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19th YEAR

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American Punjabi Society honors Philanthropist Harry Singh Bolla with prestigious "Punjabi Ratan" Award at a glittering gala



Mr. Binaya Srikanta Pradhan, Consul General of India in New York, honoring Mr. Harry Singh Bolla. Seen in the picture, among others (from L to R): APS President Gary Sikka, (slightly turned), Consul General Mr. Pradhan, Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, Honoree Harry Singh Bolla, and Nassau County Republican Party Chairman Joseph Cairo

December 10, 2025

HICKSVILLE, NY (TIP): In a night marked by celebration, cultural pride, and community spirit, the American Punjabi Society (APS) hosted its annual gala at the Pearl Banquet in Hicksville, Long Island, honoring distinguished businessman and philanthropist Harry Singh Bolla with the coveted Punjabi Ratan (Punjabi Jewel) Award. The event drew a distinguished gathering of political leaders, administrative officials, community stalwarts, and the crème de la crème of the Punjabi-American diaspora, underscoring APS's standing as one of the most influential Punjabi cultural organizations in the region. The more prominent guests included the Consul General of India, Mr. Binaya Srikanta Pradhan who handed over the award to Mr. Bolla, Sant Singh Chatwal, one of the two Patrons

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Mike Johnson Reveals GOP Health Care Plan as ACA Subsidies Set to Expire



Johnson says GOP Health Care Plan won't include ACA Extension
Screenshot / ABC 7

DECEMBER 12, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): After the Senate failed this week to advance competing health care plans, attention has shifted to the House, where

Republicans are making a last-minute push as the clock runs out to prevent higher insurance costs for millions of Americans, says a Newsweek report.

Speaker Mike Johnson unveiled a sweeping Republican proposal late Friday, December 12, moving ahead without extending enhanced tax subsidies that help people afford insurance through the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. Those subsidies, expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic, are set to expire at the end of the year.

WHY IT MATTERS

President Donald Trump has said he believes Republicans can deliver a better

CONTD ON PAGE 36

India's Foreign Secy holds talks with top US diplomat on strengthening US-India Strategic Partnership

DECEMBER 10, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. / NEW DELHI

(TIP): The India - United States Foreign Office Consultations (FOC), co-chaired by India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and U.S. Under Secretary of State Ms. Allison Hooker were held in New Delhi on December 9, according to a press note issued by the Indian embassy in Washington.

The consultations provided an opportunity for a comprehensive review of the India - U.S. Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership.

The two sides discussed key bilateral issues, including trade and investment, defense cooperation, the TRUST

CONTD ON PAGE 36



India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri hosted Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker and held talks on strengthening US-India strategic partnership.

Photo credit : ANI

FIA Taps Sreekanth Akkapalli as President for 2026; First Telugu-Origin to Head Premier Grassroots Nonprofit



Sreekanth Akkapalli has been unanimously selected to lead the 2026 Executive Team of the Federation of Indian Associations of USA (FIA NY-NJ-CT-NE)

DECEMBER 10, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): The Federation of Indian Associations of USA (FIA NY-NJ-CT-NE) has completed its annual internal review and selection process, led by the independently appointed 2026 Election Commission consisting of Alok Kumar, Jayesh Patel and Kenny Desai. The Commission's recommendations received full board approval, and the newly confirmed 2026 Executive Team will assume office on January 1, 2026.

Sreekanth Akkapalli was unanimously selected to lead the 2026 Executive Team, succeeding outgoing President Saurin Parikh. Continuing in their roles from the previous team are Vice President Priti Ray Patel and General Secretary Srishti Kaul Narula. As part of this year's restructuring,

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COMMENT

Immigration,
Humanity, and the
Idea of America

No one can reasonably question the right of a sovereign government to frame, enforce, and regulate its immigration laws. Borders matter, and so does the rule of law. However, immigration policy cannot be reduced to a cold administrative exercise alone. It must also reflect a nation's moral compass, historical experience, and understanding of human dignity. In the American context, this human dimension is not merely incidental-it is foundational.

Millions of immigrants have come to the United States over generations not to undermine it, but to build it. They have worked in factories and farms, laboratories and hospitals, classrooms and construction sites. In the process, they have contributed their labor, intellect, taxes, and loyalty, while earning a living for their families. Those who have been accepted, documented, and granted citizenship by the United States are as much a part of the American story as those born on its soil. Citizenship, once conferred by law, is neither conditional nor hierarchical.

It must also be said that immigrants do not arrive in a vacuum. They respond to America's own needs-its demand for labor, innovation, and talent. From Silicon Valley to medical research centers, from universities to startups, America's global leadership has been powered by minds drawn from every corner of the world. This openness transformed the United States into an unparalleled magnet for talent and ambition. To now treat immigrants-especially those of color-as inherently suspect or lesser, even implicitly, is to deny this legacy.

Yes, the law must act firmly against criminality, regardless of origin. Criminal behavior cannot be shielded by immigration status, just as citizenship cannot excuse it. But policies that appear indiscriminate, sweeping, or guided by racial or cultural anxieties risk punishing the many for the faults of a few. An undeclared but perceptible hostility toward "colored" immigrants sends a chilling message-not just domestically, but globally.

The world today is not what it was in the early twentieth century. Countries once dismissed as backward are advancing rapidly, offering opportunities, stability, and dignity to their own citizens. Talented individuals now have real choices. If America begins to appear unwelcoming, arbitrary, or hostile, those choices will be exercised elsewhere. Talent, unlike desperation, does not linger where it is not respected.

America's greatness has never rested on exclusion. It has thrived because it absorbed diversity and converted it into strength. An extremist view of immigration-one that prioritizes fear over fairness and suspicion over contribution-threatens to erode that strength from within.

For the sake of America's future, immigration policy must balance legality with humanity, security with fairness, and national interest with moral responsibility. Curtailing extremism in this debate is not an act of weakness. It is an affirmation of the very ideals that made America great.

By Indrajit Saluja

The Falling Rupee and
the Silent Squeeze on
India's Economy

When the currency of a country weakens sharply, it is never a matter of mere numbers flashing on a trading screen. It is a warning signal-of economic stress, policy failure, or declining confidence. In India's case, the steady and now alarming fall of the rupee should have triggered serious national debate. Instead, it has been met with an unsettling indifference from those in power.

There was a time when a slide of the rupee from around 35 to 40 against the US dollar provoked outrage. The then opposition thundered in Parliament and outside it, declaring the fall a national humiliation and a direct assault on the common citizen. Today, that same political formation presides over an economy where Indians

must shell out more than 90 rupees to buy a single US dollar. The question that naturally arises is: what does this steep decline denote, and why is the outrage missing now?

A weakening rupee hurts the Indian economy in multiple and deeply interconnected ways. India is heavily dependent on imports-crude oil, natural gas, fertilizers, electronic components, machinery, and pharmaceuticals. When the rupee falls, every imported commodity becomes costlier. This cost is inevitably passed on to consumers, pushing up prices across the board. Inflation, once unleashed, does not remain confined to fuel or imported goods; it creeps into food prices, transport costs, household essentials, and services, eroding purchasing power and squeezing middle- and lower-income families the hardest.

The timing could not be worse. With the United States playing the tariff card more aggressively, global trade is becoming more expensive and uncertain. A weaker rupee in such an environment amplifies the pain. Indian consumers pay more, Indian businesses face higher input costs, and the government's subsidy burden increases. Servicing external debt becomes costlier, and fiscal pressures mount. To argue that a falling rupee automatically boosts exports is a dangerously simplistic narrative, especially



when global demand itself is fragile and supply chains are under strain.

What is most troubling is the apparent lack of urgency in addressing the issue. Parliament finds ample time for debates that may stir emotions but have little bearing on the daily struggles of citizens. Meanwhile, the tormenting fall of the rupee-and its cascading consequences-is neither discussed with seriousness nor addressed with transparent policy measures. Blame games replace accountability, and slogans substitute for strategy. If the rupee does not recover, the long-term consequences could be severe. Persistent inflation can dampen consumption, slow growth, discourage investment, and widen inequality. The credibility of economic management suffers, both domestically and internationally. Confidence, once lost, is hard to rebuild.

The value of a currency ultimately reflects the health of an economy and the trust reposed in its governance. Ignoring the rupee's fall is not an option. The government must acknowledge the problem, communicate honestly with the nation, and act decisively. Economic realities cannot be wished away by rhetoric. The rupee's decline is not an abstract statistic-it is a silent tax on every Indian.

American Punjabi Society honors Philanthropist Harry Singh Bolla with prestigious "Punjabi Ratan" Award at a glittering gala

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

of the APS, Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, and Nassau County Republican Party Chairman Joseph Cairo.

Founded with the mission of promoting Punjabi language, culture, and heritage across generations, the APS has spent years cultivating a strong artistic and cultural presence on Long Island. Under the leadership of its President, Gary Sikka, and his committed team of volunteers, the organization has become a vibrant hub for community engagement, cultural programming, youth education, and charitable initiatives. This year's gala, one of APS's most successful events to date, reaffirmed the society's role as a bridge between tradition and the evolving Punjabi-American identity.

A FITTING RECOGNITION FOR A PHILANTHROPIST OF RARE GENEROSITY



Dignitaries and organizers with the Chief Guest and the Honoree. Seen, among others, from L to R: Gary Sikka, Film actor Neeru Bajwa, Consul General of India, Mr. Pradhan, Nassau County Executive Mr. Blakeman, Honoree Harry Singh Bolla, APS Media Chair Pradeep Tandon (in the back), and Nassau County Republican Party Chairman Joseph Cairo

The centerpiece of the evening was the conferral of the Punjabi Ratan Award upon Harry Singh Bolla, a self-made entrepreneur whose story has inspired countless immigrants. Rising from modest beginnings to building a thriving chain of businesses in the gas station and retail sector, Mr. Bolla's journey is often described as a classic American dream narrative. Yet what truly distinguishes him, APS leaders emphasized, is not the scale of his success, but the depth of his philanthropy.

For years, Mr. Bolla and his wife Kamaljit Kaur-both devout Sikhs-have been major contributors to their local gurdwaras, supporting religious programs and community initiatives generously and consistently. "The first thing Harry did when his business began to grow was open his purse for charity," said an attendee, noting that his humility remains intact despite his financial accomplishments.



Mr. Sant Chatwal, Padma Bhushan, one of the two Patrons of APS, addressing the gathering. Seen in the picture are: Neeru Bajwa and Gary Sikka

A committed Republican, Mr. Bolla believes strongly in civic responsibility. He frequently asserts that once an immigrant becomes a U.S. citizen, "America becomes your home, and its welfare becomes your primary duty." This guiding principle informs much of his philanthropic work in the United States. Through the Bolla Charity Foundation, he has supported several American institutions, the most notable being his recent \$1 million donation to modernize the Nassau County Police Academy-a contribution praised widely by county officials and community leaders alike.

A HEART STILL CONNECTED TO PUNJAB



Despite his devotion to America, Mr. Bolla has never turned away from the land of his birth. Over the years, he has funded numerous welfare, educational, and community development projects in his home state of Punjab. His charitable spirit, he often says, is a legacy from his father, who is remembered in Punjab as a man of

Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman gives his remarks

deep generosity and compassion.

This year, Punjab faced devastating floods that ravaged entire districts, leaving thousands homeless, jobless, and struggling for basic necessities. Moved by the widespread suffering, Mr. Bolla committed \$5 crore-over half a million U.S. dollars-as an initial donation to assist displaced families. Speaking to The Indian Panorama, he expressed deep concern about ensuring that his contribution reaches those who genuinely need help. "My only worry is that every rupee benefits the deserving," he said, adding that he is working with trusted channels to ensure a fair and transparent distribution system.

APS officials noted that in choosing Mr. Bolla for the Punjabi Ratan Award, the organization was guided not only by his financial success but by his humanity. "Harry Bolla embodies the best of us," said APS President Gary Sikka. "He represents hard work, humility, success, and the Punjabi tradition of giving from the heart."

A NIGHT OF STARS, MUSIC, AND CELEBRATION



An internationally famous versatile actor of Punjabi films Neeru Bajwa made a guest appearance and addressed the gathering

The gala was a grand affair, marked by elegance and vibrant cultural expressions. Political and administrative dignitaries attended in large numbers, lending the event a stature befitting its purpose. The ballroom resonated with Punjabi pride as community leaders mingled with elected officials and special guests.

Entertainment for the evening featured an engrossing musical performance by Pooja, a well-known and widely admired singer who enthralled the audience with a blend of classic and contemporary Punjabi melodies. The crowd erupted in applause as cinema star Neeru Bajwa-an international icon of Punjabi film-made a special guest appearance, surprising attendees and delighting fans.

The artistic program complemented the evening's larger theme: a celebration not just of individual accomplishment, but of the collective strength of the Punjabi community in America.



A View of the gathering. TIP photographer reported rigorous security arrangements which prevented her free movement to click more photographs of the gathering.

APS CONTINUES ITS MISSION

In his remarks, APS President Gary Sikka reaffirmed the society's commitment to cultural promotion, youth engagement, and community solidarity. He praised the volunteers whose tireless efforts ensured the success of the gala and emphasized the importance of sustaining Punjabi language and values among younger generations.

"This award to Harry Bolla is not just about honoring one man," Sikka said. "It is about reminding ourselves of what our community stands for-hard work, compassion, family, and pride in our heritage. Tonight, we celebrate all of that."

The event concluded with a standing ovation for Mr. Bolla, whose humility shone through as he dedicated the honor to his family, his community, and the values that shaped him. For those in attendance, the evening was a vivid reminder of how cultural pride, service, and generosity continue to define the Punjabi-American spirit.



The honoree Harry Singh Bolla shares his thoughts

INDIAN-ORIGIN ENTREPRENEUR DEVESH MISTRY DIES IN DUBAI



Devesh Mistry, a prominent Indian expat in the UAE and co-founder of Red Blue Blur Ideas, has died in Dubai. The cause of his death has not been announced.

DECEMBER 8, 2025

DUBAI (TIP): Devesh Mistry, a prominent Indian expat in the UAE and co-founder of Red Blue Blur Ideas, has died in Dubai, Gulf News reported. He was a well-known figure in the Middle East's digital design scene and a mentor to many university students. Mistry, fondly known as 'Superman', played a key role in shaping the region's digital experience industry with his focus on user-friendly designs. He co-founded Red Blue Blur Ideas with Amol Kadam in 2011, and the company's name was a nod to Superman's iconic 'Red Blue Blur' imagery.

His company announced his death on Sunday but didn't disclose the cause. In a LinkedIn post on Sunday, the company announced: "Today, we share news that is deeply painful for all of us at RBBi. Our Co-Founder, Devesh Mistry, passed away."

"Devesh was a driving force behind RBBi from its earliest days. To many of us, he was our own Superman. He played a defining role in shaping the company, our culture, our thinking, and the way we worked with clients and with each other. This is a moment of grief and reflection for our entire team. We are taking the time and space to support one another through this loss," the tribute added.

Devesh Mistry, also known as Dev, co-founded Red Blue Blur Ideas (RBBi) in 2011, which became one of the region's first specialized UX, UI, and digital performance marketing agencies in Dubai. His career started in coding in the late 1990s, but he soon shifted focus to user experience, realizing its importance in design. This led him to establish his own business.

Throughout his career, he worked with major global brands such as Microsoft, IBM, Telstra Australia, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Mini Cooper, MasterCard, L'Oreal, Emirates NBD, and Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi. Beyond his professional accomplishments, Dev was deeply committed to mentoring and guiding others in their growth. He played multiple roles at the University of Dubai, as a lecturer, mentor, and curriculum developer, where he focused on digital strategy programs. Earlier, while in Australia, he also briefly lectured at the University of Technology Sydney.

(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)

Punjab's Sikh man with Jalandhar roots honored with OBE by Princess Anne

The award recognizes Captain Singh-Sohal's outstanding services to the commemoration of Commonwealth soldiers who served Great Britain during WWI

DECEMBER 10, 2025

LONDON (TIP): A proud moment for Punjab and the Sikh community, Captain Jay (Jagjett) Singh-Sohal, a British Sikh man with roots in Jalandhar, has received an OBE award from Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, at St James's Palace.

The prestigious award recognizes Captain Singh-Sohal's outstanding services to the commemoration of Commonwealth soldiers who served Great Britain, particularly for founding the UK's first memorial to Sikh soldiers who served during World War I.

Established in 2015 at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, the WWI Sikh Memorial is a testament to



Jay Singh-Sohal -Photo via X

Captain Singh-Sohal's dedication to ensuring the sacrifices of Sikh soldiers are remembered.

Born in Birmingham, Captain Singh-Sohal's paternal grandparents immigrated to Britain from Sang Dhesian in Phillaur, Jalandhar, while his maternal grandparents came from Kapurthala.

Captain Singh-Sohal, an army reservist, said he was humbled by the recognition. This honor is a proud moment for the Sikh community and a celebration of the contributions of Punjab to British history. The 42-year-old from Royal Sutton Coldfield has also served as an Army Reservist for the past 16 years.

Hong Kong donor contributes Rs 3 lakh to Sarhali College

**AMRITSAR, UPDATED AT : 10:03 AM
DEC 10, 2025 IST**

DECEMBER 10, 2025

HONG KONG / AMRITSAR (TIP): Gurdev Singh Ghalib, a resident of Hong Kong, donated Rs 3 lakh to Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College, Sarhali. A function to mark the donation was held on the college campus on Tuesday, December 9, presided over by Dr. Jasbir Singh Gill, principal of the college.



Gurdev Singh Ghalib with the college staff

Photo : Gurbaxpuri

Speaking to attendees, Gurdev Singh Galib praised the achievements of the college in providing better educational facilities to remote and rural areas. He also commended Baba Sukha Singh, head of the Kar Seva section at Sarhali, for his management in running the college and ensuring facilities for needy and deserving students.

In his address, Dr. Jasbir Singh Gill discussed the current status of higher education in the region and sports in the state, highlighting challenges faced by Punjab's youth, such as resource gaps in education and sport, migration and the need to modernize colleges in rural areas with up-to-date equipment.

Gurdev Singh Ghalib pledged to extend maximum cooperation to keep the college up-to-date and ultra-modern. Harjinder Singh Billianwala, honorary secretary of the college management committee, thanked Gurdev Singh Ghalib for the generous gift.

Another Ludhiana youth behind firing incidents in Kapil Sharma's cafe in Canada

Sukhwinder Seepu of Brahampur, along with 2 other Punjabi youths, Sharry and Diljot, has been linked to the attacks

DECEMBER 11, 2025

VANCOUVER, BC (TIP): The name of another youth from Brahampur village in Raikot has surfaced as the alleged mastermind behind the three firing incidents at comedian Kapil Sharma's Kap's Café in Canada.

According to Canadian police and central agencies, Sukhwinder Seepu of Brahampur, along with two other Punjabi youths, Sharry and Diljot, has been linked to the attacks. Their names emerged a fortnight after the Crime Branch of Delhi Police arrested Bandhu Maan Singh Sekhon, an operator of the Goldy Dhillon gang, from Jawaddi village on the outskirts of Ludhiana on November 28.

Though Ludhiana (Rural) police are tight-lipped about the development, senior Raikot police personnel have been advised to keep a close watch on Seepu's associates, if any. Investigations revealed that Seepu was already booked in a case at Ahmedgarh City police station in Malerkotla district over six months ago.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Sukhwinder Singh Seepu of Brahampur

25-year-old Indian-Origin Arrested in Canada for Flashing Female Doctors in Clinics

DECEMBER 10, 2025

MISSISSAUGA (TIP): A 25-year-old Indian-origin man has been taken into custody in Canada after being accused of exposing himself to female staff members including doctors at multiple medical facilities in Mississauga, according to Peel Regional Police (PRP).

