanned over three decades, during which he earned a PhD in Sociology from the University of Alberta in 1973. He taught at York University for a year before returning to the University of Alberta, where he became a full-time faculty member in 1969. Pannu retired from academia in 1996, after 27 years of service. Pannu's entry into politics began in 1997 when he was elected as the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, a seat he held until 2008. He became the leader of the Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP) in 2000, serving in that capacity until 2004. As one of the first Canadians of South Asian descent to lead a major political party, Pannu paved the way for a diverse new generation of politicians.

Indian-origin bishop of Liverpool accused of misconduct retires from Church of England



Photo caption: Doctor John Perumbalath, the Bishop of Liverpool announced his retirement from the Church of England on Thursday, January 30 after being accused of misconduct by two women

JANUARY 31, 2025

LONDON (TIP): An Indian-origin bishop accused of misconduct by two women, the allegations he denies, announced his retirement from the Church of England on Thursday, January 30.

Right Reverend Doctor John Perumbalath, the Bishop of Liverpool who is originally from Kerala and ordained into the Church of North India in 1994, said he had sought the requisite permission from

King Charles III - the Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

He maintained his innocence and blamed a "trial by media" which had made his position at the Diocese of Liverpool "untenable".

"Having sought the permission of His Majesty the King, I have today decided to retire from active ministry in the Church of England," reads a statement by Rt Rev Dr John Perumbalath.

"Earlier this week, I was approached by 'Channel 4 news', who informed me they would be broadcasting a story containing allegations of inappropriate behavior by me against two different women. Since those allegations were made, I have consistently maintained that I have not done anything wrong and continue to do so," said the 58-year-old clergyman.

"This rush to judgment and my trial by media (be that social or broadcast) has made my position untenable due to the impact it will have on the Diocese of Liverpool and the wider church whilst we await further reviews and next steps," he added.

The bishop stressed that his move was not a "resignation occasioned by fault or by any admission of liability" but because he did not wish the story broadcast on Tuesday night to become a distraction for his diocese.

"Having received the news of the retirement of the Bishop of Liverpool, we acknowledge his decision to take this step for the good of the Diocese of Liverpool. This is a deeply painful situation, and we hold all concerned in our prayers," the Diocese of Liverpool said in its statement.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian-origin rapper starts six-week jail term for promoting ill will in Singapore



Photo caption: Subhas Nair began his six-week jail term on February 5 for attempting to promote ill will among racial and religious groups through online posts in multi-ethnic Singapore.

FEBRUARY 5, 2025

SINGAPORE (TIP): Indian-origin Rapper Subhas Nair on Wednesday began his six-week jail term for attempting to promote ill will among racial and religious groups through online posts in multi-ethnic Singapore.

The 32-year-old Singaporean, whose full name is Subhas Govin Prabhakar Nair, appealed against his conviction and sentence before Justice Hoo Sheau Peng over two days starting last year.

The High Court had dismissed his appeals, the media reported.

For attempting to promote feelings of ill will between racial or religious groups, Nair could have been jailed up to three years, fined or both.

In a brief oral decision, Justice Hoo said she agreed with the lower court's decision on conviction and sentence, adding that the six-week jail term was "not disproportionate or crushing".

Nair was found guilty of four charges by a district court in 2023 after a trial. The charges were over racially-charged statements he made between July 2019 and March 2021.

They relate to a YouTube video where he and his sister, Preeti Nair, performed a song having racist lyrics.

While Nair was given a two-year conditional warning by the police for the video, he reoffended by posting racial comments on social media.

Nair wrote that "calling out racism and Chinese privilege" equaled a two-year conditional warning and "smear campaign in the media", while "actually conspiring to murder an Indian man" equaled half the sentence and a question of "you're having a baby soon, right? Boy or girl" from the media.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American musician and entrepreneur Chandrika Tandon wins Grammy

FEBRUARY 3, 2025

LOS ANGELES (TIP): Indian American vocalist and entrepreneur Chandrika Tandon has won the Grammy award for the album 'Triveni' in the 'Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album' category.

The 67th edition of the biggest musical awards night, organized by the Recording Academy, was held on Sunday at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles.

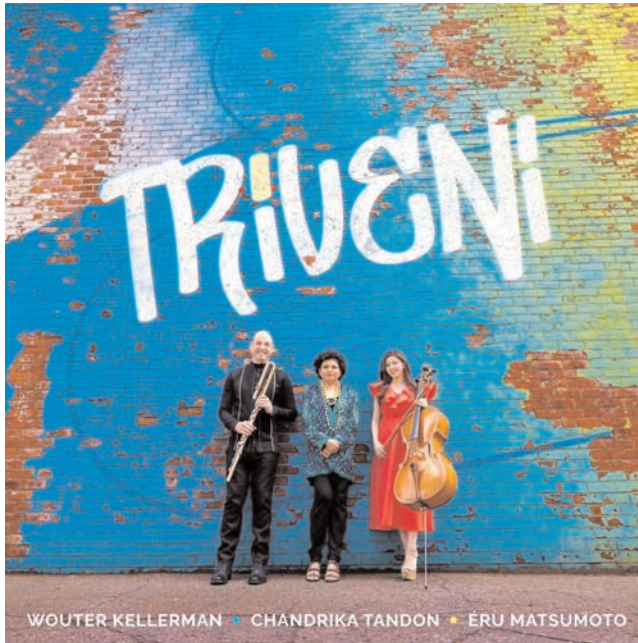
Tandon, also a global business leader and the older sister of former CEO of PepsiCo Indra Nooyi, won the award along with her collaborators South African flautist Wouter Kellerman and Japanese cellist Eru Matsumoto.

"Music is love, music is light, and music is laughter and let's all be surrounded by love, light and laughter. Thank you for the music, and thank you to everyone who makes music," she said in the award acceptance speech.

This was Tandon's second Grammy nomination after 2009's "Soul Call" and its first win.

"It feels amazing," said the musician, who grew up in Chennai, in a backstage interview with the Recording Academy after winning the Grammy.

Other nominees in the Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album category were: 'Break of Dawn' -Ricky Kej, 'Opus' - Ryuichi Sakamoto, 'Chapter II: How Dark It Is Before Dawn' - Anoushka Shankar, and 'Warriors Of Light' - Radhika Vekaria.



Chandrika won the award along with her collaborators South African flautist Wouter Kellerman and Japanese cellist Eru Matsumoto.

"We had such wonderful nominees in the category. The fact that we won this is really an extra special moment for us. There were fabulous musicians who were nominated with us," she added.

Just like its name, which means the confluence of three holy Indian rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, 'Triveni' is a collaboration of three artistes Tandon, Kellerman and Matsumoto - who represent diverse cultures.

Released on August 30, 2024, each of the seven tracks on 'Triveni' tells its own story while contributing to its overarching theme of healing resonance. The songs are: "Pathway to Light", "Chant in A", "Journey Within", "Aether's Serenade", "Ancient Moon", "Open Sky" and "Seeking Shakti".

According to Tandon's official website, the album weaves ancient Vedic chants with melodic flute and resonant cello, creating a reflective soundscape that fosters mindfulness, self-discovery and connection.

"This harmonious blend of Indian classical music, New Age ambient and global traditions appeals to a wide audience while staying deeply rooted in cultural authenticity." Tandon, who has three more albums to her credit, has performed at venues such as the Kennedy Centre, Lincoln Centre and the World Culture Festivals across Europe and India.

Indian American Kshama Sawant, who got law passed against caste discrimination in US, denied Indian visa



Ksma claims to be on a 'visa reject' list for passing a law in Washington state to end caste discrimination

FEBRUARY 6, 2025

SEATTLE (TIP): Kshama Sawant, an Indian-origin Seattle City Council member, has alleged that she was denied the Indian visa to visit her ailing mother.

She claimed to be on a "visa reject" list for having passed a law in Washington state to end caste discrimination.

This is her third visa rejection in the past year.

Facing rejection, Sawant and members of her organization, 'Workers Strike Back', staged a sit-in protest at the Indian Consulate in Seattle, calling it "peaceful civil disobedience".

Indian Consulate officials called the local police.

Sawant posted on X, "My husband & I are in the Seattle Indian Consulate. They granted him an emergency visa for my mother being very sick, but rejected mine, literally saying my name is on a 'reject list'."

She added, "They are refusing to give an explanation. We're refusing to leave.

They're threatening to call the police on us."

The Indian Consulate in Seattle posted its version on X, "The Consulate was forced to deal with a law-and-order situation arising from the unauthorized entry by certain individuals into the Consulate premises after office hours."

They said, "Despite repeated requests, these individuals refused to leave the Consulate premises and engaged in aggressive and threatening behavior with the Consulate staff. We were compelled to call in relevant local authorities to deal with the situation. Further action is being initiated against the trespassers."

In another X post, Sawant claimed, "A Consular officer said I'm being denied a visa because I'm on the Modi (Prime Minister Narendra Modi) government's 'reject list'."

She said a resolution she moved in the Seattle City Council led to her being placed on the visa 'reject list'. "It's clear why," she added. "My socialist City Council office passed a resolution condemning Modi's anti-Muslim anti-poor CAA-NRC citizenship law. We also won a historic ban on caste discrimination."

The CAA refers to the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, passed by Parliament, and the NRC is the National Register of Citizens.

In 2023, the Seattle City Council, based on a resolution moved by Sawant, added caste to the city's anti-discrimination laws, becoming the first US city to ban caste discrimination and the first in the world to pass such a law outside South Asia. (Source: PTI)

Two Indian-origin persons among victims of US air crash

FEBRUARY 1, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): At least two Indian-origin persons are among the 67 people killed in a midair collision between an Army helicopter and a jetliner at Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport, according to media reports.

Vikesh Patel, a GE Aerospace engineer, and Asra Hussain Raza, a Washington DC-based consultant, were on the doomed American Airlines flight 5342 that collided with the Army helicopter as it approached the airport on Wednesday night.

Patel, from Greater Cincinnati, had recently switched jobs at the company and was an MRO Transformational Leader who travelled around the country, according to his LinkedIn page. In a statement to media, Larry Culp, chairman and CEO of GE Aerospace, which is headquartered in Evendale, identified the employee on Thursday night as Patel.

"This is a tragedy not only for our industry but also for the GE Aerospace team as one of our cherished colleagues, Vikesh Patel, was on board the flight," Culp said. "Our hearts are with his family and all those impacted by this horrific accident." He worked for GE Aerospace for more than a decade in several roles, including Engine Assembly Engineer; Production Planner; Senior Operations Manager; Lean Transformation Coach and most recently Site Leader before his position changed.

The collision is the deadliest aviation disaster in the US since 2001. Raza, 26, was one of several victims killed, her father-in-law, Dr Hashim Raza, told media. A daughter of Indian immigrants, Raza graduated with honors in 2020 from Indiana University and married her college sweetheart in August 2023, Hashim said.

Raza was a Washington, DC-based consultant who travelled to Wichita twice a



Vikesh Patel, a GE Aerospace engineer, and Asra Hussain Raza, a Washington DC-based consultant, were on the doomed American Airlines flight 5342 that collided with the Army helicopter as it approached the airport on Wednesday, Jan 31st night.

month to work on a turnaround project for a hospital there, her father-in-law said. She would often call him at the end of his late emergency room shifts to make sure he stayed awake on the drive home, he told the media. "She went out of her way for everybody," her father-in-law said.

Raza's husband said his wife texted him that she was about to land, but by the time he got to the airport to pick her up, his life had changed forever. "She said, 'We're landing in 20 minutes,'" Hamaad Raza said. That was the last thing he heard from his wife.

"I was waiting, and I started seeing a bunch of EMS vehicles speeding past me, like way too many than normal, and two, my texts weren't going through," Hamaad was quoted as saying by media.

"It's just feels crazy that it happened to us, to be honest," he said.

"I mean, it's like you see these things happen in the news, you see them happen in other countries. And then, I show up at the airport, and my wife's not responding, and I look on Twitter and I see that it's her flight."

He said he's been surrounded by loved ones who are all devastated by the tragic and unexpected loss.

(Source: PTI)

Free artificial limb fitment camp held in Gujarat in the Memory of BRUHUD New York Seniors Founder late Shashikant Patel

BRUHUD New York Seniors, through this initiative, continues to honor the legacy of Shashikant Patel by advancing the cause of inclusion and accessibility for those in need, both locally and internationally.



Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, former Foreign Secretary and Chief Coordinator of BMVSS who was the chief guest, formally inaugurated the camp

FEBRUARY 5, 2025

GANDHINAGAR / NEW YORK (TIP):

The five-day camp, scheduled from January 27 to 31, 2025, took place at the Mahudi Jain Temple in Mahudi town, Gandhinagar district. The camp aimed to provide prosthetic limbs (Jaipur Foot), calipers, crutches, and wheelchairs to those in need.

Inspired by the humanitarian work of BMVSS and the legacy of her grandfather, Shashikant Patel, his 21-year-old granddaughter, Devika Patel, proposed organizing a free artificial limb fitment camp in Gujarat in his memory.

Devika Patel, along with her parents Kinnari Ben and Ajay Patel, traveled all the way from New York to attend and sponsor the camp. Their presence highlighted the deep commitment to continuing the charitable work initiated by Shashikant Patel, honoring his memory through this impactful initiative.



Time to appreciate humanitarian and charitable services. Mr. Shringla gives away a token of appreciation



Mr. Shringla, former Foreign Secretary and Chief Coordinator of BMVSS, Dr. D. R. Mehta, founder and Chief Patron of BMVSS, S. J. Haider, the Additional Chief Secretary of the Gujarat Government, Mr. Prem Bhandari, Jaipur Foot USA President, Ajay Patel, Devika Patel, and others attended the inauguration of the 5-day camp

of BMVSS, led by Vice Chairman Lalit Jain, for their outstanding efforts in organizing the event, including beneficiary registrations. Special thanks were also given to the trustees of the Mahudi Jain Temple for generously providing the venue and supporting planning for the camp.



Wheelchairs were given to the needy



Organizers and volunteers of the camp with the chief guest Mr. Shringla



Beneficiaries. They were provided prosthetic limbs (Jaipur foot)

The camp was officially inaugurated on January 27, 2025, by the Chief Guest, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, former Foreign Secretary and Chief Coordinator of BMVSS. The inauguration was further honored by the presence of Padmabhushan Dr. D. R. Mehta, the 90-year-old 'young' founder and Chief Patron of BMVSS, who traveled from Jaipur to attend the event. Other dignitaries present included Prem Bhandari, Chairman of Jaipur Foot USA, and S. J. Haider, the Additional Chief Secretary of the Gujarat Government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SUCCESS

In a press release, Jaipur Foot USA extended its gratitude to the Ahmedabad center

The five-day event concluded successfully, with over 300 differently-abled individuals receiving prosthetic limbs and other mobility aids, making a lasting impact on their lives.

Founded in 2009 by the late Shashikant Patel, BRUHUD New York Seniors has grown to become one of the largest organizations serving seniors in the tri-state area. The organization hosts a variety of annual events, including health fairs, Independence Day celebrations, Garba, and the Diwali Gala, often attracting between 500 and 800 participants.

Following the passing of its founder, Shashikant Patel, his son Ajay Patel took over leadership as President of BRUHUD, ensuring the continuation of his father's mission. In addition to his role with BRUHUD, Ajay Patel serves as an office bearer of Jaipur Foot USA, the U.S. branch of Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayta Samiti (BMVSS), one of the largest global organizations dedicated to assisting differently-abled individuals, especially through their renowned prosthetic limb, the "Jaipur Foot."

CONTD FROM PAGE 3

Hope For Tomorrow Fundraiser: A World Without Childhood Blindness Campaign Launched

Dr. Mukesh Batra, DG Mahesh Trikha, and PRIP Rtn Shekar Mehta delivered Special addresses during the fundraiser, offering ongoing collaboration and support to the Eye Foundation and its efforts to eradicate childhood blindness. Members of Grant Thornton, while describing their work in analyzing and finding effective ways to measure the outcome of the work being done by the Eye Foundation, offered to collaborate in the noble mission of the Foundation.

The grand finale was a live performance by the Surkriti Orchestra, National Association of the Blind, and a Fashion Show for a Purpose by the talented Shruvan Kulkarni, Designer & Philanthropist, Weaving Magic Through Fabric, Blending Artistry & Purpose.

Earlier, A Mobile Bus was launched with the objective of reaching rural areas across India, offering screening and treatment to eradicate Childhood Blindness. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Eye Foundation, Grant Thornton, and the Rotary Club of Gurugram, Haryana to continue this noble mission and support the initiatives of the Eye Foundation in its efforts to eradicate childhood blindness.

Urging everyone to be part of this noble mission, Dr. Raju said, "Together, Let Us Illuminate Young Lives and Create A World Without Childhood Blindness. Your Support Can: Change Lives, Restore Vision, And Empower Futures. Now, Let's All Join the Movement; Be Part of Something Extraordinary."

The organizers promise, "We're embarking on a bold mission: to create a World Without Childhood Blindness. Starting with Rotary International District 3011, this initiative will expand nationwide, transforming



countless young lives. Your help can make this dream come true! Join us at the "Hope for Tomorrow Fundraiser"

Every Rupee/Dollar you support will be matched 100% by the EFA Board.

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- For job description and more details please visit <https://www.pminewyork.gov.in/vacancy>
- Resume/ CV along with copies of educational qualifications, passport, and visa (if applicable) may be sent by post/ e-mail/ by hand latest by 17 February 2025 to:

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THE GREAT GAME: The message from New Delhi is that those who break the law deserve the punishment they get



---> By Jyoti Malhotra

"Former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran calls it "uncivilized behavior on the part of the US." Except, civility and good manners are already casualties of Naya America's foreign policy. The manner in which Trump is overhauling the Middle East - Gaza, Palestine, Jordan - is unprecedented. India is keeping quiet because the hyper-realist policies that it has been propagating for some time now you only get involved when you are directly affected. And you are not directly affected in Gaza, Palestine and Jordan."

February is fast turning out to be the cruelest month, with apologies to TS Eliot, on India's foreign policy calendar.

In the east, Bangladeshi lumpen youth, with no connection to either memory or even a desire for history, danced to the Bollywood song, "munni badnam hui," as they participated in the burning of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's home in Dhaka. Indians watched, horror-struck, at the hammer blow to what was once a glorious chapter in the lives of both countries - and couldn't help asking, What now?

And in the West, questions abound as PM Narendra Modi prepares to fly to the US to meet President Trump, barely days after 104 Indian nationals, shackled and cuffed, were deported back home. Another 487 are on their way. A sense of disquiet persists on whether the PM's decision to go to the US in these circumstances is the right one.

Many would say, yes of course. The India-US relationship remains the most important foreign policy relationship, notwithstanding Russia's help with slashing the price of oil these recent post-Covid years. In support of this argument, a trade roadmap is on the cards when the PM visits, as is the likely announcement of India opening up the civil nuclear sector (after 17 years), while talk of Delhi buying more US defense equipment is gaining ground.

Which is why External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has travelled to the US thrice in the last four months, in



Indian deportees treated like hardened criminals, and the Modi government is throwing the rule book at them.

September, December and January, so as to make the Modi-Trump meeting count. He has put out that the PM will be only one of the three leaders to have met Trump in his first month in power - Israel's Netanyahu, Japan's Ishiba and India's Modi.

Unfortunately, barely a week before Modi lands in DC, the news has not been very complimentary. Pictures of young Indian men in second-hand jeans and cheap Chinese shoes shuffling towards a US military plane because they have chains on their feet has sent waves of shock and awe across Punjab, if not the rest of the country.

This, of course, is exactly what Trump wants. He wants to send the message to the world that he's not interested in the great unwashed landing up at America's doors - talented, skilled and accomplished brigades on H1-B visas are just fine.

Nor does he seem to have time for saving face. If the Indian PM is coming to see you in a week, you should no longer expect that the news is good on the eve of your visit. Trump has already rewritten the rules of the world order in the few weeks he's been around.

Former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran calls it "uncivilized behavior on the part of the US." Except, civility and good manners are already casualties of Naya America's foreign policy. The manner in which Trump is overhauling the Middle East - Gaza, Palestine, Jordan - is unprecedented. India is keeping quiet because the hyper-realist policies that it has been propagating for some time now you only get involved when you are directly affected. And you are not directly affected in Gaza, Palestine and Jordan.

As for the 104 deportees, including women, who were shackled during their flight home earlier this week, the message

from New Delhi is that those who break the law deserve the punishment they get. The US Border Patrol described them as "aliens," and so they are.

And yet, as Jaishankar spoke in Parliament on the deported Indians, admitting on record that he was "being bureaucratically correct," one couldn't help wondering what his predecessor, the late Sushma Swaraj, would have said when confronted with India's present predicament - witnessing the humiliation of its poor and unskilled masses being rightfully punished for doing a very stupid thing.

Sushma Aunty had so stirred the bureaucratic consciousness of the toughened bureaucrats of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) that they were forced to be kinder to the bluest-collar workers across the world. Reforms were ordered for the protection of emigrants, laws were toughened for those wanting to work abroad, immigration agents were forced to fall in line. Not that she cleaned up the entire system, but she certainly tried. She knew her fellow citizens were more often than not on the wrong side of the foreign law in question, but she demonstrated compassion. She offered them a hanky to cry when they got caught after knowingly breaking the rules.

The current Modi government, instead, is throwing the rule book at these people. Moreover, the MEA is pointing out, these Punjabi folk who can spend Rs 45 lakh chasing the American dream are not exactly poor. Of course, the MEA is right. These 104 men and women knowingly bought that one-way ticket to Amreeka, well aware that the "dunki route" is what it was. And still they went. Problem is, they will still go if they get a chance, if only because they

need to pay the loan their families took to send them to the US.

But back to Modi and Trump and the importance of the India-US relationship. Apart from the fact that the PM seems keen on making that early connection with the President, the fact remains that both countries are increasingly invested in each other. From intelligence-sharing to defense and technology partnerships, via military foundational agreements that have been signed over the last 25 years - an alphabet soup called GSOMIA, LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA - India is so closely integrated with the US that it would not be far wrong to describe it as an "informal ally."

Some would say, why not? There are as many as 5 million US citizens of Indian origin, a hugely influential group. We celebrate them all. We wallow in the appreciation of Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella and Indra Nooyi and Ajay Banga, as if they were part of our immediate family.

The problem arises when the Punjabis from Doaba, the Haryanvis from Kaithal and the Gujaratis from Gandhinagar bomb this pretty picture - wearing handcuffs and all. What is worse is that no one, except their immediate families, want to own these Indians. The nowhere men and women of a nowhere world.

(Jyoti Malhotra is Editor-in-Chief of The Tribune group of newspapers.

She has been a journalist for 40 years, working in print, TV and digital, both in English and Hindi media, besides being a regular contributor on BBC Radio. She is deeply interested in the conflation between politics and foreign policy. Her X handle is @jomalhotra Insta handle @jomalhotra Email: jyoti.malhotra@tribunemail.com)

What will Trump 2.0 mean for the global world order?



---> By Stephen Wertheim

"THE POLICY TEST, HOWEVER, IS STILL TO COME. IF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IS SERIOUS ABOUT AVOIDING CATASTROPHIC WARS, WITHOUT EXPOSING CORE US INTERESTS TO GREAT POWER PREDATION, IT WILL MAKE A DETERMINED, SUSTAINED DIPLOMATIC EFFORT TO END THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND MINIMIZE THE RISKS OF ESCALATION IF INITIAL TALKS DO NOT SUCCEED. IT WILL EXPLORE POLITICALLY DIFFICULT WAYS TO REACH A MODUS VIVENDI WITH CHINA, INCLUDING BY OFFERING ASSURANCES THAT THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT SEEK TO KEEP TAIWAN PERMANENTLY SEPARATE FROM THE MAINLAND, A RED LINE FOR BEIJING."

Many assumed that Donald Trump's second term as president of the United States would turn out like his first. But this time looks to be different. In his opening weeks, the US president has taken a flurry of actions he never attempted before, wielding sweeping tariffs against the US's neighbors, upending portions of the federal workforce, and attempting to change constitutionally enshrined citizenship laws through executive order.

The early signs on foreign policy are no exception. In his inaugural address, Trump said next to nothing about the issues that have dominated US foreign policy for decades - matters of war and peace in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Instead, he spoke of expanding US territory in the western hemisphere (and going to Mars), harking back explicitly to the 19th-century tradition of manifest destiny. Astoundingly, Trump mentioned China solely for the purpose of accusing it, inaccurately, of operating the Panama Canal. When he turned beyond the



President Donald Trump

Americas, Trump's most telling line signaled restraint: "We will measure our success not only by the battles we win but also by the wars that we end - and perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into."

Then Marco Rubio, the secretary of state, made even more pointed and intriguing remarks. Rubio ran for president in 2016 vowing to usher in a "new American century", the mantra of post-cold war neoconservatives. But days ago, sitting for his first lengthy interview as America's chief diplomat, he emphasized the need for a foreign policy grounded in the US national interest and said:

"So it's not normal for the world to simply have a unipolar power. That was not - that was an anomaly. It was a product of the end of the cold war, but eventually you were going to reach back to a point where you had a multipolar world, multi-great powers in different parts of the planet. We face that now with China and to some extent Russia, and then you have rogue states like Iran and North Korea you have to deal with."

For a US secretary of state to announce that the world is now "multipolar", or is inevitably heading in that direction, is historically significant. Hillary Clinton also used the m-word in 2009 at the start of her tenure in the same role, but she invoked it less than affirmatively: Clinton professed a desire to move "away from a multipolar world and toward a multipartner world". Rubio, by contrast, meant that a world of multiple poles or powers is to be accepted, not resisted. He also implied that US foreign policy had long been off course, having taken unrivaled American dominance to be a normal or necessary condition when in fact it was destined to disappear. At the end of the cold war, Rubio explained: "We were the only power in the world, and so we assumed this responsibility of sort of becoming the global government in many cases, trying to solve every problem."

THE MESSAGE: NO LONGER.

Still, no longer could lead down any

number of roads. Read against the Trump administration's Americas-centric start, Rubio's comments have provoked dread - or excitement, depending on the perspective - that the United States will radically reduce its political-military role beyond the western hemisphere even as it asserts its power within the Americas.

For traditional figures in Washington, the fear is that Trump 2.0 will give China and Russia a free hand to command "spheres of influence" in their regions, so long as they permit the United States to police its own sphere. For advocates of US restraint overseas, the hope is that Trump will deliver on his promises to end the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, shift more responsibility for defending Europe on to the shoulders of European allies, and seek to find a stable if competitive mode of coexistence with China. If Rubio thinks the world is now multipolar, presumably it follows that the United States should abandon the approach it pursued in the bygone age of unipolarity - a grand strategy of "primacy" or "hegemony", as scholars call it.