Investigators allege the suspect, identified as Vaibhav, repeatedly attended clinics after pretending to suffer from medical issues, with the aim of prompting inappropriate physical contact from women doctors. Police say the incidents occurred across several locations over a number of months in 2025.

Confirming the arrest, PRP said, "The 12 Division Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) has arrested and charged a Brampton man in relation to an indecent act investigation," in a statement released on Tuesday. Authorities further allege that the accused exposed himself to female clinic staff and, on some occasions, used a false identity when interacting with doctors. Detailing the modus operandi, police said.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Photo caption: Vaibhav, a 25-year-old Indian origin man has been arrested for exposing himself to female staff members including doctors at multiple medical facilities in Mississauga,

Indian American Management Professor Dr. Poonam Arora named Dean of Babson business school

DECEMBER 11, 2025

WELLESLEY, MA (TIP) : Indian American management professor Dr. Poonam Arora has been named the new dean of the Undergraduate School at Babson College, a private business school in Wellesley, Massachusetts, focusing on practical skills, global mindset, and innovation.

"Dr. Arora brings a wealth of thought leadership and experience across academia and the corporate world to this new role," Provost and Executive Vice President Ariel Armony said.

"Her student-first approach to academic leadership will ensure that Babson remains the top destination for learners seeking to make the world a better place for generations to come."

Arora currently is the associate dean of faculty affairs and strategic initiatives and professor of management at Quinnipiac University, where she has led strategic planning efforts within the School of Business aimed at promoting sustainable growth amid a shifting higher education landscape, according to a media release.

She first joined Quinnipiac as the associate dean of faculty affairs in 2022. In her time at the university, Arora supported reaccreditation efforts, undertook the restructuring of



Dr. Poonam Arora has been named the new dean of the Undergraduate School at Babson College, a private business school in Wellesley, Massachusetts

the School of Business's assurance of learning processes and standards, curriculum innovation and mapping, and updated scholarly contribution standards and support.

"Dr. Arora has proven to be a passionate supporter of faculty excellence and interdisciplinary approaches to the integration of liberal arts and business education," Armony said. "That support and philosophy will pair well with proven Babson's Entrepreneurial Thought & Action framework."

Prior to joining Quinnipiac, Arora served as the Capalbo Professor of Business Administration and department chair of management and marketing at Manhattan College.

Her experience at Manhattan spans scholarship and academic leadership, including roles as co-director of the Center for Ethics, chair of the O'Malley School of Business Strategic Priorities Committee, and faculty representative for the Shared Governance Working Group.

Arora brings extensive experience beyond academia to Babson's Undergraduate School. She held corporate and nonprofit leadership roles that span industries, including as acting executive director and CFO of Working Today Inc., vice president of U.S. securitization at Citicorp Securities, senior associate at McKinsey & Company, and junior economist at the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Arora earned her Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree, summa cum laude, in business economics from John Cabot University in Rome, Italy, her MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, and a PhD in psychology from Columbia University.

Indian American Neal Mohan Named TIME's 2025 CEO of the Year for Transforming YouTube's Global Reach



Neal Mohan has been named TIME Magazine's CEO of the Year for 2025

DECEMBER 10, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): YouTube chief executive Neal Mohan has been named TIME Magazine's CEO of the Year for 2025, an honor recognizing his leadership of the world's largest video platform during a period of rapid change in the global media landscape.

Mohan, who took over as CEO in 2023, was cited by TIME for steering YouTube's evolution from a primarily mobile-video destination to a dominant presence in household living rooms, with major gains in TV-screen viewership through YouTube TV and smart-TV integrations. The magazine described him as a "cultural architect," noting that decisions taken under his leadership shape what billions of people around the world watch, learn, and share.

The recognition also highlights YouTube's expanding role in the creator economy. Under Mohan, the company has rolled out new tools and investments for creators, pushed for broader monetization opportunities, and strengthened the platform's position amid tightening competition and regulatory pressures. According to TIME, Mohan has managed this growth while navigating complex challenges in content moderation, misinformation, and digital policy.

Mohan, 52, was born in Indiana and spent part of his childhood in Lucknow, India, before returning to the United States for higher education. A graduate of Stanford University, he joined Google after a digital advertising startup he worked for was acquired. He later became YouTube's Chief Product Officer and succeeded Susan Wojcicki as CEO.

Media outlets in India and the United States noted the significance of the honor for the global Indian diaspora, pointing to Mohan's rise as part of a broader trend of Indian-origin executives leading major American technology companies.

In profiling him, TIME wrote: "Mohan is the farmer; what he cultivates will be what we eat," underscoring the scale of YouTube's influence under his stewardship.

The CEO of the Year distinction is part of TIME's annual recognition of leaders shaping business, culture, and technology.

Indian American professor Murali Haran named editor-in-chief of international statistics journal

DECEMBER 11, 2025

PENNSYLVANIA (TIP) : Murali Haran, an Indian American professor at Penn State University, has been named editor-in-chief of the Journal of Agricultural, Biological and Environmental Statistics (JABES) for a three-year term starting in 2026.



Murali Haran has been named editor-in-chief of the Journal of Agricultural, Biological and Environmental Statistics (JABES) for a three-year term starting in 2026.

A professor of statistics in Eberly College of Science, much of Haran's research is motivated by problems in environmental science and disease modeling, according to a university release. Haran joined the faculty at Penn State in 2004 and served as the head of the Department of Statistics between 2018 and 2024.

"I am honored to take on this role," Haran said. "This is a time when biology, agriculture, and the environmental sciences are being transformed by powerful statistical, machine learning and AI methods, as well as interesting new kinds of data that are

available to scientists. It will be exciting to learn about the new questions and statistical ideas emerging in these fields over the next three years." JABES is published jointly by the American Statistical Association, the world's largest professional organization for statisticians, and the International Biometric Society, a professional and academic society promoting statistical and mathematical theory and methods in the biosciences. JABES is dedicated to introducing new statistical methods to solve challenging problems in the agricultural, biological, and environmental sciences. The journal is international in both its authors and readership, with previous editors-in-chief representing five different continents.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

2 Indian-origin players named in Australia U19 World Cup squad

Aryan, a handy batter and slow left-arm spinner, and James, a right-arm medium pace all-rounder, were both part of the squad that played against India in the youth Tests and one-dayers in September

DECEMBER 11, 2025

MELBOURNE (TIP): Two Indian-origin players -- Aryan Sharma and John James -- have been named in Australia's 15-member squad for the men's U-19 World Cup scheduled to be held in Namibia and Zimbabwe from January 15 to February 6.

Aryan, a handy batter and slow left-arm spinner, and James, a right-arm medium pace all-rounder, were both part of the squad that played against India in the youth Tests and one-dayers in September.

Besides cricketers of Indian heritage, the squad features two players of Sri Lankan (Naden Cooray and Nitesh Samuel) and one of Chinese Origin (Alex Lee Young).

Australia enters the tournament as defending champions, with Oliver Peake as captain.

"We're delighted to announce a strong and well-balanced squad for the ICC Under-19 World Cup. Our focus has been on selecting a group with complementary skill sets that provide the best chance of success in tournament," head coach Tim Nielsen said in a release.

"The players named have impressed with their performances during the U19 series against India in September and at the recent National U19 Championship in Perth.

"It's an exciting group, some have already experienced senior training environments, while others are progressing rapidly through our pathway."

Australia is placed in Group A alongside Ireland, Japan, and Sri Lanka. The team will reach Namibia in early January and play warm-up matches from January 9-14.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Photo for representational purpose only. iStock

Dr. Sachin Dharmadhikari Leads E-commerce Business Guidance Workshop 2025 with Over 600 Participant from North America

DECEMBER 7, 2025

JERSEY CITY, NJ (TIP): DSNPD hosted a comprehensive and engaging e-commerce workshop in New Jersey, drawing more than 600 aspiring and established online business owners from across North America. The program emphasized technology, professional growth, and responsible entrepreneurship.

Organized under the leadership of Dr. Appasaheb and Dr. Sachin Dharmadhikari, the workshop offered practical tools to succeed in competitive digital marketplaces while maintaining ethical standards.

Chief Guest Anthony Romano opened the program with remarks on unity, culture, and empowerment, applauding DSNPD's commitment to helping families achieve financial independence.

The expert sessions provided clear direction for online business success. Robert Gomez spoke about building and



A workshop in progress

scaling Amazon FBA businesses through disciplined planning, cash flow management, and sustainable growth models. Tim Lutsky addressed the

importance of strong operations, covering inventory, warehousing, returns, packaging, and logistics. Casey Parris shared real-world insights on starting and growing businesses using U.S.-based sourcing and platforms like eBay and Shopify.

The workshop also encouraged networking and open discussions on future trends in digital commerce.

DSNDP continues to expand its community impact through environmental initiatives, with nearly 6,000 volunteers' participating in projects across 19 states and 127 cities, removing over 102,000 pounds of waste and planting close to 25,000 trees.

The organization remains committed to building a better future through education, service, and leadership development.

Learn more at:
<https://dsndp.com/index.html>

Musikala Presents "Immortal Rafi"-A Stirring Centenary Tribute



By Dr. Zafar Iqbal

Musikala marked the birth centenary of legendary playback singer Mohammed Rafi with a memorable tribute concert, *Immortal Rafi*, held on Sunday, December 7, 2025, at the Richard Montgomery High School auditorium in Rockville, MD. The spacious hall was packed to capacity with over 800 attendees, creating an atmosphere of excitement and nostalgia long before the show began.

From the opening notes, the ensemble of seventeen professional musicians set a tone of reverence and artistic finesse. Vocalists Swati Kanitkar, Yidhijit Bhattacharjee, Diptanu Das, Farid Mahmood, and Vishal Karparde delivered Rafi's classics with sincerity and style, capturing the timeless essence of his voice while adding their own expressive touches. Supported by a vibrant live orchestra, the performances felt both nostalgic and refreshingly alive. Thoughtfully crafted narrative interludes traced Rafi's remarkable journey—from his earliest recordings in the 1940s to his collaborations with stalwarts like Naushad, Shankar-Jaikishan, Ravi, and Laxmikant-Pyarelal. Anecdotes about his training, studio experiences, and personal warmth offered the audience a deeper understanding of the man behind the music.

A standout moment of the evening came with "Madhuban Mein Radhika Naache," featuring an electrifying tabla jugalbandi between maestro Debu Nayak and young prodigy Arnav Gadre. Their dynamic exchange of bols and rapid-fire improvisation brought the audience to its feet. Nayak-trained under icons



Captivating performances

including Ustad Zakir Hussain and a frequent performer at prestigious venues such as the Kennedy Center-commanded the stage with ease. At the same time, Arnav matched him with youthful brilliance.

As the program unfolded, a vivid portrait of Rafi emerged: not only a singer of extraordinary versatility but also a gentle, compassionate soul known for his humility and generosity.

Memories of his emotional rendition of "Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon," which famously moved Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to tears, resonated deeply with the audience.

By the final numbers, the hall glowed with shared admiration and nostalgia. Listeners were left wanting more, echoing the sentiment of the evergreen line "Abhi na jao chhod kar, ke dil abhi bhara nahin." Yet, as all good evenings

do, this one too came to a close, leaving behind a lasting warmth.

Emcee Mona Sharma delivered a cohesive, eloquent presentation throughout the program.

ABOUT MUSIKALA

Founded in 2023, Musikala is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting South Asian music and arts across the United States. Through concerts, workshops, masterclasses, and educational initiatives, it supports a wide range of genres, including classical, semi-classical, ghazal, fusion, and filmi music. Its mission is to preserve musical heritage, build community, and create inclusive cultural experiences across the South Asian diaspora.

Musikala's leadership team includes President Swati Kanitkar—an IT project management professional and trained vocalist under Pacchapurkar Joshi, a SaReGaMa finalist and accomplished performer across classical and contemporary. Secretary: Soumya Chakraverty - Indian classical musician and distinguished sarod artist with national and international performances, and Treasurer: Tej Kanitkar—a computer science graduate and multi-instrumentalist who has collaborated with renowned artists including Suresh Wadkar, Kavita Paudwal, and Ali Pervez Mehdi.

(Dr. Zafar Iqbal can be reached at raabta.india@gmail.com)



The audience

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

the Election Commission and FIA Board streamlined the Executive Team and will expand the Council. Shah Accountants, an independent CPA firm, will serve as the organization's treasurer.

Akkapalli is a distinguished entrepreneur whose portfolio spans real estate development, technology, media, and diaspora engagement in both the United States and India. His business ventures encompass multinational software development, transit technology consulting, life sciences, IT and cloud computing, sports manufacturing, and premium furniture design, demonstrating both strategic vision and strong operational leadership.

In his remarks as President-Elect, Sreekanth expressed gratitude for the Board of Trustees' support, noting that he felt "blessed and happy" to receive their confidence. He thanked Chairman Ankur Vaidya for welcoming him into FIA and helping him find "a larger family" within the organization, and extended his appreciation to the Board, Trustees, advisory members, and executive colleagues for their warm reception.

Recognizing the historic significance of becoming the first individual from his home state to hold this position, he affirmed his commitment to serve with

FIA Taps Sreekanth Akkapalli as President for 2026; First Telugu-Origin to Head Premier Grassroots Nonprofit



Mr. Sreekanth Akkapalli
FIA-President Elect 2026



FIA Board of Election

integrity and purpose. Akkapalli assured the Board and the wider FIA community of his dedication to advancing the organization, strengthening its flagship initiatives,

and developing programs that foster deeper community engagement.

Senior leaders and long-time members warmly endorsed his selection, with one veteran member praising Mr. Akkapalli's

honesty, hard work, integrity, and long-standing commitment, and calling his appointment a historic and forward-looking step that reflects FIA's growing regional diversity in leadership.

IOC USA Vice-Chairman Slams Exclusion of Opposition Leaders from Putin State Dinner

DECEMBER 11, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): George Abraham, Vice-Chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress (IOC), USA, has expressed strong dismay over the Modi government's decision not to invite the Leader of the Opposition to the State dinner hosted for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"There is little surprise anymore in how the Modi Administration continues to undermine the democratic traditions of our great country," said Mr. Abraham, reacting to the exclusion of Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, the respective Leaders of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. "This government is busy rewriting the script, upending long-standing conventions, and dismantling the vision laid down by the founding fathers of modern India."

Mr. Abraham noted that it has been a well-established practice followed even by leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee—that the Opposition Leader is part of official engagements with visiting foreign dignitaries. "The Indian National Congress is a national party with a substantial following. Even with all of the BJP's political success, they have secured the votes of barely 40% of the electorate. The remaining majority represents



IOC USA Vice Chairman George Abraham has expressed strong dismay over the Modi government's decision not to invite the Leader of the Opposition to the State dinner hosted for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

diverse voices that also deserve respect and representation.

He further criticized the government's growing disregard for democratic norms, citing the repeated passage of major legislation without adequate debate or review by parliamentary committees. "The recent theatrics around the 'Vande Mataram' debate perfectly illustrate the misplaced priorities of this administration—wasting parliamentary time while the nation grapples with pressing

issues such as unemployment, inflation, and the urgent need for rural development."

According to Abraham, the trajectory of the country makes it evident—even to casual observers—that the democratic ethos championed by Gandhi, Nehru, and Ambedkar is being eroded. "What we are witnessing is an authoritarian agenda that seeks to weaken institutions, intimidate the press, and promote crony capitalism under the guise of ultra-nationalism," he said.

He concluded with a call for national introspection: "It is time for the nation to pause, self-examine, and return to the foundational principles that built our democracy—pluralism, transparency, and respect for dissent."

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Can India trust the West? UK must answer

India will not abandon Russia simply to please western partners. It will not accept moral lectures that ignore western hypocrisy.



By Shyam Bhatia

"The Modi government's foreign policy reflects a clear doctrine of multi-alignment rather than allegiance. India cooperates with the US in the Quad, buys S-400 systems from Russia, maintains close ties with France, deepens economic engagement with the Gulf and expands participation in BRICS. This is not fence-sitting. It is the behavior of a nation that has learned not to rely on any single power."

When The Telegraph splashed its recent headline, "Can the West trust India?", it captured a sentiment now rippling through much of the British press. Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi has triggered the familiar chorus of western anxiety: India is "hedging", India is "in Moscow's orbit", India is "unreliable". Commentators warn about discounted Russian oil, defense purchases and diplomatic signaling - as though a sovereign nation pursuing its strategic interests were committing an ideological betrayal.

What these headlines reveal, however, is not a failure of Indian policy but a failure of western imagination. The question is mis framed. A more honest one in 2025 would be whether India can trust the West to treat it as an equal partner.

Much of the commentary in London reflects an outdated assumption: that India should align reflexively with western preferences. Only recently, the British High Commissioner in New Delhi co-authored an op-ed urging India to stand firmly with the West on Ukraine and isolate Russia "as a matter of principle." The tone was unmistakably patronizing, implying that India must assume a subordinate posture.

But India today is not the India of 1991, let alone 1947. It is a rising economic powerhouse, a central player in the Indo-Pacific and an increasingly indispensable global swing state. It trades widely, hedges openly and maintains multiple strategic options. This is not duplicity; it is statecraft. Western discomfort stems from something simpler: India no longer responds to moral pressure or diplomatic coaxing in the way it once did.

British commentary often singles out India for continuing to buy crude oil

from Russia. What is omitted is equally important. European nations still import significant quantities of Russian LNG. The US remains one of the world's largest buyers of Russian uranium. Several G7 countries maintain complex, sanctioned-but-exempt trade channels with Russia. Yet only India is asked to justify its purchases, even though they ensure affordable energy for 1.4 billion people and prevent fuel inflation from throttling its economy. The selective outrage is not lost on New Delhi.

lingering reluctance to confront Britain's own role in shaping historical mistrust.

Indian policymakers rarely invoke colonial history in diplomatic meetings. But every serious Indian strategist is aware that trust deficits did not begin in 2022. Parliament debates, commission reports and the historical record all testify to periods of profound injustice during British rule. That past cannot be erased simply because today's commentators find it inconvenient. India's skepticism towards western

close ties with France, deepens economic engagement with the Gulf and expands participation in BRICS. This is not fence-sitting. It is the behavior of a nation that has learned not to rely on any single power.

Western anxiety arises because India refuses to be absorbed into the old western security architecture. It insists on building its own. The debate in London is revealing not of India's unreliability, but of Britain's need to adjust to a new geopolitical reality.



Statecraft: A routine complaint is that India refuses to distance itself from Russian defense hardware.

Credit : PTI

Another routine complaint is that India refuses to distance itself from Russian defense hardware. But Britain, like the US and France, is simultaneously urging deeper strategic and defense cooperation with New Delhi. London wants India on its side but appears unwilling to accept the policy choices that come with strategic autonomy. India's position is straightforward: it will diversify defense suppliers, but not at the cost of national readiness; it will maintain ties with Moscow as long as those ties serve India's interests; it will not enter alliances that compromise independent decision-making. This is not duplicity; it is exactly how the West behaves when its own interests are at stake.

The deeper issue is psychological. British political culture still struggles with the idea of India as a global peer. This discomfort is visible in moralizing editorials that frame Indian choices as ethical lapses rather than strategic calculations, selective double standards that judge India more harshly than western states acting similarly, and a

advice is not an emotional legacy of the empire; it is a rational reading of recent behavior.

Beyond history, there are contemporary reasons why India is cautious. One is inconsistency on Pakistan, where western pressure and indulgence often shift unpredictably. Second, technology and sanctions risks have repeatedly forced India to choose between great-power agendas, not of its own making, and vacillation on immigration and visas. Britain courts Indian talent but simultaneously tightens entry rules, sending mixed signals about partnership.

The West's own Asia strategy has also become increasingly variable, asking India simultaneously to be indispensable and to "choose sides", a contradiction New Delhi refuses to accept. Trust is not built on lectures; it is built on consistency.

The Modi government's foreign policy reflects a clear doctrine of multi-alignment rather than allegiance. India cooperates with the US in the Quad, buys S-400 systems from Russia, maintains

India will not abandon Russia simply to please western partners. It will not accept moral lectures that ignore western hypocrisy. It will not behave as a subordinate power in the international system. And it will not apologize for acting in its own national interest, any more than Britain would.

So when British commentators ask "Can the West trust India?", they reveal an outdated assumption that trust means compliance. But partnership in 2025 looks very different from partnership in 1965 or even 2005. The more meaningful question now is whether western governments - and the British press in particular - are prepared to treat India as an equal interlocutor rather than a pupil in need of direction.

India has demonstrated consistency, transparency and a clear logic in its foreign policy. What it seeks in return is not approval, but respect. If trust is the issue, India has every reason to be the one asking whether the West has earned it.

(Shyam Bhatia is an Indian-born British journalist, writer and war reporter based in London)

BJP takes Hindutva route in TN, Bengal

Saffron party gears up to overpower strong regional forces in 2026 Assembly elections



By Radhika Ramaseshan

"Undaunted by the not-so-encouraging statistics, Prime Minister Narendra Modi framed the Bengal battle with an image and a metaphor that he believed its voters could relate to. On the day the BJP celebrated the Bihar mandate at its Delhi headquarters, Modi declared, "The Ganga flows from Bihar to Bengal", as though the mighty river would also deposit a bounty of votes in the BJP's catchment areas. It was not an oratorical flourish because on cue, Modi's chief strategist and Union Home Minister Amit Shah formed a team to act on the Bengal blueprint, some elements of which are already visible. On top of the BJP's playbook is the Hindutva card that has not yet brought in the expected gains in West Bengal and much less in Tamil Nadu, a state abounding in paradoxes that ultimately do not favor Hindu majoritarian politics."

Having wrapped up Bihar with an impressive win, the BJP's dream run of electoral wins faces formidable challenges in two states which will vote in April-May 2026: West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Politics in these states pivots around strong regional forces that have persistently walled out the mainline parties or forced the BJP and the Congress to transact electoral arrangements on their terms.

These parties - the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal - are again expected to dominate the show.

While the Congress seems at peace riding on its ally DMK's back in Tamil Nadu, it finds virtually no purchase in Bengal, not after the disastrous showing in Bihar. Both in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and the 2021 Assembly elections, the Congress had an alliance with the Left Front (LF) that yielded nothing for both partners, but two LF constituents -- the All India Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party - recently raised objections to striking yet another deal with the Congress. The TMC, too, is unlikely to have any truck with the Congress.

On the other hand, true to its character, the BJP, notwithstanding its endeavor to cement a broad coalition in Tamil Nadu, is determined to put up a fight in both states, particularly Bengal. Buoyed by its success in the 2019 parliamentary elections, the BJP was convinced that it was a matter of time before it 'conquered' the eastern state. However, in the 2021 Assembly elections, it came nowhere close to its target of winning 200 of the 294 seats. It won only 77 (the tally fell to around 65 due to defections and by poll losses), but the BJP had the satisfaction of getting 38 per cent of the votes and emerging as the principal Opposition party.

Undaunted by the not-so-encouraging statistics, Prime Minister Narendra Modi framed the Bengal battle with an image and a metaphor that he believed its voters could relate to. On the day the BJP celebrated the Bihar mandate at its Delhi headquarters, Modi

declared, "The Ganga flows from Bihar to Bengal", as though the mighty river would also deposit a bounty of votes in the BJP's catchment areas. It was not an oratorical flourish because on cue, Modi's chief strategist and Union Home Minister Amit Shah formed a team to act on the Bengal blueprint, some elements of which are already visible.

On top of the BJP's playbook is the Hindutva card that has not yet brought in the expected gains in West Bengal and much less in Tamil Nadu, a state abounding in paradoxes that ultimately do not favor Hindu majoritarian politics.

he added.

While the ruling DMK has stuck to its position, the 'dispute' can gain traction if the BJP and the RSS - which are bereft of strong local networks except in small parts - can sustain the momentum aimed at polarizing a polity largely fed on the ideology of Dravida Kazhagam leader Periyar EV Ramasamy. A key feature of Periyar's Self-Respect Movement was portraying Muslims as Dalits who converted to Islam to escape the caste oppression inherent in Hinduism. Most Tamil-speaking voters have no problem with Periyar's postulate.



Confrontation: The BJP and the ruling DMK are at loggerheads over lamp-lighting at the Thiruparankundram temple near Madurai during Karthigai Deepam celebrations in Tamil Nadu. -Credit: PTI

The underlying political irony was reflected in the recent controversy ignited by the lighting of a lamp in the Subramanya Swamy temple at Thiruparankundram Hill in Madurai district. The temple is supposed to be one of the six abodes of Murugan, the second son of Shiva-Parvati and the most revered deity in Tamil Nadu. The Sultan Sikandar Avulia Dargah is located meters away, but barring occasional skirmishes, the lamp-lighting - an old and important ritual performed during the Karthigai Deepam festival to symbolize the triumph of light over darkness - passed off peacefully because of a court order to light the lamp away from an ancient pillar called Deepathoon, which is just 15 meters from the dargah and became a bone of contention.

This time, a petition filed in the Madurai bench of the Madras High Court sought permission to perform the ritual at the pillar. The BJP and its allies celebrated when the court allowed the petitioner to light the lamp at the spot, but the district administration promptly issued prohibitory orders which were enforced by the police. Armed with a legal sanction, the BJP and its supporters protested vociferously against the cops.

Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS chief, weighed in on the matter, saying that the "awakening of Hindus was sufficient to achieve the desired outcome" - it sounded like a veiled call for a confrontation if such a situation arose. Congress MP Karti Chidambaram said the BJP's understanding of Tamil Nadu's cultural and religious fabric was "fundamentally misplaced". "The people of Tamil Nadu are most god-fearing, ritualistic, orthodox and temple-going, but faith does not mix with politics,"

In West Bengal, after three successive terms in office, the TMC appears vulnerable over issues such as the alleged corruption by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's trusted lieutenants and the anger that spilled over on the streets after the brutal rape-murder of a young doctor in a Kolkata hospital. Then there are the quotidian experiences of people who have to deal with the ruling party's musclemen and power-brokers, taking them back to the era of Left Front toughies who made survival possible only on their terms.

But the BJP has tied itself in knots over the issue of illegal migrants - data suggests that there are more Hindu than Muslim migrants in West Bengal. The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls by the Election Commission has caused anxiety within the BJP's own vote bank, along with the affront to the Bangla language, infamously described by the Delhi Police as "Bangladeshi language".

Banerjee tried hard to depict herself as a "friend of the Hindus" with measures like the payment of monthly salaries to Hindu priests and organizing the Durga carnival. The experience of other states demonstrates that the Opposition still finds it hard to beat the BJP over Hindutva; so, Banerjee will have to target the BJP's other shortcomings.

The politics of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal is centered around a strong regional distinctiveness, unlike the Hindi belt where voters identify themselves seamlessly with the Hindutva narrative because religious identity is overarching. Can the BJP subsume markers of language and culture into the Hindutva theme. (Radhika Ramaseshan is a senior journalist)

India must win over neighbors or will lose out

China has won over these countries by providing timely financial, infrastructural and other material support as required by them



By Gurbachan Jagat

"We should be proactive first in our neighborhood and with our friends around us. We seem to have hardly any friends in our vicinity. This is not an overnight development but the result of painstaking policy initiatives taken by China in the absence of any meaningful effort by us. Whereas we have sought to live in self-denial, China has played deft hardball and won over these countries by providing timely financial, infrastructural and other material support as required by them. Now they have the capacity to disturb our borders and border states, whether it's the northeast or northwest. An active diplomatic mission with strategic goals could have avoided this scenario."

To subdue an enemy without fighting is the acme of skill - Sun Tzu, the famous Chinese General, said this around 500 BC; it holds good today as well. The Chinese have been good students of their old military strategist, as can be seen in their 'String of Pearls' geopolitical strategy vis-a-vis the Indian sub-continent and the Indian Ocean through which a large percentage of global shipments pass.

They have built ports in Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Kyaukpyu (Myanmar) and Djibouti. When tied with their Belt and Road initiative, their domination of the region and ability to project Chinese trade and military strength is apparent. Their economy grew at 9 per cent from 1978 to 2005, propelling them from being one of the poorest countries to the second-largest economy in the world.

At the same time, a long-term geopolitical strategy was also put into motion. These ports and other infrastructure have been decades in the making. Today, while observing the political map of the sub-continent, one can't avoid seeing the increasingly isolated environment that we find ourselves in. The entire northwestern border with Pakistan is hostile; to the northeast, China dominates the canvas, with a hostile Bangladesh, a neutral Nepal, rogue Myanmar and a fragile Bhutan. To the south, Sri Lanka finds itself increasingly under Chinese influence. The Tamil-Sinhalese conflict over the years, followed by a misguided IPKF operation, eroded a lot of trust. Nothing much has been done in the following decades to repair this relationship. Maldives, an old ally, barely tolerates us today. We have no meaningful trade agreement with Southeast Asia, so where do we stand?

The world is caught up in a whirlpool of extreme violence and there are so many more flashpoints which can only lead us to further violence. Three years ago, when war erupted in Ukraine, our Prime Minister gave a call to shed violence - "this is not an era of war" found resonance around the globe. However, since then, the world seems irrevocably drawn towards the vortex of a cataclysmic denouement. Before coming to the catastrophe taking place in the Middle East and Ukraine, let us first see how we are placed in today's scenario.

It is true that we have almost never sought war, but when it has come calling at our door, we have always stepped up and defended ourselves. However, the

important thing is to deflect war from our borders before it starts to take a toll. For this, deft diplomacy is called for, backed with a very strong defense force. We should be proactive first in our neighborhood and with our friends around us. We seem to have hardly any friends in our vicinity. This is not an overnight development but the result of painstaking policy initiatives taken by China in the absence of any



Priority: We must make our presence felt in the neighborhood through shared diplomatic and economic goals.

-Credit: PTI

meaningful effort by us. Whereas we have sought to live in self-denial, China has played deft hardball and won over these countries by providing timely financial, infrastructural and other material support as required by them. Now they have the capacity to disturb our borders and border states, whether it's the northeast or northwest. An active diplomatic mission with strategic goals could have avoided this scenario.

In Kashmir, where our land was stained by Pakistani agencies in their quest for bloodlust, we stood firm, and our political leadership and armed forces were resolute and decisive in their response. The result of proactive measures was that after four days, the enemy sued for peace, and we generously accepted their plea, although there was a strong lobby in favor of more stringent action. US President Trump did claim credit for the ceasefire, but our PM has categorically told him that India has never and will never accept third-party mediation.

The US, its President and military leadership have praised Pakistan for its so-called help in containing terrorism. Its military spokesperson conveyed this in very laudatory terms before the US Senate Armed Forces Committee. And Trump hosted the Pakistani Army Chief at the White House on Wednesday.

In the recent cross-border skirmish, the Chinese, of course, were with the Pakistanis, the Russians not as effusive in their support to us as before and the American tone and tenor were disparaging. Compare this with the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation signed between India and the Soviet Union in 1971. The US deployed the 7th Fleet, while the UK sent a carrier group against us. However, the Soviets countered the pincer move with a deployment of nuclear submarines and destroyer groups. The US and the UK retreated, and the rest is history. One might attribute this to Cold War dynamics, but the fact is that when we needed an ally, we had one.

For long, Indian soft power has helped the country punch way above its weight. India was one of the key

organizers of the Bandung Conference (1955) on Asian-African cooperation; India and other NAM countries took the initiative to foster close relationships with Africa, with Nehru naming it a 'sister' continent. Since then, subsequent governments kept the effort going in developing closer ties - did something go amiss recently that no one rallied to our cause? Nepal and especially the Nepalese army have had an umbilical relationship

with us, with many of their generals having been trained at the NDA. The Indian Gurkha regiment regularly recruited Nepalese citizens - why did this stop? From being the chief supporters and architects of the independence of Bangladesh, why do we find ourselves on the opposite side today?

Some Western countries did try to play fair; however, the disquieting thing was the silence of our neighbors.

The conflict in the Middle East threatens to engulf the entire region, with the belligerents bent upon a Machiavellian desire to obliterate the other. Increasingly, technology in the form of drones and missiles gives it an apocalyptic dimension. We see eerie images of the night sky lighting up with the fire trails of missiles and hear haunting sounds of air raid sirens. In Europe, war rages on between Russia supported by its allies and Ukraine backed by NATO. Are there deeper dimensions to these regional wars - of course.

The US hegemony, both economic and military, is being challenged by a combined Russia and China. The old order of NATO, which held strong in the 20th century, is weakened by an increasingly nationalistic America. There is a need for us to be proactive in the formulation and execution of our foreign policy. We must win over our neighborhood (we cannot choose our neighbors) through shared diplomatic and economic goals.

On the international scene, maintaining silence or being seemingly neutral are not always good options. Sometimes, it is wise to show your hand while keeping an ace up your sleeve. Whenever the question of a ceasefire has come up in the UN regarding the Ukraine war, we have abstained. Similarly, in respect of Gaza, we have abstained. The result is neither the West is happy with us nor Russia. It is time to make amends and develop strong friendships as well as strong deterrence.

(Gurbachan Jagat is former Governor, Manipur and ex-DGP, J&K.)

International Indian Icon (3iii) Season 9- 2025 Successfully Completed

DECEMBER 8, 2025

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): A delayed report from the 3iii Talent Foundation says it successfully completed the 9th season of INTERNATIONAL INDIAN ICON (3iii)- its most expansive, diverse, and globally celebrated edition to date. Hosted from November 28th to 30th, 2025, at The Matrix Club in Naperville, Illinois, Season-9 brought together extraordinary talent from across the world, reaffirming the platform's commitment to elevating Indian arts, culture, and performance on a truly international stage.

Season 9 marked a historic milestone, recording more than 10,000+ global registrations from over 39 countries across North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Australia. Participants competed across the multi-tiered structure of online video auditions through video upload and online LIVE auditions, conducted internationally. From these extensive audition rounds, 150 semifinalists advanced to the Chicago Episode Production, each of them bringing dedication, passion, and artistic excellence to the global 3iii stage.

The on-site episode production of 3iii Season-9 2025 unfolded as a vibrant cinematic and cultural spectacle, spanning three days of multi-camera filming, celebrity mentoring, live performances, and iconic red-carpet moments. The event was honored by the presence of Bollywood legend and Grand Master Jatin Pandit, alongside a distinguished panel of judges representing diverse categories-singing, dancing, fashion, acting, instrumental music, and unique talent formats. Haley Bhardwaj, Director of Simantikos Dance Academy (Chicago), served as the judge for the dance category, while Rami Mital, Miss Universe USA & Mrs. Illinois Bharat 2026, and Director of Ark Medical Revenue Management Group, one of the event's key sponsors, led the Fashion Category as the primary judge. Anchors Sonia Keshwani, Raahul Jatin and Ajai Kumar brought exceptional energy, charisma, and warmth to the stage, adding a dynamic presence to the 3iii Season-9 journey.

The 3iii platform continues to stand as a uniquely inclusive movement, open to all age groups, genders, cultures, and backgrounds. Participants compete in categories such as Singing, Dancing, Acting, Instruments, Fashion, Comedy, and IGT (I?Got?Talent), with no restrictions on artistic expression. Non-Indian participants can also compete by showcasing an element of Indian culture through language, dance forms, attire, or musical traditions.

The 3iii Talent Foundation acknowledges the exceptional leadership and guidance of its Board of Directors, whose collective vision and dedication were pivotal in making 3iii Season-9 (2025) a resounding success. The Board comprising Founder & CEO Sharan Walia, and Executive Board of Directors Brij Sharma, Yogi Bharadwaj, Dileep Shrivastava, Swetalina Ahuja, Dr. Hitesh Bhatt, Vinni Walia, Ishita Walia and Palak Walia played a transformative role



The traditional Lamp lighting to inaugurate the event. Darshan Singh Dhaliwal (in turban in the center) was the Chief Guest

in shaping the event's direction, scale, and execution. Each member contributed strategic insight, organizational stewardship, and unwavering commitment to advancing the Foundation's mission of providing a global platform for talent and cultural expression. Their combined expertise across business, arts, community

contributions of esteemed sponsors and partners, each bringing remarkable credibility and momentum to the event. The Grand Finale was graced by Darshan Dhaliwal, Director of Dhaliwal Enterprises, who attended as the Chief Guest of Honor, adding distinguished presence through his longstanding legacy in business and philanthropic



The contestants

leadership, media, and technology created the strong foundation upon which Season-9 achieved its remarkable impact and global reach.

As 3iii continues to expand each year, Founder & CEO Sharan Walia remains unwavering in his vision of building a global cultural bridge-one that elevates Indian arts and talent, giving them the recognition, visibility, and creative freedom they deserve on international stages. Under his leadership, and with the dedicated support of core team members Rahul Kundu, Naresh Shastri, and Damini Datta, the execution of the world's first global non-profit talent platform reached a defining milestone.

The Season-9 production stands as a testament to this mission, showcasing an exceptional blend of scale, quality, and worldwide participation-reflecting 3iii's continued commitment to empowering talent and celebrating cultural excellence.

The success of 3iii Season-9 (2025) was strengthened by the valued support and

leadership. The Fashion Category received exceptional endorsement from Sunil Bhatia, Director of MyFashion.com, whose commitment to creativity and industry excellence enhanced the platform for emerging fashion talent. Significant support was also extended by Rami Mital, Director of Ark Medical Revenue Management and a prominent contributor to 3iii Season-9, recognized for championing growth and opportunity for global performers. Brij Sharma, owner of Power Volt Group and Power Gen AI LLC, played an influential role as a driving force for innovation and technology, aligning strongly with the event's forward-looking vision. Additional recognition goes to RJ Anya Ahuja, owner of Anya International, acknowledged for her dynamic encouragement of cultural and community-focused initiatives. Culinary partnership was led by Rajat Sahani, owner of Shimla Peppers, whose authentic flavors enriched the event's hospitality experience. Premium

accommodation for artists, judges, and production crew was facilitated by Sunny Shah, owner of Holiday Inn, as the official Stay Partner for Season-9. Esteemed mentor Pratibha Phadke, owner of A3P Connections, further contributed through her guidance, expertise, and commitment to nurturing the personal and artistic growth of participants. Together, these distinguished partners elevated 3iii Season-9 with unparalleled support, enabling a truly global celebration of culture, creativity, and talent.

Below are the official results, presented in individual paragraphs as part of the press release.