Perhaps. Rubio, though, was not nearly so conclusive. Throughout the interview, he referred to the governments in Moscow and Beijing in adversarial terms, which hardly suggest a willingness to grant them spheres of influence. Nor is there a straight line from acknowledging the loss of unipolarity to abandoning primacy. Even in a crowded, competitive landscape, the United States could try to remain militarily stronger than every rival, retain all its globe-spanning defense commitments, and maintain a large troop presence in Asia, Europe and the Middle East simultaneously. Those are the elements of primacy. Rubio did not renounce any of them. The United States, in short, could still pursue primacy without enjoying unipolarity.

Indeed, in associating multipolarity with the existence of "multi-great powers", Rubio may have meant to affirm the outlook of the first Trump administration, which adopted "great power competition" as a watchword. For

Trump 1.0, as for the Biden administration that followed, the rise of China and the assertion of Russia did not compel Washington to pare back its military commitments and presence. Quite the contrary. Over the two presidencies, Nato enlarged to four new countries, the US military presence in the Middle East (excluding Afghanistan) remained stable, and the United States deepened security cooperation with Ukraine, Taiwan and others.

So far, the appearance of formidable rivals has done less to discipline US ambitions than to furnish US global primacy with a new rationale - to stand up to the aggressive and revisionist activities of America's adversaries. As Rubio put it: "China wants to be the most powerful country in the world and they want to do so at our expense, and that's not in our national interest, and we're going to address it."

But Rubio did signal more restraint than a continuation of business as usual. Just after his remarks on multipolarity, he noted that the second world war ended 80 years ago and that "if you look at the scale and scope of destruction and loss of life that occurred, it would be far worse if we had a global conflict now." Since the end of the cold war, US leaders have invoked the second world war almost exclusively to exhort the country to lead the world. Rubio, by contrast, did so to caution against the dangers of overreach. He continued:

"You have multiple countries now who have the capability to end life on Earth. And so we need to really work hard to avoid armed conflict as much as possible, but never at the expense of our national interest. So that's the tricky balance."

Quite so. In recent years, the risk of conflict between major powers has grown acute. The war in Ukraine - in which one major power is fighting directly on its borders and the other heavily arming its opponent - had no parallel during the cold war. A US-China military conflict over Taiwan would be ruinous. In a country unused to paying noticeable costs for foreign policy choices, and a world that no longer remembers the last general war, Rubio delivered a salutary message.

The policy test, however, is still to come. If the new administration is serious about avoiding catastrophic wars, without exposing core US interests to great power predation, it will make a determined, sustained diplomatic effort to end the war in Ukraine and minimize the risks of escalation if initial talks do not succeed. It will explore politically difficult ways to reach a modus vivendi with China, including by offering assurances that the United States does not seek to keep Taiwan permanently separate from the mainland, a red line for Beijing.

The new administration's opening moves suggest some intention to find a more sustainable and less confrontational approach toward the world's major powers. But if unipolarity is dead, the lure of primacy remains very much alive.

(Stephen Wertheim is a senior fellow in the American statecraft program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a visiting lecturer at Yale Law School and Catholic University)

A nexus that left the police red-faced

Ex-minister Deshmukh must explain why he did not object to the reinstatement of a tainted cop



---> By Julio Ribeiro

I was surprised to receive a book written by Maharashtra's former Home Minister Anil Deshmukh. I had heard tales of how transfers of police personnel at all levels were effected through political pressure during his tenure. He faced stiff competition from an IPS officer (now retired), Param Bir Singh. The good name of the Mumbai city police came under threat while they were in office.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) - comprising the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-Sharad Pawar) and the Congress - ruled Maharashtra from November 2019 to June 2022. The ruling alliance chose a wrong man as the Commissioner of Police (CP), Mumbai. Simultaneously, Pawar picked Deshmukh as the minister supervising the working of the police force. It was a deadly combination that was bound to cause an explosion sooner than later. And it did.

On February 25, 2021, a Scorpio car, laden with 20 gelatin sticks - but mercifully without a detonator - was found parked near Mukesh Ambani's residence (Antilia) on Altamount Road, an upmarket residential area of the city. The car was traced to Mansukh Hiren, a friend of then CP Param Bir's 'blue-eyed boy' Sachin Vaze, who was an assistant police inspector (API) in the Crime Branch. It was established by the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of the state police and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) that Vaze had been seen in that Scorpio on earlier occasions.

Another car, an Innova, belonging to the Crime Branch, was specially allotted to Vaze. That was also seen in the vicinity of the Ambani house at the same time. It was apparent that the Crime Branch's intelligence unit, headed by Vaze, was involved in the planting of the Scorpio outside Ambani's home for reasons that remain undisclosed to this date.

Vaze had been suspended as he was facing a murder charge. His visiting cards projected him as an 'encounter specialist'; his associates in the private security business used to distribute these cards among potential customers. Vaze had served under inspector Pradeep Sharma, the doyen of 'encounter specialists', in the early years of his service in the police. Sharma and Vaze were in touch with each other and also with the IPS officer who has been targeted by Deshmukh in his book, *Diary of a Home Minister*.

The officer had been the CP of the neighboring city of Thane. His image



Controversy: The Antilia bomb scare rocked Mumbai during Anil Deshmukh's tenure as Maharashtra's Home Minister.

Photo: ANI

in the eyes of Thane's residents left much to be desired. His image in the eyes of his own men, whom he was chosen to lead, was even worse.

This officer had tried desperately for the Mumbai police chief's post when his tenure as the Thane CP ended. Two excellent officers, DD Padsalgikar and SK Jaiswal, were sent back from Central deputation. The BJP-led Central Government had correctly assessed the risk of installing a wrong man as the chief of the Mumbai Police.

When the MVA government was sworn in and the Home portfolio was allotted to the NCP, Mumbai residents were saddled with a choice that puzzled them. How did the appointee avoid the eagle eye of Pawar? The officer himself let it be known that Pawar had interviewed him and advised him to not let down a much-respected force and sully its good name.

Deshmukh's account of his post-Antilia relations with the CP is a defense of himself in the case registered against him by the CBI and then the NIA on the allegations made by his friend-turned-foe after the latter was removed from the top post. The minister was accused by the CP of summoning Vaze and demanding Rs 100 crore a month as his share of the illegal collections that Vaze was

reportedly making from bar owners and others.

The former Home Minister does not explain in his book why and how the CP was chosen. He must answer that question because the decline in the police's performance began from there. Further, he does not explain why he, as Home Minister, did not object to the reinstatement of Vaze in service despite the latter facing a murder charge. He also does not explain how a hands-on minister like him did not advise the CP to follow protocol procedures and ensure that Vaze reported to senior officers in the Crime Branch and not to the CP directly. The intelligence unit is supposed to be headed by a senior inspector. How was an API made the head of that important unit? Why did the CP summon the ACP in charge of the social services (SS) unit and tell him to involve Vaze in his work? The SS unit of the Crime Branch deals with the city's brothels!

The discovery of explosives in a car near Ambani's house was itself an indicator that things were going wrong for the city police. No API, even a swashbuckler like Vaze, could have dared to carry out such a project without the CP's knowledge. If the latter insists that he knew nothing of the plan, that admission alone would

disqualify him from holding high office.

The subsequent murder of Hiren conclusively showed that the menace of encounter specialists should be buried once and for all. That burial had been effected by Anami Roy, who was the CP two decades ago. City residents were breathing easier till Vaze was inducted into the Crime Branch and given powers that were well beyond his rank. Did the minister not know about the rumblings in the police because Vaze operated as the CP's alter ego?

The almost unanimous opinion in Mumbai's police force was that the Home Minister and the CP were in league. After the Scorpio fiasco, the latter got off the hook by teaming up with the BJP, then in the Opposition.

The image of Mumbai's city police suffered considerably from the games that politicians played. And this is what should alarm the city's residents. Deshmukh's defense of the part he played in the episode, as reflected in his book, is as he intended it to be - his defense. The facts against the ex-CP that he has disclosed need to be tested also, but in a court of law.

(Julio Ribeiro is a Former Ambassador & DGP, Punjab)

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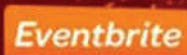
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Embassy of India in Guatemala celebrates World Hindi Diwas 2025



World Hindi Day was celebrated with enthusiastic participation from the Indian community, local Guatemalans, and friends of India in various Hindi competitions

JANUARY 19, 2025

GUATEMALA CITY (TIP): The Embassy of India in Guatemala celebrated World Hindi Diwas 2025 on 18 January 2025 by organizing a series of vibrant Hindi competitions, which garnered an overwhelming response from participants. The event saw enthusiastic participation from not only members of the Indian community but also local Guatemalans and friends of India, showcasing the growing appreciation for the Hindi language and culture.

World Hindi Day is celebrated annually on January 10th to mark the recognition of Hindi as one of the official languages of India by the Indian government. The day is celebrated to promote the significance of Hindi, a language spoken by millions of people worldwide, and to spread awareness about its cultural and historical importance. It was first observed in 2006, and since then, it has become an occasion to celebrate the rich heritage of Hindi literature, arts, and traditions. Hindi holds a crucial place not only in India but also on the global stage, as it is one of the most spoken languages worldwide, with a vast diaspora of Hindi speakers across the globe. Its impact is far-reaching, contributing to global conversations in fields such as literature, entertainment, politics, and education. The promotion of Hindi on World Hindi Day aims to increase its visibility, strengthen ties among

Hindi-speaking communities, and encourage more people to learn and appreciate the language.

The Embassy has been instrumental in propagating and promoting Hindi through a variety of initiatives and events throughout the year in Central American region. By organizing numerous Hindi-related activities, such as competitions, workshops, and cultural programs, the embassy has fostered a deeper appreciation for the language among local communities, Indian diaspora, and friends of India. Each year, these events have witnessed a remarkable increase in participation, reflecting the growing enthusiasm for Hindi in the region. Additionally, the embassy encourages its staff to incorporate Hindi into their official communications, further enhancing the language's visibility and relevance in diplomatic work.

This year, the World Hindi Diwas was celebrated with a series of engaging competitions, including essay writing, poem recitals, and Sulekh (Hindi writing). To adjust with relocation of Embassy chancery to a new building during 10th January, the earmarked to celebrate Hindi Day, the celebrations were postponed to 18th January. The embassy hosted the Poem Recital and Sulekh competition, requiring participants to present their works in person at the chancery. For those unable to attend in person, an opportunity was provided to submit their essays via email, allowing participants



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra addressed the gathering on World Hindi Day, emphasizing the global significance of Hindi and its role in connecting cultures.

from El Salvador and Honduras to join in the festivities.

Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra expressed heartfelt gratitude to all participants for their enthusiastic involvement in the World Hindi Diwas celebrations. He acknowledged that the overwhelming response from the Indian community, local Guatemalans, and friends of India significantly contributed to the success of the event, enabling the embassy to expand its efforts on such a large scale. In his address, the Ambassador highlighted how the collective enthusiasm and passion for Hindi had made this journey not only possible but also incredibly rewarding. Ambassador Mohapatra reassured the audience of the Government of India's unwavering support and commitment to promoting Hindi both domestically and internationally. He spoke about various initiatives and programs that the Indian government has undertaken to propagate the language and strengthen cultural ties with countries across the globe. A message on World Hindi Day from Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was also read during the event.

The Embassy of India in Guatemala is firmly committed to promoting Hindi and celebrating its rich cultural heritage. It has successfully fostered a deeper understanding and appreciation of the language by engaging with local Guatemalans and diverse communities through various initiatives, events, and competitions. Additionally, the embassy has effectively encouraged the Indian diaspora to embrace Hindi, instilling a sense of pride in the language through direct engagement. Looking ahead, the embassy will continue to organize more events and programs designed to inspire future generations to explore and cherish Hindi, ensuring that it remains a vibrant component of our shared identity and cultural dialogue.

(Based on a press release issued by Ramesh Khulbey)



Participation from the Indian community, local Guatemalans, and friends of India in various Hindi competitions

Embassy of India in Guatemala Celebrates the 76th Republic Day of India

Enthusiastic participation, grandeur and patriotic fervor mark the celebrations



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra unfurled the Indian flag at the Flag hoisting ceremony to mark the 76th Republic Day

JANUARY 27, 2025

GUATEMALA CITY (TIP): The Embassy of India in Guatemala celebrated the 76th Republic Day with grandeur and patriotic fervor at its chancery premises on 26 January 2025. The event was attended by distinguished guests, including Ministers, diplomats, government officials, dignitaries, business leaders, media representatives, members of the Indian community, and friends of India from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

The celebration commenced with the hoisting of the Indian national flag by Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, followed by the singing of the national anthem. The Ambassador then addressed the gathering, highlighting India's remarkable progress in various sectors, its growing global partnerships, and the strengthening ties between India and the Central American region.

In his speech, Ambassador Mohapatra underscored India's technological advancements, particularly in 5G technology, digital transformation, and the role of Indian companies in shaping the global tech landscape. He also emphasized the Embassy's efforts in fostering business and investment opportunities in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, particularly in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, infrastructure, and IT. He further elaborated on India's commitment to South-South cooperation and developmental partnerships, showcasing India's support for capacity-building programs, including the ITEC initiative. The Ambassador reaffirmed India's dedication to strengthening diplomatic, cultural, and economic ties with the region. He highlighted that the Embassy's initiatives in promoting trade and investment between India and Central America have yielded significant progress. The successful organization of business seminars, BSMs, and collaborations with trade bodies have facilitated increased trade in pharmaceuticals, textiles, automotive components, and technology-driven sectors. Ambassador Mohapatra also mentioned India's growing involvement in renewable energy projects in the region, including waste-to-energy conversion initiatives.

A key highlight of the event was the vibrant cultural program, reflecting the rich heritage and traditions of India. The cultural performances included Dance Performance by Natraj Dance Group (Guatemala City) with a captivating presentation of classical and folk Indian dances, mesmerizing the audience with intricate moves and vibrant costumes. Enthusiastic participation from the Indian diaspora showcased soulful performances of Bollywood melodies and classical compositions. A series of patriotic songs were performed, invoking a deep sense of pride and unity among the attendees.



Certificates were awarded to the winners of the Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz during the 76th Republic Day celebrations

The Embassy recognized and awarded the top fifty winners of the Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz, a prestigious competition aimed at strengthening knowledge about India's culture, history, and achievements. Participants from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador took part in this initiative, displaying a remarkable understanding of India's rich heritage. Prizes were distributed to the winners by the Ambassador, acknowledging their enthusiasm and interest in India. This initiative not only engaged the younger generation but also fostered stronger cultural bonds between India and the region. The celebration concluded with a grand reception, providing a platform for diplomatic and business interactions. Guests had the opportunity to network, discuss future collaborations, and enjoy a specially curated selection of Indian cuisine.



Indian community members showcased vibrant cultural performances at the 76th Republic Day celebrations, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of India



The Embassy of India hosted a grand reception on the occasion of the 76th Republic Day, attended by Ministers, diplomats, officials, dignitaries, business leaders, the media, the Indian community, and friends of India

In the lead-up to the Republic Day celebrations, the Embassy of India hosted a grand Republic Day Reception on January 24, 2025. The event was attended by Ministers, high-ranking government officials, diplomats, business leaders, members of the local media, the Indian diaspora, and friends of India. Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra delivered an insightful speech, reflecting on India's global leadership, diplomatic engagements, and strengthening bilateral relations with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. He also reiterated India's commitment to mutual growth and cooperation in trade, technology, and cultural exchange. The reception also featured a brief yet engaging cultural program, where Indian and Guatemalan artists came together to present dance and musical performances that highlighted the shared appreciation of artistic heritage. The evening provided an excellent opportunity for networking, fostering diplomatic and business engagements, and reinforcing the strong ties between India and Central America.

The 76th Republic Day celebrations at the Embassy of India in Guatemala successfully reinforced the deep-rooted friendship between India and Central America. The events highlighted India's commitment to diplomatic, economic, and cultural engagement, paving the way for a stronger partnership in the years ahead.

(Based on a press release issued by Ramesh Khulbey)

Liberal Party leadership race: "It is ironic. The people that broke the system certainly cannot fix it," says Ruby Dhalla



--->By Prabhjot Singh

FEBRUARY 4, 2025

OTTAWA (TIP): "I just found it ironic that all the people that are running as candidates wanting to be the leader have spent the last 10 years creating and developing all of these policies," says Ruby Dhalla while taking forward her Liberal Party leadership campaign on an aggressive note.

Without naming any of her rival candidates, she says that "the people that broke the system certainly cannot fix it" maintaining that the "Liberal Party is broken. We must clean up the system." She claims she is the only contestant with no connection to outgoing PM Justin Trudeau.

Ruby Dhalla, the three times MP representing Brampton-Springdale riding from 2004 to 2011, is staging a political comeback.

"Canada's comeback starts now," she says in her message on social media handles. "The first act that I would do as

the leader of the party is to ensure that we get back towards the center, to the right of center, because I think that is the need of the hour," she said.

Describing herself as a "trailblazer, hotelier, philanthropist [and] motivational speaker" on her X page while touting her political and business experience, she adds: "As a self-made businesswoman, I believe that I have a great understanding of the struggles and the sacrifices that business owners and entrepreneurs in our country are facing."

Her latest post on Instagram says: "I am Ruby Dhalla and I'm running because we must beat Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives. I started off as a volunteer with the party at the age of 14 and today I am running to leave the Liberal Party and become Canada's next Prime Minister," she says holding that "the Liberal Party is broken. We must clean up the system. The people that broke the system certainly cannot fix it. The time for change is now. The time for real change is now, and together we can make it happen."

"So, I invite all of my fellow Canadians and members of the Liberal Party to join me because we can make this happen together. Let's bring our party back to the

center so that we can stand up for Canadians and fight for Canada. Please join me and sign up and vote for Ruby Dhalla. Canada's comeback starts now.

"And when I took a look at all of the candidates that we're running, I just found it ironic that all the people that are running as candidates wanting to be the leader have spent the last 10 years creating and developing all of these policies," said her post.

Meanwhile, all seven contestants have aggressively campaigned while conducting membership recruitment drives. The Election Office of the Liberal Party will register new members on January 27.

"The Liberal Party of Canada is ready to run a secure, fair, and robust leadership race that will engage and energize our grassroots supporters across the country," said Sachit Mehra, President of the Liberal Party of Canada. "This is an exciting time for the Liberal Party, and I encourage anyone wanting to join our movement to register as a Liberal by January 27, 2025."

The Leadership Expense Committee has decided that an individual candidate can spend a maximum of \$5 million and



Ruby Dhalla, a candidate for Liberal Party leadership
Facebook photo

have a debt limit of no more than \$200,000 at any given time throughout the leadership race.

The committee also wants the contestants to meet the financial requirements outlined in the election notice. The fee for entering the leadership race is Can\$350,000, which hopefuls can pay in three instalments by February 17 at the latest.

The start of the tariff war sets to hit people-to-people relations

BY PRABHJOT SINGH

More than "tariffs," a war of attrition set in motion by both the US Administration and the Canadian government may fuel an unending socio-economic conflict that impacts people-to-people relations between two major trade partner nations.

Within hours of U.S. President Donald Trump making good on his tariff threat, declaring an economic emergency to impose a 25 per cent tariff on Canadian goods and a 10 per cent tariff on energy, including natural gas, oil, and electricity, his Canadian counterpart, Justin Trudeau, retaliated by chairing a Cabinet meeting, holding a virtual meeting with provincial and territorial premiers, and speaking with the President of Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum, before imposing 25 per cent immediate tariffs on American goods worth \$30 billion.

Justin Trudeau announced that an additional \$125 billion in duties on American products would follow in 21 days, allowing Canadian consumers and supply chains to find alternatives.

When Justin Trudeau, who has already announced his decision to step down and not contest the ensuing federal elections, was joined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, the Minister of Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs, Dominic LeBlanc, and the Minister of Public Safety, David J. McGuinty while announcing the retaliatory steps.

The White House says the tariffs are being placed on Canada until it "cooperates with the U.S. against drug traffickers and on border security."

"There is growing production of fentanyl in Canada, and enough fentanyl was seized at the northern border last fiscal year to kill 9.8 million Americans," reads the statement posted to social media. "Additionally, illegal border crossings from Canada reached historic new highs every year for the last four fiscal years."

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have become part of history. Nothing will come across the borders with a duty tag on it.

The "tariff war" is expected to impact the people-to-people relations and movements across international borders as routine or household groceries done across the border



Trump has launched a tariff war against Canada

would not be exempt from the new tariff order. Imports below that sum are now allowed to cross into the United States without customs and duties.

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians shuttle across the international borders regularly for their routine requirements. With the "tariffs", the vehicular movements, including those of truckers, would be adversely affected as the entry points on either side of the borders would be jammed awaiting customs clearances.

The order signed by Trump contained no mechanism for granting exceptions, the official said, a possible blow to homebuilders who rely on Canadian lumber as well as farmers, automakers and other industries.

The US President has been categorical in his statements that his country needs nothing from its neighbor though the United States imported 4.6 million barrels of oil daily from Canada in October last year, according to Energy Information Administration.

Cutting across their affiliations, leaders of various Canadian political outfits, both federal and provincial, have assailed the US move.

Ontario Premier and Progressive Conservative Leader Doug Ford, who has called for early provincial elections on this issue of the US tariffs, said in a statement that he was "extremely disappointed" by Trump's actions, reiterating his support for a "strong and forceful response" by the federal government.

"I wish we were not here. I wish Ontario and Canada were working together with our American friends and allies to

make our two countries the richest, most successful, safest, most secure on the planet," said Ford. "Instead, President Trump has chosen to move forward with tariffs that will only hurt America and make Americans poorer. Canada now has no choice but to hit back and hit back hard."

The Leader of the official Opposition party, the Conservatives, Pierre Poilievre condemned the "massive, unjust and unjustified tariffs on Canada's already weak economy" in a press release. He reiterated his call for Parliament's return, advocating for dollar-for-dollar tariffs, an emergency tax cut and other measures to support businesses, workers and the economy.

A similar call has been made by NDP leader Jagmeet Singh as he has urged the federal government to protect workers as it responds to the incoming tariffs from the U.S.

"It is urgent that the government is ready to put financial help into the hands of workers who are impacted, and that we protect as many jobs as possible with a strong commitment to buy Canadian," he said in a statement.

Liberal leadership candidate Mark Carney, who had been a Governor of the Bank of Canada, issued a statement, calling the tariffs a clear violation of our trade agreements which require "the most serious trade and economic responses in our history."

"Canada will not bow down to a bully. We won't stand by as illegal US tariffs hurt our workers and their families. As Canadians, we need to face this challenge as one united team," said Carney.

"I support dollar-for-dollar retaliatory tariffs aimed where they will be felt the hardest in the United States but will have the least impact in Canada. At the same time, we need a coordinated strategy to boost investment and to support our Canadian workers through what will be a difficult moment."

(Prabhjot Singh is a Toronto-based award-winning independent journalist. He was celebrated by AIPS, the international body of sports journalists, for covering ten Olympics, at its centennial celebrations held at UNESCO Centre in Paris during the 2024 Olympic Games. Besides, he has written extensively about business and the financial markets, the health industry, the public and private sectors, and aviation. He has worked as a political reporter besides covering Sikh and Punjab politics. He is particularly interested in Indian Diaspora and Sikh Diaspora in particular. His work has also appeared in various international and national newspapers, magazines, and journals. He can be reached at prabhjot416@gmail.com)



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FIA Commemorates Republic Day Celebration with 41st Annual Dance Pe Chance Edition



Consul General of India, Mr. Binaya S. Pradhan administering the oath of office to incoming FIA President Saurin Parikh, alongside the newly elected FIA Executive Committee 2025

FEBRUARY 4, 2025

TRENTON, NJ (TIP): The Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) NY-NJ-CT-NE celebrated its largest turnout with their annual 'Dance Pe Chance' (DPC) competition on February 1, 2025, at the Patriots Theater at the War Memorial in Trenton, NJ. Due to an overwhelming response and a record-breaking 800+ participants, this year's event ran longer than previous editions, drawing over 2,000 spectators for an extended evening of vibrant performances.

The event showcased 33 craft-fully choreographed performances by community participants aged 6 to 60 from 15 dance academies across four states. Broadway-style dance compilations were supported by a massive LED backdrop, state-of-the-art lighting, and elaborate costumes that brought Indian cultural storytelling to life through dance.

Hon. Consul General of India, Mr. Binaya S. Pradhan administered the oath of office to the newly elected FIA Executive Committee. He announced significant developments including a new Indian Consulate in Boston, MA, a satellite office in New Jersey, and the Consulate's new year-round operations.

The distinguished judging panel included renowned dancer and actor Salman Yusuff Khan, Indian dancer Josephine Madhuri Verghese, Nupoor Art Academy founder Mamta Patel, and Yuva Dance Academy



Winners



Performers

CONTD FROM PAGE 16



Scintillating performances

Creative Director Miral Shah.

FIA Chairman Ankur Vaidya emphasized DPC's volunteer-driven nature, powered by over 100 dedicated volunteers, and thanked the dance choreographers,



DPC Chair and FIA Vice President Preeti Patel addresses the gathering, highlighting dance as a universal language that brings diverse communities together



The Incoming President Mr. Saureen Parikh



The Master of Ceremonies who made everyone dance to her tunes- the one and only Mamta Naula - Mamta, tere bin kuch naheen jamta

Sreekanth Akkapalli, CEO of TV9 North America, and FIA Grand Gala Chair Manan Saxena. Mamta Narula and Nishil Parikh served as the Emcees for the event.

The event's success was contributed by sponsors including CGI-NY, ONYX Edge, The Diaspora Bi-weekly, TV9 USA, Parikh Worldwide Media, TV Asia, The South Asian Times, New India Abroad, The Indian Panorama, ITV Gold, Subway. FIA's Dance Pe Chance 41st Edition concluded with awards



A packed room. Seated in the front are the distinguished judges who included renowned dancer and actor Salman Yusuff Khan, Indian dancer Josephine Madhuri Verghese, Nupoor Art Academy founder Mamta Patel, and Yuva Dance Academy Creative Director Miral Shah.

participants, parents, sponsors and War Memorial Theatre.

FIA President Saurin Parikh highlighted the event's core mission of craftily engaging the diaspora's youth

while showcasing culture and heritage. DPC Chair Priti Ray Patel applauded the event's role in unifying diverse communities through performing arts. The FIA committee presence included FIA Convenor 2025,

across multiple categories, celebrating the participants' dedication and artistic excellence while strengthening community bonds through cultural expression.

(Based on press Release)



Before Trump bilateral, PM's France stopover to seal N-reactor deal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be visiting France on February 10-11, a trip during which he is expected to finalise with President Emmanuel Macron a key understanding on nuclear power to have a partnership on small and advanced modular reactors.