SINGING - JUNIOR CATEGORY RESULTS:

According to the official results document, the Singing Junior category winner is Nitika Pande from the USA, who earned the top title through her exceptional vocal performance and artistic expression. The first runner?up is Mishka Kacholiya from the USA, followed by two second runner?ups: Tharani Somanathan from the UK and Rayyan Ariff from the UK. Judges' Choice recognitions were awarded to Saanvi Chandna (USA), Renia Ganguly (UK), Prasheeta Mohanty (USA), and Sahithi Yalamanchli (Canada).

SINGING - SENIOR CATEGORY RESULTS:

In the Singing Senior category, the Season?9 winner is Razin Syed from the USA, celebrated for his powerful voice and stage presence. The first runner?up position was secured by Zain Baig (USA), while the second runner?up was awarded to Luoyi Pan (USA). Judges' Choice recognitions were presented to Ranjita Roy (USA), Caren Mempin (USA), Arwyn Anish (UK), Soumya Mahapatra (UK), and Shayan Mukherjee (USA).

SINGING - SUPER SENIOR CATEGORY RESULTS:

The Super Senior Singing title was won by Raj Kewalramani (USA), whose performance captivated the judges and audience alike. The first runnerup was awarded to Murali M. Collur (USA), followed by the second runnerup, Saigeetha Matta (USA). Judges' Choice

ICE is using air passenger data for deportation effort

DECEMBER 12, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The Trump administration is providing the names of all air travelers to immigration officials, substantially expanding its use of data sharing to expel people under deportation orders, according to a New York Times report.

Under the previously undisclosed program, the Transportation Security Administration provides a list multiple times a week to Immigration and Customs Enforcement of travelers who will be coming through airports. ICE can then match the list against its own database of people subject to deportation and send agents to the airport to detain those people.

It's unclear how many arrests have been made as a result of the collaboration. But documents obtained by The New York Times show that it led to the arrest of Any Lucía López Belloza, the college student picked up at Boston Logan Airport on Nov. 20 and deported to Honduras two days later. A former ICE official said 75 percent of instances in that official's region where names were flagged by the program yielded arrests.

ICE has historically avoided interfering with domestic travel. But the partnership between airport security and the immigration agency, which began quietly in March, is the latest way the Trump administration is increasing cooperation and information sharing between federal agencies in service of the president's goal of carrying out the largest deportation



ICE in action

campaign in U.S. history.

"The message to those in the country illegally is clear: The only reason you should be flying is to self-deport home," said Tricia McLaughlin, a spokeswoman for the Department of Homeland Security.

Airline passengers have long been subject to some federal scrutiny. Airlines typically provide passenger information to T.S.A. after a flight is reserved. That information is compared against national security databases, including the Terrorist Screening Dataset, which includes the names of individuals on a watch list of known or suspected terrorists.

But the T.S.A. previously did not get involved in domestic criminal or immigration matters, said one former

agency official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the issue freely. Among the concerns, the former official said, has been that enforcement activities at airports could distract from airport security and contribute to longer passenger wait times.

"If you have more officers conducting arrests at airports, it puts more strain on the system, delays and complications may annoy and frighten some travelers, and those who are unsure about their status will move away from air travel," said Claire Trickler-McNulty, a senior ICE official during the Biden administration. "It will continue to reduce the space where people feel safe going about their business."

The push to ramp up enforcement is pervasive inside the Department of Homeland Security, which houses both ICE and the T.S.A. Earlier this year, Stephen Miller, a top White House official, floated a goal of 3,000 immigration arrests a day and met with top ICE officials about how to increase deportations.

Some former ICE officials said the program would be a huge help to an agency struggling to meet the numbers of deportations sought by the Trump administration.

"The administration has turned routine travel into a force multiplier for removals, potentially identifying thousands who thought they could evade the law simply by boarding a plane," said Scott Mechkowski, the former deputy head of the ICE office in New York City. "This isn't about fear; it's about restoring order and ensuring every American knows their government enforces its laws without apology."

Activists blasted the airport deportation program as one intended to frighten immigrants.

"This is another attempt to terrorize and punish communities and will make people terrified to ever leave their homes for fear of being unjustly detained and disappeared out of the country before they have a chance to contest the detention," said Robyn Barnard, senior director of refugee advocacy at Human Rights First, an immigrant advocacy organization.

(Edited)

Dallas jury awards \$44 million to family of man killed in 2021 ice storm crash on I-35

DECEMBER 12, 2025

DALLAS (TIP): A Dallas County jury this week awarded \$44 million in damages to the family of a man killed when his truck was rear-ended by an 18-wheeler during the 2021 winter ice storm that devastated the entire state, according to a report in The Dallas Morning News.



A Dallas County jury awarded \$44 million in damages to the family of a man killed in a crash on I-35 during the 2021 winter ice storm. Christopher Ray Vardy, 49, died after his car was rear-ended by an 18-wheeler. The driver and the trucking firm were found liable.

Photo for representation only

The jury ordered Missouri-based trucking company New Prime Inc. to pay \$24.1 million in compensatory damages and \$20 million in punitive damages for the Feb. 11, 2021, death of Christopher Ray Vardy, according to a statement provided by the family's attorney, Frank L. Branson. The verdict came at the end of a two-week trial in the 44th District Court, according to a spokesman for Branson.

Vardy, 49, of Boyd, was stopped on the southbound side of the TEXpress section of Interstate 35 that morning due to other crashes in front of him, the

statement said.

The jury determined that a semi-truck being operated by a New Prime driver was traveling too fast under the weather conditions when it slammed into the back of Vardy's truck, the statement said.

"Evidence presented during the trial showed that trucking operator New Prime Inc.'s driver, Steven Ridder, did not receive adequate winter weather driving training and failed to exercise extreme caution in hazardous weather," Branson said in the statement. "Trucking companies have the obligation to make sure their big rigs are being operated safely, which means taking extra precautions during extreme weather conditions, given the enormous size and weight of these vehicles." (Source: The Dallas Morning News)

Federal Judge Orders Release of 2019 Jeffrey Epstein Grand Jury Records

The investigation in 2019 led to Epstein's arrest before he was found dead in a Manhattan jail cell in August of that year.

DECEMBER 11, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): A federal judge in New York on Wednesday, December 10, ordered the release of grand jury materials of the 2019 federal investigation and case against deceased sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, weeks after the passage of a congressional measure requiring the disclosure of those documents, says an AP report.

Federal judges in two other cases have already ordered the unsealing of materials related to Ghislaine Maxwell, a former accused Epstein accomplice, and an earlier case against Epstein that was brought against him in Florida in the mid-2000s.

The 2019 investigation led to sex trafficking charges against Epstein before he was arrested and detained in a New York City jail. In August, 2019, he was found dead in his cell, with the New York City Medical Examiner's office ruling it a suicide by hanging.

In his Wednesday order, U.S. District Judge Richard M. Berman said that the November passage of the Epstein Files Transparency Act requires the Department of Justice (DOJ) to release all records related to Epstein, Maxwell, and other individuals who may have been connected to the cases.

"The Court hereby grants the Government's motion in accordance with the Epstein Files Transparency Act and with the unequivocal right of Epstein victims to have their identity and privacy protected," the judge wrote in a four-page ruling.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Jeffrey Epstein 9 second from the left) appears in court in West Palm Beach, Fla., on July 30, 2008.

Photo credit : Uma Sanghvi/Palm Beach Post

Major Visa Appointment Changes for H-1B and H-4 Applicants: What Travelers and Employers Need to Know

DECEMBER 11, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Many H-1B and H-4 visa applicants are seeing their U.S. consular stamping interviews unexpectedly rescheduled. Beginning December 8, 2025, consular posts started moving interviews that were set for mid-December and beyond-often into March 2026, and in some cases as far as June 2026, says a VISASERVE note.

These shifts appear tied to an expanded online presence review, which may reduce daily interview capacity and push appointments further out. Travelers and employers should plan for potential delays, confirm the latest interview date in the portal, and keep copies of the updated appointment confirmation.

If you or your family members have any questions about how immigration and nationality laws in the United States may affect you, or if you want to access additional information about immigration and nationality laws in the United States or Canada, please do not hesitate to contact the immigration and nationality lawyers at NPZ Law Group. You can reach us by emailing info@visaserve.com or by calling us at 201-670-0006 extension 104. We also invite you to visit our website at www.visaserve.com for more information.

Embassy of India in Romania Hosts Anand Kumar for an Inspiring Interactive Session on the Future of Mathematics and Learning

DECEMBER 8, 2025

BUCHAREST (TIP): Embassy of India welcomed renowned mathematician, Educator and founder of the celebrated "Super 30" programme, Shri Anand Kumar, for an engaging and thought-provoking interactive event attended by educators, students, and members of the Indian community.

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Manoj Kumar Mohapatra spoke of Shri Anand Kumar's extraordinary journey and his transformative contributions to expanding access to high-quality mathematics education for underserved students in India. He praised Shri Kumar's unwavering commitment to empowering youth and nurturing excellence, which has earned him global recognition and admiration.



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra welcoming Shri Anand Kumar, Founder of the Super 30 program

During the session, Shri Anand Kumar delivered an insightful talk on the future of Mathematics in the age of artificial intelligence. He explored how AI is reshaping learning environments, influencing analytical thinking, and redefining the skills required for future problem-solvers. He noted that AI-enabled tools such as interactive platforms, intelligent tutoring systems, and automated assessment techniques hold immense potential to democratize access to complex concepts.



Shri Anand Kumar speaks about his journey and the mission of the Super 30 program to empower talented students

Shri Kumar emphasized the urgent need for teachers, professors, and educational institutions to adapt to these evolving technological landscapes. He encouraged educators to make their lessons more interactive, engaging, and aligned with modern learning styles, while ensuring that students continue to develop strong conceptual foundations and critical reasoning abilities.

Participants actively engaged with Shri Kumar during an energetic Q&A session, seeking advice on nurturing mathematical talent, integrating technology into classroom teaching, and fostering curiosity among young learners. Many attendees appreciated the practical insights he shared, drawn from decades of hands-on experience mentoring students from diverse backgrounds.

The Embassy expressed gratitude to Shri Anand Kumar for his inspiring visit and



Shri Anand Kumar engages with the audience, answering questions on Mathematics, its societal impact, and the transformative role of AI in education and innovation



Shri Anand Kumar discusses how math teachers can adapt to AI, embrace new technologies, and develop creative solutions to keep students engaged and inspired



Group picture with Shri Anand Kumar

extended appreciation to all participants for contributing to an enriching and meaningful dialogue.

(Based on a Press Release issued by Embassy of India, Bucharest)

Embassy of India in Romania Hosts Interactive Session on "New India, New Opportunity" to Promote MSME Collaboration and Sectoral Partnerships with Romania



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra highlighted the Government of India's long-term vision of Viksit Bharat @2047



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra presented overview of India-AI Impact Summit 2026



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra highlighted about Goa Film Festival emphasizing India's growing global presence in cinema

DECEMBER 8, 2025

BUCHAREST (TIP): A belated news report says that the Embassy of India in Bucharest organized a focused interaction titled "New India, New Opportunity" for leading Romanian business journalists and key economic stakeholders on 26 November 2025. The event highlighted India's dynamic economic transformation, its robust MSME ecosystem, and the expanding avenues for India-Romania collaboration across priority sectors.

Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra delivered the keynote address and underscored the core pillars driving New India's growth story, wide-ranging economic reforms, rapid digitalization, innovation-led development, strengthened manufacturing capabilities, and a strong commitment to inclusive and sustainable progress. He also highlighted the Government of India's long-term vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, outlining India's aspirations to become a developed nation empowered by technology, entrepreneurship, and global partnerships.

The Ambassador also emphasized the far-reaching labor reforms undertaken by India recently, noting that a comprehensive modernization of labor laws has been implemented through the consolidation of 29 central labor legislations into four simplified and industry-friendly Labor Codes. These reforms aim to create a more predictable and transparent regulatory ecosystem, enhance worker welfare and social security, promote ease of doing business, and support the growth of MSMEs and manufacturing industries. By introducing provisions for flexible work arrangements, streamlined compliance, and stronger protections for gig and platform workers, India is building a labor environment that encourages investment, boosts productivity, and aligns with global best practices. The Ambassador underlined that these reforms open new opportunities for Romanian companies seeking stable, skilled, and future-ready human capital partnerships in India.

A central focus of the interaction was India's MSME sector, one of the world's largest and most vibrant networks of

micro, small, and medium enterprises. The Ambassador spoke about the sector's expanding role in manufacturing, exports, innovation, and employment

that India's business-friendly reforms, unified digital platforms, and sector-specific incentives under schemes like Make in India, Start-up India, and the

resilient macroeconomic performance, which continues to make it one of the world's fastest-growing major economies. He outlined emerging opportunities for bilateral cooperation in areas such as renewable energy, IT & digital technologies, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, film & creative industries, agriculture, and clean-tech solutions.

AS PART OF THE ENGAGEMENT, HE FURTHER HIGHLIGHTED TWO MAJOR GLOBAL EVENTS HOSTED BY INDIA:

- (i) 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Goa from 20-28 November 2025: A platform for global filmmakers, including from Romania, to collaborate in co-productions, film technology, content development, and creative partnerships, strengthening cultural and creative industry linkages.
- (ii) India-AI Impact Summit 2026 from 16-20 February 2026: A premier forum bringing together global experts, industry leaders, and innovators to deliberate on AI-driven opportunities in manufacturing, MSMEs, governance, and emerging technologies.

The interaction served as an important platform for forty plus Romanian media representatives and sectoral stakeholders to gain first-hand insights into India's transformative governance, economic reforms, and rising opportunities for bilateral trade and investment. It reaffirmed India's commitment to working closely with Romania to deepen cooperation in MSMEs, technology, innovation, culture, and people-to-people ties.

The event concluded with a dynamic Q&A session featuring thoughtful questions from Romanian business journalists on India's reform agenda, investment policies, digital economy, and global partnerships. The Embassy appreciates the active participation of all stakeholders and looks forward to continued engagement in advancing India-Romania economic and sectoral collaboration.

(Based on a Press Release Issued by the Embassy of India in Bucharest)



The event was attended by the leading Romanian business journalists and key economic stakeholders

generation. He invited Romanian businesses and investors to explore opportunities in co-production, technology partnerships, trade

Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) framework have made India an increasingly attractive destination for economic engagement.



Group photo : Interactive Session on "New India, New Opportunity" to Promote MSME Collaboration and Sectoral Partnerships with Romania

diversification, supply chain linkages, and digital MSME solutions. He noted

During the session, the Ambassador also briefed participants on India's

India Continues to Demonstrate Strong Economic Momentum with 8.2% GDP Growth in Q2 FY 2025-26

DECEMBER 8, 2025

BUCHAREST (TIP): The Embassy of India in Romania hosted a focused briefing on India's accelerating economic performance, highlighting the country's continued position as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies on Tuesday, 3rd December 2025. The session was attended by the economic experts, academics, business leaders and the members of the Indian community. It provided an insightful overview of India's macroeconomic outlook and structural drivers of growth.

Addressing the gathering, Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra noted that India has recorded an impressive GDP growth rate of 8.2% in the second quarter of FY 2025-26, reflecting robust domestic demand, improved investor confidence, and sustained economic reforms. He emphasized that this performance stands as a testament to the resilience and dynamism of the Indian economy amid global uncertainties. He highlighted that the growth surge is supported by strong fundamentals across key sectors. The manufacturing sector has expanded significantly, propelled by the "Make in India" initiative, rising production capacity, and increased global value chain integration. The services sector, particularly IT, digital services, and financial technologies, continues to drive innovation and export growth.

Ambassador also underlined India's remarkable progress in digital infrastructure, with the world-leading Unified Payments Interface (UPI), rapid adoption of digital public goods, and expansion of high-speed broadband networks across urban and rural areas. These developments are boosting entrepreneurship, improving service delivery, and enabling financial inclusion at scale.

Further, Ambassador noted that sustained government initiatives such as the National Infrastructure Pipeline, Gati Shakti, and policies encouraging foreign direct investment have strengthened India's position as a reliable global



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra discussing India's economic growth and prospects, highlighting the country's dynamic GDP trajectory

partner in trade and investment. Rising FDI inflows, improved logistics efficiency, and simplified regulatory frameworks continue to elevate India's competitiveness. Participants at the event expressed keen interest in India's long-term economic prospects and discussed potential areas for deeper cooperation in trade, technology, and innovation.

Since India's economy is experiencing robust growth, positioning it as the world's fastest-growing major economy, it is expected to fuel rising domestic demand for imports, particularly Romania's key exports like machinery (\$105M in 2024), electrical equipment (\$63M), and optical instruments (\$26M), which reached \$292M total to India last year amid expanding bilateral trade nearing \$3B. Consequently, Romanian firms stand to gain greater market access and higher sales volumes in India, while the surge in investment opportunities, bolstered by recent ministerial level talks on supply chains and an India-EU FTA, draws Romanian capital into priority sectors, fostering mutual economic resilience.

The Embassy reiterated India's commitment to fostering stronger economic engagement and invited



India's economy surged in Q2 FY 2025-26, with GDP growth hitting 8.2% - a six quarter high and a clear sign of robust economic momentum



India continues its ascent as the world's fastest-growing major economy, showcasing resilience, innovation, and strong economic fundamentals.

stakeholders to explore the many emerging opportunities in the Indian market.

(Based on a Press Release issued by Embassy of India in Bucharest)

Embassy of India in Romania Celebrates the Inscription of Deepavali on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List

DECEMBER 8, 2025

BUCHAREST (TIP): Embassy of India hosted a special and joyous celebration to mark the historic inscription of Deepavali on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on Tuesday, 3 December 2025. The momentous recognition reflects global appreciation for one of India's most cherished festivals symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and hope over despair.

The event brought together members of the Indian diaspora, friends of India, cultural partners, scholars, and well-wishers, creating a warm and festive atmosphere within the Embassy premises. The gathering reflected not only the pride of the Indian community but also the universal values embodied by Deepavali, which resonate far beyond India's borders.

In his remarks, Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra highlighted that UNESCO's recognition of Deepavali as an element of humanity's shared cultural heritage is a profound milestone for India's civilizational legacy. He noted that the festival serves as a timeless reminder of harmony, compassion, and collective well-being. Ambassador also acknowledged the efforts of cultural practitioners, diaspora communities, and scholars whose contributions helped bring this global recognition to fruition.

The celebration featured symbolic lighting of Diya by the participants, reflecting the essence of Deepavali. The Embassy announces that the next celebratory event will be held on 13 December, continuing the spirit



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra highlights the spirit, traditions, and universal message of light and hope that Deepavali brings



Celebrating the Inscription of Deepavali on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List

of togetherness and offering another opportunity for the diaspora and friends of India to gather in honor of this historic recognition.



Lighting the Diya to welcome light, positivity, and the spirit of Deepavali



Candles lit by the community, coming together to spread warmth and light

The Embassy expressed gratitude to all participants for making the event memorable and reaffirmed its commitment to promoting India's rich cultural heritage in the host country.

(Based on a Press Release Issued by the Embassy of India in Bucharest)

IndiGo chaos: DGCA suspends 4 flight operations inspectors

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Friday, Dec 12, suspended four flight operations inspectors (FOIs) in a tacit admission of regulatory gaps during the IndiGo scheduling meltdown that affected millions of flyers this month even as the embattled airline's chief appeared before the regulator for a second day running.

These inspectors are senior officials who work as part of DGCA's regulatory and safety oversight functions, often deployed to monitor airline operations. "Contracts of these FOIs with the DGCA have been terminated in relation to the recent IndiGo crisis," an official said, citing the order dated December 11.

The officers are Rishi Raj Chatterjee, consultant, deputy chief FOI, Seema Jhamnani, senior FOI, Anil Kumar Pokhariyal, consultant FOI, and Priyam Kaushik, consultant FOI. Chatterjee worked with Vistara, Jhamnani with the erstwhile Indian Airlines, Pokhariyal with Alliance Air, and Kaushik with IndiGo, till 2024, said people aware of developments.

"Consequent upon approval of the competent authority, the following FOIs under various categories, on contract basis, in DGCA are hereby relieved from DGCA with immediate effect to join their respective parent organisations," the order stated. The action came amid mounting criticism of the airline and the government's handling of the crisis that saw thousands of scrapped flights, millions of stranded passengers and airports overflowing with misdirected pieces of baggage since December 2. Even on Friday, around 160 flights were cancelled, despite assurances of normal operations by the carrier as well as the government.

Cabinet clears key bills, approves census budget, greenlights coal exports policy

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Union Cabinet on Friday, Dec 12, approved the budget for the upcoming census and a new economic partnership with Oman, allowed the export of coal, and cleared key bills proposing a unified national education regulator, opening up the insurance sector fully to foreign direct investment, bringing in sweeping changes to the atomic energy sector to attract private players, and renaming the national rural jobs scheme, people aware of developments said on Friday.

Union information and broadcasting minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the proposal to conduct the Census which will be the first digital exercise, and approved ₹11,718 crore as budget. He added that around three million enumerators will be involved in the exercise, the 16th edition of the census since Independence which will also provide an option of self enumeration to the citizens.

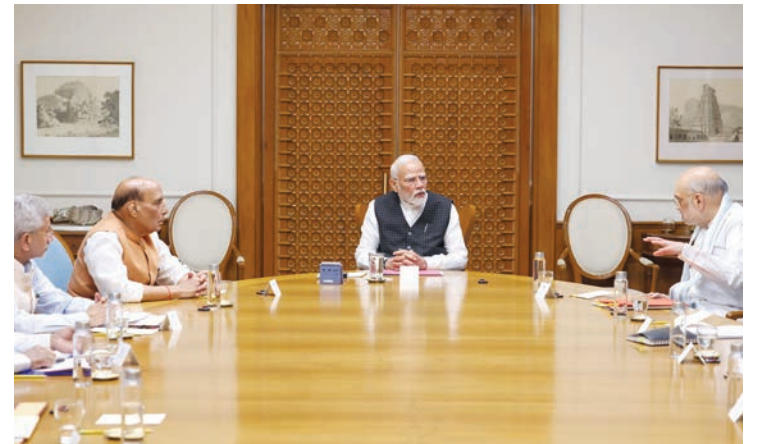
The decadal exercise, which was scheduled to take place in 2021, was initially postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is the first census since independence to enumerate all castes.

"The outcome of the Census 2027 will serve as the new compass for development, mirroring India's latest population data with more accuracy. The precision in data will accelerate Modi ji's vision of delivering the benefits of good governance and development to citizens of every demographic denomination, making the slogan of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' a grand reality of New India in the Amrit Kaal," Union home minister Amit Shah said on X.

The Cabinet also approved the introduction of several important bills.

The government may introduce the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025 – which proposes raising foreign direct investment in the insurance sector from 74% to 100% on condition that foreign firms would invest the entire premium thus collected in the country itself – in Parliament next week, the people cited above said.

Proposed 100% FDI in the sector will give significant freedom to foreign entities in managing affairs of their firms with adequate safeguards that would be part of the rules framed in consultation with the sector regulator Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India



(IRDAI), they said, adding that the legislation is in line with the government's plan to deepen insurance penetration and to achieve 'Insurance for All by 2047'.

"The insurance bill could be introduced next week, perhaps on Monday, depending on the situation," one of the people cited above said. The session is scheduled to conclude on December 19. Besides allowing 100% FDI in the insurance sector, the government may also bring significant reforms through the bill for ease of doing business and protection of consumers. "The proposed legislation will also simplify certain procedures and rules," the person added.

The cabinet also approved a bill to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to the 'Poojya Babu Grameen Rozgar Yojna, and hike the number of workdays from 100 to 125.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, better known as MGNREGA or NREGA, is a flagship scheme of the government aimed at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The programme became a lifeline for the rural population in the aftermath of Covid19. According to the government data, currently 7813434 workers are expected on 1049150 worksites as on Friday. Last year, 308.7 crore person days of work were generated in this programme.

Former Lok Sabha speaker and Cong leader Shivraj Patil dies at 90

MUMBAI (TIP)

Former home minister and Congress leader Shivraj Patil died aged 90 at his residence in Maharashtra's Latur on Friday, Dec 12 morning. He was keeping unwell for the past few days and breathed his last at his residence 'Devghar', his family sources told news agency PTL.

Born on October 12, 1935 in Latur's Chakur village, Patil was a towering figure in Indian politics and kickstarted his political journey as the president of Latur municipality between 1966 and 1970. He then made his way to the Maharashtra assembly as he was elected as MLA for two terms and held several crucial positions there, including deputy speaker and speaker between 1977 and 1979.

After his stint as an MLA, Patil paved his way to the Parliament after he won from the Latur Lok Sabha seat in 1980 and represented the constituency in the Parliament for seven terms till 2004. He served as the 10th Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 1991 to 1996. However, in 2004 Lok Sabha polls, he lost to BJP's Rupatai Patil Nilangekar. Patil also served as a member of the upper house of the Parliament.

Between 1980-1990, Patil also served on the Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of Members of Parliament before becoming its chairperson.



Among the many Union portfolios that Patil held during his political career are defence, commerce, and science and technology. He also served as the home minister from 2004 to 2008 before resigning on November 30, 2008 after the terror attack in Mumbai.

From 2010-2015, he served as the governor of Punjab and administrator of the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

Patil is survived by his son Shailesh Patil, daughter-in-law Archana and two granddaughters.

Condolences pour in

Grieving the death of Shivraj Patil, Prime Minister Narendra Modi that he was "saddened" by his passing. "He was an experienced leader, having served as MLA, MP, Union Minister, Speaker of the Maharashtra Assembly as well as the Lok Sabha during his long years in public life. He was passionate about contributing to the welfare of society. I have had many interactions with him over the years, the most recent one being when he came to my residence a few months ago. My thoughts are with his family in this sad hour. Om Shanti," PM Modi wrote in a post on X.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said that he shared a "close bond" and "many cherished memories" with Patil.

"A statesman of great dignity, Shri Patil served the nation with distinction, holding key Constitutional and Parliamentary responsibilities and contributing significantly to India's Democratic institutions. His demise is a profound loss for the Congress Party and for all who admired his integrity, composure and commitment to public service," Kharge wrote on X.

Congress' Rahul Gandhi called Patil's death "extremely heartbreaking and an irreparable loss for the party" and said that "his dedication to public service and his contributions to the nation will always be remembered".



Navjot Kaur Sidhu seeks security, accuses Punjab govt of shielding land, liquor mafia

Navjot Kaur Sidhu, who has been recently suspended by Congress, has raised serious allegations against the Bhagwant Mann-led AAP government, seeking security and accusing the administration of shielding the liquor and mining mafia.

In a post on X, Sidhu warned that any threat to his safety would be the Chief Minister's responsibility and questioned the lack of response to issues he had earlier raised with the Punjab Governor.

In his post, Sidhu shared a detailed letter addressed to Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, alleging what he termed as the "biggest land scandal" in the state.

She claimed that large-scale illegal land holdings in the Shivalik belt, including protected forest areas, were being regularised by the present government. Sidhu alleged that land sharks had grabbed parcels ranging from one acre to 10,000 acres at throwaway prices and were now being given legal cover.

Sidhu recalled her husband, Navjot Singh Sidhu's tenure as Local Bodies Minister, stating that he refused to sign files related to the issues and instead ordered an inquiry.

Expressing grave concern over Punjab's law-and-order situation, Sidhu said the state was witnessing rising crime, misuse of weapons and public fear, forcing people to consider migration.

He urged the Governor to convene an urgent special session of the Punjab Assembly to address key issues, including honouring Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji and safeguarding institutional autonomy, and to appeal for immediate intervention to restore public confidence.

India eases visa rules as Chinese applicants rise

NEW DELHI (TIP)

India has tweaked visa rules to address the issue of a growing number of applications from Chinese nationals coming to the country for short periods for business activities without changing vetting procedures, people familiar with the matter said on Friday, Dec 12.

After the two sides reached an understanding in October 2024 on ending their military face-off in Ladakh sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and gradually began putting in place measures to normalise their ties, there was a rise in visas applications from Chinese nationals for purposes such as installation of machinery at factories, the people said on condition of anonymity.

While such applicants were earlier issued employment visas or "E" visas, which are valid for six months or more, a decision was made to give them business visas or "B" visas, which are valid for short periods, the people said. A decision was also made to grant these visas within three to four weeks, they said.

The changes will apply to nationals of



all countries, but the people noted that Chinese nationals will be the main beneficiaries as the largest number of such applications are being received from China.

All vetting procedures for Chinese nationals, in which the Union home ministry usually plays the main role, continue to remain in place, the people said. There is also a quota for the business visas to be granted to Chinese nationals, they said, declining to provide further details. This quota is understood to be set by the Union home ministry. "The home ministry, the external affairs ministry and several agencies are involved in the vetting

process and other decisions related to visas for Chinese nationals," one of the people said. India had virtually stopped issuing visas to Chinese nationals after the start of the standoff on the LAC in April-May 2020 and the brutal clash in Galwan Valley a few months later that killed 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese troops. It had also banned dozens of Chinese apps and virtually blocked Chinese investments in the country.

Earlier this year, the two sides agreed to revive the Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra and this was followed by the resumption of direct flights and easing of tourist visas for Chinese nationals.

The Observer Research Foundation recently estimated that the tougher scrutiny of Chinese business led to production losses of \$15 billion over four years to Indian electronics makers, which import key machinery from China to make mobile telephones. Since the gradual improvement in bilateral ties, many firms have applied for visas for Chinese experts to come in and install specialised machinery imported from China.

Aadhaar gets a new offline ID tool, tougher checks for entities using it

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has issued new regulations to introduce an Aadhaar Verifiable Credential (AVC), a digitally signed document containing limited user demographic data for offline identity verification, as well as update regulations for entities that conduct offline Aadhaar verification (not in real time using UIDAI servers).

The amendments to the Aadhaar (Authentication and Offline Verification) Regulations, 2021, were notified on December 9, and uploaded on the UIDAI website on Friday, Dec 12.

AVC, which has now been added by the authority to its list of offline Aadhaar verification methods, can be used for identity verification without revealing the full Aadhaar number.

According to the regulations, AVC was "a digitally signed document issued by the Authority to the Aadhaar number holder which may contain the last 4 digits of Aadhaar number, demographic data, like name, address, gender, date of birth, and photograph of Aadhaar number holder... which may be shared by Aadhaar number holder in full or part with an OVSE... (Offline Verification Seeking Entity) for verifying the demographic information or photograph of the Aadhaar number holder."

But how does a user decide what information to include in an AVC when sharing it with a business or OVSE? A UIDAI official told HT that the new Aadhaar app, still in testing and yet to be officially launched, will let users pick exactly which details they want to share with an OVSE.

The amendment also provided for the introduction of 'Offline Face Verification,' which would allow an entity to verify someone's identity by matching a live face image with the photograph stored in the Aadhaar application.

The amendments also introduce an official definition of 'Aadhaar Application' to cover UIDAI's apps and portals. At the same time, older references that specifically mention 'mAadhaar' in other sections have been removed.

This comes as UIDAI is preparing to officially launch a new Aadhaar mobile application that will enable paperless electronic ID sharing, as part of the authority's efforts to curb misuse of physical Aadhaar cards and strengthen the offline verification ecosystem.

UIDAI chief executive officer Bhuvnesh Kumar previously said the new app was intended to shift Aadhaar usage away from physical cards, which are frequently photocopied and, in many cases, improperly stored or misused by OVSE.

Retail inflation rises to 0.71% in Nov, below RBI target of 2-6%

India's retail inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), rose to 0.71 per cent in November, from 0.25 per cent in October, according to the data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

The rise in the headline inflation in November is mainly due to higher prices of vegetables, eggs, meat and fish, spices, and fuel and light.

The headline inflation had continued its deflationary trend in the last two months after a slight increase in August, which marked the first monthly rise in inflation in 10 months.

The food inflation in November stood at -3.91 per cent, marking an increase from -5.02 per cent in October. The inflation rates for rural and urban areas stood at -4.05 per cent and -3.60 per cent, respectively. Housing inflation stood at 2.95 per cent in November, marking a marginal decline from 2.96 per cent in October 2025. The housing index is compiled only for the urban sector. Even the other sectors, including education, health, and transport, reported a decline in inflation. The education inflation eased slightly to 3.38 per cent from 3.54 per cent in October. Even the health inflation moderated to 3.60 per cent in November from 3.81 per cent in October. Transport and communication inflation softened to 0.88 per cent in November from 0.94 per cent in October.

India in history this Week

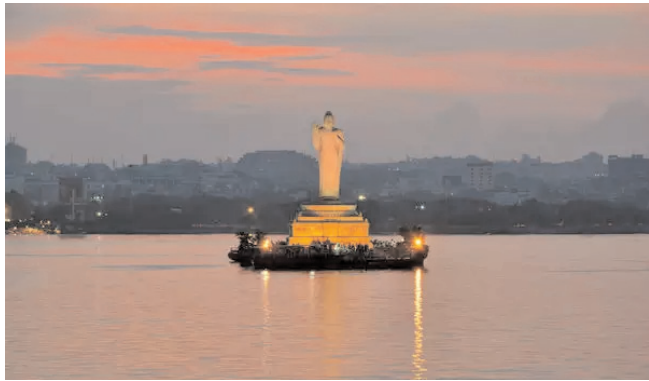
DECEMBER 12 TO DECEMBER 18

DECEMBER 12

1911 The capital of India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi.

1971 All the facilities provided to the former kings by the Indian Parliament were canceled.

1992 Giant Buddha statue was installed in Hyderabad's Hussain Sagar lake.



1990 TN Seshan appointed as Chief Election Commissioner.

13 DECEMBER

1232 Iltutmish, the ruler of the Ghulam dynasty, captured Gwalior.

1996 Kofi Annan was elected Secretary General of the United Nations.

2001 The Indian Parliament was attacked by terrorists.

1921 The Banaras Hindu University was inaugurated by the 'Prince of Wales'.

1955 India and the Soviet Union accepted the Panchsheel agreement.



1961 Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi started his Test match career against England in Delhi.

1998 Mahatma Ramchandra Veer was awarded the "Bhai Hanuman Prasad Poddar Rashtra Seva" award from the Bada Bazaar Library in Kolkata.

2008 For the fifth phase of Jammu and Kashmir, 57% polling was held in 11 assembly constituencies.

2012 In the final match of the blind Twenty20 World Cup, the Indian cricket team defeated Pakistan by 30 runs to take the title of world winner.



1955 Former Defense Minister of India and former Chief Minister of Goa Manohar Parrikar was born.

2000 Former captain of the Indian cricket team, Vijay Samuel Hazare became the first person to receive the 'Castrol Lifetime Achievement Award'.

14 DECEMBER

1924 Director, producer, showman Raj Kapoor was born.



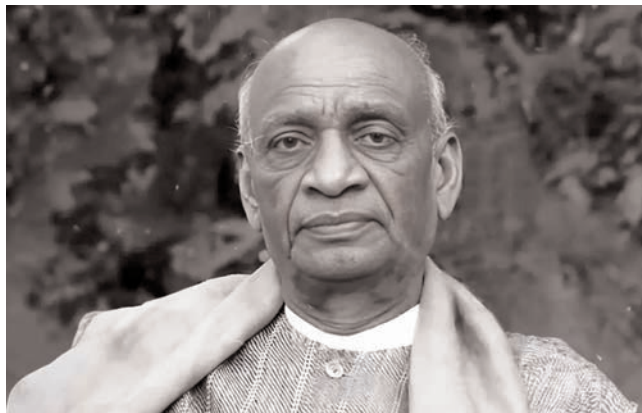
1901 Mahatma Gandhi reached Rajkot via Porbandar.

1960 The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was established.

2005 11 Hindus are condemned with life imprisonment for their involvement in the killing of Muslims in the 2002 Gujarat violence.

2011 Poisonous liquor banned in India kills 166 people in West Bengal.

15 DECEMBER



1950 The iron man Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel died.

1749 Chhatrapati Shivaji's grandson Shahu died.

1953 India's S. Vijayalakshmi Pandit was elected the first woman president of the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

1991 Filmmaker Satyajit Ray was awarded a Special Oscar for his achievements in the cinema world.



16 DECEMBER

1985 The country's first fast breeder nuclear reactor started functioning in Kalpakkam.

1971 Bangladesh separated from Pakistan and became an independent nation after agreeing to a cease-fire between India and Pakistan.

1993 'Education for all' conference starts in New Delhi.

2004 Doordarshan's free to air DTH service 'DD Direct +; Was launched by the Prime Minister.

1903 The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai was opened for guests.



2012 In New Delhi, a woman was gang-raped in a bus, leading to public protests against the Government of India and the Government of Delhi.

1937 Hawa Singh, one of the best boxers in India, was born.

17 DECEMBER

1645 Nur Jahan Begum, wife of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, died.

2002 Turkey supported India on Kashmir issue.

1715 Banda Bahadur Bairagi, the chief of the Sikhs, surrendered to the Mughals at Gurdaspur.

1929 The great revolutionaries Bhagat Singh and Rajguru shot English police officer John Saunders.

1933 India's legendary cricketer Lala Amarnath played an excellent innings of 118 runs in his debut Test match.

1940 Mahatma Gandhi postponed the individual Satyagraha movement.

1971 The third war between India and Pakistan ended after Bangladesh came into existence as a result of the partition of Pakistan.

1996 National Football League was launched.

18 DECEMBER

1897 Bhojpuri artist, musician and social worker Bhikhari Thakur was born.

1271 The Mongol emperor Kublai Khan named his empire as Yuan. With this began the Yuan dynasty.

1960 The National Museum was inaugurated in the capital Delhi.

1398 Timur captured Delhi by defeating Sultan Nusrat Shah.

1989 Sachin played his first ODI against Pakistan.

1995 Unidentified aircraft dropped weapons in Purulia, West Bengal.

1997 The Washington Treaty concluded for cooperation in space research between India and the United States.

2008 The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was successfully tested.

2017 India won 29 gold out of 30 at Commonwealth Wrestling Championships.

2017 The heaviest rocket GSLV Mark-3 was successfully launched.

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY RETURNS WITH ITS HOLIDAY TRADITION: HANDEL'S MESSIAH



Richardson Auditorium (exterior), Princeton -Credit: njsymphony.org.

BY MABEL PAIS

“What the New Jersey Symphony has established, bringing music to the Garden State in schools and in six different cities, is a sincere accomplishment. And it’s never been better.” – nj.com

The New Jersey Symphony will present three performances of George Frideric Handel’s Messiah. The Symphony will perform all three parts of the oratorio (see program below).

Handel composed the famous oratorio in just 24 days. Messiah was premiered in Dublin, Ireland, in April of 1742. The performance of this masterpiece became an annual tradition in London after 1750 and has been performed countless times by orchestras and choruses around the world since.