The PM will co-chair an artificial intelligence (AI) summit in Paris on February 10 and join a dinner hosted by Macron for the heads of state and government attending the event. He will, along with Macron, also visit Kadash, the site of an international thermal nuclear experimental reactor, said officials.

India has already announced setting up of the Nuclear Energy Mission for research and development of small modular reactors (SMR) with an outlay of Rs 20,000 crore. At least five indigenously developed SMRs would be operationalised by 2033, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said during her Budget speech in Parliament on February 1.

India and France are also likely to unveil a bilateral roadmap on AI. The AI summit will also witness the presence of US Vice-President JD Vance and Chinese Vice-Prime Minister Ding Xuexiang along with other key stakeholders.

Cooperation in defence and space would be on agenda when Modi and Macron hold a bilateral meeting, said sources. India is also looking to acquire naval fighter jets Rafale M, additional three Kalvari-class submarines and a tie-up for making a next generation engine for fighter jets. On the France visit, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said PM Modi and Macron would also visit the war cemetery at Marseille to pay tribute to the sacrifices made by Indian soldiers in World War 1.

Macron would also host a dinner in honour of PM Modi, said officials. The two leaders will jointly inaugurate the newest Consulate General of India in Marseille.

From France, the PM will head to the US on a two-day visit from February 12 to 13 where he is scheduled to meet President Donald Trump, the duo's first bilateral after the change of guard in the White House.

Number of voters in Maha exceed state population, says Rahul

NEW FELHI (TIP)

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Friday, February 7, promised to respond in writing minutes after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and his Maharashtra allies questioned the anomalies in the electoral roll ahead of the assembly polls in the western Indian state in November. Gandhi claimed more voters were added in the state in five months than in five years. He said overall the number of voters in Maharashtra surpassed the state's adult population.

Gandhi said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which swept back to power as part of a coalition, won the constituencies where voters were added. He alleged a large number of voters from the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and minority communities were deleted from the voter list.

"In five years between the assembly elections in 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha polls, 3.2 million voters were added. In five months between the 2024 Lok Sabha and assembly polls, 3.9 million voters were added. Who are these 3.9 million voters? That is equivalent to the total number of voters of Himachal Pradesh. Why are there more voters in Maharashtra than the entire adult population?... the voters were suddenly created in Maharashtra," said Gandhi at a joint press conference with Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray)'s Sanjay Raut and the Nationalist Congress Party - Sharadchandra Pawar's Supriya Sule.

The Congress and its allies bagged 30



of Maharashtra's 48 Lok Sabha seats before they were reduced to 50 seats in the assembly in November. The BJP-led alliance won 235 of 288 assembly seats.

Gandhi cited the health ministry data and said Maharashtra's population was 95 million. He added the electoral roll had 97 million voters. "...The constituencies where they added [voters] are BJP's...they were added wherever the BJP won."

Gandhi said more voters than the adult population of Maharashtra was not a speculation. "These are facts. This is not our data. This is the ECI's data.there are factual anomalies...90% strike rate [for the BJP]...The ECI is the final authority. We are asking them. You would not be able to explain how there are more voters in Maharashtra than the adult population of the state," Gandhi said.

Gandhi asked for the electoral roll with complete addresses to explain it. "If they give us that, we will have another press conference where the answers to the questions [they raised] will be

given...My concern is that the strategy is to delay and destroy. The ECI needs to give data...The next step is that we go to the judicial system...This is a small piece of the puzzle. The big piece of the puzzle is voter deletion."

Gandhi said they do not know how many voters were deleted and where. "We know how many have been added. We do not know how many have been deleted. We suspect the number of deleted is more than the number added."

The ECI responded to Gandhi's comments saying it values views, suggestions, and questions. "ECI considers political parties, as priority stakeholders, of course the voters being the prime & deeply values views, suggestions, and questions coming from political parties. Commission would respond in writing with full factual & procedural matrix uniformly adopted across the country," said the ECI.

Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis rejected Gandhi's charges saying the ECI has categorically replied to all the questions. "Gandhi is doing a cover fire as he knows that after the February 8 election results, his party will be nowhere in Delhi." He accused Gandhi of creating a new narrative. "If he does not introspect and continue to console himself with lies, his party's revival is impossible. Rahul Gandhi should introspect his defeat."

Gandhi this week also raised the issue in Lok Sabha during the debate on the President's speech. He flagged anomalies and sought data from the ECI.

Jayalalithaa's niece moves Supreme Court seeking return of confiscated assets

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha's one of the legal heirs have approached the Supreme Court challenging a Karnataka High Court January 13 order, which declined to return the movable and immovable assets, seized by the authorities, in the multi-crore disproportionate assets case.

J Deepa, niece of former AIADMK chief, stated since the proceedings stood abated in terms of judgment by the apex court in 2017, Jayalalitha cannot be treated as a convict resulting in the confiscating of properties seized by the prosecution.

Filing an appeal against the High Court order, she said Jayalalitha's legal heirs are entitled to claim back all the properties that were confiscated and attached in connection with the case.

"Petitioner being the Class-II legal heir of late Dr J Jayalalitha as recognised by the High Court of Madras is entitled to properties seized in connection with... pursuant to abatement of criminal proceedings against Jayalalitha," the petition before the top court stated.

After the acquittal order of the High Court on May 11, 2015, Jayalalitha passed away on December 05, 2016, i.e., before the judgment of the top court on February 14, 2017.

The petition of her niece stated, "In terms of the judgment of this court, all the proceedings against Jayalalitha stand



abated and there is no presumption of guilt based on the conviction and sentence passed by the Special Court," it said.

It added, "The law by this court that no person shall be deprived of his property save by authority of law and the state cannot dispossess a citizen of his/her property except in accordance with the procedure established by law."

She pointed out that post the Karnataka High Court's order, the Special Court passed an order dated January 29, 2025, transferring the properties confiscated to the government of Tamil Nadu and instructed the Registrar, City Civil Court, Bengaluru to make necessary arrangements to hand over the properties to the state government.

The appellant has challenged both the orders -- the January 13 judgement of the High Court and the Special Court's order of January 29, 2025.

RBI cuts repo rate by 25 basis points

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Corporate and retail loans (including home loans) will get cheaper as the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) pivoted its policy by cutting the policy rate for the first time in five years, with analysts expecting another cut in April when the committee meets next.

The quantum of the rate cut -- 25 basis points or 0.25 percentage points to 6.25% -- was in line with expectations although it disappointed the more optimistic analysts who were hoping for a 50-point cut, and the stock markets which had already factored in a 25 basis point cut.

The rationale for the rate cut is laid out in RBI's projections for the year. It expects the GDP to expand by 6.7% in 2025-26, with quarterly growth estimates of 6.7%, 7%, 6.5% and 6.5%. In December, it estimated growth to be 6.9% in the first quarter of the year and 7.3% in the second -- and so the latest numbers suggest that there is a challenge to growth. In its December policy, MPC also overestimated the 2024-25 annual growth by 20 basis points at 6.6%. According to the first advance estimates released in January, GDP growth in 2024-25 is expected to be 6.4%. It also expects inflation for the year to be 4.2%, close to RBI's target of 4% (in fact, the closest it will be since India adopted an inflation targeting framework for its monetary policy. If the annual inflation projection of RBI were to materialise, it will be the lowest annual inflation number since 2018-19 when it came in at 3.4%



Clearly, RBI's MPC has decided (unanimously) that it needs to support what is clearly seen as slowing growth momentum in the Indian economy. Its policy stance continues to be cautious (neutral), which is understandable given the turbulent external environment. The neutral stance, however, could also be taken as a hint of more cuts to come.

Already in January, RBI has, through other measures, announced the introduction of around Rs 1.5 lakh crore of liquidity in the system.

RBI's rate cut is likely to bring cheer to retail and corporate borrowers -- RBI governor Sanjay Malhotra, presiding over his first MPC meeting after taking over, has said it could take up to two quarters for the reduction to be transmitted -- with the almost five-year-long monetary tightening cycle increasing interest payments. In the

case of home loan buyers, for instance, it increased loan durations (since most lenders and borrowers preferred to keep payments the same). That could well boost consumption, adding to the boost already provided by the income tax rebate and slab rate changes announced by the Union finance minister on February 1 (which is estimated at Rs 1 lakh crore).

To be sure, a lot of the inflation-growth dynamics will depend on the performance of this year's monsoon, which RBI hopes will be normal.

MPC last reduced repo rate in May 2020 when it brought it down to 4%, a massive 1.15 percentage point reduction from the 5.15% level in February 2020 to cushion the pandemic's impact on the Indian economy. Prior to Friday's decision, the rate had stayed unchanged at 6.5% since February 2023.

HC nixes WB appeal over RG Kar verdict, admits CBI petition

The Calcutta High Court on Friday, Feb 7, refused to admit the West Bengal Government's appeal challenging the trial court's life term till death sentence awarded to RG Kar hospital rape-murder case convict Sanjay Roy, while accepting a similar prayer by the CBI.

Passing the judgement, a Division Bench comprising Justices Debansu Basak and Md Shabbar Rashidi said since the investigation of the case was conducted by the CBI, it is the appropriate authority to issue directions for the presentation of an appeal against the inadequacy of sentence. "The state government cannot issue such directions so long as the Central Government or the CBI is willing to do so," the Bench said, refusing to admit the appeal of the state government claiming inadequacy of sentence awarded to Roy by the Additional Sessions Judge of the Sealdah court. The Division Bench said since the appeal pertains to conviction under Sections 64 and 66 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, it is required to be disposed of within six months from the date of filing of such appeal.

Cabinet clears Income Tax bill, to be introduced in Parliament next week

Union Cabinet on Friday, Feb 7, approved the new Income Tax Bill to replace the Income Tax Act, 1961, the aim being to modernise the tax system and simplify the legal jargon so that taxpayers can easily understand its provisions.

The Bill was announced on February 1 by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her Budget speech and is likely to be brought to Parliament next week.

The Bill won't introduce new taxes and rather focus on simplifying tax laws, reducing legal complexities and making compliance easier for taxpayers, said sources. It would have shorter sentences, provisos and explanations, they said.

The government has also said that the new law would be 50 per cent shorter than the current one, with the major goal being to reduce litigation. The Bill may introduce lower penalties for certain offences, making the tax system more taxpayer-friendly. The new tax system will take effect from the 2025-26 financial year and apply to taxpayers from the assessment year 2026-27.

Governor can't simply sit on Bills without communicating, rules apex court

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Supreme Court on Friday, Feb 7, flagged the creation of an "impasse" if the Governor withheld his assent on the bills passed by legislative assembly without any communication to the state government and wondered how the deadlock would be resolved.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan said Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi couldn't simply sit over the bills based on perception of repugnancy with the Central law, without communicating his opinion.

"When the Governor feels that the bill suffers from repugnancy, that it will not fall within the ambit of changes, amendments, etc. So, we have a query. If the Governor is prima facie of the view that the bill suffers from repugnance, should it not bring it to the notice of the state government? How is the government expected to know what is in the mind of the Governor?" the bench asked attorney general R Venkataramani, representing the Governor.



The bench went on to add, "If repugnancy is something that troubled the Governor, then the Governor should have immediately brought it to the notice of the government, which could have reconsidered the said bills."

Justice Pardiwala, questioned the status of the bills, which were reserved for consideration of the President by the Governor.

"If you are of the view that this bill suffers from repugnancy to the Central law, then you have to give a message. The Governor has to say something like I am referring this bill for the consideration of the President. Otherwise, there will be an impasse. How do you expect the state

government to overcome repugnancy? If you create the impasse, you have to clear the impasse. But, who will clear the impasse? There cannot be an absolute deadlock," it observed.

Venkataramani said in seven of the bills, the assent was withheld by the President and the state government was informed about the decision.

"Withholding the assent means declining the assent," said the AG submitted, adding when the President decided to withhold the assent, as was communicated by the President in these cases, it meant the bills were repugnant.

The bench, however, said it might not be a correct interpretation of the provisions for accepting the argument would render the provisions under Article 200 and 201 as otiose.

Venkataramani said he would argue on the aspect in detail and sought time till February 10.

The bench, which deferred the matter, indicated it would reserve its verdict on the issue on February 10 after hearing both sides.

Dissecting the Indian Budget 2025-26: A Comprehensive Analysis

The Union Budget 2025-26, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2025, outlines the government's economic priorities and fiscal policies for the upcoming financial year. With a focus on sustainable growth, employment generation, and fiscal prudence, this budget sets the stage for India's continued economic expansion. Here's a detailed analysis of its key aspects:

Macroeconomic Outlook

- **GDP Growth Projection:** The government estimates GDP growth at 6.8% for FY 2025-26, driven by manufacturing, services, and agriculture sectors.
- **Inflation Control:** Measures have been introduced to keep inflation in check, aiming for a 4% target through better supply chain management and subsidy rationalization.
- **Fiscal Deficit Target:** The fiscal deficit is pegged at 4.4% of GDP, down from the previous year's 4.8%, showing commitment towards fiscal consolidation.
- **Disinvestment Target:** The government aims to raise ₹1.2 lakh crore through strategic disinvestments in PSUs, including a stake sale in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) and Container Corporation of India (CONCOR).

Taxation Policy Reforms

Direct Taxes

- **Personal Income Tax Slabs:**
- Income up to Rs5,00,000 - Exempt
- Rs 5,00,001 to Rs10,00,000 - 5%
- Rs10,00,001 to Rs 20,00,000 - 10%
- Rs 20,00,001 to Rs 35,00,000 - 20%
- Above Rs 35,00,000 - 30%

Corporate Tax:

- Retained at 25% for domestic companies.
- Startups to enjoy a tax holiday for five years if annual turnover remains below Rs 100 crore.

Capital Gains Tax:

- Long-term capital gains on listed securities to be taxed at a flat 12% instead of the previous 10% with indexation benefits.

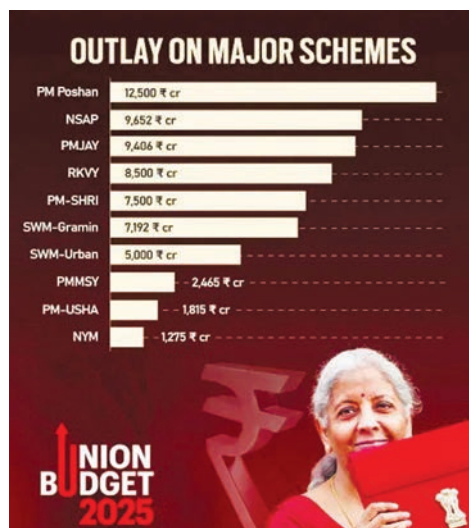
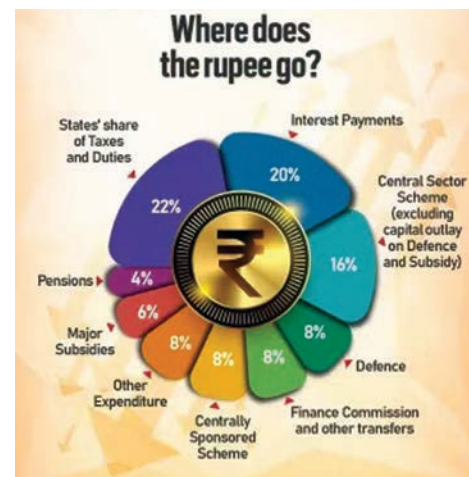
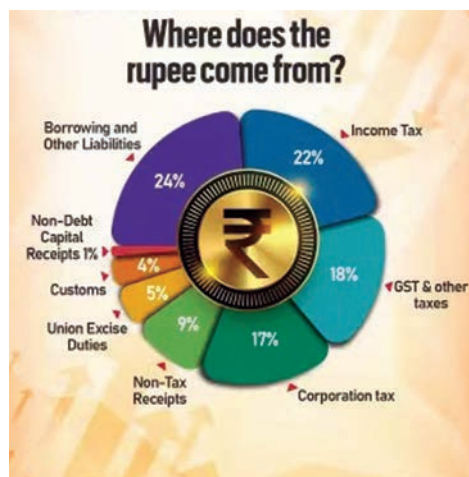
Standard Deduction Increase:

- Salaried individuals and pensioners will now receive a standard deduction of Rs 75,000, up from Rs 50,000.

Indirect Taxes

GST Reforms:

- Rationalization of GST rates on essential commodities.
- Compliance relaxation for small businesses with turnover up to



Rs 5 crore.

Customs Duty Adjustments:

- Reduction in import duties on lithium-ion batteries and semiconductor chips to boost domestic production.
- Increase in duties on luxury goods such as imported cars and high-end electronics.

Infrastructure and Capital Expenditure

- Allocation of Rs 12.5 lakh crore for infrastructure projects.

Urban Transport:

- Rs 2.1 lakh crore allocated for

metro rail expansion in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad.

Highways and Railways:

- National Highway expansion of 10,000 km.
- Introduction of 100 new semi-high-speed Vande Bharat trains.

Smart Cities and Urban Development:

- Rs 50,000 crore allocated for smart cities and urban housing projects.

Agriculture and Rural devp

- PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana launched to increase productivity and reduce post-harvest losses.
- Interest-free loans of up to ₹3 lakh for farmers using Kisan Credit Card.
- Incentives for organic and sustainable farming with a Rs 10,000 crore allocation.
- New Pulses Production Initiative to reduce dependence on imports.

Energy and Green Economy

- Renewable Energy Investment: Rs 2 lakh crore for solar energy parks and wind power projects.
- Rs1 lakh crore for green hydrogen mission.

EV Promotion:

- Subsidies for electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers extended till 2030.
- Charging infrastructure expansion with a Rs 5,000 crore fund.

Nuclear Power Initiative:

- Government to establish a 100 GW nuclear power capacity by 2047.

MSMEs and Startup Ecosystem

- Credit Guarantee Fund of Rs 50,000 crore for MSMEs.
- Easier loan accessibility for startups through a dedicated Startup Credit Scheme.
- 50% reduction in patent filing fees for startups and MSMEs.

Healthcare and Education

- Ayushman Bharat Expansion: Coverage increased to include middle-income families.
- Free annual health check-ups for citizens above 40.

Medical Research Boost:

- Rs 25,000 crore allocated for AI-driven healthcare solutions.
- National Digital Health Mission expansion.

Education:

- 200 new Navodaya schools.
- Rs 1 lakh crore for research grants in higher education.
- National Apprenticeship Scheme for skill development.

Defence and Internal Security

- Defence Budget increased to ₹6 lakh crore.
- Indigenous defence production push with 75% allocation to domestic manufacturers.

Cybersecurity Framework:

- Rs 10,000 crore allocated to strengthen cybersecurity measures and combat digital fraud.

Social Welfare and Women Empowerment

- PM Mahila Samridhi Yojana: Low-interest loans for women entrepreneurs.
- Increased maternity leave benefits to 9 months with 100% salary compensation.
- Rs1 lakh crore allocated for rural employment generation.

Digital Economy and AI Integration

- AI-driven governance to reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies.
- Digital Rupee Expansion to enhance financial inclusion.

Budget 2025: Key focus on middle-class growth, inclusive development, and boosting investment

DESPITE BEING THE WORLD'S FIFTH-LARGEST ECONOMY, INDIA IS EXPECTED TO EXPERIENCE ITS SLOWEST GROWTH IN FOUR YEARS, PRIMARILY DUE TO WEAK URBAN DEMAND AND SLUGGISH PRIVATE INVESTMENT.

India will focus on enhancing the spending power of its middle class, promoting inclusive development, and boosting private investment to stimulate economic growth, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday while unveiling the annual budget for 2025-26. The budget will include measures aimed at supporting the poor, youth, farmers, and women, along with plans for transformative reforms in taxation.

Despite being the world's fifth-largest economy, India is expected to experience its slowest growth in four years, primarily due to weak urban demand and sluggish private investment. The Chief Economic Adviser's report, released on Friday, indicated that India's economy is projected to remain subdued in the fiscal year starting April 1. It also emphasised the need for long-delayed reforms in land and labour sectors to enhance medium-term growth prospects.

Although growth for the near term is aligned with the 10-year average, economists suggest India requires an 8% growth rate to achieve its long-term economic objectives and create sufficient jobs for its young population. Experts have proposed tax cuts on income and energy products to ease the burden on individuals, alongside building on the \$24 billion job creation schemes introduced in the first post-election budget in July.

The budget will also introduce measures in sectors such as urban development, power, and mining. However, equity markets remained flat as traders awaited more details on the announcements. As of 11:17 a.m. IST, both the Nifty 50 and BSE Sensex were up by approximately 0.3%.

India has faced high food inflation over the past year, with retail inflation easing to a four-month low of 5.2% in December. However, food inflation, which accounts for nearly half of the consumption basket, remained elevated at 8.39%.

To boost productivity in the agricultural sector, the government will launch a national mission aimed at increasing the production of high-yielding crops, particularly pulses and cotton. Additionally, the limit for subsidised credit to farmers has been increased to Rs 500,000 (\$5,778), up from the previous Rs 300,000.

Items that have got cheaper

- Life-saving drugs: Cancer, chronic disease medicines-- 36 life-saving drugs are fully exempted from basic custom duties
- Electronic goods: Customs duty on open cell for interactive flat panel display, touch glass sheet, touch sensor for LED/LCD TVs reduced from 15 to five per cent

REBATE ON INCOME-TAX UNDER THE NEW TAX REGIME

Income	Tax on Slabs and rates		Benefit of Rate /Slab	Rebate benefit Full upto Rs 12 lacs	Total Benefit	Tax after rebate Benefit
	Present	Proposed				
8 lac	30,000	20,000	10,000	20,000	30,000	0
9 lac	40,000	30,000	10,000	30,000	40,000	0
10 lac	50,000	40,000	10,000	40,000	50,000	0
11 lac	65,000	50,000	15,000	50,000	65,000	0
12 lac	80,000	60,000	20,000	60,000	80,000	0
16 lac	1,70,000	1,20,000	50,000	0	50,000	1,20,000
20 lac	2,90,000	2,00,000	90,000	0	90,000	2,00,000
24 lac	4,10,000	3,00,000	1,10,000	0	1,10,000	3,00,000
50 lac	11,90,000	10,80,000	1,10,000	0	1,10,000	10,80,000



- EV and phone batteries: The list of exempted capital goods will include 35 new goods for electronic vehicle (EV) battery production and 28 new goods for mobile phone battery production.
- Fish and seafood: Customs duty on frozen fish paste (surimi) is reduced from 30 to five per cent. Customs duty on fish hydrolysate for the manufacture of aquatic feed is reduced from 15 to five per cent.
- Synthetic flavouring essences: Customs duty on mixtures of odoriferous substances used in food or drink industries reduced from 100 to 20 per cent
- Waste and scrap of Lithium: Customs duty reduced on ion battery, lead, zinc, antimony, beryllium, bismuth, cobalt, cadmium, molybdenum, rhenium, tantalum, tin, tungsten, zirconium, and copper scrap reduced to nil
- Cobalt powder: Customs duty reduced from five per cent to nil
- Wet blue leather: Customs duty reduced from 10 per cent to nil
- Shuttle less looms: Customs duty on rapier looms and air jet looms for use in the textile industry reduced



- Mobile equipment: Customs duty on inputs/sub-parts of camera module, connectors, manufacture of wired headset, microphone and receiver, USB cable, fingerprint reader/sensor of cellular mobile phone reduced from 2.5 per cent to nil
- Space satellite equipment: Customs duty on goods used in the building of launch vehicles and launching of satellites, ground installation for satellites including its spares and

What leaders say...

- Budget a document of "jugglery of words": **AIADMK**
- Band-aid for bullet wounds: **Rahul Gandhi**
- Goddess Lakshmi in common man's house: **Eknath Shinde**
- Grave 'injustice' to Telangana: **TPCC chief Mahesh Goud**
- This is a people's Budget and a force multiplier: **PM Modi**
- Nothing for West Bengal: **Abhishek Banerjee**
- Where are jobs?: **Shashi Tharoor**
- Middle class always in PM Modi's heart: **Amit Shah**
- Roadmap to developed India: **Minister Sanjay Kumar**
- A big gift for the middle class: **Uttarakhand CM Dharam Singh**
- "Less about the people and the country": **Mayawati**
- A bold Budget: **Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnis**
- Why Andhra Pradesh so cruelly ignored: **Jairam Ramesh**
- Many engines of Budget derailed: **Congress**
- What will common man get: **Sanjay Raut**
- A visionary roadmap for developed India: **J.P. Nadda**
- A game-changer: **BJP State president K. Surendran**

- consumables reduced to nil
- Shipbuilding: Exemption on customs duty for ships and their parts extended for 10 more years.
- Motorcycle imports: Customs duty on engine capacity not exceeding 1600 CC reduced to 40 per cent, semi-knocked down reduced to 20 per cent, and completely knocked down reduced to 10 per cent. Engine capacity 1600 CC and above reduced to 30 per cent.

Items that have got costlier

- Knitted fabrics: Customs duty hiked from 10 to 20 per cent
- Interactive flat display: Customs duty hiked from 10 to 20 per cent
- Social Welfare Surcharge: Exemption removed on 82 tariff lines currently under cess.

Interestingly, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made history by presenting her eighth consecutive Budget today, surpassing the record of former Prime Minister and Finance Minister Morarji Desai. Sitharaman, who holds the record for the longest Budget speech delivered on February 1, 2020, which lasted two hours and 40 minutes before being cut short.



Valentine's Day



Valentine's Day has grown from its ancient and religious origins into a widespread celebration of love in its many forms. While it is often criticized for its commercialization, the essence of the holiday-expressing affection and appreciation for others-remains a cherished tradition. Whether through grand gestures or simple acts of kindness, Valentine's Day serves as a reminder of the importance of love and connection in our lives. It is a day to celebrate not only romantic relationships but also the bonds of friendship, family, and community, reinforcing the universal significance of love in all its expressions.

Valentine's Day, celebrated annually on February 14th, is a day dedicated to love, romance, and affection. While it is widely known for the exchange of cards, flowers, and gifts between lovers, its origins are rooted in both ancient history and Christian tradition. Over time, Valentine's Day has evolved into a global celebration that transcends romantic love, embracing expressions of affection among family members, friends, and even colleagues.

Historical Origins

The origins of Valentine's Day can be traced back to the Roman festival of Lupercalia, which was celebrated in mid-February. This pagan festival was associated with fertility and the coming of spring. During Lupercalia, Roman priests, known as Luperci, would perform rituals to promote fertility and purify the city. One of the customs involved a lottery in which young men drew the names of women from a jar, pairing them for the duration of the festival, often resulting in romantic relationships. The festival also included the sacrifice of goats and dogs, with their hides used to gently slap women, believing this would make them more fertile in the coming year.