PROGRAM

Princeton - Friday, December 19, 2025, 7:30 pm, Richardson Auditorium

61 Nassau Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08542

Princeton - Saturday, December 20, 2025, 7:30 pm, Richardson Auditorium

61 Nassau Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08542

Newark - Sunday, December 21, 2025, 7 pm, Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart

89 Ridge Street, Newark, New Jersey 07104

HANDEL'S MESSIAH

New Jersey Symphony Holiday Tradition

Anthony Parnter conductor
Caitlin Gotimer soprano
Maria Dominique Lopez mezzo-soprano

Orson Van Gay II tenor
Shyheim Selvan Hinnant bass-baritone

Montclair State University Singers | Heather J. Buchanan, director

New Jersey Symphony

PRE-CONCERT PERFORMANCE

Preceding the performance on Friday, December 19, at 6:30 pm, the audience is invited to enjoy a festive array of holiday

songs and carols from the Montclair State University Singers and Heather J. Buchanan.

TICKETS

For tickets to Handel’s ‘Messiah’ at Princeton on December 19, visit <https://my.njsymphony.org/22667/22880>

For tickets to ‘Messiah’ at Princeton on December 20, visit

<https://my.njsymphony.org/22667/22881>

For tickets to Handel’s ‘Messiah’ at the Newark Cathedral Basilica on December 21, visit

<https://my.njsymphony.org/22667/22882>

ANTHONY PARNTER

American conductor Anthony Parnter is in his sixth season as music director of California’s San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra and was recently praised as the “quintessential L.A. musician of our day” by the L.A. Times. As conductor of the Gateways Music Festival Orchestra, whose members hail from leading orchestras nationwide, Parnter led its sold-out Carnegie Hall debut, showcasing the world premiere of ‘I Can’ by five-time GRAMMY Award-winner Jon Batiste.

A master of multiple genres, Parnter has conducted many of the world’s preeminent artists, from Joshua Bell, Lynn Harrell, Jessye Norman, and Frederica von Stade to Imagine Dragons, John Legend, Avenged Sevenfold, Wu-Tang Clan, Metro Boomin, Rihanna, and more. Parnter’s recent conducting engagements include the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Sydney Symphony, and the Chineke! Orchestra (UK), with whom he debuted at the BBC Proms, and more.

Dedicated to amplifying traditionally underrepresented voices, Parnter has reconstructed and performed orchestral works by Margaret Bonds, Duke Ellington, Zenobia Powell Perry, Florence Price, William Grant Still, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. He also led LA Opera’s world premiere of Tamar-kali Brown’s oratorio ‘We Hold These Truths’

and Long Beach Opera’s revival of Anthony Davis’ Pulitzer Prize-winning ‘The Central Park Five.’ For his extensive championing of works by Black, Latino, and women composers, Parnter was profiled in 2015 as a “Local Hero” by Los Angeles’ PBS SoCal/KCET. He was also featured in a New York Times profile for his New York Philharmonic debut.

One of today’s top film conductors, Parnter helms recording sessions for multiple international feature films and television series. Recent projects include ‘Avatar: The Way of Water,’ ‘Black Panther: Wakanda Forever,’ ‘Encanto,’ ‘Transformers: Rise of the Beasts,’ and more. Learn more at anthonyparnter.com.

CAITLIN GOTIMER

“Caitlin Gotimer, in the title role, delivered an object lesson on the art of classical singing ... negotiating the most intricate ornamentations and sustained, high-flung passages with equal agility ... this soprano has yet to disappoint ... displaying a voice of truly heroic proportions—seemingly with the greatest of ease, but the amount of talent and study involved in creating such an impression boggles the mind”

- OnStage Pittsburgh.

In the 2025-26 season, Ms. Gotimer reprises the title role in Tosca at the renowned Glyndebourne Festival under Robin Ticciati; she makes a thrilling debut at the Royal Danish Opera, singing Nedda in ‘Pagliacci’ under the baton of Giulio Cilona; makes her role debut as Cio-Cio-San in ‘Madama Butterfly’ with North Carolina Opera; and joins the roster at The Metropolitan Opera to cover Mimi in ‘La bohème.’ In addition to her concerts with the New Jersey Symphony, she also appears at the Megaron Mousikis in Athens for a special performance of Rufus Wainwright’s ‘Dream Requiem.’

Recent operatic credits include La Madre (‘La Fiamma’), Donna Anna (‘Don Giovanni’), and the title role in Silvana for Deutsche Oper Berlin; Nedda (‘Pagliacci’) for Pittsburgh Opera; Countess (‘Le nozze di Figaro’) at the

Aspen Music Festival as a Renée Fleming Artist; She has also covered Musetta (‘La bohème’) at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival, the title role in ‘Suor Angelica,’ and Giorgetta in ‘Il tabarro’ in a high-profile production led by Carlo Rizzi for Opéra national de Paris.

Equally at home on the concert stage, Ms. Gotimer has performed Handel’s ‘Messiah’ with the Santa Fe and Idaho Falls Symphonies, Mozart’s ‘Requiem’ at Québec’s Festival Songe d’été en musique, and Bach’s ‘Missa Brevis’ with Binghamton University. Learn more at caitlingotimersoprano.com.

MARIA DOMINIQUE LOPEZ

Praised as “a rich-voiced mezzo” (‘Operawire’) and “a real tour-de-force” (‘Splash Magazines Worldwide’), Mexican-American mezzo-soprano Maria Dominique Lopez has sung operatic roles and symphonic works throughout the US and Europe, in addition to recording vocals for independent films and major motion pictures (including the Golden Globe and Academy Award®-winning Disney Pixar film, ‘Coco.’)

She has had recent stage appearances in various locations including Houston Grand Opera’s ‘Opera to Go!’, Arizona Opera (Third Lady, ‘The Magic Flute’; Bonita, ‘Arizona Lady’), The Phoenix Symphony (Vaughan Williams’ ‘Magnificat’), Pacific Opera Project (Madam Flora, ‘The Medium’; Mercédès, ‘Carmen’; Musetta, ‘La bohème’), the world premiere at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts of Jenni Brandon’s ‘3 Paderewskis,’ the premiere of Mark Weiser’s ‘The Place Where You Started,’ and many more.

Ms. Lopez lives in the Los Angeles area and owns her own reiki healing practice, ‘Ascending Arts.’ She is a Senior Fellow in the Eric Fütterer Vocal Studio of Academy of Advanced Vocal Technique, and studies shamanic and energy practices with Shaman and Reiki Master, Jamie Jones. Follow her at tiktok.com/@ascendingarts.

ORSON VAN GAY II

CONTD ON PAGE 20

CONTD FROM PAGE 19

Orson Van Gay II has captivated audiences in classical and contemporary opera and concert hall performances with his charisma and “fine heroic tenor” (San Francisco Classical Voice). He has garnered acclaim for roles in his home of Southern California and across the US, with Broadway World declaring, “his sound was fluent and his high notes golden.”

Recent opera appearances include the role of Raymond Santana in the world premiere of Anthony Davis’ ‘The Central Park Five’ (winner of a 2021 Pulitzer Prize) with Long Beach Opera. He made his debut in two roles with Pacific Opera Project as ‘The Athlete’ in the West Coast premiere of I Can’t Breathe and as Rodolfo in La bohème and more.

Mr. Van Gay has sung extensively with the LA Opera’s “Connects” series which explores the connections between music, wellness, and recovery.

Equally at home in the concert hall, he joined the California Philharmonic Orchestra in celebration of Leonard Bernstein’s 100th anniversary, performing in Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, “Chorale,” at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Mr. Van Gay has also appeared at Carnegie Hall in a recital with Wang Wei.

In December 2023, he released his debut classical album, ‘Colors of a Lyric,’ a curation of arias that capture the warmth and stratosphere of this rising star’s vocal spectrum.

SHYHEIM SELVAN HINNANT

Hailing from Woodbridge, Virginia, Shyheim Selvan Hinnant is a multi-disciplinary artist who puts the “tone” in bass-baritone. As a singer, songwriter, actor, and electric bass player, he has dedicated his life to creating art and inspiring others.

Currently, he is pursuing a Master of Musical Arts degree from Yale University under the tutelage of mezzo-soprano Adriana Zabala. His favorite roles include Simone (‘Gianni Schicchi’), Figaro (‘Le nozze di Figaro’), and Colline (‘La bohème’). He recently completed a residency with Des Moines Metro Opera as an apprentice artist, where he premiered the role of Clarence in Damien Geter’s ‘American Apollo’ and covered the role of First Nazarene in Richard Strauss’ ‘Salome.’

As a commercial model and actor, Shyheim has worked for various clients including UNO!™, Facebook (Meta), Away Travel, AllBirds, and Intel. In 2022, Shyheim starred in Christian Osagiede’s short film ‘Hunted,’ which was a finalist in Dolby’s Finish the Script filmmaker competition.

In his free time, he writes alternative R&B music under the alias of Shy



Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart (interior), Newark.

Credit: njsymphony.org.

Lennox. His smooth sound and creative work have been increasingly recognized and featured in ‘AfroPunk,’ ‘Lyrical Lemonade,’ ‘The Commonwealth Times,’ ‘Ink Magazine,’ ‘RVA Magazine,’ and in various online publications. Shyheim’s debut single “afterblunts,” has gained over five million streams and over 50,000 monthly listeners.

Shyheim currently resides in New Haven, Connecticut where he sings as the bass-baritone section leader and soloist for The Congregational Church of New Canaan. He also teaches both virtual and in-person voice lessons and tutors music theory and mathematics. Learn more at orsonvangay.com.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY SINGERS | HEATHER J. BUCHANAN

Under the direction of Australian-born conductor Heather J. Buchanan since September 2003, the Montclair State University choral program has been recognized for successful collaborations with world-renowned artists and celebrated professional musicians in national and international venues, including Meredith Monk, Richard Alston Dance Company (UK), VOCES8 (UK), and Eric Whitacre. Montclair choirs appear regularly with the New Jersey Symphony and have won critical acclaim for their “heartfelt conviction,” “and vibrant sound,” being a “marvel of diction, tuning, and rhythm,” “eloquence” and for singing with the “crispness and dexterity of a professional choir.” Pianist Gregory

Stout is the Montclair choral accompanist.

University Singers, Montclair’s flagship choir, is an elective mixed-voice ensemble comprising undergraduate and graduate students with a passion for choral singing. Previous New Jersey Symphony performances include Felix Mendelssohn’s ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ and Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No. 3, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s ‘Requiem,’ the US premiere of Kate Whitley’s ‘Speak Out,’ and George Frideric Handel’s ‘Messiah’ annually since 2014. They recorded ‘Songs of Ascension’ with Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble on the prestigious European label ECM Records under legendary producer Manfred Eicher, which received a GRAMMY Award nomination in the Producer of the Year Category. Their solo recording ‘I Sing Because’ is available on Spotify and iTunes.

Established in 1908, Montclair State is a Research Doctoral Institution ranked in the top tier of national universities, with 13 degree-granting colleges/schools serving more than 24,000 undergraduate and graduate students. At Montclair’s John J. Cali School of Music, students study with a world-class faculty drawn from the finest musicians and scholars in the New York metropolitan area and beyond. Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities Dr. Heather J. Buchanan, a vibrant teacher, dynamic performer, and passionate health advocate for musicians, she is in demand as a guest conductor, somatic educator,

and choral clinician in the US and abroad. Learn more at montclair.edu & facebook.com/heather.j.buchanan.7

NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

New Jersey Symphony is a GRAMMY and Emmy Award-winning orchestra. Under the direction of Music Director Xian Zhang, the Symphony performs more than 55 mainstage concerts across the state at venues in Newark, Princeton, New Brunswick, Red Bank, and Morristown, as well as at schools and public spaces statewide.

Programming at the Symphony reflects an unwavering commitment to diverse communities throughout the state, while providing students unparalleled opportunities to achieve musical excellence through its Youth Orchestra and other education programs.

In 2024, the Symphony announced it would continue to deliver its statewide activities from a new, permanent office, rehearsal, and concert space in Jersey City, set to open in 2026. For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit the website at njsymphony.org.

CONNECT WITH NJ SYMPHONY

Follow NJ Symphony on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, and YouTube

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

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WITH CHRISTMAS AROUND THE CORNER CECE WINANS AND COMPANY LIGHT UP THE HOLIDAY

BY MABEL PAIS

NJPAC makes the holiday season come alive ... before the curtain even rises!

With only a few days before Christmas, CeCe Winans lights up your holiday with joyful music. The 12-time GRAMMY® winner is the shining star atop the glittering tree of gospel. It's impossible to count all the songs she's gifted to us over the years: "Count on Me" from "Waiting to Exhale," "Alabaster Box" and "Goodness of God" are just a few. And there's nothing like her renditions of your favorite Christmas songs. Rejoice and feel the glory of this special time of year. Roman Collins will open the show.



CeCe Winans with group. -Credit: njpac.org.

PROGRAM

CHRISTMAS WITH CECE WINANS LIVE IN CONCERT

Friday, December 20th at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 21st at 8:00 p.m.

PERFORMANCE PRELUDE

On Friday, Dec 19 @ 6 – 7:30PM, enjoy the performance prelude.

Arrive at 6PM for pre-show drumming, dance and poetry experiences,

exclusively for CeCe Winans ticket holders. Join professional artists for a drumming workshop and learn two joyous dance styles: West African and pageantry.

Then starting at 7PM be moved by captivating spoken word performances to witness a free liturgical dance prelude by DEW Ministries on Friday. Special thank you to Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral of Newark for providing a practice space for the prelude performer.

TICKETS

To purchase tickets to CeCe Winans, visit njpac.org/event/cece-winans.

BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA DELIVER THE GIFT OF JOY

BY MABEL PAIS

The **BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA** deliver the gift of joy at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) on Sunday, December 21 at 3PM.

In this uplifting holiday show, the GRAMMY®-winning gospel legends perform Christmas classics and songs from their albums 'Go Tell It on the Mountain' and 'Talkin' Christmas.' You'll be singing and clapping along with the spirit of the season.

Hailed as "gospel titans" by Rolling Stone, the Blind Boys of Alabama defied the considerable odds stacked against them in the segregated south, working their way up from singing for pocket change to performing for three different American presidents. Inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2003, the group has won five Grammy Awards for



Blind Boys of Alabama. -Credit: njpac.org.

their albums (plus a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award), received a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and collaborated with artists as diverse as Mavis Staples, Stevie Wonder, Chrissie Hynde, Lou Reed, Tom Waits, Peter Gabriel, Bonnie Raitt, and Bon Iver. Beyond the group's considerable commercial success, the artistic influence the Blind Boys imparted onto their contemporaries and

the generations of gospel, rock, and soul singers who followed is immeasurable.

The New York Times explained that in their earlier years, the band "came to epitomize what is known as jubilee singing, a livelier breed of gospel music," adding that "they made it zestier still by adding jazz and blues idioms and turning up the volume, creating a sound...like the rock 'n' roll that grew out of it." TIME raved that the group has always been

"hunting for—and finding—the perfect note or harmony that lifts an old tune into the sublime," while The Washington Post praised their "soul-stirring harmonies" and "cross-genre collaborations," and The New Yorker simply dubbed them "legendary."

"One of the greatest and most venerated gospel groups the world has ever known ... an impeccable mix of polished blues, swinging soul and from-the-gut gospel."

TICKETS

Tickets for the 'Blind Boys of Alabama' can be purchased by visiting NJPAC.org or the NJPAC Box Office or by calling 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

Learn more at njpac.org.

AMAS THEATRE PRESENTS MUSICAL ICON BACHARACH'S SONGS

BY MABEL PAIS

Who in this world doesn't have a favorite Burt Bacharach song?

Amas Musical Theatre (Donna Trinkoff, Artistic Producer) and Jack Lewin will present the World Premiere of 'Going Bacharach: The Songs Of An Icon,' a musical revue featuring the many songs of Burt Bacharach, including such recognizable titles as "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?," "What's New Pussycat?," and "That's What Friends Are For", and many more.

LOCATION & SCHEDULE

Performances will begin on Thursday, January 8, 2026 at 7:30pm at The Marjorie S. Deane Little Theater (10 West 64th Street – between Broadway & Central Park West).

Opening Night is scheduled for Monday, January 12 at 7:30pm. The production will play through Sunday, February 15, 2026.

The regular performance schedule is

Monday at 7:30pm; Wednesday at 2:30pm; Thursday at 7:30pm; Friday at 7:30pm; Saturday at 2:30pm and 7:30pm; and Sunday at 2:30pm. There is an additional 7:30pm performance on Sunday, January 11, 2026.

KEY CREDITS

The show was co-created by Will Friedwald, Adrian Galante, Tedd Firth & Jack Lewin, and conceived by Mr.



Burt Bacharach. -Credit: playbill.com.

Lewin. The arrangements and orchestrations are by Adrian Galante, who also serves as the production's Music Director. Musical supervision is by Tedd Firth, and the show is directed by Tony and Olivier Award winner David Zippel.

Rediscover the soundtrack of a lifetime with 'Going Bacharach,' a vibrant new revue celebrating the legacy of one of America's most iconic composers. Three powerhouse vocalists backed by a five-piece band take audiences on a melodic journey through the timeless songs spanning Bacharach's extraordinary career. Joyful and illuminating, 'Going Bacharach' offers fresh, sophisticated, and original interpretations.

The cast of 'Going Bacharach: The Songs of an Icon' includes vocalists Hilary Kole, John Pagano, Ta-Tynisa Wilson, and Adrian Galante at the Piano & Clarinet leading a 5 piece band. 'Going Bacharach: The Songs of an Icon' is produced by Amas Musical Theatre by

special arrangement with Jack Lewin. General Management Consultation is by Visceral Entertainment. Marketing & Advertising is by Schanzer Marketing.

BURT BACHARACH

For nearly 70 years, Burt Bacharach supplied the soundtrack of the American experience. His is one of the most stylistically diverse and individualistic catalogues in popular music. Through his early classical training under composer Darius Milhaud and his exposure to the vibrant New York City Jazz scene as a teenager in the early 1940s, Bacharach was able to seamlessly amalgamate a wide range of stylistic influences to create his own brand of popular song.

His catalogue of hits served as a bridge from the classic Great American Songbook standards of the early 20th century to the post Rock n' Roll era of popular music, creating a library of songs that became the soundtrack to the lives of multiple generations... recorded by everyone from Dionne Warwick and Aretha Franklin to Adele, from Frank Sinatra to Elvis Presley to Elvis Costello.

TICKETS

Tickets can be purchased at goingbacharach.com. VIP Package Upgrades are available.

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



Border 2 first look: Ahan Shetty embodies bravery in tense combat-ready poster

The first-look poster of actor Ahan Shetty from the film *Border 2* was released on Tuesday. It gave audiences an early glimpse of his character in the much-anticipated military drama. The poster captures Shetty in the midst of combat, his face streaked with blood and his expression marked by determination, as he holds a military gun and stands on duty.

In the poster, Ahan appears in a tense moment, portraying the relentless courage of India's naval warriors. The visual depiction of his character emphasises the high-stakes situations central to *Border 2*, aligning with the film's focus on the bravery and sacrifices of Indian soldiers.

The caption accompanying the poster on social media read, "Stronger than the waves. Fiercer than the storm. *Border 2* in cinemas 23rd January, 2026 (sic)".

The unveiling of Ahan's poster follows the positive response received to the first look images of Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, and Diljit Dosanjh, who appear as Indian Air Force officers in the film. This sequence of reveals has generated considerable attention for the film across social media and film circles.

Border 2 is directed by Anurag Singh and features a cast that includes Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, Medha Rana, Mona Singh, and Sonam Bajwa, in addition to Ahan. The production is led by Bhushan Kumar, JP Dutta, and Nidhi Dutta.

The film is presented by Gulshan Kumar and T-Series, in partnership with J.P. Dutta's J.P. Films. The production team also includes Krishan Kumar.

Set for release ahead of the Republic Day weekend, *Border 2* continues the legacy of stories honouring the heroism and spirit of Indian soldiers. The film aims to take audiences on a journey that highlights themes of patriotism, courage, and sacrifice at the nation's borders.

The poster release has heightened excitement for the film, which is scheduled to arrive in cinemas on January 23, 2026.

Alia Bhatt receives Golden Globe Horizon award at Red Sea Film Festival

Alia Bhatt emerged as one of the most celebrated figures at this year's Red Sea International Film Festival, where she was honoured with the Golden Globe Horizon Award.

The recognition, announced by the festival on Instagram, marks a significant milestone in her international journey. Red Sea Film wrote, "We're proud to partner with the Golden Globes Awards to honor Hind Sabri with the Omar Sharif Award and Alia Bhatt with the Golden Globe Horizon Award on the sidelines of the 5th Red Sea International Film Festival. Noteworthy, these two awards highlight the achievements of the brightest creative talents in the Middle East and North Africa."

The honour coincided with a curated showcase of Alia's filmography, a festival tribute that traced her evolution from debutante to one of Indian cinema's most versatile and bankable stars. The segment spotlighted her growth as an actor, revisiting performances in *Highway*, *Dear Zindagi*, *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani*, and *Brahmastra*. International audiences responded enthusiastically, praising the emotional breadth and genre range she has mastered across arthouse drama, mainstream romance, biographical storytelling, and high-volume commercial cinema.

The festival also turned into an unexpected launchpad for Alpha, the upcoming YRF Spy Universe instalment headlined by Alia. According to



Alia Bhatt and Hind Sabri honoured at Red Sea Film Festival. (Photo Credit: Instagram/ Red Sea)

Deadline, she presented an exclusive early look at the project, unveiling select visuals that offered attendees a glimpse of the film's tone, scale, and action-led energy.

Directed by Shiv Rawail, Alpha marks a major shift for the YRF Spy Universe, becoming its first female-led chapter. The film teams Alia with Sharvari and Bobby Deol in a high-octane thriller set for a 2026 release. Speaking at the event, Alia reflected on the challenge of leading a franchise previously dominated by male

action icons like Tiger, Kabir, and Pathaan, describing the experience as both exhilarating and demanding.

The film will be the seventh entry in YRF's expanding Spy Universe, following *Ek Tha Tiger*, *Tiger Zinda Hai*, *War*, *Pathaan*, *Tiger 3*, and the forthcoming *War 2*. Under the leadership of CEO Akshaye Widhani, the studio continues to scale its global ambitions, with multiple new productions slated to begin filming in the UK from 2026 onward.

Akshaye Khanna's viral Sher-e-Baloch song is Dhurandhar's most explosive twist

The *Sher-e-Baloch* song from *Dhurandhar* has gone viral on social media for all the obvious reasons. Chief among them is Akshaye Khanna's swagger – the way he commands the Arabic beat, the slow-motion haze wrapped around every move, and the magnetic presence he brings to the frame. But what most people don't realise is this: it's not meant to be just a crowd-pleasing visual, but it's crucial to the film's internal architecture. Composed by Bahrain-based rap artist Flipperachi, *Sher-e-Baloch* or FA9LA is more than a catchy number. It's the film's make-or-break moment, the hinge on which director Aditya Dhar balances everything. It features two key players – Ranveer Singh and Akshaye Khanna – and in a three-hour, 33-minute thriller, this single song becomes the glue that holds their performances, motivations and the entire plot together. It even acts as a precursor to what the second part of the film might



unleash. To realise why *Sher-e-Baloch* is so significant, one must first understand the characters Singh and Khanna portray. And here come the spoilers. If you want to avoid them, stop reading now. But if you choose to continue, things are about to get interesting. In *Dhurandhar*, Khanna

plays Rehman Dakait, revered as *Sher-e-Baloch* – the pivotal figure at the heart of the Baloch vs Pakistan conflict. Rehman is the leader of a community grappling with decades of political marginalisation, economic neglect, and state violence since Balochistan's annexation in 1948.

Sydney Sweeney addresses plastic surgery rumors, says changes are natural

Sydne Sweeney is once again confronting the intense scrutiny that has followed her rise in Hollywood. In a new interview, the 28-year-old actor firmly shut down long-circulating plastic surgery rumours, addressing the speculation that has trailed her since her teens and offering a candid explanation about her appearance.

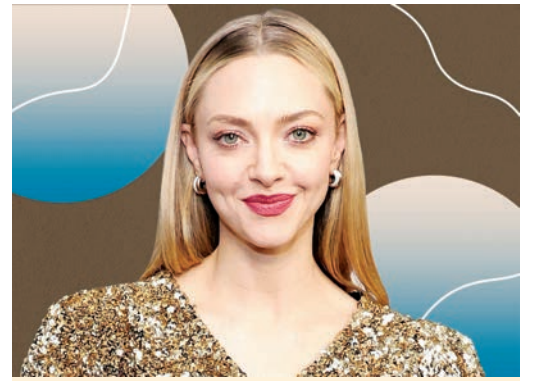
During a conversation with her *The Housemaid* co-star Amanda Seyfried for *Allure*, Sweeney was asked to debunk a "beauty rumor" of her choice. She didn't hesitate. "Let's debunk them all. I mean, I have never gotten work done," she said, adding, "I am so scared of needles, you have no idea." Seyfried responded with humour, saying, "You gotta call me, and I'll give you a little bit of Ativan, and you'll be so excited But you don't need it yet."

Sweeney also provided a lighthearted but pointed response for those convinced she has undergone cosmetic procedures. Agreeing that she doesn't "need" any, she joked, "No, also if I did, you guys, my face would be even." When Seyfried asked what she meant by "even," Sweeney revealed a detail many fans may not know - that she had a childhood wakeboarding accident requiring 19 stitches, leaving one eye that "opens a little more than the other." She clarified that the surgery she had as a child was medical, not cosmetic.

The *Euphoria* star also called out social media users who post side-by-side comparisons of her childhood photos with present-day images. "You cannot compare a photo of me from when I was 12 to a photo of me at 26 with professional makeup and lighting! Of course I'm going to look different," Sweeney said. "Everybody on social media's insane," she added.

This isn't the first time Sweeney has spoken about beauty standards and the pressure placed on young actors.

In an interview with *Variety* published on October 27, she recalled receiving harsh advice as a teenager. "I have very strong eyebrow muscles," she said, sharing that she was told at 16 to "fix my face" if she wanted a career. "I should get Botox. I was 16!" She emphasised then, as she does now, "I've never gotten anything done. I'm absolutely terrified of needles. No tattoos. Nothing. I'm going to age gracefully."



Not apologising: Amanda Seyfried reacts to backlash over Kirk comment

Amanda Seyfried is standing firm on her earlier remarks about conservative activist Charlie Kirk, saying she will "not be apologising" for calling him "hateful" after his shocking murder.

The actor addressed the controversy during an interview with *Who What Wear* while promoting her upcoming series *The Testament of Ann Lee*, insisting that her comments were grounded in fact and taken out of context.

"I'm not apologising for that," Seyfried said. "I mean, for fuck's sake, I commented on one thing. I said something that was based on actual reality and actual footage and actual quotes. What I said was pretty damn factual, and I'm free to have an opinion, of course. Thank God for Instagram. I was able to give some clarity, and it was about getting my voice back because I felt like it had been stolen and recontextualised - which is what people do, of course." Kirk, the 31-year-old co-founder of Turning Point USA, was fatally shot in the neck on Sept. 10 during a college speaking event in Utah. Seyfried initially reacted to his death by writing, "He was hateful," which sparked backlash from conservatives accusing her of implying the murder was justified. Seyfried immediately pushed back, clarifying her stance in a separate Instagram post.

The Drama first look: Zendaya and Robert Pattinson sends fans into a frenzy

2025 isn't even over yet, but Zendaya has already given fans a big reason to be excited for 2026. The actor unveiled the first-look poster of her upcoming romantic comedy *The Drama*, co-starring Robert Pattinson, and social media can't stop talking about it.

The adorable poster shows the pair looking cute as a button, with Zendaya even sporting a ring on her finger - sparking speculation that her character may be engaged to Pattinson's. The film hits theatres on April 3, 2026.

Sharing the poster on social media, Zendaya captioned it, "THE DRAMA. Formal invitation to follow."

The comments section immediately lit up with excitement, humour and dramatic fan reactions. One fan wrote, "i'm seated. the

theater employees are scared and asking me to leave because it's not even april 3rd 2026 yet, but i'm simply too seated." Another joked, "girl i thought u were engaged to robert pattinson!" A third comment read, "Batman really stealing spideys girl!" - a playful nod to Pattinson playing *The Batman*, while Zendaya is engaged to Tom Holland, MCU's *Spider-Man*.

Robert Pattinson was last seen in *Die My Love*, where he starred alongside Jennifer Lawrence. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year.

With the whimsical poster already sparking memes, speculation and excitement, *The Drama* is shaping up to be one of 2026's most anticipated romcom releases.



China's new 'condom tax' draws skepticism and worries over health risks

China will soon start collecting a value-added tax on contraceptive drugs and products for the first time in over three decades, a move aligned with Beijing's effort to get families to have more children after decades of limiting most to one child.

"Contraceptive drugs and products" will not be tax-exempt as of Jan. 1, according to the country's newest value-added tax law. Products such as condoms will be subject to the usual 13% value-added tax imposed on most products. While state-run news outlets have not widely highlighted the change, it has been trending on Chinese social media, drawing ridicule among people who joked they'd have to be fools not to know that raising a child is more expensive than using condoms, even if they are taxed. More seriously, experts are raising concerns over potential increases in unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases due to higher costs for contraceptives.

The ruling Communist Party's past "one-child" policy was enforced from about 1980 until 2015 with huge fines and other penalties and sometimes with forced abortions. In some cases, children born over the limit were deprived of an identification number, effectively making them non-citizens.

The government raised the birth limit to two children in 2015. As China's population began to peak and then fall, it was lifted to three children in 2021. Contraception has been actively encouraged and easily accessed, even for free.

North Korea's Kim vows to root out 'evil', scolds lazy officials

SEOUL (TIP)

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to root out "evil" and scolded lazy officials while praising his troops fighting with Russia against Ukraine, state media said Friday, capping a major meeting of Pyongyang's top brass.

The three-day meeting of the regime's central committee discussed key policy issues as well as plans for a congress of its ruling party, expected in early 2026 -- North Korea's first in five years.

Wrapping up the meeting on Thursday, Kim condemned "the wrong ideological viewpoint and inactive and irresponsible work attitude" of some officials, the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

He called on officials to have "greater confidence in and courage for the future of our cause and struggle". State media did not offer specifics, though it did say the ruling party had revealed numerous recent "deviations" in discipline -- a euphemism for corruption.

The North Korean leader reserved praise for Pyongyang's soldiers fighting against Ukraine alongside Russia, of whom at least 600 have died and thousands more sustained wounds, according to South Korean estimates. Their work, Kim said, "demonstrated to the world the prestige of our army and state as the ever-victorious army and genuine protector of international justice".

Analysts say Pyongyang is receiving financial aid, military technology, food and energy supplies from Russia in return for sending troops. Kim's mention of the troops "signalled



whose leader Donald Trump had hoped to meet Kim during a visit to Asia in October. The pair -- who Trump once famously declared were "in love" -- last met in 2019 at Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas after the US leader extended an invitation to Kim on Twitter. But analysts now say that the North Korean leader, increasingly emboldened by his growing ties with Russia, had few good reasons to join the photo-op.

Kim hails 'ever-victorious' army's role in war against Ukraine

Kim Jong Un praised the deployment of his troops in support of Russia's war against Ukraine and promised to root out "evil practices" among some officials, state media reports.

In remarks concluding a key meeting of his ruling party on Thursday, Kim condemned "the wrong ideological viewpoint and inactive and irresponsible work attitude" of some officials, the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

He also spoke of "shortcomings and evil practices that must be corrected", KCNA said. The North Korean news organisation did not offer any specifics regarding the targets of Kim's comments, though it did say the ruling party had revealed numerous recent "deviations" in discipline -- a euphemism often used to refer to corrupt practices.

Wrapping up the three-day meeting, Kim reserved praise for the North Korean soldiers fighting against Ukraine alongside Russia, of whom at least 600 have been killed and thousands more injured in the war, according to South Korean estimates.

SURIN (TIP)

Fighting between Thai and Cambodian forces continued early on Saturday, Dec 13, hours after US President Donald Trump said the two countries had agreed to a ceasefire. Thai prime minister Anutin Charnvirakul said he told the US president a ceasefire would only be possible after Cambodia had withdrawn all its forces and removed landmines.

"Thailand will continue to perform military actions until we feel no more harm and threats to our land and people. I want to make it clear. Our actions this morning already spoke," he said on social media.

Shelling continued overnight, as Thai forces push to take a number of vantage points along the border. At least 21 people have died in the renewed fighting and 700,000 have been evacuated on both sides.

Trump had claimed earlier in the week that he could stop the fighting between Thai and Cambodian forces that broke out on Monday just by picking up the phone.

After speaking to both prime ministers on Friday night he wrote on social media that the two countries had agreed to "cease shooting effective this evening" and go back to the agreement they signed in front of the US president in October. "Both countries are ready for peace," he wrote.

However, Anutin said he told Trump that Thailand was not the aggressor, and that Cambodia must show that it

Thailand-Cambodia fighting continues after Trump says countries agree to ceasefire



had withdrawn its forces and removed landmines from the border before a ceasefire was possible. "They must show us first," he said. There was no mention of the use of tariffs as leverage to force the two sides to disengage, as happened in July.

Thailand has warned the US not to link the conflict to trade. On Saturday Cambodia reported that it had been

struck by more Thai air strikes.

"On December 13, 2025, the Thai military used two F-16 fighter jets to drop seven bombs" on a number of targets, the Cambodian defence ministry said in an X post. "Thai military aircraft have not stopped bombing yet," it said. The Thai military also confirmed that fighting continued. The long-standing border dispute escalated on 24 July, as Cambodia launched a barrage of rockets into Thailand, which responded with air strikes. Both countries have accused each other of initiating the attacks. After days of intense fighting which left dozens dead, the neighbouring South East Asian countries agreed to an "immediate and unconditional ceasefire" brokered by Trump and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. This was formalised at a ceremony in Malaysia in October presided over by the US president.

However both sides continued to trade accusations of ceasefire violations, with Thailand publishing evidence of Cambodian troops laying landmines, which have caused seven Thai soldiers to lose limbs. Cambodia says the mines are left over from the civil war in the 1980s.

Russia could attack Nato within five years, says alliance chief in stark new warning

Russia could attack a Nato country within the next five years, the Western military alliance's chief has said in a stark new warning.

"Russia is already escalating its covert campaign against our societies," Mark Rutte said in a speech in Germany. "We must be prepared for the scale of war our grandparents or great-grandparents endured."

He echoed similar statements about Russia's intentions made by Western intelligence agencies, which Moscow dismisses as hysteria.

Rutte's warning comes as US President Donald Trump tries to bring an end to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, launched in February 2022.

Earlier this month, Russia's President Vladimir Putin said his country was not planning to go to war with Europe, but it was ready "right now" if Europe wanted to - or started a war. But similar reassurances were given by Moscow in 2022, just before 200,000 Russian troops crossed the border and invaded Ukraine.

Putin has accused European countries of hindering US efforts to bring peace in Ukraine - a reference to the role Ukraine's European allies have recently played in trying to change a US peace plan to end the war, whose initial draft was seen as favouring Russia.

But Putin was not sincere, Nato's secretary-general said in the German capital, Berlin.

Supporting Ukraine, he added, was a guarantee for European security.

Trump 'extremely frustrated' over delays in Russia-Ukraine peace deal: WH

WASHINGTON (TIP)

The White House has stated that US President Donald Trump is "extremely frustrated" with both Russia and Ukraine over the slow progress toward ending the ongoing war and is unwilling to engage in "meetings just for the sake of meeting".

During a press briefing, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt stated the President was tired of meetings that achieve nothing and wanted results, not words, as the US acts as the primary mediator to end the four-year-long running war.

"The president is extremely frustrated with both sides of this war. He's sick of meetings just for the sake of meeting. He doesn't want any more talk. He wants action. He wants this war to come to an end," Leavitt

She further confirmed that the Trump administration remains actively involved in peace efforts, with President Trump holding talks with European leaders on Wednesday and Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and his team continuing direct discussions with both sides "literally as we speak".

Regarding possible high-level US participation in upcoming talks this weekend, Leavitt said the decision remains "up in the air".

"The United States and the Trump administration continue to be very much engaged in trying to bring the Russia-Ukraine war to an end. The President had a call with Europeans yesterday. His special envoy Witkoff and his team continue to talk with both sides literally as we speak. If there is a real chance of signing a peace agreement, if we feel like those meetings are worthy of someone in the United States's time this weekend,



then we will send a representative. It's still up in the air whether we believe real peace can be accomplished and we can truly move the ball forward," Leavitt stated.

Earlier, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated that the US is advocating for Ukraine to pull back its forces from the Donetsk region to create a "free economic zone" in Kyiv-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine, which Moscow seeks to dominate, as reported by Al Jazeera. Zelenskyy confirmed that Ukraine had submitted a 20-point set of counter-proposals to the US as part of ongoing discussions on security guarantees with senior American officials, emphasising that any territorial concessions would need to be approved through a national referendum.

Meanwhile, Zelenskyy has been facing increasing pressure from Washington to reach a peace deal with Russia, with reports suggesting that Trump wants an agreement by Christmas, Al Jazeera reported.

The overall peace plan includes a 20-point framework, along with separate

documents addressing security guarantees and the reconstruction of Ukraine.

The full details of the revised framework, which adjusts an earlier US draft seen as favouring Russia, have not been made public.

Zelenskyy indicated that the main points of disagreement remain the control of the Donetsk region in the Donbas and the future governance of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is currently under Russian control, as reported by Al Jazeera.

Kremlin suggests it may not like new Ukraine peace proposals after latest US-Ukraine talks

Kremlin foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov said on Friday that Moscow has not seen revised US proposals made after the most recent talks with Ukraine, but that it may not like parts of them.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Wednesday Kyiv had agreed on key points of a post-war reconstruction plan in talks with US President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and other top officials.

Zelenskyy said work on an "economic document" was proceeding and that Ukraine was "fully aligned with the American side."

The United States has sought to establish an investment fund in Ukraine for sectors including rare metals as a central aspect of the country's post-war reconstruction.

Moscow has also signaled its interest in attracting foreign investment after the Wall Street Journal reported that Washington's peace plan includes proposals to invest in Russian rare earths and energy.

Bristol museum heist: Priceless ivory elephant, footage from colonial India, Buddha statue among stolen artefacts

BRISTOL (TIP)

The over 600 artefacts stolen from Bristol Museum in the UK included household belongings, souvenirs, photographs, and papers of British people who lived and worked in the colonies, including India. However, the most valuable of the stolen items included artifacts taken from India, such as an elephant carved in ivory and an ivory statue of the Buddha.