As Christianity spread across the Roman Empire, the church sought to replace pagan festivals with Christian holidays. Valentine's Day is believed to have been established to honor Saint Valentine, a Christian martyr. However, there is some ambiguity about which Saint Valentine the day commemorates, as there were multiple martyrs by that name. The most popular legend suggests that Saint Valentine was a priest who defied Emperor Claudius II's ban on marriages for young men-believing that single men made better soldiers-and secretly performed weddings. When his actions were discovered, Valentine was imprisoned and later executed on February 14th. It is also said that Saint Valentine wore a ring with a cupid symbol, a recognizable sign of love, which helped soldiers identify him.

Another legend claims that while in prison, Saint Valentine fell in love with the jailer's daughter and sent her a note signed "from your Valentine," a phrase that is still widely used today. Some versions of the story suggest that his miraculous healing of the jailer's blind daughter contributed to his sainthood.

The Evolution of Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day began to take on a more romantic connotation during the Middle Ages, particularly in England



and France. It was commonly believed that February 14th marked the beginning of birds' mating season, adding to the idea that the day should be one of romance. The poet Geoffrey Chaucer is often credited with linking Valentine's Day to romantic love in his 14th-century poem "Parliament of Fowls," which describes a gathering of birds on Saint Valentine's Day to choose their mates. This literary association helped cement the day's connection to love and courtship.

By the 18th century, it had become customary in England for friends and lovers to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes. The practice eventually spread to other parts of the world, and by the 19th century, printed Valentine's cards became popular, thanks to advances in printing technology and the reduction of postal rates, known as the "Penny Post." The commercialization of Valentine's Day continued into the 20th and 21st centuries, with the holiday becoming a major economic event driven by the sale of cards, flowers, chocolates, and jewelry. Today, Valentine's Day ranks as one of the most commercially successful holidays, with billions of dollars spent annually on gifts and celebrations.

Modern Celebrations Around the World

Today, Valentine's Day is celebrated in various ways across the globe, reflecting different cultural traditions and customs:

- **United States and Canada:** Valentine's Day is widely celebrated with the exchange of cards, flowers (especially red roses), chocolates,

and romantic dinners. Schools often host classroom parties where children exchange Valentine's cards and candies. In addition to romantic relationships, it is common for friends and family members to exchange tokens of appreciation.

- **United Kingdom:** Similar to North America, people in the UK exchange cards, flowers, and gifts. Some regions maintain unique traditions, such as "Jack Valentine," a mysterious figure who leaves gifts for children. In Wales, people celebrate "Dydd Santes Dwynwen" on January 25th, honoring the Welsh patron saint of lovers.
- **Japan:** Valentine's Day has a unique twist, with women giving chocolates to men. There are two types of chocolates: "giri-choco" (obligation chocolate) for colleagues and acquaintances, and "honmei-choco" (true feeling chocolate) for romantic interests. A month later, on March 14th, men reciprocate with gifts on White Day, often giving white chocolate, jewelry, or lingerie.
- **South Korea:** Similar to Japan, women give chocolates on Valentine's Day, and men reciprocate on White Day. Additionally, South Koreans celebrate "Black Day" on April 14th, where singles gather to eat black noodles, known as "jajangmyeon," and commiserate over their single status. The country also observes "Pepero Day" on November 11th, where people exchange cookie sticks as a token of affection.
- **Italy:** Traditionally, Valentine's Day

was celebrated as the Spring Festival, with couples gathering outdoors to enjoy poetry readings and music. Today, Italians exchange gifts, and "locks of love"-padlocks attached to bridges and railings-have become a popular symbol of enduring affection. The key is often thrown into the river below as a sign of unbreakable love.

- **Brazil:** Instead of February 14th, Brazilians celebrate "Dia dos Namorados" (Lovers' Day) on June 12th, coinciding with Saint Anthony's Day, the patron saint of marriage. The holiday is marked with festivals, music, and the exchange of gifts, including personalized items and handmade crafts.
- **France:** Known as one of the most romantic countries in the world, France celebrates Valentine's Day with the exchange of cards and flowers. The village of Saint-Valentin, in particular, becomes a hub for romantic celebrations, hosting festivals, vow renewal ceremonies, and decorating the town with flowers and hearts.

Symbols and Traditions

Valentine's Day is rich with symbols that have become synonymous with love and romance:

- **Hearts:** The heart, often depicted in red or pink, symbolizes love and affection. The shape is thought to have originated from the ivy leaf or the seed of the silphium plant, which was used as a contraceptive in ancient times.
- **Cupid:** The Roman god of love, Cupid is often illustrated as a cherubic figure with a bow and arrow, representing the idea of being struck by love. His Greek counterpart, Eros, was depicted as a handsome young man.
- **Roses:** Red roses, in particular, are associated with deep love and passion. The flower's connection to love dates back to ancient Rome, where roses were linked to Venus, the goddess of love.
- **Doves:** Symbolizing peace and fidelity, doves are often linked to romantic love. They are known to mate for life, making them a fitting emblem of enduring affection.
- **Valentine's Cards:** The tradition of sending Valentine's cards dates back to the 15th century, with the oldest known Valentine's message written by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London.



Valentine's Week Calendar



Valentine's Week is just around the corner, bringing love and romance with it. The celebrations start on February 7 and continue until February 14, with each day symbolising a unique expression of love. It's the perfect time to show your partner how much they mean to you, so make sure to cherish and appreciate them wholeheartedly.

From Rose Day 2025, which marks the beginning of Valentine's Week to Valentine's Day 2025 on February 14, the grand finale, where in couples express love and appreciation for each other, here's the full list of Valentine's Week days. Also read | Valentine's Day: Who is St Valentine? Why is he associated with love?

Each day of Valentine's Week holds significance for those who celebrate – the seven days of love are Rose Day (February 7), Propose Day (February 8), Chocolate Day (February 9), Teddy Day (February 10), Promise Day (February 11), Hug Day (February 12), and Kiss Day (February 13).

Rose Day 2025: February 7

Rose Day marks the beginning of Valentine's Week, where lovers exchange roses as a symbol of their affection. Rose Day sets the tone for the rest of Valentine's Week, filling the air with love, romance, and sweet gestures. Roses are a timeless symbol of love, passion, and romance. Gifting roses on Rose Day represents the deep feelings of love and affection. Roses come in various colours, each conveying a different emotion. For instance, red roses symbolise love and passion, pink roses represent appreciation and gratitude, white roses signify purity and innocence, yellow roses express friendship and joy. Rose Day is an opportunity to make a romantic gesture, surprise your loved one, and express your feelings in a beautiful and meaningful way.

Propose Day 2025: February 8

Propose Day is the second day of Valentine's Week; it is the day to confess your love and propose to your significant other. Propose Day is a special day to express your love and commitment to your partner and create lifelong memories to take your relationship to new heights. It's a day to tell them how much they mean to you and how you envision your future together. Propose Day is all about making romantic gestures. It's a day to plan a surprise proposal, to make it a memorable moment for your partner. Plan a romantic candlelit dinner proposal, complete with flowers, soft music, and a



delicious meal.

Chocolate Day 2025: February 9

Chocolate Day is the third day of Valentine's Week. It celebrates the sweetness of love with the exchange of chocolates. Chocolate Day is a delicious way to celebrate love and romance during Valentine's Week. Chocolates are a classic symbol of love and affection, making them the perfect treat for Valentine's Week. Did you know chocolates contain phenylethylamine, a natural mood elevator that can help create a romantic atmosphere. So, go ahead and indulge in some sweet treats with your partner! Gift your partner their favorite chocolates or a box of assorted treats. Or surprise your partner with chocolate-covered strawberries, bananas, or other fruits.

Teddy Day 2025: February 10

Teddy Day is all about gifting cuddly teddy bears to show affection and care. It is the fourth day of Valentine's Week, and a cuddly celebration of love and affection, where teddy bears take centerstage. Teddy bears are a classic symbol of cuddles and affection, making them the perfect gift for Teddy Day.

Teddy bears evoke childhood memories and nostalgia, reminding us of the simple joys of life. Gift your partner a cuddly teddy bear, either in person or as a surprise. Or gift a pair of teddy bears, one for each partner, to symbolize your love and connection. Don't forget to shower your partner with cuddly teddy bears and affection!

Promise Day 2025: February 11

Promise Day emphasises the importance of commitment and loyalty in relationships. Promise Day is the fifth day of Valentine's Week. It's a meaningful celebration of commitment and loyalty in relationships. Promise Day is all about making promises to your partner, reaffirming your commitment, and vowing to stand by each other through thick and thin. This day strengthens the bond between partners, encouraging them to make promises that foster trust, understanding, and loyalty. Write heartfelt letters or create handmade cards promising your love and commitment or simply take a trip down memory lane, revisiting special moments and promises made in the past. Promise Day is a beautiful celebration of love, commitment, and loyalty. It's a

reminder that relationships are built on promises, trust, and mutual support.

Hug Day 2025: February 12

Hug Day is the sixth day of Valentine's Week. It's a heartwarming celebration of physical affection and love. Hugs represent physical touch, which is essential for human connection and bonding; they provide emotional comfort, reassurance, and support, strengthening relationships. Hug Day celebrates the beauty of love and affection, encouraging people to express their feelings physically. Surprise your partner with warm hugs throughout the day! How about you plan a cuddle day with your partner, watching movies, playing games, or just enjoying each other's company?

Kiss Day 2025: February 13

Kiss Day is a time to celebrate passion and romance with kisses. Kiss Day is the seventh day of Valentine's Week and a romantic celebration of love and affection, where couples express their feelings with a kiss. Kisses are a universal symbol of love, affection, and intimacy; they convey emotions and feelings that words often can't express. Kiss Day encourages couples to be romantic, surprise each other with kisses, and rekindle their passion. So plan a romantic dinner with candles, flowers, and soft music, ending with a sweet kiss.

Valentine's Day 2025: February 14

Valentine's Day is, the grand finale, where couples express their love and appreciation for each other. Valentine's Day, celebrated on February 14, is a day to honour love, romance, and relationships. Valentine's Day originated from the Roman Catholic Church's feast day for Saint Valentine, a martyr who symbolised love and devotion. It's a day to express gratitude and appreciation for the loved ones in your life. To celebrate, exchange gifts, such as flowers, chocolates, or jewelry, to show your love and appreciation. Plan a surprise weekend getaway or a romantic vacation. You can also write heartfelt letters or create handmade cards to express your feelings.

Some people also celebrate an extended Valentine's Week, which includes:

- Slap Day: February 15th, a humorous day to release pent-up frustrations.
- Kick Day: February 16th, continues the lighthearted theme by playfully symbolizing letting go of frustrations.

India in history this Week

FEBRUARY 7 TO FEBRUARY 13

07 FEBRUARY



1931 Freedom fighter and lawyer Motilal Nehru died.

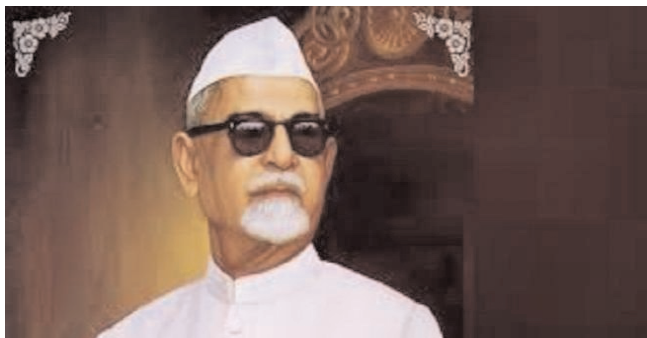
2000 The first meeting of the joint opposition between India and the United States began in Washington on February 7, 2000.

2009 Maharashtra Governor SC Jamir conferred the 12th and the first woman President of Independent India, Pratibha Patil, with the title of D.Litt.

2010 The 19th International Book Fair held at Pragati Maidan in Delhi ended on 7 February 2010. Let us tell you that this fair lasted for 9 days, in which about 2 thousand publishers took part.

1898 Ramabai Ambedkar, wife of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, was born in 1898.

08 FEBRUARY



1897 Zakir Hussain, the third President of the country, was born.

1941 Ghazal singer Jagjit Singh was born.



1943 Freedom fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose left for Japan via a ferry from Kell, Germany.

1986 Prepaid taxi service was started for the first time at Delhi Airport.

09 FEBRUARY

1971 Apollo 14 mission returns to Earth from moon.

1960 Maratha general Dattaji Shinde died.

1951 In 1951, the task of making a list was started to conduct the first census in independent India.

1931 For the first time in India in 1931, a stamp with a picture was issued in honor of a person.

2009 The Supreme Court on 9 February 2009 gave notice to the UP government on illegal construction in and around the Taj.

2010 The Indian government banned commercial cultivation of Bt brinjal on February 9, 2010, indefinitely.

10 FEBRUARY

1846 The battle of Sohraon started between the East India Company and the Sikhs.



2013 36 people were killed and 39 others were injured in a stampede during the Kumbh Mela ceremony in Allahabad.

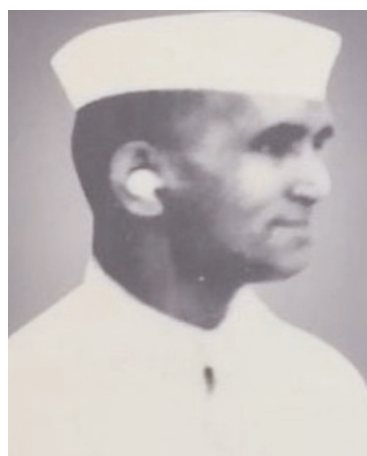
1847: Bengali poet writer Navinchandra Sen was born.

1818 Third and final battle between the British and Marathas was fought at Rampur.



2009 Famous classical singer Pandit Bhimsen Joshi was awarded the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honor.'

11 FEBRUARY



1901 Indian revolutionary Damodar Swarup Seth was born.

1856 The East India Company took over Awadh.

1968 Jana Sangh founder, writer, journalist Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay was killed in Mughalsarai.

1933 The publication of Mahatma Gandhi's Harijan Weekly began

in 1933.

1966 Former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri died in Tashkent in 1966.

1997 Indian Astrophysicist Jayant V Narlikar awarded the 1996 Kalinga Prize in 1996 by UNESCO.

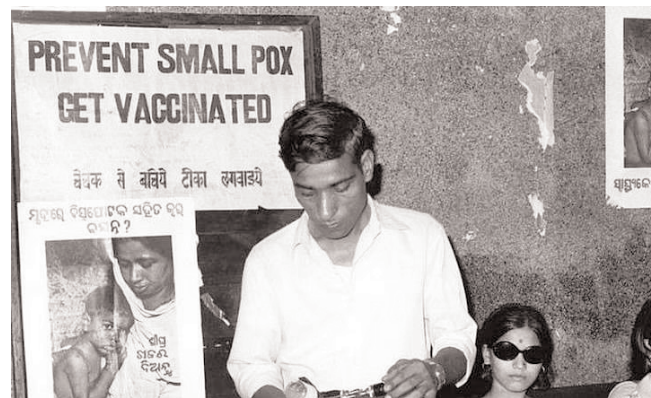
12 FEBRUARY

1502 Vasco-de-Gama sailed from Lisbon for a second trip to India.



1928 Gandhiji declared Satyagraha in Bardoli.

1975 India declared itself as a smallpox-free nation on 12 February 1975.



1999 President's rule in Bihar since 1999.



2009 In 2009, the University of Cambridge announced the conferment of a DeLitt degree to India's renowned economist Amartya Sen.

13 FEBRUARY



1879 Birth of freedom fighter Sarojini Naidu.

1959 Children's favorite Barbie doll begins selling.

1984 Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi inaugurates the Mazgaon Dock in Mumbai for the Navy.

CUNY DANCE INITIATIVE WITH IMGE DANCE PRESENT (no) man

BY MABEL PAIS

The CUNY (City University of New York) Dance Initiative (CDI), an expansive program providing New York City choreographers and dance companies with creative residencies on CUNY campuses, announces IMGE (Image) Dance's (no)man on February 14 and 15, 2025 at 7:30pm at the BMCC (Borough of Manhattan Community College) Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers Street, New York, NY, 10007.

TICKETS

Tickets are priced for General admission and Students get a Discount. To purchase tickets, visit tribecapac.org/event/imge-dance-company or call (212) 220-1460.



Ishita Mili

Credit: imgedance.com



Dance Ensemble

Credit: imgedance.com

Culture and movement merge with IMGE, an American dance company blending Indian classical dance, hip hop, and contemporary styles. Led by Ishita Mili, IMGE brings a fresh perspective to storytelling, tackling social, cultural, and environmental themes through a global movement vocabulary. IMGE has performed at NYC venues, including New Victory Theater and Lincoln Center, and their online videos have garnered millions of views on social media.

(no)man springs from a series of questions as to who is included -- and who is excluded -- across space and time. Weaving together dynamic body language, percussive footwork, and a soundscape that pulls from 11 different languages, from Bengali to Yoruba, IMGE examines relationships between [power-loss] and [birth-death] to reveal repeating cycles between the past, present, and future. This expanded version of (no)man, which had a sold-out run at 'The Tank' in April 2023, includes revised sections with new music and additional production elements.

(no)man is directed and choreographed by Ishita Mili, with lighting design by Bentley Heydt & Brad Trenaman, and audio engineering by srijononthebeat. It is performed by a cast of seven dancers: Lex Bolisay, Hanna Gosztyla, Maddie Jacob, Shivani Lamba, Andrei Miasco, Ishita Mili, and Sangeetha Santhebennur.

IMGE Dance's residency at BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center is part of the CUNY Dance Initiative (CDI), which marks a decade of supporting the NYC dance field in 2024. The program was developed in response to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's 2010 report, 'We Make Do,' which cited how destabilizing the shortage of affordable rehearsal space in New York City is to the dance sector.

A successful pilot supporting residencies on four CUNY campuses in 2013 led to CDI's formal launch in 2014. Since then, CDI has become a key player in New York City's performing arts ecosystem, leading a consortium of 13 CUNY colleges and three arts organizations to host 20+ residencies for NYC choreographers and dance companies each year.

In the past 10 years, CDI has granted 247 residencies to emerging and established choreographers, providing invaluable resources to artists, while enhancing CUNY students' education and cultural experiences. The CUNY Dance Initiative's 10th Year Impact Report can be seen at https://www1.cuny.edu/sites/wpcontent/uploads/sites/40/2024/01/cdi_impact_report.pdf.

IMGE DANCE AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ISHITA MILI

IMGE Dance ("image") is an American dance company that unravels traditional forms from Indian and American classical, folk, street styles, and contemporary to reinvent how movement connects our experiences. Their work navigates themes of belonging and home, multiplicity in identities, and mythic explanations of reality to make audiences think more about how they interact with the world.

IMGE was founded in 2017 by Artistic Director Ishita Mili, and has attracted a roster of niche artists with unique identities from the New York City metro area.

Ishita created the IMGE methodology by weaving her eclectic foundation in Mayurbhanj chhau, house, bharatanatyam, old-way vogue, and more diasporic forms and has taught all over the world. She was awarded Artist of Exceptional Merit by the Asian American Arts Alliance, received a Folks Arts Apprentice grant under the NJ



Dance Ensemble

Credit: imgedance.com

State Council of the Arts, and was a guest choreographer at Princeton University. Ishita most recently was selected into the LabWorks Cohort ('24-'25) at New Victory Theater.

IMGE and Ishita have reached inter/national stages from Lincoln Center Out-Of-Doors, Battery Dance Festival, Seattle International Dance Festival, to the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival. They've designed numerous commercial campaigns and experiences with clients like NBCUniversal, IndoWarehouse, Sona Restaurants, and fashion/lifestyle brands. They have also worked in musical theater including Broadway Bares and Asolo Rep's 'Hair.' IMGE was featured in Vogue and Vanity Fair and amassed a loyal global fan base with millions of views on their short film "Time Travellers." Learn more at imgedance.com.

BMCC TRIBECA PAC

BMCC Tribeca PAC (Borough of Manhattan Community College Tribeca Performing Arts Center) is Downtown Manhattan's premier presenter of the arts, reaching audiences from the college community, downtown residential and business communities, local schools, families, and audiences of all ages. BMCC Tribeca PAC strives to present a broad global perspective through the presentation of high-quality artistic work in music, theatre, dance, film and visual arts. BMCC Tribeca PAC is located on the Borough of Manhattan Community College campus, 199 Chambers Street (between Greenwich Avenue & West Street) and is convenient to the 2/3, A/C/E and R subway lines and the New Jersey Path Train. For more information, visit tribecapac.org.

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

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE AND HONORING SURVIVORS

BY MABEL PAIS

January 27th, every year, is International Holocaust Remembrance Day, a day to remember the victims of the Holocaust. It also marks the day the Red Army liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in 1945.

The American Sephardi Federation (ASF)'s President David Dangoor, at the opening night of the annual Sephardic Film Festival of 2024, introduced Stella Levi, a native Ladino speaker, survivor of Auschwitz at 101 years young, and exemplar of the Sephardic spirit at the Pomegranate Awards Ceremony on Opening Night of the 26th New York Sephardic Jewish Film Festival.

On Opening Night (2 June 2024) of the 26th NY Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, Stella Levi was honored with the Pomegranate Lifetime Achievement Award for Preservation and Celebration of Sephardic Culture.

SPEECH BY ASF'S PRESIDENT DAVID DANGOOR

"When I came here you had heard already 20 years ago - um - I was thrilled to be part of the organization and one of the first persons. I met Stella Levi and Stella was at that time a board member of the American Sephardi Federation but she had come by ways of something called Sephardic house which was a cultural organization that had been started at the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue... and I must tell you I can't think of a better beginning of an award ceremony than to recognize Stella.

Stella was born on the island of Rhodes. At that time when she was born and grew up in Rhodes it was under Italian rule; so Stella learned to speak Italian, Greek, Turkish, and French. ("Did I forget any language Stella?" he asked Stella. She replied, "Ladino.") Stella was an intensely cultural person and in the beginning of my tenure she was very, very helpful with some very sophisticated and highbrow events that we had and Stella is a unique person in terms of when you asked her a question or you wanted to learn something she had this amazing way to be intellectually brilliant in the way she answered without a notion of showing off.

That's an amazing capability and that's how I remember you during your board stint - uh - Stella then left our board and went on to Centro Primo Levi and has had and continues to have a key role there. Now what I didn't know until much much later about Stella is that she experienced the Holocaust personally and I think it must have been the first half of 1943 the whole Rhodes community that had suffered a lot of discrimination under the Italian Rule and the cooperation with the Germans ended up in Auschwitz and spent - uh - until I would assume in out this was something Stella never spoke about.

You could never see a sign of bitterness in Stella and - uh - I understand now Stella that you have spoken about it a little more and I can't believe that if a refined person like you have been in a place like that just can't understand. I can't understand that anyone



Stella Levi, Holocaust survivor, 101 years of age assisted by Natalia Indrimi.

Credit: Zak Siraj, nysjff.com

got there but anyway that you survived it must have been torturous for you. So Stella has been a force for the American Sephardi Federation for Centro Primo Levi in art and in culture.

She knows Sephardic Jewish and Jewish history better than most and - um - she has had a huge importance for Italian Jewish culture so much so that the president of Italy awarded her with the highest award - uh - last month and she got the - um - the medal of the king - uh - King Cross is the name of the medal, I think, and without going into much more detail I would like to invite Stella up and receive an extremely well deserved award for the arts and history while Stella gets settled.

What I omitted to mention was Stella was also very instrumental in the creation of the Sephardic Jewish Film Festival."

Watch the video of David Dangoor's welcome speech and Stella Levi's acceptance of the Pomegranate Lifetime Achievement Award for Preservation and Celebration of Sephardic Culture and her response - youtu.be/7AfuHTg_nXw

STELLA LEVI RESPONDS

"Buenas Noches, Hermanos Hermanas" (Good evening, brothers and sisters)!

Good evening to all and thank you for being here...Grazie (thank you!) my gratitude for honoring me with this award goes to David Dangoor and Jason Guberman and the American Sephardi Federation and my thanks to my dear friends of Centro Primo Levi some of whom are here - Alessandro Cassin and Natalia Indrimi, my cousin Isabel Levi and her husband and on this occasion I want to thank my son John for being a wonderful human being and so loving to me. Even if his father and I did not raise him religiously, every Friday he calls me and

wishes 'Shabbat Shalom.'

When I was a young girl in Rhodes, the island was one of the few Mediterranean destinations of early 20th century tourists. My paternal grandmother never left the Jewish quarter in her life but to go only to the hamam (the Turkish bath). Besides a few prayers in Hebrew she only spoke Espanol. Our ancestors arrived in Rhodes following the Spanish expulsion in 1492 and were welcomed by the Ottomans. She (grandmother) used to sit on the pilota (water sport) by the main door of our home. When Spanish tourists passed by in the Old City, she would turn to me and comment - look how many Jews are coming to visit the city and I would say (that) they are not Jewish they are Spanish. How can they not be Jewish she would say - they speak our language.

My maternal grandmother, instead, on the other hand every year went to Jerusalem where she learned Arabic also. She wanted to be buried there with her family; however she did not die and every year she came back to Rhodes. My Nonna's (grandmother) fantastic imagination conjured the Spanish Exodus of 1492, Jerusalem, the love for our language which are many and the tradition of welcoming everyone who came by. They represented the Sephardic world as a Spark of Life, curiosity and enthusiasm for everything that surrounded us. We were lucky to speak many languages - Spanish, Turkish, some Greek, some Hebrew. My older sister studied French at the Alliance Israeli Universal and we learned French at home from them - we little ones. Then the Italians occupied the island in 1912 and my sister and I went to Italian schools and Italian was added to the language of our home.

We knew that there were Jews in Germany, Poland, Hungary and Russia....

those were Askenazi.... and they spoke, of course, Yiddish. But I always realized that in the eyes of mainstream American Jews I am an exotic person, a Jew who doesn't speak Yiddish. In fact, when we arrived at Auschwitz the other prisoners shunned us for not knowing Yiddish. It was French - the language that saved us because the French women in the camp spoke both Yiddish and French and translated German for us. Language places the Sephardim of Spain and all the communities they have been connected to in the Middle (East) and Far East amidst a very large and diverse population of Spanish, Turkish, Portuguese, French, Farsi, etc.

The Jewish worldliness is what I have always wanted to share and make a source of inspiration. This is what guided me when I helped develop the Jewish Museum in Athens and Rhodes, the Sephardic House in New York and in the past 25 to 24 years Centro Primo Levi which truly honors this Vision. When the American Sephardi Federation invited the Sephardic house to join the Center for Jewish history, I hoped that this would make our culture known and the center more cosmopolitan. That cosmopolitan spirit is sadly at odds with the inward looking attitudes of a great part of the American and Israeli Jewish society today. I believe however that it will ultimately prevail if we place humanity before and above everything else without fear to lose our own particularity.

As is said in Adon Olam, the Jewish hymn written in Spain in the circle of the beloved poet Solomon ibn Gabirol "The Lord is with me and I have no fear." Shalom, Shalom!"

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

WARNER BROS DISCOVERY WITH NJ SYMPHONY CELEBRATES

'BUGS BUNNY AT THE SYMPHONY' 30TH ANNIVERSARY IN FILM CONCERT

BY MABEL PAIS



'Bugs Bunny at the Symphony,' Poster

Credit: njsymphony.org

The New Jersey Symphony with Warner Bros. Discovery presents 'Bugs Bunny at the Symphony' with George Daugherty conducting at three locations in New Jersey (see program below) in mid-February, 2025.

'Bugs Bunny at the Symphony' pairs 16 iconic Looney Tunes shorts projected on the big screen, including 'What's Opera, Doc?' 'The Rabbit of Seville,' 'Baton Bunny,' 'Zoom and Bored,' and 'Corny Concerto,' - plus five brand new animated shorts - while their Carl Stalling scores are played live.

Known as a multi-generationally loved concert, 'Bugs Bunny at the Symphony' reminisces on memories with beloved characters Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, Daffy Duck, Wile E. Coyote, Road Runner, Michigan J. Frog and the rest of the Looney Tunes cast, seen in some of their most cherished animated shorts. Looney Tunes, whose iconic classical music-inspired scores by Carl Stalling and Milt Franklyn are as celebrated as the animation itself, have provided introductions to the great classical composers for millions of people worldwide for over 80 decades.

Conducted by Emmy Award winner George Daugherty, and created by Daugherty & Emmy Award winner David Ka Lik Wong, in partnership with Warner Bros. Discovery Global Themed Entertainment, 'Bugs Bunny at the Symphony' has delighted audiences worldwide - from The New York Philharmonic and Philadelphia Orchestra to the Hollywood Bowl to the Sydney Opera House - since 1990, when the production first sold-out Broadway's Gershwin Theatre as 'Bugs Bunny On Broadway.'

PROGRAM

Warner Bros. Discovery presents Bugs Bunny at the Symphony
New Jersey Symphony Special Concert | 30th Anniversary Concert
George Daugherty conductor
George Daugherty & David Ka Lik Wong creators
New Jersey Symphony
Red Bank - Friday, February 14, 8 pm, Count Basie Center for the Arts
Newark - Saturday, February 15, 8 pm, NJPAC
New Brunswick - Sunday, February 16, 3 pm, State Theatre New Jersey
For more information on concerts and tickets, visit njsymphony.org/events.

WARNER BROS. DISCOVERY GLOBAL THEMED ENTERTAINMENT

Warner Bros. Discovery Global Themed Entertainment (WBDGTE), part of Warner Bros. Discovery Global Brands, Franchises and Experiences, is a worldwide leader in the creation, development and licensing of location-based entertainment, live events, exhibits and theme park experiences based on the biggest franchises, stories and characters from Warner Bros.' film, television, animation and game studios, HBO, Discovery, DC, Cartoon Network and more. WBDGTE is home to the groundbreaking locations of The Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal theme parks around the world, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, The WB Abu Dhabi, The FRIENDS Experience, The Game of Thrones Studio Tour and countless other experiences inspired by the Wizarding World, DC, Looney Tunes, Scooby-Doo, Game of Thrones, FRIENDS and more. With best-in-class partners, WBDGTE allows fans around the world to physically immerse themselves inside their favorite brands and franchises.

IF/X PRODUCTIONS

Emmy Award-winning Industrial F/X Productions, also known in the entertainment world as IF/X, was born in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and has now relocated to Las Vegas. Founded by George Daugherty and David Ka Lik Wong, and now with the addition of partner and producer Amy Minter, IF/X has created award-winning and critically

acclaimed live symphony orchestra concerts, Broadway musical productions, television specials and series and feature films for three decades, collaborating with iconic studios, networks and labels including Warner Bros., ABC, CBS, PBS, PBS Kids, National Public Radio, Sesame Workshop, the BBC, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Canada, RCA, Water Tower Music, Warner Bros. Records, BMG, Sony Entertainment and others, as well as for the world's leading symphony orchestras and concert venues. IF/X has produced and toured 'Bugs Bunny at the Symphony' since its creation in 1990.

GEORGE DAUGHERTY



Bugs Bunny

Credit: njsymphony.org

Conductor George Daugherty is one of the classical music world's most diverse artists. In addition to his 40-year conducting career which has included appearances with the world's leading orchestras, ballet companies, opera houses and concert artists, Daugherty is also an Emmy Award-winning / five-time Emmy nominated creator whose professional profile includes major credits as a director, writer and producer for television, film, innovative and unique concerts and the live theater.

Daugherty is a prolific guest conductor nationally and worldwide and has performed with many orchestras, world class guest artists and landmark venues.

Daugherty also received an Emmy nomination for 'Rhythm & Jam,' his ABC television network specials which taught the basics of music to a teenage audience, which he created and produced with David Ka Lik Wong.

DAVID KA LIK WONG

'Bugs Bunny at The Symphony,' executive producer David Ka Lik Wong was awarded an Emmy Award for his work as producer on 'Peter and the Wolf' in 1996 and was also nominated for an Emmy in 1994 for his work as producer of 'Rhythm & Jam,' the ABC series of Saturday morning music education specials for children.

He teamed with George Daugherty as principal producer for the 'Peter and the Wolf' project, the animation and live-action production starring Kirstie Alley, Lloyd Bridges, Ross Malinger of 'Sleepless in Seattle' and the new animated characters of legendary animation director Chuck Jones. He also produced the interactive CD-ROM version of the production for Time Warner Interactive.

He was also the senior producer for the Warner Bros. documentary film 'The Magical World of Chuck Jones,' directed by George Daugherty and starring interviews by Steven Spielberg, Whoopi Goldberg, George Lucas and Ron Howard, among many others.

He has been producer for the Warner Bros. touring concert production 'Bugs Bunny On Broadway' since 1991, and 'Bugs Bunny at the Symphony' since 2010, as they have toured the world, and he co-produced the original audio CD album for Warner Bros. Records.

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 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)



Vicky Kaushal and Kabir Khan to collaborate on a film

Creative partnerships are forged through success and hard work. But most importantly, they're made after a period of patience and perseverance. After a long time of being friends and admiring each other's works, Vicky Kaushal and director Kabir Khan are in talks to do a film together. The final modalities of the project are still being worked out, but we're excited that these two creative masters have decided to finally collaborate.

Our source revealed, "Kabir Khan and Katrina Kaif have had a long-standing association and friendship. Ever since Katrina and Vicky Kaushal came together, Kabir has always been a friend and mentor to Vicky. But now, after all these years, they have finally found a project, where the two can come together. The deal hasn't been sealed yet. But it is as good as done." That's truly exciting news. We will hope that the powers that be come together and get this Vicky Kaushal-Kabir Khan project green lit as soon as possible. We've seen how Kabir Khan and Katrina Kaif's creative partnership has given us memorable movies like New York, Ek Tha Tiger and Phantom. Both Kabir and Vicky have recently impressed with their respective projects Chandu Champion and Chhaava. So the time is right for these creative synergies to create something special. Fingers crossed.

Kriti Sanon joins Dhanush in Aanand L Rai's Tere Ishk Mein

Bollywood star Kriti Sanon is all set to star opposite South sensation Dhanush in Aanand L Rai's upcoming romantic drama, Tere Ishk Mein. The film marks yet another collaboration between Dhanush and Aanand L Rai after the critically acclaimed Raanjhanaa and Atrangi Re.

On January 28, the makers of Tere Ishk Mein released an intense first-look video featuring Kriti Sanon. The video shows the actor walking through a riot with a bottle of kerosene in her hand, delivering a powerful monologue in Hindi:

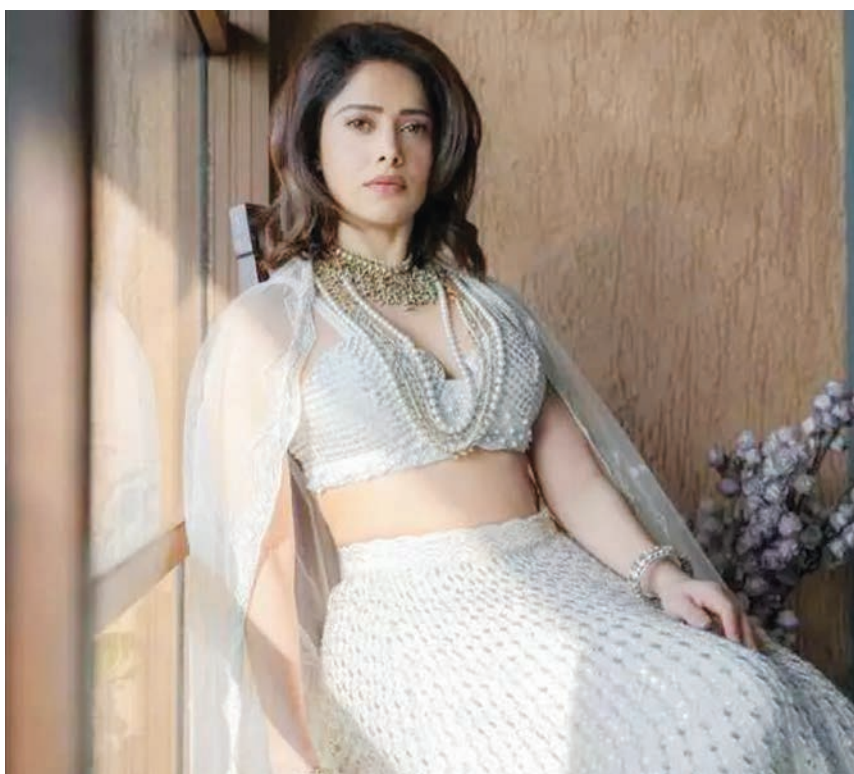
"You love me, I know, but it isn't necessary that I feel the same for you. You may raise the city to chaos in your frenzy, but it isn't necessary that I, too, burn in pain. It may be inevitable that your anguish scares me, but it isn't necessary that I succumb to fear. You may bow your head in temples and before idols, but it isn't necessary that you will find salvation."

The clip ends with Mukti (Kriti) pouring kerosene on herself and lighting a cigarette, leaving viewers intrigued.

The caption accompanying the video read, "Some souls are meant to collide. Some love stories are destined to burn brighter. Welcoming Kriti Sanon to the #WorldOfRaanjhanaa as MUKTI in #TereIshkMein." Fans reacted enthusiastically to Kriti Sanon's inclusion in the cast. One comment read, "Dhanush and Kriti Sanon will blow everyone's minds with this venture. Extremely excited." Another wrote, "Excited for this combination." A third added, "Kriti killed it."



Nushratt Bharuccha, Anurag Kashyap join forces for next thriller



Actress Nushratt Bharuccha has joined hands with Anurag Kashyap and Vishal Rana for their next thriller film. The yet-untitled project is produced by Rana's Echelon Productions, with Kashyap onboard as the creative producer.

The actress took to her social media handle to share photos with Rana, Kashyap and the film's director Akshat Ajay Sharma and wrote, "The Thrill is Real! My next! A rollercoaster of suspense and thrill with the creative genius Anurag Kashyap And very passionate Vishal Rana. Helmed by Akshat Ajay Sharma. This one's going to be memorable"

Meanwhile, talking about this collaboration, Vishal Rana said, "We are thrilled to have Nushratt Bharuccha lead this project, guided by the visionary Anurag Kashyap as Creative Producer, and skillfully directed by Akshat Ajay Sharma. This collaboration reflects our ambition to create high-quality, compelling cinema that pushes boundaries and resonates deeply with

audiences."

The actress added, "This film is a bucket list tick! Working with Anurag sir is a dream come true! That too on this intense, gripping thriller film, where we are all aligned to push the boundaries and create something that will be etched in the minds of the audiences for a long time to come. I am very happy to join hands with the ambitious and very passionate Vishal Rana. I am also looking forward to working with Akshat, a promising storyteller. It's my first with all three, but as they say firsts are always the most magical!"

Calling Nushratt a fine actress, Anurag Kashyap expressed, "Nushratt, a very fine actor, who I have never had the chance to collaborate with, finally working with Vishal Rana after trying to, for over three years and Akshat Ajay, who I have known since he was the second unit director of Sacred Games and had the opportunity to work with him closely. I also admire the way the script is now and pushing the boundaries of storytelling."

Ben Affleck 'has had a crush' on Jessica Alba even when married to Jennifer Lopez

Fresh off his divorce from Jennifer Lopez, Ben Affleck is reportedly setting his sights on a new leading lady—Jessica Alba. Sources told RadarOnline, that Affleck, who is preparing for the finalisation of his split from the singer had a long-time crush on Alba even while married to the singer. Now that Alba is back in the dating scene after announcing her separation from Cash Warren, this potential new romance seems to be heating up.

The source told the media outlet, "It's been a well-kept secret that Ben Affleck had quite the crush on Jessica Alba years ago." The insider continued, "In Jessica Alba's circle, it's no secret that Ben has had a longstanding interest in her for about two decades. However, they've never crossed paths at a time when both were single and open to dating...until now. They have a strong connection and whenever they've spent time together in the past, the chemistry between them is undeniable."

They added, "With both of them now single and their children all grown up, it seems the perfect moment has arrived for their relationship to flourish."

The Batman actor recently finalised the divorce settlement with Lopez on January 20. After their initial split, Affleck was rumoured to be seeing the daughter of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Kick Kennedy after they were spotted spending a lot of time together. However, he quickly shut down all the related rumours.

Although news of Alba's divorce from



Cash Warren only broke in January, sources suggest that their relationship had been unravelling for some time. The couple, who had been together for 16 years, reportedly grew apart before officially announcing their separation. She confirmed the news on Instagram, as she wrote, "I've been on a journey of self-realization and transformation for years," adding, "both as an individual and in partnership with Cash."

She continued, "I'm proud of how we've grown as a couple and in our marriage over the last 20 years and it's now time for us to embark on a new chapter of growth and evolution as individuals. We are moving forward with love and kindness and respect for each other and will forever be family."

Alba added that she and Warren's children remain their "highest priority."



Reese Witherspoon breaks silence on Kate Winslet 'falling out' drama

Reese Witherspoon didn't waste a moment shutting down rumors of a falling out with fellow actress Kate Winslet. Speculation began after Witherspoon's interview with Will Ferrell, where she admitted to losing touch with an actress following an awkward awards show speech blunder. The internet quickly assumed she was referring to Winslet, but that doesn't seem to be the case—Witherspoon and Winslet have since laughed off the rumors.

"Hey guys .. just spoke to my very dear friend for years, Kate W. We laughed about this stupidity. Please do not believe the internet," the Big Little Lies actress wrote. "We are good friends and have never had any falling out."

In the next slide, she continued, "This is completely UNTRUE ...so silly!"

Reese Witherspoon recounted a story during a recent PEOPLE interview with her You're Cordially Invited co-star Will Ferrell about presenting an award to another actress. The speech she gave was apparently so awkward that the two are no longer on speaking terms. "Not even kidding," Witherspoon joked, "she doesn't talk to me anymore!" While Witherspoon didn't name the actress, online speculation points to Kate Winslet.

Karla Sofia Gascon defends past controversial remarks about Selena Gomez

Karla Sofia Gascon is speaking out about the resurfacing of a past social media post, in which she criticised her Emilia Perez co-star, Selena Gomez.

In a heartfelt Instagram post on February 1, Gascon addressed her controversial comments, alongside an apology for her previous posts, which have sparked backlash for containing Islamophobic, anti-Black, and other derogatory remarks.

The 52-year-old actress reflected on her personal growth and sought forgiveness for her past actions, insisting that her words were taken out of context and misunderstood.

"I have many things to learn in this world, the forms [in which I learn] are my biggest defect," Gascon wrote, offering a sincere apology to those hurt by her comments. "Life has taught me something I never wanted to learn: it's clear to me that no matter how much my message is my message, without using the

proper words, (the message) can convert into another," she added.

Along with her apology, Gascon shared an image of the Nichiren Buddhist symbol, signifying her commitment to her faith, which she credits for helping her transform her life. "As with Emilia Perez: We can all do better. Me too," she wrote.

She also reflected on her rapid rise to fame, emphasising the greater responsibility she now feels, recognising that her voice is no longer her own, but belongs to the many people who feel represented and hopeful through her journey.

Gascon's post also addressed the resurfaced criticism about her 2022 X post, in which she referred to Gomez as a "rich rat" while commenting on Gomez's rumoured feud with Hailey Bieber. The post made headlines when it was shared publicly, drawing significant attention and criticism.





Two dead after small plane crashes into bus in Sao Paulo

SAO PAULO (TIP): Two killed and six people injured on February 7 when a small plane crashed on a major avenue in Brazil's economic capital Sao Paulo, narrowly escaping heavy traffic and skidding into a bus, authorities said.

The plane, carrying two people, slid hundreds of meters along the avenue, passing in front of a queue of dozens of vehicles waiting at a traffic light, according to images shown in local media.

The aircraft then hit a bus and exploded. The pilot and a passenger were killed in the accident, which happened shortly after the King Air F90 took off from the Campo de Marte airport, which handles domestic flights. Six people were injured, said firefighter chief Ronaldo Melo told journalists.

The passengers of the bus managed to escape, some of whom were left with "bruises." A passing motorcyclist also fell and received medical attention.

Images broadcast on local television showed thick plumes of smoke billowing into the air, however firefighters quickly got the blaze under control.

Investigators are at the scene "taking photos and interviewing people who witnessed the aircraft crash" to establish the circumstances of the accident, Melo said.

He said it was unclear if the plane had been attempting an emergency landing at the time of the accident.

Brazil has seen several dramatic small plane crashes in recent months.

According to statistics from the Center for Investigation and Prevention of Aeronautical Accidents (CENIPA), there were 20 aircraft accidents in January, with eight people killed. These mainly involved agricultural aircraft and private planes.

In 2024, the country recorded the highest number of aircraft accidents in the last 10 years, with 175 crashes and 152 deaths.

Last August, Brazil suffered its worst air tragedy in 17 years, when a plane crashed in the city of Vinhedo in Sao Paulo state, killing all 62 on board. (AFP)

Hamas to free three more Israeli hostages for dozens of Palestinian prisoners under Gaza ceasefire

08 FEB 2025

DEIR AL-BALAH: Hamas-led militants are set to free three more hostages, all Israeli civilian men, on Saturday, and Israel will release dozens of Palestinian prisoners as part of a fragile agreement that has paused the war in the Gaza Strip.

President Donald Trump's stunning proposal to transfer the Palestinian population out of Gaza, welcomed by Israel but vehemently rejected by the Palestinians and most of the international community, does not appear to have affected the current phase of the truce, which runs until early March.

But it could complicate talks over the second and more difficult phase, when Hamas is to release dozens more hostages in return for a lasting ceasefire. Hamas may be reluctant to free more captives — and lose its main bargaining chip — if it believes the U.S. and Israel are serious about depopulating the territory, which rights groups say would violate international law.

The hostages to be released on Saturday, according to Hamas and Israel, are: Eli Sharabi, 52; Ohad Ben Ami, 56; and Or Levy, 34. All were abducted during the Hamas-led attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, that sparked the war.

Dozens of masked and armed Hamas fighters, some driving white pickup trucks with guns mounted on them, gathered Saturday morning at the location of the exchange, near the territory's main north-south highway in Central Gaza.



It will be the fifth swap of hostages for prisoners since the ceasefire began on Jan. 19. Eighteen hostages and more than 550 Palestinian prisoners have already been freed in that time.

The first phase of the ceasefire calls for the release of 33 hostages and nearly 2,000 prisoners, the return of Palestinians to northern Gaza and an increase in humanitarian aid to the devastated territory. Last week, wounded Palestinians were allowed to leave Gaza for Egypt for the first time since May.

Sharabi and Ben Ami were both taken hostage from Kibbutz Beerli, one of the hardest-hit farming communities in the Hamas attack. Levy was abducted from the Nova music festival, where he was

taking shelter in a saferoom when the militants arrived.

Sharabi's wife and two teenage daughters were killed during the Oct. 7, 2023 attack, while his brother Yossi was also abducted and died in captivity. Levy's wife was also killed during the attack. His now 3-year-old son has been cared for by relatives for the past 16 months.

The 183 Palestinian prisoners to be released by Israel on Saturday include 18 people serving life sentences for committing deadly attacks, 54 serving long-term sentences and 111 Palestinians from Gaza who were detained after the Oct. 7 attack. All are men, ranging in age from 20 to 61. (AP)

Tainted alcohol kills 33 in Ankara: governor's office

07 FEB 2025

ANKARA (TIP): Thirty-three people have died in Ankara after drinking bootleg alcohol and another 20 are in intensive care, the regional governor's office told AFP Friday.

Such poisonings are relatively common in Turkey, where clandestine production is widespread and bootleg alcohol is often tainted with methanol, a toxic substance that can cause blindness, liver damage and death.

Police had seized 102 tonnes of tainted alcohol and arrested 13 people on suspicion of selling it, Ankara governor Vasip Sahin told reporters on Friday.

Although the governor did not give a timeline, his office's X account had on Tuesday referred to a "an increase in counterfeit alcohol deaths in recent days".

A spokesman for the governor's office told AFP he believed the figure was "from the beginning of the year".

Last month, 38 people died in the space of four days in Istanbul after drinking counterfeit alcohol in a surge of cases



that by January 17, had left another 26 people in intensive care.

Since then, there has been no official statement on whether the number of victims increased, nor on the condition of those in intensive care.

Asked by AFP for an update on Friday, a spokesman for the Istanbul governor's office said: "We are not going to make a statement on that."

Although Turkey is a nominally

secular country, alcohol taxes have risen sharply under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a Muslim who vociferously opposes drinking.

A litre bottle of raki, Turkey's aniseed-flavoured national liquor, bought at a supermarket currently costs around 1,300 lira (\$37.20) in a country where the minimum wage only recently hit \$600.

Critics say such prices are fuelling the production of moonshine. (AFP)

How a wave of antisemitic attacks roiled Australia and provoked claims of foreign influence

07 FEB 2025

WELLINGTON (TIP): A wave of antisemitic attacks has roiled Australia, with a dozen arrests for vandalizing or setting homes, schools, and synagogues on fire since October and hundreds more charged in just over a year with crimes targeting Jews.

The attacks in areas where Jewish people live have provoked an outpouring of condemnation — and a fraught and complicated debate about who's to blame. But in a rare moment of unity, Australia's federal lawmakers on February 6 advanced hate crime laws almost unanimously.

"We want people who are engaged in antisemitic activities to be caught, to be charged and to be put in the clink," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told reporters.

"This is a time of national crisis," opposition leader Peter Dutton said.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AUSTRALIA?

Jewish and Muslim organizations and hate researchers have recorded drastic spikes in hate-fueled incidents on both groups since the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel that triggered the war in Gaza. And although how groups define antisemitism and Islamophobia differs, the numbers the organizations cite all show a rise in incidents.

Antisemitic episodes in the two biggest cities, Sydney and Melbourne — home to 85% of Australia's Jewish population — have drawn the highest profile because they're severe, unusual and public.

SINCE NOVEMBER THEY'VE INCLUDED:

- A trailer filled with explosives used in the mining industry and a list of Jewish targets discovered on Sydney's outskirts

- Firebombing of a Melbourne synagogue, with one person hurt. Defacement of another with Nazi symbols and pro-Palestine graffiti

- A Jewish childcare center set on fire
- Jewish schools in Sydney and Melbourne daubed with white



supremacist graffiti

- Three Jewish businesses torched
- The former home of a prominent Jewish leader sprayed with graffiti
- Cars defaced and windows smashed in areas where Jews live

Counter-terrorism officials have arrested 12 people in connection with those crimes. Nearly 200 more have been charged since October 2023 in the state of New South Wales — where Sydney is located — with crimes linked to antisemitism, police say.

WHO'S COMMITTING THE CRIMES?

Investigators are examining whether criminals for hire were paid by foreign actors to carry out the recent attacks, leaders of the taskforce said in January. They did not specify what foreign interests they believed were responsible.

Days later, officials said the 12 arrested by the taskforce don't share the antisemitic ideology expressed by their crimes, underscoring suggestions that the acts were orchestrated abroad.

The revelations were strange — but not unprecedented, analysts said.

"It's not completely new, the connection between ideological groups

and criminal groups," said Matteo Vergani, a researcher of hate and extremism with Deakin University. "What's new is that it usually happens in relation to larger scale terrorist attacks. So that is surprising."

WHAT'S BEHIND THE RISE?

Lawmakers in speeches this week said the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas had provoked a outburst of antisemitism at levels Australia had not registered before.

In tense public debates echoing those in the United States and elsewhere, right-leaning lawmakers and some Jewish leaders — among them Peter Wertheim from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry — have accused pro-Palestinian demonstrators, particularly "progressives" and university students, he said, of fueling the crimes.

Demonstrators use opposition to Israel to target Jews and give antisemitism "a new social license," he said.

Other Jewish leaders were more cautious. The episodes were "alarming and worthy of attention," said Sarah Schwartz from the Jewish Council of Australia.

"But I think the real danger we see here with linking this spate of antisemitic incidents to the Palestine solidarity movement is that that sort of language breeds division, breeds anti-Palestinian racism, breeds Islamophobia and is also bad for Jews as well," she said.

WHAT'S THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE?

Albanese's center-left government on Thursday approved measures in the House of Representatives that will create new and bolstered hate crime offences protecting a raft of characteristics, including race, religion and gender.

Amendments from the opposition include the imposition of mandatory prison terms for terrorism offenses — which the prime minister had rejected before — and for displaying hate symbols.

The bill passed 117 votes to 13. It's expected the Senate will pass it into law.

Other initiatives since last January include:

- Imposing sanctions on Terrorgram, an online white supremacist terrorism financing network

- Criminalizing Nazi salutes
- Making doxing — the sharing of personal information online — illegal after a list of Australian Jews was published on the internet in 2024

- Appointing national envoys to address Islamophobia and antisemitism

Some states have passed their own laws; New South Wales also revealed proposed hate crime measures Thursday.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT IN AUSTRALIA?

By all measures, anti-Jewish hate has spiked across the U.S., Europe and the United Kingdom since October 2023 — even though many leaders have denounced it — prompting tens of thousands of Jews to leave Europe, according to some figures.

However, Australia's situation had distinctive factors, analysts said. One was the claim that the primary agitators could be based abroad. (AP)

Kosovo set for parliamentary polls on February 9

07 FEB 2025

PRISTINA (TIP): Kosovo goes to the polls February 6 in a parliamentary election expected to be a key test for Prime Minister Albin Kurti after his governing party won in a landslide four years ago.

Eligible voters, including those of the diaspora, will cast ballots to elect 120 lawmakers among 26 political groupings and one independent candidate in a vote held from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. The Serb minority has 10 secured seats while 10 more are for other minorities.

This is the first time since independence in 2008 that Kosovo's parliament has completed a full four-year mandate. It is the ninth parliamentary vote in Kosovo since the end of the 1998-1999 war between

Serbian government forces and ethnic Albanian separatists that pushed Serbian forces out following a 78-day NATO air campaign. Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's independence, proclaimed in 2008.

Kurti's left-wing Vetevendosje! or Self-Determination Movement Party is seen as the front-runner but is not expected to win the necessary majority to govern alone, leaving open the possibility the other two contenders join ranks if he fails to form a Cabinet.

"On Feb. 9 we vote for the future," said Kurti, "We vote for Vetevendosje!"

The other contenders are the Democratic Party of Kosovo, or PDK, whose main leaders are at The Hague tribunal accused

of war crimes, and the Democratic League of Kosovo, or LDK, the oldest party in the country that lost much of its support after the death in 2006 of its leader, Ibrahim Rugova.

During the election campaign the parties made big-ticket pledges to increase public salaries and pensions, improve education and health services, and fight poverty. However, they did not explain where the money would come from, nor how they would attract more foreign investment.

"We have a plan for each city, each family, each persons," said Bedri Hamza of the PDK.

"We have an alternative to guarantee a better life in Kosovo," said Lumir Abdixhiku of the LDK.

Kosovo, with a population of 1.6 million, is one of the poorest countries in Europe with an annual gross domestic product of less than 6,000 Euros per person.

Kosovo is also suffering after Washington imposed a 90-day freeze on funding for different projects through the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has been key in promoting the country's growth. The U.S. has invested \$2 billion in Kosovo since 1999, including investments of over \$1 billion from USAID.

The vote will determine who will lead the Kosovo side in stalled normalization talks with neighboring Serbia, facilitated by the European Union to get both sides closer to joining the bloc. (AP)

59 SRI LANKANS RECRUITED BY RUSSIA DIED IN UKRAINE, PARLIAMENT INFORMED

COLOMBO (TIP): At least 59 of the 554 Sri Lankans have perished in the Ukraine war fighting for Russia, Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath told parliament here on February 7.

"According to the information received by January 20 this year, 554 were recruited for the Russian military service," Herath said.

There was no forcible enlisting of the Sri Lankans by Russia, Herath said adding, Colombo has been continuing its talks with the Russians to delist and send them back.

Sri Lanka also pressed the Russians to discontinue the recruitment of Sri Lankans to fight in the war.

Sri Lankan police last year arrested two retired generals and six others for illegally acting as recruiting agents for Russian mercenary firms.

Local reports said that the hardships faced by common people in the aftermath of the island nation's economic crisis prompted the ex-soldiers to join in to fight the war for both sides. (PTI)

BANGLADESH SUMMONS INDIAN ENVOY AFTER SHEIKH HASINA ACCUSES YUNUS OF ASSASSINATION PLOT

NEW DELHI (TIP): Dhaka summoned India's Acting High Commissioner, Pawan Badhe, on February 5 after former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accused Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser of Bangladesh's interim government, of plotting to assassinate her.

Hasina made the allegation during a live Facebook address to her supporters and Awami League members. She claimed that she was forced to flee to India after Islamist groups and mobs attacked her residence, following the hijacking of a student protest.

IN RESPONSE, BANGLADESH'S FOREIGN MINISTRY STRONGLY PROTESTED HER REMARKS, CALLING THEM "FALSE AND FABRICATED." A GOVERNMENT ADVISOR ALSO OPPOSED HER STATEMENTS, INCLUDING THOSE MADE ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

The interim government led by Yunus has filed multiple cases against Hasina and her family, accusing them of enforced disappearances, corruption, and crimes against humanity during the June-August protests, which left over 800 people dead.

Yunus has urged India to extradite Hasina, accusing her of destabilising Bangladesh with her comments. The protest note handed to the Indian envoy expressed "strong discontent and concern" over her remarks, calling them offensive to the Bangladeshi public. (PTI)

Bodies of 4 Pakistanis who died on a migrant boat journey off West Africa return home for burial

06 FEB 2025

SHEIKHUPURA, PAKISTAN (TIP): The bodies of four Pakistanis who were among dozens who drowned in the capsizing of a migrant boat off West Africa last month have been repatriated.

The four were among 13 Pakistan citizens identified through DNA tests. Their remains were brought home from Morocco overnight by a Saudi flight that landed at the Islamabad International Airport, officials said Thursday. The bodies were later buried in their hometowns in Punjab province.

The boat had set off from Mauritania on Jan. 2 with 80 passengers, including several from Pakistan, according to the Foreign Ministry and a Spain-based migrant rights group, Walking Borders. The ministry said the boat capsized near the Moroccan port of Dakhla en route to the Canary Islands, a Spanish archipelago off northwest Africa where a large numbers of migrants head on a dangerous Atlantic crossing in ramshackle boats.

Walking Borders had said 50 people on the boat died on their way to the Canary Islands and 44 of them were Pakistanis. Pakistan has already repatriated all the 22 Pakistani survivors.

The brother of one of the migrants who died told The Associated Press that human smugglers had tortured and thrown the migrants, including his brother, into the sea over a payment dispute.



Mohammad Adnan said his family had agreed to pay 5 million rupees (\$18,000) to a local human smuggler for sending his brother, Mohammad Arslan, to Europe and 4 million rupees (\$14,000) were paid in advance. The rest was yet to be paid when they heard news about the capsizing, and later some of the survivors said the migrants were thrown into the sea.

Another man, Samar Iqbal, whose brother also died, said he did not know that human smugglers threw migrants into the sea. He said his brother Qaiser Iqbal in his last message had only said that he was boarding a boat and later he lost contact with him.

He made his comments before receiving the body of his brother at the

airport. Recently, some of the survivors have also said their boat never capsized and African human smugglers had tortured migrants with hammers and threw them into the sea in a payment dispute.

No government official was immediately available to comment on the claims.

Hundreds of Pakistanis die every year while trying to reach Europe by land and sea with the help of human smugglers.

After the sinking, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari on Jan. 18 stressed the need for strict measures to curb human trafficking. Pakistan says it is cracking down on human traffickers and sacked several immigration officials for negligence. (AP)

Sri Lankan govt unaware of move to arrest former president Rajapaksa, says minister

05 FEB 2025

COLOMBO (TIP): Sri Lankan minister Nalin Jayathissa said on 5 February that the government is unaware of any move to arrest former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa in the Easter Sunday bombings case.

Jayathissa, the Minister of Health and Mass Media, said this in response to opposition politician Udaya Gammanpila's statement.

Gammanpila, a former minister, said the government planned to arrest Rajapaksa and Suresh Sallay, the then chief of state intelligence to pin the blame on the state intelligence services for the 2019 Easter Sunday suicide bombings.

"Someone must have told Gammanpila. He might be saying it because he knows. But the government will be guided by the investigators," Jayathissa said.

The National People's Power (NPP) government has started a fresh probe into the Easter Sunday attacks as the coalition before coming to power pledged to revive high-profile cases of



rights abuses before 2015.

Jayathissa also told reporters the attorney general's recent action to free three key suspects from the murder investigation of Lasantha Wickrematunga, the editor of the Sunday Leader in 2009, would be closely studied by the government.

It was alleged the attorney general on January 27 advised the Criminal

Investigation Department of Sri Lankan Police to inform the magistrate's court that three key suspects were no longer held responsible for the murder.

The purported decision has angered rights groups and urged the NPP government to bring Wickrematunga's murderers to justice. (PTI)

Sikh History This Week

FEBRUARY 7 TO FEBRUARY 13

7th February



1955 Master Tara Singh was elected President of SGPC for the third time.

Master Tara Singh was born on 24 June, 1885, in Haryal in Rawalpindi district of North Western Province of undivided India. His mother, Moolan Devi, was a pious lady and his father, Bakshi Gopi Chand, was a patwari of the village and was a well known and respected person. Tara Singh's original name was Nanak Chand. In 1902 Nanak Chand embraced Sikhism and came to be called Tara Singh.

8th February

1780 Sikhs fought Timur near Multan during his 2nd invasion but lost Multan city and the fort.

1961 Fateh Singh and Nehru held talks on Punjabi Suba. Talks followed on March 1 and May 12. As expected, these talks failed to materialize anything and a "failed talks" was announced.

9th February



1924 1st Shaheedhi Jatha of 500 Akali Sikhs, under the command of Jathedar Udharn Singh of village Verpal, marched from Sri Akal Takhat for Gangsar, Jaito. It reached Jaito on Feb 20-21, the third anniversary of Nankana tragedy

1992 Expressing their desire to live free of India, Sikhs overwhelmingly boycotted elections under the Indian constitution. Despite efforts by government troops to force Sikhs to vote at gunpoint, less than 3.4 percent of the Sikhs in villages voted.

10th February

1760 Baba Deep Singh having learned of denegration of Harmandir Sahib and Amritsar sarowar at the hands of Jahankhan. performed ardas for his shahadat.

The Khalsa forces fought British forces in the battle of Sabhraon. It is during this battle that the brave Khalsa General, Sardar Sham Singh of Attari, fell fighting and accepted shahadat. During this war, the Khalsa forces suffered heavy losses, mainly due to internal



dissension. The Sikh army deprived of ammunition and rations, crossed Sutlej at Sobraon. British made three attacks and were repulsed. Lal Singh and Tej Singh ran away from the battle field as planned with the British. Gulab Singh came and started negotiations with the British to the detriment of Sikh interests. Lal Singh cut off the boat bridge so that Sikh army could neither get any reinforcement nor could retreat back. Under such circumstances the British won and the Sikhs lost. The Sikh army stood defeated and thus came the most inglorious end of a most glorious army of the Khalsa. This was the last battle between the British and the Sikhs.

1923 Bishan Singh Zaildar of Rani Thua killed.

11th February



1393 Birthday of Bhagat Ravidas. A Study of Bhakata Ravidas", by Darshan Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1981. concludes that Ravidas lived between 1393-1528.

1713 Farukhsyar became ruler of Delhi. He immediately sent a mammoth army against the Sikhs. The Sikhs resisted for about six months until they ran short of food supplies. In October 1713, the Sikhs retreated to the hills. 1820 Kanwar Naunihal Singh, grand son of Sher-I-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was born.

1861 Maharani Jind Kaur caught with her beloved



son, Maharaja Dalip Singh, and met in Calcutta.

12th February



1764 Foundation was laid for a permanent fort at Patiala.

13th February

1870: Baba Darbara Singh of the Nirankari movement, passed away. He was second to Baba Dayal Singh, founder of the Nirankari movement.

1923: A police informer, Diwan, is murdered by the Babbar Akalis.



1987: Feb. 13-15, an Academic Conference on Sikh Scholarship was organized under the auspices of the University of Toronto. This was the first conference of its kind after the assault on Golden Temple. Many renowned scholars from United Kingdom, India, United States, and Canada participated in this conference. Papers were presented on selected topics on Religion and Culture; History and Politics: India; History and Society; Diaspora; and Comments on recent Events.

Flawless Lips: Tips for perfect lipstick application

Lipstick is a powerful tool that can enhance your beauty, boost your confidence, and complete your overall look. However, applying lipstick perfectly requires some technique and practice. Here are some expert tips to help you achieve a flawless lip application every time.

Prep Your Lips

Before applying lipstick, ensure your lips are smooth and hydrated:

- **Exfoliate:** Use a gentle lip scrub or a soft toothbrush to remove dry skin.
- **Moisturize:** Apply a lip balm and let it absorb for a few minutes to prevent dryness and cracking.
- **Prime:** Use a lip primer or a bit of foundation to create an even base for your lipstick.

Choose the Right Lipstick Formula

Different occasions and preferences call for different lipstick formulas:

- **Matte Lipsticks:** Provide a long-lasting, bold look but may be drying.
- **Creamy Lipsticks:** Offer hydration and a rich color payoff.
- **Glossy Lipsticks:** Give a shiny, plump effect to the lips.
- **Liquid Lipsticks:** Provide high pigment and long wear but can sometimes feel dry.

Use a Lip Liner

Lip liner defines your lips and helps prevent feathering:

- Choose a liner that matches your lipstick or is slightly darker.
- Outline your natural lip shape, starting from the cupid's bow and moving outward.
- Fill in your lips with the liner for a base that enhances longevity.

Apply Lipstick with Precision

- Use a lip brush for precise application, especially with bold shades.
- Start at the center of your lips and work outward for even coverage.



- Blot with a tissue and reapply another layer for longer-lasting color.

Perfect the Edges

- Clean up any mistakes with a concealer and a fine brush for sharp lines.
- Use a highlighter on the cupid's bow for an enhanced look.

Set Your Lipstick for Longevity

- Lightly dust translucent powder over a tissue placed on your lips.
- Opt for setting sprays designed for makeup longevity.

Touch Up as Needed

- Keep your lipstick handy for touch-ups throughout the day, especially after eating or drinking.
- By following these tips, you can ensure your lipstick always looks flawless and lasts longer. Experiment with different shades and techniques to find what works best for you.

Egg curry

Ingredients

6 hard-boiled eggs, 5 tbsp. cooking oil (vegetable, canola, or sunflower), 2 medium-sized onion (cut into quarters), 3 medium-sized tomatoes (cut into quarters), 2 green chilies, 2 tsp. garlic paste, 2 tsp. ginger paste, 2 tsp. coriander powder, 1 tsp. cumin powder, 1 tsp. garam masala powder, 1/2 tsp. turmeric powder, 1/2 tsp. red chili powder, Salt to taste, Optional: 2 potatoes cut into 1-inch cubes, To Garnish: Chopped fresh coriander leaves, To Garnish: 2 green chilies, slit lengthwise

Method

- Heat 2 tbsp. of the cooking oil in a deep pan and when hot, add the onions. Fry till slightly golden. Turn off the fire. Use a slotted spoon to remove the onions from the pan and put them in a food processor. Grind the onions, tomatoes, and green chilies into a smooth paste. Try not to add water while grinding, if possible.
- Heat the remaining oil in the same pan and add the paste you just made. Fry for 2 to 3 minutes.
- Add the ginger and garlic pastes, all the dry spices (coriander powder, cumin powder, garam masala powder, turmeric powder, and red chili powder) then mix and fry till the oil begins to separate from the masala (onion-tomato-spice mix).
- Add 2 cups of warm water to this masala and bring to a boil on a medium flame.
- If adding potatoes to the curry, add them now and cook till half done. Half slit the boiled eggs vertically and add them gently to the gravy. Simmer the flame and cook for 10 minutes or till the gravy has thickened or reduced to about 3/4 of the original quantity.



Women tend to gain weight in high-demand jobs

Studies indicate that women in high-pressure careers—such as healthcare, finance, law, and corporate leadership—are at greater risk of weight gain. The reasons are multifaceted and include:

1. Stress and Cortisol Levels

Chronic job stress triggers the release of cortisol, a hormone linked to increased appetite and fat storage, particularly around the abdomen. Women, due to hormonal differences, may be more susceptible to these effects compared to men.

2. Emotional Eating and Unhealthy Food Choices

Many women in demanding jobs turn to comfort foods as a coping mechanism. High-pressure environments often lead to emotional eating, where sugary and high-calorie foods provide temporary relief but contribute to long-term weight gain.

3. Lack of Time for Exercise

Balancing work with personal responsibilities leaves little time for physical activity. Women are often primary caregivers at home, further limiting their ability to



prioritize fitness. The combination of long working hours and family duties can result in a sedentary lifestyle.

4. Irregular Eating Patterns

Skipping meals, eating late at night, or consuming fast food due to time constraints disrupts metabolism. Irregular eating patterns can lead to overeating later in the day and poor digestion, both of which contribute to weight gain.

5. Sleep Deprivation

High-stress jobs often lead to poor sleep quality. Lack of sleep is associated with an increased appetite, reduced metabolism, and a preference for unhealthy foods, all of which make weight management more challenging.

6. Gendered Workplace Stress

Women often face additional workplace challenges such as gender bias, wage gaps, and the pressure to prove themselves in male-dominated fields. These factors can compound stress and lead to unhealthy coping habits, including overeating or lack of self-care.

Boost your brainpower: Exercise enhances cognition in young adults

In recent years, scientific research has increasingly highlighted the benefits of physical exercise on brain function. While much of the focus has been on older adults and its potential to delay cognitive decline, emerging evidence suggests that exercise can also enhance cognition in young adults. This revelation is particularly significant, as it underscores the lifelong benefits of physical activity beyond just physical health.

The Science Behind Exercise and Brain Function

Exercise has long been associated with improved cardiovascular health, muscle strength, and overall well-being. However, its impact on brain function is gaining more attention. Physical activity increases blood flow to the brain, delivering oxygen and essential nutrients that support neural activity. Moreover, exercise stimulates the release of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin, which are crucial for mood regulation and cognitive processes.

One of the most critical benefits of exercise is its role in neurogenesis—the growth of new brain cells. Studies indicate that aerobic exercise, such as running or cycling, promotes the production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that supports brain plasticity and memory formation. This suggests that even young adults, who are in their cognitive prime, can benefit from regular physical activity in terms of enhanced learning, memory retention, and problem-solving abilities.

Benefits for Young Adults

Although cognitive decline is typically associated with aging, young adults can still experience cognitive fatigue, mental fog, and decreased concentration due to stress, poor diet, or lack of sleep. Exercise provides a natural and effective way to combat these issues. Some specific cognitive benefits for young adults include:

- **Improved Memory:** Regular physical activity has been linked to better recall and retention of information, which is particularly beneficial for students and professionals.



- **Enhanced Focus and Attention:** Exercise helps increase the efficiency of neural connections, leading to improved concentration and reduced distractions.
- **Better Problem-Solving Skills:** Engaging in activities that require coordination, such as dancing or team sports, can enhance cognitive flexibility and critical thinking.
- **Reduced Stress and Anxiety:** The release of endorphins during exercise helps alleviate stress and improve mental clarity.

How Much Exercise is Needed?

The good news is that young adults do not need to engage in excessive or strenuous workouts to reap cognitive benefits. Research suggests that moderate-intensity exercise for at least 30 minutes, three to five times a week, can significantly enhance brain function. Activities such as brisk walking, yoga, swimming, and strength training can all contribute to cognitive improvements.



This weight loss app can track fibre, protein content in meals

Researchers have developed a weight management programme that helps individuals plan meals with the assistance of a web application and support from a registered dietitian, including tracking fibre and protein content in meals.

Many people struggle to maintain a healthy weight, and choosing the optimal meals for weight loss can be challenging. Most dieting apps available are usually macronutrient calculators, according to the study published in the journal *JMIR Formative Research*.

“But we want people to focus on finding foods that have a high protein and fibre density to get them to their meal goals. It’s less about counting calories and more about finding the foods that will satisfy us and provide the protein we need to maintain muscle mass as we lose weight,” said Ashleigh Oliveira, a doctoral student at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in the US.

“Foods that are high in fibre also have all the micronutrients we need, so we’re not missing out on vitamins and minerals as we’re eating less food,” Oliveira added.

The programme’s first iteration, the Individualized Dietary Improvement Programme (iDip), was an in-person programme where participants received education and feedback from registered dietitians.

Subsequently, iDip was converted to a fully online programme, EMPOWER, to increase accessibility. The researchers tested the program’s efficacy with individuals in rural Illinois.

“The overall goal is to develop an online weight loss programme that can be used as prevention as well as treatment in a clinical setting,” said co-author Manabu Nakamura, associate professor in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition and the Division of Nutritional Sciences. *Source: IANS*

Global study estimates Vitamin D most common deficiency in diabetics

Vitamin D is the most common deficiency among diabetics, affecting over 60 per cent of people with diabetes, according to a global analysis published in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ) Nutrition Prevention and Health*.

The analysis, based on 132 studies conducted between 1998 and 2023 involving more than 52,000 participants, also found that magnesium deficiency affects 42 per cent of people with diabetes, while 28 per cent suffer from iron deficiency.

Researchers, including those from the Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), Rajasthan, said that the study helps assess the global prevalence of micronutrient deficiency—whereby levels of vitamins and minerals essential for healthy bodily function



are far too low—in people with type 2 diabetes.

Women with diabetes were found to be at a higher risk of micronutrient deficits, also termed “hidden hunger,” compared to men, the team found.

The authors explained that risk factors for developing diabetes

include genetic tendencies, along with environmental factors, such as a sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet and obesity.

Studies have shown that micronutrients have a key role in the development of diabetes, by affecting how glucose is metabolised and insulin pathways.

However, this study was aimed to resolve conflicting evidence from previous studies that mainly focused on one specific micronutrient, the authors said.

“The pooled prevalence of multiple micronutrient deficiency (vitamins, minerals and electrolytes) was 45.30 per cent among T2D patients,” they wrote.

Further, the prevalence was found to be higher in women with the condition—at nearly 49 per cent—compared to men.

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AI helps discover 123 new craters on Mars

Artificial Intelligence has just helped astronomers discover a new crater on the surface of Mars that has revealed a long-hidden secret. New findings reveal that meteoroids striking Mars produce seismic signals that can reach deeper than previously known. The details are the result of joint work by Nasa Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) and the now-dead InSight lander, which had its ears to the ground listening for aftershocks.

In a series of two papers, published in Geophysical Research Letters (GRL), scientists observed how seismic waves from those quakes change as they travel through the planet's crust, mantle, and core. Scientists have now got a glimpse into Mars' interior, as well as a better understanding of how all rocky worlds form, including Earth and its Moon.

"We used to think the energy detected from the vast majority of seismic events was stuck travelling within the Martian crust. This finding shows a deeper, faster path — call it a seismic highway — through the mantle, allowing quakes to reach more distant regions of the planet," InSight team member Constantinos Charalambous said.

The meteor crash was detected in Cerberus Fossae, an especially quake-prone region of Mars that is 1,640 kilometres away from the InSight lander. The impact crater is 71 feet in diameter and much farther from InSight than scientists expected, based on the quake's seismic energy.

Nasa said that the Martian crust has unique properties thought to dampen seismic waves produced by impacts, and researchers' analysis of the Cerberus Fossae impact led them to conclude that the waves it produced took a more direct route through the planet's mantle.

Alibaba Launches New AI Model; Claims It Can Beat DeepSeek, ChatGPT, Llama

Alibaba has launched a new version of its AI model, Qwen2.5 Max, claiming it performed better than DeepSeek's AI, OpenAI's GPT-4o and Meta's Llama. The Chinese tech company's cloud division claimed in a statement that "Qwen 2.5 Max outperforms ... almost across the board GPT-4o, DeepSeek-V3 and Llama-3.1-405B," referring to the advanced open-source AI models from OpenAI and Meta.

The announcement comes on the heels of the shockwaves DeepSeek's AI models have sent in the global AI landscape. The release of DeepSeek's AI assistant, powered by the DeepSeek-V3 model on January 10, and its R1 model on January 20, rattled Silicon Valley, causing tech stocks to drop.

DeepSeek-V3, which it says is as good as OpenAI's GPT-4o but much cheaper. Alibaba's introduction of Qwen 2.5 Max appears to be a direct response to the rise of DeepSeek, which recently released another model, R1, causing a stir.

DeepSeek, founded just 20 months ago in Hangzhou, Alibaba's home city, has emerged as a major player in the field of AI, drawing attention for its low-cost, high-performance models. The startup has forced established players like Alibaba, Tencent, and Baidu to enhance their AI systems to keep pace with the competition.

As part of the ongoing AI price war, these companies have slashed prices to capture a larger share of the market.

Last year, DeepSeek's release of its V2 model sparked a price war within



China's AI market. The model, priced at just 1 yuan (Rs 11) per 1 million tokens processed, was open-source and significantly cheaper than most competitors. This pricing strategy led Alibaba's cloud division to slash its prices by up to 97 per cent on certain models.

The rising competition has forced the industry's biggest players to re-evaluate their strategies. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman recently acknowledged DeepSeek's success, calling its progress "impressive." He also hinted that OpenAI was working on even more advanced models in the future.

OpenAI Alleges Its AI Models Were Used to Build DeepSeek-R1: Report

OpenAI has reportedly claimed that DeepSeek might have distilled its artificial intelligence (AI) models to

build the R1 model. As per the report, the San Francisco-based AI firm stated that it has evidence that some users were using its AI models' outputs for a competitor, which is suspected to be DeepSeek. Notably, the Chinese company released the open-source DeepSeek-R1 AI model last week and hosted it on GitHub and Hugging Face. The reasoning-focused model surpassed the capabilities of the ChatGPT-maker's o1 AI models in several benchmarks.

According to a Financial Times report, OpenAI claimed that its proprietary AI models were used to train DeepSeek's models. The company told the publication that it had seen evidence of distillation from several accounts using the OpenAI application programming interface (API). The AI firm and its cloud partner Microsoft investigated the issue and blocked their access.

Elon Musk's X will launch its first digital wallet this year

Elon Musk owned social media platform, X (formerly Twitter) will soon introduce financial services on its app. X has recently announced its partnership with Visa, signalling its first digital wallet. The company will use Visa Direct, Visa's real-time money transfer solution, to fund X Money's wallet, link to a debit card for payments to other users, and enable seamless transfers back to your bank account.

In a post, X CEO Linda Yaccarino stated that X Money is scheduled to launch later this year. This X-Visa partnership will allow secure and instant funding to users' X Wallet via Visa Direct, she added. It will also connect debit cards, allowing person-to-person payments.

X Money will also give users an option to instantly transfer funds to your bank account. Yaccarino claims that this is the "first of many big announcements about X Money this year".

The thought of adding financial services to X was communicated right after Musk took over. With this partnership, it looks like the services will arrive in the US first and then expand to the rest of the world. But as per previous reports, this service will be available to



selected states first.

App researchers have repeatedly discovered code related to X Money, highlighting features such as the ability to load funds into a wallet on the platform and make payments to other users.

The X Money service is set to launch in the first quarter, with additional partnerships in the works. According to the CNBC report, one of the initial use cases for X Money will be to enable creators on the platform to receive payments and store funds independently.

X Payments LLC is licensed in 41 states and registered with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), according to its website.

In the recent affair, Musk has been reportedly sending emails to its X employees, signalling that the platform is struggling financially. According to a report by Wall Street Journal, he admitted that X is "barely breaking even," citing stagnant user growth and underwhelming revenue.

He added, "Our user growth is stagnant, revenue is unimpressive, and we're barely breaking even."

Musk acquired the social media platform, previously called Twitter, in a \$44 billion deal in late 2022. Since then, he has implemented several changes, such as eliminating the free verification program, launching a paid membership option, and rebranding the company as X.

Trade diversion due to US-China tariff war could boost Indian exports

India was the fourth-largest beneficiary of the trade diversion following the US-China trade war initiated by US President Donald Trump during his first term, and domestic exporters could experience a similar boom as a fresh trade war erupts between the two largest economies, a senior government official has said.

The US tariff war with China escalated as Beijing on Tuesday retaliated against the 10 per cent US tariff by announcing 15 per cent levies on coal and liquefied natural gas, as well as 10 per cent on oil and agricultural equipment from the US. China also announced it would investigate US tech giant Google for alleged antitrust violations.

"Early indications from exporters suggest that traders in India are receiving higher orders amid fears that tariffs will rise in China. A similar tariff war previously helped India increase exports, as it became the fourth-largest beneficiary of the trade diversion away from China following the tariff war," an official said.

A report from Oxford Economics last year on the effects of the US-China trade war during Trump's first term noted that US trade rerouting had been particularly pronounced in the large electronics market, where China's share had plummeted by 19 percentage points since 2017.

"India's share in US electronics imports has risen nearly tenfold since



then, reaching 2.1 per cent. Electronics now also account for a greater share of India's overall exports, meaning the government's ongoing efforts to become a high-tech powerhouse appear to have partly paid off," the report stated.

However, the report added that despite this remarkable catch-up, India remains far behind its Asian peers in terms of competitiveness and, consequently, market share.

"India mainly supplies telecommunications equipment—such as Apple ramping up its iPhone production in India, which accounted for nearly two-thirds of all electronics exports in 2023. More advanced electronics, such as semiconductors, are supplied by Korea and Taiwan.

Moreover, China itself remains a significant supplier, accounting for 27 per cent of total US electronics imports in 2023," the report said.

To better capture the trade diversion this time around, the government has reduced basic customs duties on a number of items. But has kept the effective rates on a range of items the same indicating a cut in cess moving forward.

The government's decision in the Union Budget to lower import tariffs on various goods is a deliberate move to rationalise India's trade tariffs, which had faced criticism—most notably from US President Donald Trump—for being too high, Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey told The Indian Express.

Budget signals slowing fiscal consolidation, says Moody's

The Budget signals slowing fiscal consolidation as focus shifts to reinforcing growth, global ratings agency Moody's Ratings said on Tuesday but it expects that govt is within reach of its near-term deficit target of 4.5% by fiscal 2025-26.

"Planned cuts to personal income tax rates will bolster middle-class spending power and consumption, which is credit positive for many corporates and the financial sector," the agency said in a note. "However, the resulting foregone revenue will slow the pace of the country's fiscal consolidation even as total spending declines as a share of GDP. The proportion of spending allocated to debt servicing continues to increase," Moody's Ratings said.

It said the increase in exemption limits for income tax will boost disposable income, particularly for urban middle-class households. The agency said that along with easing inflation, higher growth in real income will bolster consumption growth, facilitating a credit-positive recovery for many consumer-facing sectors. Moody's said in the Budget for the fiscal year ending March 2026 (fiscal 2025-26), govt is targeting a central govt deficit of 4.4% of GDP.

SEBI allows safer participation of retail investors in algo trading

Capital markets regulator SEBI facilitated the participation of retail investors in algorithmic trading (algo trading), which provides advantages of faster order execution and improved liquidity.

At present, only institutional investors are allowed to put in algo trading, which provides significant advantages of timed and programmed order execution. Also, the regulator came out with a regulatory framework aimed at spelling out the rights and responsibilities of the main stakeholders of the trading ecosystem such as investors, brokers, algo providers/vendors and Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs) so that the retail investors can avail algo facilities with requisite safeguards.

The move will be applicable from August 1, the SEBI said in a circular. "In order to facilitate safer participation of retail investors in algo trading, with stock brokers and stock exchanges playing the required roles in risk management, it has been decided to review and refine the existing regulatory framework to ensure proper checks and balances, to safeguard investor interest as well as integrity of the market," SEBI said.

Ratan Tata's millennial friend Shantanu Naidu gets top role at Tata Motors

Shantanu Naidu, known for his special bond with late industrialist Ratan Tata, was promoted to General Manager, Head of Strategic Initiatives, at Tata Motors after spending more than six years at Tata Sons.

Naidu, 32, shared the big career update on LinkedIn. "I'm happy to share that I'm starting a new position as General Manager, Head - Strategic Initiatives at Tata Motors!" he wrote.

Turning nostalgic, he added, "I remember when my father used to walk home from the Tata Motors plant in his white shirt and navy pants, and I would wait for him in the window. It comes full circle now."

A mechanical engineering graduate, Shantanu Naidu began his professional journey as an intern at Tata Technologies before joining Tata Elxsi. It was in 2014 that he first caught Ratan Tata's eye.

Naidu, an automobile design engineer, developed a dog collar design with a safety innovation to protect homeless



dogs from speeding vehicles. Tata, a known animal lover, not only decided to invest in the project but also became his mentor.

The industrialist's backing of the initiative marked the beginning of a long-standing professional and personal bond between the two.

In 2018, Naidu assumed the role of Tata's assistant, a position that brought him into the public spotlight. His close relationship with the business tycoon won hearts, especially after a video of

him singing a birthday song for the billionaire philanthropist went viral.

Naidu chronicled their unique friendship in his book, I Came Upon a Lighthouse, which offered a rare glimpse into the personality of Ratan Tata beyond his business empire.

Beyond his corporate endeavours, Naidu is also an entrepreneur. In 2021, he founded Goodfellows, a startup dedicated to providing companionship for senior citizens living alone. The venture, valued at Rs 5 crore, received backing from Ratan Tata, who later relinquished ownership of the company.

Following Ratan Tata's death on October 9, 2024, at the age of 86, Naidu shared an emotional tribute on LinkedIn. "The hole that this friendship has now left with me, I will spend the rest of my life trying to fill. Grief is the price to pay for love. Goodbye, my dear lighthouse," he wrote.

According to reports, Naidu's MBA expenses at Cornell University were covered under Tata's will.

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - FEB 10, 2025 TO FEB 16, 2025

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



ARIES

Ganesha says this week your life will be full of energy and enthusiasm. You will be particularly enthusiastic about your work and feel inspired to take on new projects. This time is favorable for understanding your priorities at work and realizing them. Personal relationships will also improve this week. You will try to spend more time with your loved ones, which will strengthen your relationships. Your communication skills will be especially effective this week, allowing you to express your thoughts clearly. Keep in mind that sometimes your enthusiasm can make you make hasty decisions, so proceed thoughtfully. Take care of your health this week; regular exercise and a balanced diet will energize you. Overall, this week will be full of new possibilities and opportunities for Aries. Maintain a positive attitude and enjoy all the achievements.



TAURUS

Ganesha says this week some important opportunities may come up for the people of Taurus. There are signs of progress in your professional life, so it is the right time to bring your ideas and projects to life. With your hard work and dedication, you will set an example for others. In personal relationships, you will get a chance to spend more time with your loved ones. This week, mutual communication will strengthen the relationship. If there is any pending issue, then this is the right time to resolve it. In terms of health, try to avoid stress. Yoga and meditation will give you mental peace. In financial matters, if you are thinking of investing, do not forget to do good research. Keep in mind that hasty decisions can cause harm. Overall, this week is a sign of positive changes for you. Stay focused on your goals and capitalize on the opportunities.



GEMINI

Ganesha says many positive opportunities may come your way this week. Your communication skills and social relations will be especially strong at this time. Try to express your ideas more clearly, as your communication can have a positive impact on others. There may be some challenges in work life, but with your cleverness and adaptability, you will overcome them easily. Maintain better coordination with colleagues, it will prove beneficial for you. Personal relationships will also get stronger. This is a good time to spend time with loved ones and share your feelings. If you are

thinking of starting a new relationship, then this is a better time. In terms of health, pay attention to small things. Follow regular exercise and a balanced diet. Also, pay attention to mental health, take time for yourself, and relax. This week, recognize opportunities and use your knowledge and intellect. New possibilities and experiences can be found in your life.



CANCER

Ganesha says this week is an important time for Cancer natives. Your emotional depth and sensitivity will keep you open to new experiences. Time spent with family and friends will bring you happiness and satisfaction. This week, your thoughts and intentions will be clear, which will make it easier for you to make important decisions. Some new challenges may arise in your career, but your hard work and patience will bring you success. This is also the time to take care of your health; regular exercise and a nutritious diet will keep your mental and physical health better. Your creativity will be at its peak this week. Your ideas may get new dimensions in art, writing, or any other creative field. This week will be exciting in terms of love life; even though you may have to face some ups and downs, your relationship will deepen. In short, this week will bring a mix of opportunities and challenges for you. Move forward with positive thinking and following your intuition.



LEO

Ganesha says Leo A lot of possibilities are going to open up for you this week. You will be full of positive energy, which will also affect the people around you. Your creativity in the workplace can reach a new level, which will make your identity even stronger. Present your ideas with clarity, this will increase the impact of your words. In personal relationships, you will feel inspired to spend time with your loved ones. This will be a time of good communication with each other, which will further strengthen your relationships. Meeting an old friend is also possible, which will prove to be enjoyable for you. Be careful in terms of finance. Take a well-thought-out decision before making any major investment. In terms of health, focus on regular exercise and a balanced diet, so that you can stay full of energy. Overall, this week is a time of new opportunities and progress in relationships for you. Maintain your confidence and focus on how you can use your inner strength.



VIRGO

Ganesha says this week you will try to establish balance and order in various aspects of your life. At work, your hard work and dedication will attract everyone's attention. Relationships with your colleagues will strengthen, and you will emerge as an important ally for the team.

In your personal life, you will get a good opportunity to spend time with your family and friends. With your help and wisdom, people close to you will be able to find solutions to their problems. Pay attention to health this week. Regular exercise and a proper diet will maintain your energy. Take time for meditation and relaxation for mental health. In financial matters, think seriously before taking any important decision. Investment opportunities may come your way but be cautious. Your good planning and organizational skills will lead you to success this week. Maintain a positive attitude and keep moving towards your goals.



LIBRA

Ganesha says many positive changes can come your way this week. You will be active in social activities and will get the opportunity to make new connections. Spend time with your friends and family, as it will be mentally healthy for you. Your intelligence and decisiveness in difficult work issues can impress everyone. Maintain self-confidence to face any challenge. You are going to get a chance to work in partnership, which will benefit you. Clearly express your ideas so that you can get support. On an emotional level, it is important to keep your emotions balanced. Try to build a cordial relationship with your partner; this will strengthen your relationship. Take time to understand your thoughts and desires. In terms of health, doing yoga and meditation will boost mental health. This week brings you an opportunity for self-determination and growth. Unleash your creativity and move forward toward your goals.



SCORPIO

Ganesha says many new possibilities are going to open up in front of you this week. Trust your intuition; it will lead you in the right direction. At the workplace, your hard work and dedication will be appreciated, and your image will be even stronger among your colleagues. Your activity in social life will also increase. Meeting old friends will bring happiness to your mind. Moments spent with your family will give you mental peace. However, it is important to pay attention to health, a little carelessness can make you feel tired. Making new plans and working on them will be beneficial for you this week. Use communication skills and express your thoughts clearly. Whatever decisions you take at this time will prove to be important for your future. Keep in mind, that your determination and dedication can overcome all obstacles. Stay optimistic and keep moving forward.



SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says this week will bring new opportunities for Sagittarius natives. It is time to fulfill high aspirations, and your

confidence will increase. This is the right time to take up new projects in the work and professional field. Your clarity of thought and creativity will lead you to success. Be a little cautious in personal relationships. Do not let there be a lack of communication with your loved ones, as this week you may be a little hesitant to express your feelings. Try to share your feelings openly, this will strengthen the relationship. In terms of health, it is very important to stay active. Exercise and meditation will be beneficial for your mental and physical health. This week is also a time to strengthen your mental health. This week is a week of fundamental change and self-discovery for Sagittarius natives. Believe in yourself and move forward with positivity.



CAPRICORN

Ganesha says this week's horoscope for Capricorn: This week will bring new possibilities and opportunities for you. Some important changes are expected in your workplace. Your hard work and dedication can pay off in the projects you are working on. Be careful in communicating with your colleagues, as a small misunderstanding can lead to a big issue. In your personal life, spending time with family will give you mental peace and happiness. Going out and participating in some competitive activities can increase your energy. You also need to pay attention to your health and follow regular exercise and a balanced diet. This week can be a week of inner growth and self-reflection for you. Recognize your full potential and try to realize it. In financial matters, caution is needed; avoid making investments without thinking. Your hard work will be rewarded soon, so be patient and stay positive.



AQUARIUS

Ganesha says this week; the time will be full of challenges and new opportunities for Aquarius. New energy will flow inside you, which will help you focus on your goals. Transparency and honesty will be important for you in personal relationships; try to express your feelings openly. At work, your hard work and creativity will be appreciated, and you are likely to get new projects. Listening and understanding your partner's ideas during this time can take you further in collaboration. This week is a time for meditation and finding peace in your health. Try to reduce mental stress through yoga and meditation. Spending time with family will also give you happiness and satisfaction. Overall, this week symbolizes growth and prosperity for Aquarius. Try to embrace new experiences and move forward with positivity.

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : FEB 10 TO FEB 16 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

FEBRUARY 10

Ganesha says you will attempt to go to whatever length to carry out and achieve your predetermined plans. Even though your family discussions are bitter, only sweetness will fill the void. Before starting any project, you are a dependable source who carefully investigates all the information. Your health conditions could not satisfy you. Through financial assistance that you might receive due to luck, your assistance to the poor and needy will help to dry their sorrows. Your profession may have many twists and turns, so you must be cautious.

FEBRUARY 11

Ganesha says you enjoy leading a self-determined lifestyle. You need to be careful to seize the opportunities that knock on your door. You will become a wonderful person because of your insatiable passion for accomplishing your objectives. Avoiding excessive displays of winning emotions is an urgent need right now. With no expectations or complaints, you will accept life as it is. What you experience in life is a series of ups and downs. To prevent resentment from dividing you from your admirers, try to avoid disagreements with them.

FEBRUARY 12

Ganesha says you adore leading an independent life. Opportunities will knock on your door, so be careful to seize them. You will become a wonderful person because of your unquenchable desire to achieve your objectives. Avoiding excessive displays of winning emotions is a crucial current need. With no expectations or complaints, you will accept life as it is. Your life will be full of ups and downs. Avoid disputes with your admirers to prevent resentments from dividing you.

FEBRUARY 13

Ganesha says your original concepts would provide you with the most sought-after abilities. A large crew is relatively simple to manage. You would perform exceedingly well in the upcoming time and get amazing honours and awards. But occasionally, because of your snarky and peculiar behaviour, you start to seem mysterious to your friends. On a professional front, you must restrain or conceal your erratic behaviour. You will undoubtedly increase your savings, but you will also likely indulge in extravagant spending. It would be planned to be brief but exciting for a change.

FEBRUARY 14

Ganesha says joining the crowd, you keep yourself informed at all times. Your

sense of unbelievableness could propel you to fame shortly. Similar to how honey attracts more flies than vinegar, you are surrounded by kind people. You have good leadership qualities, which will help you succeed as you move up the organisational ladder. To avoid creating factions, you should be devoted to your coworkers. Even if your family comes first in your life, you find yourself having less time to spend with them.

FEBRUARY 15

Ganesha says about your life experiences and their substance, people will be inquisitive. This romantic relationship is a win-win for you. Your level of intimacy will probably rise, and you might be preoccupied with creating your wedding invitation. You will fulfil all of your requirements through your spouse and receive your desired outcome. It will take time for you to travel through a long passage as the number of people who admire you will continue to grow. Love, sacrifices, provocations, disengagement, and peace are all available to you at this moment. You'll always achieve the outcomes you want by learning from experience.

FEBRUARY 16

Ganesha says you're more likely to



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

actively explore the notion of your business deal. You always look into anything that comes your way because you think, "No pain, no gain." Your prowess could occasionally bring you into disrepute. Check your toad-like characteristics, which include conservatism introversion and a preference for staying in one place. You can be concerned if the number of people who support you declines since it could make you feel as though you have no one to encourage you.

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PISCES



Ganesha says your week will be full of dreams and creativity. At this time, deep emotions will arise within you, which will help you move toward your goal. You will get the opportunity to focus on a particular project or hobby, which will give you satisfaction and happiness. Dedication and sensitivity will further strengthen your relationships. You will be inspired to spend time with your loved ones, which will be very beneficial for your emotional health. There is a possibility of meeting an old friend or relative, which will refresh your memories. Your intuition will be most active this week. Listen to your inner voice as it will help you make the right decisions. Use your imagination and be open to new ideas. Take care of your health; some meditation and relaxation are a must.

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 NAMA ||



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Nastur Bejan Daruwalla

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

Lotus blooms in Delhi after 27 years

adding that his party would leave "no stone unturned" in developing Delhi.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday, February 8, 2025, conceded his party's defeat in the high-stakes Delhi Assembly elections.

The AAP is heading towards a big defeat in the 70-member Assembly with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leading on 47 seats, leaving the AAP to just 23 seats. AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal and his number two Manish Sisodia have already lost to BJP's Parvesh Verma and Tarvinder Singh Marwah, respectively.

In a video message, AAP supremo said, "We accept people's mandate with humility, and I congratulate the BJP for its victory and also hope that it will fulfil the expectations of the people of Delhi."

Mr. Kejriwal said the AAP will play the role of a constructive Opposition, saying, "In the next five years, the AAP will not only play the role of a constructive Opposition, but will also be available to the people of Delhi. We are not in politics for power, instead we consider it as a medium to serve people," Mr. Kejriwal claimed in the video message.

In the end, the AAP chief thanked all his party workers. "I thank all the AAP workers for their hard work during the elections and we fought a good election." While the AAP has dominated the political landscape in Delhi for the past 10 years, the BJP has been out of power in the city since 1998.

The Congress, which governed Delhi from 1998 to 2013 and was hoping for a resurgence, seemed headed for its third straight washout. (With inputs from agencies)

Trump imposes sanctions on International Criminal Court

alleged war crimes by American troops in Afghanistan.

The sanctions include freezing any US assets of those designated and barring them and their families from visiting the United States.

The Netherlands, the host nation of the court based in The Hague, said it regretted the sanctions. "The court's work is essential in the fight against impunity," Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp said in a post on X.

But Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, a staunch ally of Trump, said the sanctions showed it might be time to leave the ICC.

The ICC is a permanent court that can prosecute individuals for war crimes.

487 presumed Indians face 'final removal orders': Foreign Secretary Misri

diligence on that. And then action follows. In recent conversations, when we have sought details about potential returnees from the US, we have been told that there are up to 487 presumed Indian citizens with final removal orders," he said.

When asked about past instances of Indian migrants being deported in shackles, Misri said there was no record of the government protesting such cases in 2012. However, he reiterated that India has now registered its concerns with the US.

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday, February 6, told the Rajya Sabha that the deportation of illegal immigrants from the US to India is not a new phenomenon and that there has been a standard operating procedure in place till 2012.

H-1B visa initial registration period to commence on March 7 and close on March 24

require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The initial registration period for the most sought-after H-1B visas for foreign guest workers for fiscal 2026 will open at noon Eastern Time (10.30 pm IST) on March 7 and run through noon Eastern Time (10.30 pm IST) on March 24, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said on Wednesday, February 5.

During this period, prospective petitioners and representatives must use a USCIS online account to register each beneficiary electronically for the selection process and pay the associated registration fee for each beneficiary, it said.

(Source: PTI)

Suozi Honors Students from 3rd Congressional District for National Achievements in Sciences and Mathematics



FEBRUARY 6, 2025

GLEN COVE, NY (TIP): Congressman Tom Suozzi (D-Long Island, Queens) recognized and honored high school students from New York's Third Congressional District for their achievements in life science, computer science, and mathematics in the Regeneration Science Talent Search and the Congressional App Challenge.

Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory hosted the ceremony, during which Suozzi was introduced by Dr. Bruce Stillman, President and CEO.

"Amidst what seems like only negative news, the good news shines brightly. Despite representing just 0.2% of the U.S. population, New York's Third Congressional District boasts 8.3% of the Regeneration Science Talent Search Scholars," said Suozzi. "The Third Congressional District has consistently produced the brightest young talent the nation has to offer. This achievement is a testament to these students' hard work and dedication and the exceptional high schools they attend. These students represent the future of our community and our country, and I am proud to honor their remarkable accomplishments."

Of the 300 high school seniors from across the country who advanced in the first round of the annual Regeneration Science Talent Search, 49 are from Long Island, and a very impressive 25 are from the 3rd Congressional District.

Two students, Emma Wen of Great Neck North High School and Sandeep Sawhney of Herricks High School, have advanced and have been named finalists in the competition. They are among the 40 finalists nationwide who will compete in March for the more than \$1.8 million in awards provided by Regeneration Pharmaceuticals of Tarrytown, NY.

The students honored by Congressman Suozzi represent twelve high schools in the 3rd Congressional District: Cold Spring Harbor High School, Great Neck North High School, Great Neck South High School, Herricks High School, Jericho High School, Manhasset High School, Mineola High School, North Shore High School, Plainview-Old Bethpage High School, Paul D. Schreiber High School, Syosset High School, and The Wheatley School.

Suozzi also recognized the winner and runner-up of the Congressional App Challenge, an annual competition sponsored by the U.S. House of Representatives in which high school students use a programming language to create an application for a PC, web, tablet, mobile device, or other device.

First place was awarded to Aditya Varma of Syosset High School. Aditya's app, "Rent Your Driveway," is a game-changer for drivers and homeowners alike. It makes it easier to find private driveway parking near essential locations like schools, hospitals, and train stations. It's a practical solution that efficiently addresses a common problem.

Stephanie Sze of Manhasset High School was the runner-up. Stephanie's "College Buddy" app streamlines the college search process, helping high school students discover the best options based on their unique interests. By empowering students to make informed decisions about their future, "College Buddy" plays a crucial role in shaping their educational journey.

Suozzi's office received applications from 28 students representing 11 high schools in New York's Third Congressional District, the largest number in the seven years that Suozzi has sponsored the Congressional App Challenge.

NYC buses are painfully sluggish as the city falls short of bus lane goals

FEBRUARY 6, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): Bus riders are losing out as the city's Department of Transportation (DOT) continues to lack enough funding to get NYC buses moving faster on the streets, a new report released on Thursday uncovered.

The NYC Independent Budget Office's (IBO) latest review of initiatives to improve bus speeds found what most NYC straphangers already knew: City buses are painfully slow despite the system's daily ridership of over one million people.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



A bus on Queens Boulevard that will soon offer more bus service if a plan is approved

Spiritual significance of Magha Purnima

Magha Purnima, the full moon day in the Hindu month of Magha (January-February), holds immense spiritual significance in Hinduism. It marks the culmination of the month-long Magha Mela, an auspicious gathering of devotees at sacred rivers, especially at the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati in Prayagraj, India. The day is celebrated with fervor and devotion across various parts of India and Nepal, reflecting deep-rooted traditions, legends, and spiritual practices.

Legends Associated with Magha Purnima

- **The Legend of Bhishma Pitamaha:** According to the Mahabharata, Bhishma Pitamaha, the grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, chose to leave his mortal body on Magha Purnima. He had the boon of iccha mrityu (the ability to choose his time of death) and waited for this auspicious day, believing that dying during Magha Purnima would grant him liberation (moksha). His selfless life, unwavering principles, and ultimate sacrifice are celebrated, emphasizing the virtues of duty, honor, and devotion.
- **The Story of Sage Vishwamitra:** Another legend speaks of Sage Vishwamitra, who performed intense penance during the month of Magha. His devotion and austerities during this time are believed to have helped him attain the status of a Brahmarishi from a Kshatriya, symbolizing the power of penance and devotion during this holy month. His story underscores the transformative potential of spiritual dedication, regardless of one's birth or background.
- **The Tale of King Harishchandra:** In some regions, the story of King Harishchandra is recounted, emphasizing truth and sacrifice. It is believed that his trials and tribulations, which were marked by unwavering adherence to truth, are commemorated on Magha Purnima, inspiring devotees to uphold righteousness. His life serves as a beacon of integrity, demonstrating that truth and virtue triumph over adversity.
- **The Legend of River Saraswati:** It is also believed that on Magha Purnima, the invisible river Saraswati becomes accessible to those who bathe at the Triveni Sangam (the confluence of Ganges, Yamuna, and Saraswati). This confluence is considered the holiest of places, and bathing here during Magha Purnima is said to wash away even the gravest of sins.

Significance of Magha Purnima

- **Spiritual Cleansing and Bathing Rituals:** Taking a holy dip in sacred rivers like the Ganges, Yamuna, or



Important information

Magha Purnima 2025

Wednesday, 12 February 2025

Purnima Tithi Begins: 11 February 2025 at 06:55 PM

Purnima Tithi Ends : 12 February 2025 at 07:22 PM

Godavari on Magha Purnima is believed to cleanse sins and purify the soul. The practice of 'Magha Snan' (bathing in the month of Magha) is considered highly meritorious, with the Purnima (full moon) day being the most auspicious. Pilgrims often start their day before sunrise, chanting hymns and offering prayers as they immerse themselves in the sacred waters.

- **Magha Mela:** The Magha Mela, held in Prayagraj, attracts millions of devotees from across the country. Pilgrims engage in rituals, offer prayers, and participate in community activities. The festival's highlight is the mass bathing ritual, which is believed to bring spiritual merit and blessings. Temporary settlements of sages, ascetics, and spiritual seekers create a vibrant spiritual environment, offering discourses, kirtans (devotional songs), and communal feasts.
- **Charity and Philanthropy:** Acts of charity hold special significance on Magha Purnima. Donating food, clothes, and other essentials to the needy is considered a way to

- **Worship and Fasting:** Devotees observe fasts and offer prayers to Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva on this day. Temples are adorned with lights and flowers, and special pujas (rituals) are conducted. Many also worship the Moon God (Chandra Deva) on Magha Purnima night, seeking peace and prosperity. In some traditions, devotees read sacred texts like the Bhagavad Gita and perform Satyanarayan Puja to invoke divine blessings.
- **Astrological Significance:** Magha Purnima is considered astrologically potent. The moon is in its full glory, and its positive influence is believed to enhance mental clarity and emotional balance. Astrologers suggest that performing spiritual practices on this day can amplify their effects. It

is also considered an ideal time for performing ancestral rites (Pitra Tarpan), seeking the blessings of forefathers and ensuring their peaceful journey in the afterlife.

- **Ratha Saptami and Preparation for Maha Shivaratri:** Magha Purnima often coincides with preparations for Ratha Saptami, dedicated to the Sun God (Surya), and marks the lead-up to Maha Shivaratri, a major festival honoring Lord Shiva. Thus, it serves as a spiritual bridge between significant Hindu festivals, encouraging continuous devotion and observance of sacred rituals.

Regional Variations and Celebrations

- **North India:** In states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, devotees flock to the banks of rivers for holy baths and participate in community feasts and fairs. Prayagraj's Magha Mela is a central attraction. In Varanasi, special aarti ceremonies are performed along the ghats of the Ganges, creating a mesmerizing spiritual ambiance.
- **South India:** In Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, Magha Purnima is marked by temple festivals and special rituals dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. Temples like the Arunachaleswarar Temple in Tamil Nadu see grand celebrations, with processions and abhishekam (ritual bathing of deities).
- **West Bengal and Odisha:** In these regions, devotees perform Puja to Lord Jagannath and participate in river baths, believing in the day's power to cleanse and purify. In Odisha, the Chandrabhaga Mela near Konark attracts thousands of devotees who take a dip in the Chandrabhaga River before offering prayers at the Sun Temple.
- **Nepal:** The day is celebrated with religious fervor, particularly in Kathmandu and along the Bagmati River, where devotees take ritual baths and offer prayers. Temples like the Pashupatinath Temple witness special pujas, and pilgrims from across the country gather to seek blessings.

Conclusion

Magha Purnima is a day of immense spiritual importance, symbolizing purity, devotion, and the pursuit of righteousness. Whether through holy dips, charitable acts, or rigorous spiritual practices, devotees seek to align themselves with the divine and attain spiritual growth. The legends and traditions surrounding Magha Purnima continue to inspire millions, fostering a sense of community, devotion, and moral integrity. This sacred day serves as a reminder of the eternal values of truth, sacrifice, and devotion, guiding individuals on their spiritual journeys.

History This Week FEB 07- FEB 13

FEBRUARY 7

February 7, 1795 - The 11th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, limiting the powers of the Federal Judiciary over the states by prohibiting Federal lawsuits against individual states.



Birthday - Thomas More (1478-1535) was born in London, England. He was a lawyer, scholar, and held the title Lord Chancellor of England. As a devout Catholic, he refused to acknowledge the divorce of King Henry VIII from Queen Catherine, thereby refusing to acknowledge the King's religious supremacy. He was charged with treason, found guilty and beheaded in 1535, with his head then displayed from Tower Bridge. Four hundred years later, in 1935, he was canonized by Pope Pius XI.



Birthday - British novelist Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was born in Portsmouth, England. He examined social inequalities through his works including; David Copperfield, Oliver Twist, and Nicholas Nickleby. In 1843, he wrote A Christmas Carol in just a few weeks, an enormously popular work even today.

Birthday - American social critic and novelist Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) was born in Sauk Center, Minnesota. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930. His works include; Main Street, Babbitt, and It Can't Happen Here.

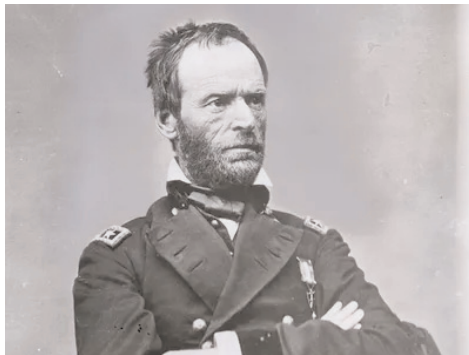
FEBRUARY 8

February 8, 1587 - Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, was beheaded at Fotheringhay, England, after 19 years as a prisoner of Queen Elizabeth I. She became entangled in the complex political events surrounding the Protestant Reformation



in England and was charged with complicity in a plot to assassinate Elizabeth.

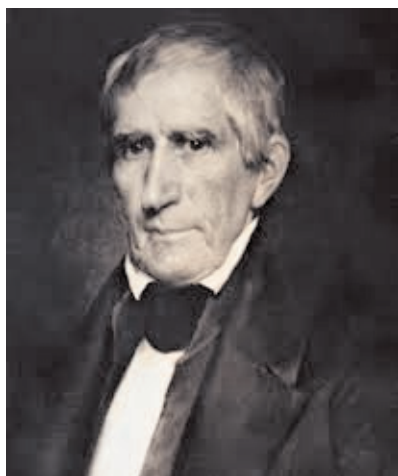
February 8, 1910 - The Boy Scouts of America was founded by William Boyce in Washington, D.C., modeled after the British Boy Scouts.



Birthday - Union Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820-1891) was born in Lancaster, Ohio.

FEBRUARY 9

February 9, 1943 - During World War II in the Pacific, U.S. troops captured Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands after six months of battle, with 9,000 Japanese and 2,000 Americans killed.



Birthday - William Henry Harrison (1773-1841) the 9th U.S. President was born in Berkeley, Virginia. He took office on March 4, 1841 and died only 32 days later after developing pneumonia from the cold weather during his inaugural ceremonies.

FEBRUARY 10

February 10, 1942 - The first Medal of Honor during World War II was awarded to 2nd Lt. Alexander Nininger (posthumously) for heroism during the Battle of Bataan.

February 10, 1967 - The 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, clarifying the procedures for presidential succession in the event of

the disability of a sitting president.

FEBRUARY 11

February 11th - Celebrated in Japan as the founding date of the Japanese nation, which occurred with the accession to the throne of the first Emperor, Jimmu, in 660 BC.



February 11, 1929 - Italian dictator Benito Mussolini granted political independence to Vatican City and recognized the sovereignty of the Pope (Holy See) over the area, measuring about 110 acres.

February 11, 1990 - In South Africa, Nelson Mandela, at age 71, was released from prison after serving 27 years of a life sentence on charges of attempting to overthrow the apartheid government. In April 1994, he was elected president in the first all-race elections.



February 11, 2011 - In Egypt, President Hosni Mubarak resigned amid a massive protest calling for his ouster. Thousands of young Egyptians and others had protested non-stop for 18 days in Cairo, Alexandria and elsewhere. Mubarak had ruled Egypt for nearly 30 years, functioning as a virtual dictator.



Birthday - American inventor Thomas Edison (1847-1931) was born in Milan, Ohio. Throughout his lifetime he acquired over 1,200 patents including the incandescent bulb, phonograph and movie camera. Best known for his quote, "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration."

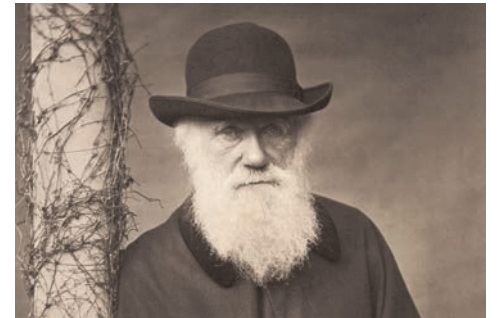
FEBRUARY 12

February 12, 1999 - The impeachment trial of President Bill Clinton in the U.S. Senate ended. With the whole world watching via television, Senators stood up one by one during the final roll call to vote "guilty" or "not guilty." On Article 1

(charging Clinton with perjury) 55 senators, including 10 Republicans and all 45 Democrats voted not guilty. On Article 2 (charging Clinton with obstruction of justice) the Senate split evenly, 50 for and 50 against the President. With the necessary two-thirds majority not having been achieved, President Clinton was thus acquitted on both charges and served out the remainder of his term of office lasting through January 20, 2001.



Birthday - Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) the 16th U.S. President was born in Hardin County, Kentucky. He led the nation through the tumultuous Civil War, freed the slaves, composed the Gettysburg Address, and established Thanksgiving.



Birthday - Author and naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-1882) was born in Shrewsbury, England. Best known for his work Origin of the Species concerning the theory of evolution.

FEBRUARY 13

February 13, 1635 - Boston Latin School, the first tax-payer supported (public) school in America was established in Boston, Massachusetts.

February 13, 1945 - During World War II in Europe, British and American planes began massive bombing raids on Dresden, Germany. A four-day firestorm erupted that was visible for 200 miles and engulfed the historic old city, killing an estimated 135,000 German civilians.



Birthday - American artist Grant Wood (1892-1942) was born near Anamosa, Iowa. Best known for his painting American Gothic featuring a farm couple.

Vrindavan: A spiritual and cultural journey

Vrindavan, a sacred town in Uttar Pradesh, India, is revered as the childhood abode of Lord Krishna. Nestled on the banks of the Yamuna River, this town attracts pilgrims and tourists from across the world. Known for its rich history, vibrant temples, and spiritual ambiance, Vrindavan offers an unforgettable experience for those seeking peace and devotion.

Places to Visit in Vrindavan

1. Banke Bihari Temple

One of the most revered temples in Vrindavan, the Banke Bihari Temple is dedicated to Lord Krishna. The temple's unique idol of Krishna in tribhanga posture mesmerizes devotees. The temple remains filled with bhajans and kirtans, creating an enchanting atmosphere. The aarti rituals here are performed in a distinctive manner, ensuring that the deity is not exposed to the eyes of devotees for long durations.

2. Prem Mandir

This grand temple, built by Jagadguru Kripalu Maharaj, is a masterpiece of white marble architecture. Dedicated to Radha-Krishna and Sita-Ram, the temple is famous for its intricate carvings, stunning light shows, and serene gardens. The evening light and sound show narrating Krishna's pastimes is a major attraction.

3. ISKCON Temple

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) Temple, also known as Sri Krishna Balaram Mandir, is a major attraction. Devotees from around the world gather here to participate in soulful prayers and kirtans. The temple also houses a guesthouse, vegetarian restaurants, and a bookstore with a vast collection of spiritual literature.

4. Radha Raman Temple

This ancient temple, dedicated to Radha and Krishna, is known for its beautifully adorned deity of Radha Raman Ji. The temple is famous for its deep spiritual significance and traditional rituals. The deity of Radha Raman is self-manifested from a shaligram shila (sacred stone), making it unique among Krishna temples.

5. Nidhivan

A mysterious and sacred grove in Vrindavan, Nidhivan is believed to be the place where Lord Krishna performs Raas Leela with Radha and the gopis every night. It is said that no one is allowed to stay in the vicinity after sunset, as locals believe divine activities take place in the area. The trees in Nidhivan are bent and intertwined, as if dancing in the eternal Raas Leela.

6. Govind Dev Ji Temple

This 16th-century temple, built by Raja Man Singh, is an architectural marvel. Originally a seven-storey structure, it was partially destroyed during Mughal



invasions but still retains its grandeur. The temple's construction follows a blend of Rajasthani and Mughal architecture.

7. Seva Kunj and Kesi Ghat

Seva Kunj is believed to be the place where Krishna performed Raas Leela with Radha. Nearby, Kesi Ghat on the Yamuna River is where Krishna is said to have defeated the demon Kesi. Pilgrims

take holy dips here and offer prayers. The ghat is famous for its mesmerizing evening aarti on the Yamuna River.

8. Rangaji Temple

Dedicated to Lord Ranganatha, this temple showcases a fusion of Dravidian and Rajasthani architecture. It has a towering gopuram (gateway tower) and is one of the largest temples in Vrindavan. The temple also has a large

water tank and an annual Rath Yatra festival that attracts thousands of devotees.

9. Madan Mohan Temple

This is one of the oldest temples in Vrindavan, dedicated to Lord Krishna. It is situated on a small hill and provides a serene environment for devotees. The original deity of Madan Mohan was moved to Rajasthan during the Mughal invasions, but the temple remains a significant site of worship.

10. Gokul and Barsana

Located near Vrindavan, Gokul is where Krishna was raised, and Barsana is Radha's birthplace. These places hold immense religious significance and are worth visiting for a deeper connection to Krishna's life. Barsana is especially famous for its Lathmar Holi celebrations, where women playfully hit men with sticks in a reenactment of Krishna's playful teasing of Radha and her friends.

Best Time to Visit Vrindavan

The ideal time to visit Vrindavan is during the winter months from October to March when the weather is pleasant. Festivals like Janmashtami, Holi, and Radha Ashtami bring the town to life with grand celebrations. The Holi festival in Vrindavan is particularly famous, drawing thousands of tourists to experience the unique Phoolon Ki Holi (Holi with flowers) and Lathmar Holi.

How to Reach Vrindavan

- By Air: The nearest airport is in Agra (around 70 km away), while Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (150 km) offers better connectivity.
- By Train: Mathura Junction, about 15 km from Vrindavan, is the nearest railway station with frequent trains from major cities.
- By Road: Vrindavan is well-connected by road, with regular bus and taxi services from Delhi, Agra, and Mathura. Hiring a private cab or taking an auto-rickshaw within the town is a convenient way to explore different temples and attractions.

Where to Stay in Vrindavan

Vrindavan offers a variety of accommodation options, ranging from budget guesthouses to luxurious hotels. Popular options include:

- MVT Guesthouse & Restaurant: A comfortable stay option near ISKCON Temple with modern amenities.
- Nidhivan Sarovar Portico: A premium hotel offering great hospitality and comfort.
- Ananda Krishna Van: A peaceful and spiritual retreat for devotees and tourists.
- Various Dharamshalas: For budget travelers, numerous dharamshalas (pilgrim lodges) provide affordable lodging with basic facilities.

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Nagpur ODI: Gill anchors India to 4-wicket win over England, Harshit impresses on debut

NAGPUR (TIP)

Vice-captain Shubman Gill orchestrated India's chase with grace, while debutant Harshit Rana dazzled with the ball as the hosts registered a four-wicket win against England in the series opener here on Thursday, February 6.

Gill (87), Shreyas Iyer (59), and Axar Patel (52) rose to the occasion, guiding India to a commanding chase after Rana (3/53 from 7 overs) and the seasoned left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja (3/26 from 9) shared six wickets between them, dismantling England for a below-par 248.

Rana's fourth over, which claimed the twin wickets of Ben Duckett and Harry Brook, decisively stifled the England innings, putting India firmly in control as the visitors never managed to rebuild despite fifties by skipper Jos Buttler (52) and Jack Bethell (51).

Chasing a below 250 score, Gill anchored the innings, forging key partnerships with Iyer and Axar that became the backbone of India's chase.

He adapted perfectly to the match situation, playing the perfect foil to Iyer when the Mumbai batter was in full flow, then stepping up as the mainstay, steering India towards victory.

Iyer, walking in at 19/2, unleashed a counter-attacking knock, filled with sizzling shots, including back-to-back sixes -- one a pull shot over deep mid-wicket off Jofra Archer and the other a reverse switch-hit four off Adil Rashid.

On the back of a stellar domestic season, Iyer played with confidence, finding gaps effortlessly and taking on the aggressor's role, with Gill remaining steady at the other end.

But once Iyer, trapped LBW by Bethell after being struck flush on the front pad, was dismissed, Gill seamlessly took charge, with an able ally in Axar, who was promoted up the order.

Gill continued to exude confidence, as



he smashed 14 fours, while Axar too brought up a memorable fifty.

England took a flurry of wickets, causing some nervous moments for the hosts but India managed the win with 68 balls remaining.

Earlier, England blazed out of the blocks with electrifying intent after opting to bat, but India's disciplined bowling and razor-sharp fielding orchestrated a remarkable fightback.

Making his ODI debut, Rana endured a baptism by fire. His first over proved costly, as the explosive Phil Salt (43) feasted on his deliveries, plundering 26 runs in a ruthless display of power-hitting.

Three sixes and two fours rained down upon the young pacer, prompting Rohit Sharma to swiftly turn to spin, summoning Axar Patel (1/38) in an attempt to stem the flow of runs.

However, England's charge remained relentless, with Ben Duckett (32) unfurling an array of strokes, including a beautifully executed reverse sweep, to keep the scoreboard ticking.

Just when the visitors seemed poised for an onslaught, India struck back in sensational fashion. Shreyas Iyer produced a moment of brilliance in the field, running out the dangerous Salt with a bullet throw to KL Rahul following a mix-up between the two openers.

While Rana's 26-run over gave England the momentum, his fourth over which yielded two wickets changed the complexion of the innings, putting India in control.

First, India's two debutants -- Rana and Yashasvi Jaiswal -- combined to get rid of Duckett. Jaiswal, stationed at midwicket, ran back 21 meters before executing a breathtaking full-stretch dive to pouch a stunning catch off Rana's bowling.

Rana, now in rhythm, struck again just two balls later, forcing Harry Brook to edge behind to Rahul as England, once in cruise control, suddenly found themselves reeling, having lost three wickets, leaving their two most experienced batters -- Joe Root and Buttler -- with the responsibility of rebuilding the innings.

Source: PTI



Marcus Stoinis announces shock retirement from ODIs

Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis, who was named in the country's Champions Trophy squad, on Thursday announced a shock retirement from ODIs to "fully focus on the next chapter" of his career, creating a fresh selection headache for the side that is already dealing with injuries to key players.

The 35-year-old will, however, continue to be available for selection in T20 Internationals.

Australia has time till February 12 to unveil their final squad for the Champions Trophy that will be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19.

His sudden decision to call it quits might be a result of a hamstring injury that he sustained during the ongoing SA20, where he has been playing for Durban Super Giant.

"Playing ODI cricket for Australia has been an incredible journey, and I'm grateful for every moment I've had in the green and gold. Representing my country at the highest level is something I'll always cherish," said Stoinis in a media release issued by Cricket Australia.

"This wasn't an easy decision, but I believe it's the right time for me to step away from ODIs and fully focus on the next chapter of my career," he declared without elaborating any further.

"I've got a fantastic relationship with Ron (head coach Andrew McDonald) and I've hugely appreciated his support. I'll be cheering the boys on in Pakistan," he added. Source: PTI

Liverpool set up final against Newcastle United after thrashing Spurs

Liverpool have stormed into the Carabao Cup final with a comprehensive 4-0 victory over Tottenham Hotspur in the second leg of their semi-final clash at Anfield, securing a 4-1 aggregate win. Liverpool's emphatic Anfield win overturned a 1-0 first-leg deficit and set up a showdown with Newcastle United at Wembley on March 16.

Cody Gakpo ignited Liverpool's comeback in the 34th minute, finishing off a Mohamed Salah cross with a precise right-footed shot. Salah then doubled the lead from the penalty spot early in the second half after Spurs goalkeeper Antonin Kinsky fouled



Darwin Nunez. Dominik Szoboszlai added a third, and Virgil van Dijk capped off the rout with a powerful header, ensuring a comfortable passage to the final.

Newcastle, who eliminated Arsenal with a 4-0 aggregate win, will be seeking their first major domestic trophy since 1955. Eddie Howe's side have demonstrated their quality with a resounding victory over Arsenal and will pose a formidable challenge to Liverpool at Wembley.

For Liverpool, the final represents another opportunity to add silverware in what has been a promising first season under manager Arne Slot. With the team leading the Premier League, competing in the Champions League round of 16, and still in the FA Cup, the Reds remain in contention for an unprecedented quadruple.

Cody Gakpo acknowledged the significance of reaching the final but stressed the importance of staying focused: "We are in one final, but we have a lot to play for still. We have to stay calm and focus to reach as much as possible."

In contrast, Tottenham's exit marks another disappointing chapter in their pursuit of silverware, extending their trophy drought that dates back to their League Cup triumph in 2008. The result will likely intensify scrutiny on manager Ange Postecoglou, with Spurs struggling for consistency in the Premier League and failing to register a single shot on target in the match, according to Opta.

Judge Halts Access to Treasury Payment Systems by Elon Musk's Team

FEBRUARY 7, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): A federal judge temporarily restricted access by Elon Musk's government efficiency program to the Treasury Department's payment and data systems, saying there was a risk of "irreparable harm", New York Times reported.

Trump administration's new policy of allowing political appointees and "special government employees" access to these systems, which contain highly sensitive information such as bank details, heightens the risk of leaks and of the systems becoming more vulnerable than before to hacking, U.S. District Judge Paul A. Engelmayer said in an emergency order.

Judge Engelmayer ordered any such official who was granted access to the systems since Jan. 20 to "destroy any and all copies of material downloaded from the Treasury Department's records and systems." He also restricted the government from granting access to these categories of officials.

The defendants - President Trump and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent - should show cause on Feb. 14 before Judge Jeannette A. Vargas, who is handling the case on a permanent basis, Judge Engelmayer said.

The order came in response to a lawsuit filed on Friday by Letitia James of New York along with 18 other Democratic state attorneys general, charging that when President Trump gave Mr. Musk the run of government computer systems, he had breached protections enshrined in the Constitution and "failed to faithfully execute the laws enacted by Congress."

The attorneys general said the president had given "virtually unfettered access" to the federal government's most sensitive information to young aides who work for Mr. Musk, who runs a program the administration calls the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, though it is not an actual department.

While the group was supposedly assigned to cut costs, members are "attempting to access government data to support initiatives to block federal funds from reaching certain disfavored beneficiaries," according to the suit. Mr. Musk has publicly stated his intention to "recklessly freeze streams of federal funding without warning," the suit said, pointing to his social media posts in recent days.

Efforts to reach press officers at the White House



New York State Attorney General Letitia James has filed a suit accusing the president of failing to faithfully execute the nation's laws when he let DOGE comb through federal computer system

were not immediately successful.

Mr. Musk's team was given access to the government's most fundamental computer data, including the U.S. Treasury Department's payment system, which is used to disburse funds including Social Security benefits, veteran's benefits and federal employee wages.

The system - which channels about 90 percent of the payments for the U.S. government, which spent about \$6.75 trillion last fiscal year - pays funds directly to people in the states, as well as to state governments, the suit says.

Before President Trump took office last month, access was granted to only a limited number of career civil servants with security clearances, the suit said. But Mr. Musk's efforts had interrupted federal funding for health clinics, preschools, and climate initiatives, according to the filing.

The money had already been allocated by Congress. The Constitution assigns to lawmakers the job of deciding government spending.

"President Trump does not have the power to give away Americans' private information to anyone he chooses, and he cannot cut federal payments approved by Congress," Ms. James said in a statement. "Musk and DOGE have no authority to access Americans' private information and some of our country's most sensitive data."

The lawsuit was filed in concert with the attorneys general of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut,

Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wisconsin. It is one of many resisting Mr. Trump's aggressive actions since he took office last month.

Three unions this week sued the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the government's human resources division, to block an effort to persuade roughly two million federal employees to resign.

Two anonymous sets of F.B.I. agents and employees sued to keep the Trump administration from releasing the identities of people who worked on investigations into the Capitol riots on Jan. 6, 2021. They won an order on Friday requiring the administration to keep their names secret.

Ms. James and other attorneys general challenged Mr. Trump's executive order attempting to end birthright citizenship. This week, she warned New York hospitals that complying with a White House executive order seeking to end gender-affirming medical care for young people could violate state law.

The actions of DOGE - bulldozing through the federal government - have been confounding and concerning Democratic lawmakers and federal employees.

With license from Mr. Trump, Mr. Musk's mandate appears to be vast: His team has tried to shut down the U.S. Agency for International Development, a key international source of foreign assistance. On Friday, a federal judge in Washington ordered a pause on an effort to put 2,200 U.S.A.I.D. employees on leave and rapidly withdraw employees stationed abroad.

On Friday, Mr. Trump said that Mr. Musk would turn his attention to the Pentagon, which has billions of dollars in contracts with companies Mr. Musk owns.

The heart of the lawsuit filed by Ms. James's coalition on Friday was focused on Mr. Musk's access to the Treasury Department. The department's system is a repository of some Americans' most sensitive information, including Social Security numbers and bank account numbers, which the attorneys general said puts residents of their states at personal risk.

In a video message on Friday, Ms. James said that the president "does not have the power to give our private information away to whomever he wants."

"As Democratic attorneys general, we're suing to stop this unprecedented and unauthorized attack," she said.

(Source: New York Times)

Trump admn plans to slash all but a fraction of USAID jobs

The plan will leave fewer than 300 staffers on the job out of what are currently 8,000 direct-hires and contractors



President Donald Trump

FEBRUARY 7, 2025
WASHINGTON, D.C.

(TIP): The Trump administration presented a plan on Thursday, February 6, to dramatically cut staffing worldwide for US aid projects as part of its dismantling of the

US Agency for International Development, leaving fewer than 300 workers out of thousands, the associated Press reported.

Two current USAID employees and one former senior USAID official told The Associated Press of the administration's plan, presented to remaining senior officials of the agency on Thursday. They spoke on condition of anonymity amid a Trump administration order barring USAID staffers from talking to anyone outside their agency.

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

North American Punjabi Association urges Punjab Government to set up rehabilitation fund for youths deported from US

PARAMINDER SINGH
AUJLA

FEBRUARY 5, 2025

SACRAMENTO (TIP): The North American Punjabi Association (NAPA) on Wednesday, February 5, urged the Punjab Government to establish a rehabilitation fund to support young boys and girls being deported from the United States.

In a statement, NAPA Executive Director Satnam Singh Chahal said lack of support and resources for these returnees could lead to severe social and economic challenges for the state.

He warned the Punjab Government that negligence in addressing this growing crisis would only create more problems for the state.



NAPA Executive Director Satnam Singh Chahal urged the Punjab Government to establish a rehabilitation fund to support young boys and girls being deported from the United States.

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

Indian American Rohit Chopra fired from Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

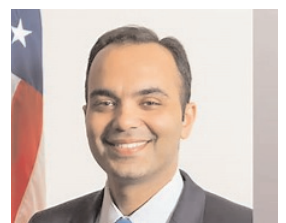
FEBRUARY 4, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Rohit Chopra, Indian American director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, who has been targeted by Republican lawmakers for putting restrictions on financial institutions in favor of consumers, has been fired.

Chopra received an email from the White House on Saturday, February 1 morning informing him of the firing.

He confirmed his departure in a post on X Saturday.

"This letter confirms that my term as CFPB Director has concluded. I know the CFPB is ready to work with you and the next confirmed Director, and we have a great deal of energy to ensure continued success," Chopra wrote. Chopra was appointed in 2021 by former President Joe Biden to serve as director of the bureau that regulates financial agencies.



Rohit Chopra who has been targeted by Republican lawmakers for putting restrictions on financial institutions in favor of consumers, has been fired.

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news



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"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MD. I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautifully facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses, and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"

Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



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In 2018 Prasanth, Sushanth and Nisanth were diagnosed and treated for Prematurity Retinopathy. An illness in premature babies which can cause blindness.

Luckily through GEMROP an initiative funded by EFA to screen premature babies throughout hospitals in India, the triplets were able to receive an expensive surgery free of charge. The boys are now the age of 4 with perfect vision.