According to Bristol City Council, the items stolen include medals, badges and pins, necklaces, bangles and rings, decorative items such as carved ivory, silver items, and bronze figurines. Natural history pieces, including geological specimens, are also believed to have been taken in the burglary.

The Bristol City Council also released images of an elephant carved in ivory, an ivory statue of the Buddha, a ship lantern, and an Emancipation token.

The museum archived the links between Britain and countries in the British Empire from the late 19th century to recent times, including India. It had over 2,000 items in the film collections dating from 1920 to the



1970s, with footage from India and countries in Africa, and around 500,000 photographs dating from the 1860s to the 1970s. These include the African photographs of the writer Elspeth Huxley, the Crown Agents Railway archive, and Charles Trotter's collection of negatives from 1950s Nairobi.

Investigation officer Det. Constable Dan Burgan claimed many of these collections were donations.

"These items, many of which were donations, form part of a collection that provides insight into a multilayered part of British history, and we are hoping that members of the public can help us to bring those responsible to justice," he told reporters.

Interestingly, Bristol, situated over 195 kilometers southwest of London, was a prominent spot of the slave trade, with ships based in the city transporting Africans into slavery. Most of the people in the city had benefited from and enjoyed the benefits of slavery until its ban in 1807.

In 2020, anti-racism demonstrators toppled the statue of Edward Colston, a 17th-century slave trader, which was later put on display in the museum.

The theft happened on September 25 after four men, wearing hoodies and caps, broke into a building between 1 am and 2 am local time.

The theft was discovered only the next day. According to Philip Walker, head of culture and creative industries at Bristol City Council, the museum had been ransacked.

Sentencing of Pakistan's former ISI chief 'just the begining' Report

The sentencing of Pakistan's former spy chief Faiz Hameed may just be "the beginning", as it can herald a spate of new cases against politicians and activists for involvement in anti-army riots over two years ago, a report said.

Pakistan's former spy chief Faiz Hameed was on Thursday sentenced to 14 years in jail by a military court, which found him guilty on multiple charges, including violating the Official Secrets Act and engaging in political activities.

A statement issued by the army on his sentencing focused on his conviction under military laws. However, it was the final paragraph that drew the most attention, according to a Dawn report.

"Involvement of the convict in fomenting vested political agitation and instability in cahoots with political elements and in certain other matters is separately being dealt with," the statement said, offering no details.

The language implied linking Faiz Hameed and unnamed politicians to a wider effort to engineer unrest, the report said.

The reference marked the latest in a series of military statements since last year, signalling suspicion and hinting at an alleged nexus between him and political elements, opposed to the government, it added.

In a statement issued on August 15, 2024, the ISPR noted that "further investigations of certain retired officers and their accomplices for fomenting instability at the behest of and in collusion with vested political interests are continuing."

A separate statement released at the time of Hameed's detention alleged that "multiple instances of violation of Pakistan Army Act post retirement have also been established," though it did not elaborate.

Days later, the ISPR disclosed that Hameed was being investigated for alleged involvement in the May 9, 2023, riots, during which military buildings and monuments were vandalised.

"During the process, involvement of Lt Gen Faiz Hameed (retd) in events related to creating agitation and unrest, leading to multiple incidents, including, but not limited to May 9, 2023, for fomenting instability at the behest of and in collusion with vested political interests, is also being separately investigated," the statement had then said.

Senator Faisal Vawda hailed Thursday's decision, stating that "it was only the beginning" as charges pertaining to May 9 riots still remained to be seen.

Pakistan's KPK CM alleges Imran Khan subjected to mistreatment in jail

PESHAWAR (TIP)

Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province Chief Minister Muhammad Sohaib Afridi on Friday, Dec 12, alleged that former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi are being subjected to mistreatment in jail.

Afridi's comments came after he was denied permission to meet incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan for the 10th time by the Adiala jail administration.

Addressing a meeting of the Provincial Cabinet, Afridi said that despite the harsh winter, basic necessities and warm clothing were not being provided to the detained couple.

The Chief Minister said that the use of water cannon against Imran Khan's sisters was "shameful," adding that the provincial government strongly condemned such "unjust and inhumane behaviour." Khan, 73, has been in Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi since August 2023 in multiple cases.

Speaking to media persons on Thursday, Afridi said that it was strange that an elected chief minister was not being allowed to meet his party's founding chairman despite court orders



to the contrary.

He warned that both the federal and Punjab government leadership would face consequences once the PTI returned to power at the Centre.

Afridi said efforts had been underway for the past three years to "minus Imran", but all such attempts had failed. The government and the "powers that be" should engage in talks with Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Allama Raja Nasir Abbas, as Imran had authorised them to represent him in negotiations, he added.

Prime Minister's Adviser on Political

Affairs, Rana Sanaullah, stated on Thursday that Afridi was denied a meeting with Khan "based on intelligence reports", The News International reported on Friday.

"Imran Khan wanted to orchestrate another event similar to the November 26 protests in Islamabad on the same date this year, and that Afridi's appointment as chief minister was part of this plan — a plot he claimed has been foiled," the report quoted him as saying.

Replying to a question about Faiz Hameed's sentencing, Afridi said it was an "internal matter of the institution".

Authorities used water cannons to disperse protesters, including the sisters of the PTI founder, who were staging a sit-in outside Adiala jail after being denied a meeting with the ex-premier.

The sit-in, led by Aleema and also including Imran's other sisters Uzma and Noreen, was staged outside the jail on Tuesday after she was once again denied a meeting with the ex-premier.

Senior party members, including PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja and PTI KP Provincial President Junaid Akbar Khan, had also joined the demonstration.

Humiliated, sidelined: Bangladesh President Shahabuddin wants to quit mid-term

DHAKA (TIP)

Bangladesh's President Mohammed Shahabuddin has said he wants to leave office midway through his tenure after the country's February parliamentary election. In an exclusive interview with Reuters on Thursday, the Bangladesh President said he felt "humiliated" and sidelined by the interim administration led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus.

Mohammed Shahabuddin, 75, holds the role of commander-in-chief of the armed forces, though the presidency remains largely ceremonial in the South Asian nation of 173 million. Executive authority rests with the prime minister and cabinet. His office, however, took on prominence last year when a student-led revolt forced long-serving premier Sheikh Hasina to flee to New Delhi in August 2024, leaving him as the only constitutionally mandated authority after parliament's dissolution.

The president was elected unopposed in 2023 for a five-year term as the nominee of Hasina's Awami League, which has since been barred from contesting the 12 February election.

In the interview conducted via WhatsApp from his official residence in Dhaka, Shahabuddin said he no longer wished to continue in office. "I am keen to leave. I am interested to go out," he



said, adding that he would remain only until the election. "Until elections are held, I should continue. I am upholding my position because of the constitutionally held presidency."

He said he had been marginalised by the Yunus-led interim government. According to him, Yunus had not met him for nearly seven months, his press department had been removed, and portraits of the president were taken down from embassies and consulates worldwide in September.

"There was the portrait of the president, picture of the president in all consulates, embassies and high commissions, and this has been eliminated suddenly in one night," he said. "A wrong message goes to the people that perhaps the president is going to be eliminated. I felt very much humiliated."

Shahabuddin said he had written to

Yunus over the removal of his portraits but received no response. "My voice has been stifled," he said. Yunus' press advisers have not responded to the request for comment, according to Reuters. Shahabuddin said he remains in regular touch with Army Chief General Waker-uz-Zaman, whose forces stayed neutral during last year's deadly unrest that ended Hasina's rule. He said the army chief had assured him he had no intention of seizing power, despite Bangladesh's long history of military interventions. Zaman has publicly stated he wants democratic governance restored.

The president noted that although some student groups had initially demanded his resignation during the uprising, no political party has asked him to step aside in recent months.

Asked whether Hasina attempted to contact him after she fled the country, Shahabuddin refused to answer. He insisted he had acted independently since assuming office and was no longer tied to any political party.

Opinion surveys indicate the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by former prime minister Khaleda Zia and the conservative Jamaat-e-Islami are likely to lead the race for forming the next government. The two parties previously governed in coalition from 2001 to 2006.

Sikh History This Week

DECEMBER 12 TO DECEMBER 18

12th December

1762 Abdali left Sikh Homeland after defeat. Sikhs became de facto rulers of their land.

1841 Zorawar Singh dies while fighting the Lhasa force.

1844 Dogra Hira Singh attempted to escape to Jammu. Sham Singh and Jawahar Singh with 6000 troops caught up with and killed the fleeing Dogras.

1920 Inaugural meeting of SGPC at Sri Akal Takhat.



1704 SHAHEEDHI, Chotae Sahibjadhae, Sakka Sirhind.

1921 Master Dalip Singh of Gossal attended a diwan at Rukha Kalan and delivered a lecture.

1922 Shahadat of Sardar Banta Singh and Juyala Singh Babbar.

1923 Munder carnage takes place.

13th December

1845 Lord Hardinge, the Governor General of British forces, issued the proclamation of War against the Sikhs.



1923 Maharaja Ripudaman Singh Nabha passed away.

1924 Sardar Sundar Singh Babbar of Hayatpur dies during trial.

14th December

1705 Imperial forces give solemn assurances of safe conduct at Anandpur. Subsequent events proved these promises to be hollow.

1920 Shiromani Akali Dal was established to assist



the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and launch Gurudwara Sudhar (Restitution) Movement.

15th December

1887 Maharani Bamba, wife of Dalip Singh, passed away in London.



1923 Bhai Pheru Morcha.

1924 14th Shaheedhi Jatha of 500 Akalis marched from Amritsar to Jaito.

1941 Independent Hind Forces were established.

1983 Jarnail Singh Bhindrawalae moved his resident into the building neighboring Sri Akal Takhat.



1990 International Conference on Sikh Studies held in New York.

16th December

1634 Battle of Lahara Gaga between Moghals and Sikhs.

1665 Guru Tegh Bahadur released from



Aurangzeb's detention.

1705 Guru Gobind Singh reached Rai Kot.

1971 Pakistani solidiers surrendered to General



Jagjit Singh Arora.

1987 Isreal Condemns Attrocities against Sikhs in the UNO.

17th December

1846 Treaty of Bhairawal signed between the British and Maharaja Dalip Singh.

18th December

1661 Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji left for Delhi to saefguard the rights of Brahmins.

1845 Battle of Mudki between Sikhs and British Forces.

1960 Fateh Singh started fast unto death for Punjabi Suba.

19th December

1924 Babbar Sada Singh PinDori accepted shahadat in Jail.

1967 Punjabi Bill passed by the Punjab Assembly.

Manage hair fall with these ayurvedic tips

Hair fall is a growing concern for many people today, often triggered by stress, poor nutrition, hormonal changes, pollution, and excessive use of chemical-based hair products. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of natural healing, offers a holistic approach to hair care by treating the root causes rather than just the symptoms. By balancing internal energies and nourishing the scalp naturally, Ayurvedic practices help restore healthy, strong, and long-lasting hair.

According to Ayurveda, excessive hair fall is usually linked to an imbalance of the Pitta dosha, which creates excess heat in the body and weakens hair follicles. Cooling the system and strengthening the roots are therefore central to Ayurvedic hair care. One of the most effective ways to control hair fall is regular scalp massage with warm herbal oils. Oils such as Bhringraj oil, Amla oil, and coconut oil infused with curry leaves improve blood circulation, calm the scalp, and deeply nourish the hair roots. Massaging the scalp two to three times a week and leaving the oil overnight can significantly reduce breakage and promote new hair growth.

Ayurveda also emphasizes the use of powerful herbs that work from within to strengthen hair. Amla provides essential vitamin C and antioxidants that prevent hair thinning and premature greying. Brahmi helps reduce stress, which is one of the most common hidden causes of hair fall. Bhringraj stimulates hair follicles and improves hair density, while Neem keeps the scalp free of infections and dandruff that can weaken the roots. These herbs can be taken in the form of powders, juices, or herbal teas, and can also be used in natural hair masks for external care.

Diet plays a vital role in maintaining healthy hair in Ayurveda. A fresh, balanced, and nutrient-rich diet helps nourish hair from the roots. Including green leafy vegetables, seasonal fruits, soaked nuts, seeds, milk, lentils, and iron-rich foods such as spinach, dates, and jaggery strengthens hair naturally. At the same time, limiting spicy, fried, oily, and processed foods helps control excess body heat, which is a major factor



behind hair fall.

Another important Ayurvedic principle is detoxification. The buildup of toxins, known as Ama, can block the proper flow of nutrients to the scalp. Simple daily habits like drinking warm water in the morning, taking Triphala at night, and maintaining a healthy digestion help cleanse the system and support hair growth. When the body is free from internal toxins, hair becomes stronger and more resilient. Stress management is equally important in controlling hair fall. Ayurveda encourages practices like yoga, meditation, and pranayama to keep the mind calm and the hormones balanced. A relaxed nervous system directly reflects in better hair health. Adequate sleep also plays a crucial role, as the body repairs and regenerates tissues, including hair follicles, during deep rest.

Natural hair masks made from Ayurvedic ingredients can further strengthen the hair. A traditional mixture of Amla, Reetha, and Shikakai powders mixed with water can be applied to the scalp once a week to cleanse, nourish, and fortify the roots. With regular use, such remedies reduce hair fall, add shine, and improve overall hair texture.

FOOD CORNER

Aloo keema

INGREDIENTS

2 medium onions, chopped, 450 g beef or 450 g ground chicken, 1 teaspoon gingerroot, minced, 1 teaspoon garlic, minced, 1 teaspoon chili powder, 1 teaspoon coriander powder, 1 teaspoon turmeric powder, 1 teaspoon salt, 2 tablespoons yogurt, 2-3 tomatoes, chopped, 300 g potatoes, peeled and diced, 1 teaspoon garam masala, 2 green chillies, chopped, 3 tablespoons coriander leaves, chopped.

Method

- Fry onions in a heavy based pan over medium heat.
- when onions are soft but not brown, add meat, garlic and ginger and cook over medium heat about 3-5 mins or until all the moisture has dried from the minced meat.
- Add spices + 3 tbsp water and stirring constantly, cook another 2 minutes.
- Add chopped tomatoes and yogurt and cook for about 10 mins, stirring constantly.
- Add potatoes, mix well.
- Add 1 cup of water, cover and cook 30 mins over low heat or until potatoes are tender.
- Add garam masala, chillies and coriander right before serving.
- Mix well.
- Serve hot with naan, chapati or rice.

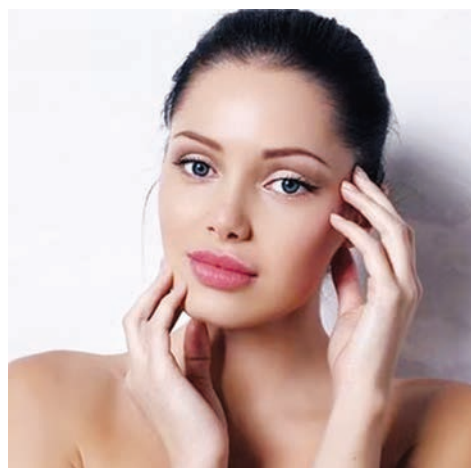


Radiance revealed: Timeless secrets for naturally glowing skin

Glowing, flawless skin is not just about expensive skincare products or fancy salon treatments; it is the result of consistent care, healthy habits, and mindful living. True beauty begins from within, and when your body, mind, and skin are in harmony, the natural radiance shows effortlessly on your face. Whether you are dealing with dullness, uneven texture, or occasional breakouts, these timeless beauty secrets can help you achieve naturally luminous skin.

One of the most essential secrets to flawless skin is proper hydration. Drinking enough water throughout the day helps flush out toxins, improves blood circulation, and keeps the skin plump and supple. Well-hydrated skin looks fresher, smoother, and more youthful. Starting your day with a glass of warm water, sometimes with a few drops of lemon or a teaspoon of honey, can instantly boost your skin's natural glow.

Cleansing your skin correctly is equally important. Dirt, pollution,



makeup, and excess oil clog pores and make the skin look tired and uneven. Using a gentle cleanser twice a day helps remove impurities without stripping the skin of its natural moisture. Double cleansing at night, especially if you wear makeup or sunscreen, ensures that your skin can breathe and repair itself while you sleep. Exfoliation is another powerful secret that many people underestimate.

Dead skin cells accumulate on the surface of the skin, making it look dull and rough. Gentle exfoliation two to three times a week helps remove this dead layer, revealing brighter and smoother skin underneath. Natural exfoliants like sugar, coffee grounds, or finely ground oatmeal mixed with honey or milk can work wonders when used gently.

Face masks and natural packs play a major role in enhancing skin texture and brightness. Ingredients like turmeric, gram flour, sandalwood, aloe vera, and multani mitti have been used for centuries to improve skin clarity and glow. A simple pack made with gram flour, turmeric, milk, and a few drops of rose water can instantly refresh and brighten the skin when applied once or twice a week. Nutrition is one of the biggest contributors to flawless skin.

A balanced diet rich in fresh fruits, green vegetables, healthy fats, and proteins nourishes the skin from within. Foods high in antioxidants, such as

berries, citrus fruits, tomatoes, and leafy greens, protect the skin from damage and premature aging. Omega-3 fatty acids found in nuts and seeds help maintain skin elasticity and natural moisture. Sleep is often called the ultimate beauty treatment, and for good reason. When you sleep, your skin repairs itself, regenerates new cells, and heals damage caused during the day. Getting seven to eight hours of quality sleep every night can significantly reduce dark circles, puffiness, and dullness.

A consistent sleep schedule also helps balance hormones that affect skin health. Sun protection is a non-negotiable part of flawless skin. Prolonged sun exposure leads to tanning, pigmentation, fine lines, and early aging. Using sunscreen daily, even on cloudy days or while indoors near windows, protects the skin from harmful UV rays and preserves its natural clarity. Wearing sunglasses and wide-brimmed hats can give your skin extra protection.

Beyond calcium: Essential nutrients that strengthen your bones

When it comes to strong bones, calcium often gets all the attention. However, bone health depends on a combination of several essential nutrients working together. Without these nutrients, calcium cannot be properly absorbed, utilized, or retained in the bones. To build and maintain strong bones throughout life, it's important to include these vital nutrients in your daily diet.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is one of the most critical nutrients for bone health because it helps your body absorb calcium from food. Without enough vitamin D, even a calcium-rich diet won't be effective. It also helps regulate calcium and phosphorus levels in the blood, which are essential for proper bone mineralization. Sunlight is the best natural source, while foods like fortified milk, mushrooms, and egg yolks also provide this vitamin.

Magnesium

Magnesium plays a key role in converting vitamin D into its active form, allowing better absorption of calcium. It also contributes to bone structure, as a significant portion of the body's magnesium is stored in the bones. Nuts, seeds, whole grains, bananas, and leafy green vegetables are excellent natural sources of magnesium.

Phosphorus

Phosphorus works closely with calcium to form hydroxyapatite, the mineral compound that gives bones their strength and rigidity. A balanced intake of phosphorus helps improve bone density and durability. It is commonly found in dairy products, meat, fish, lentils, nuts, and whole grains.



Vitamin K

Vitamin K is essential for activating osteocalcin, a protein that binds calcium to the bone matrix. Without sufficient vitamin K, bones may become weak and more prone to fractures. Green leafy vegetables such as spinach, kale, broccoli, and cabbage are rich sources of this important vitamin.

Protein

Protein is a structural component of bones, not just muscles. About one-third of bone mass is made of protein, which forms the framework on which minerals like calcium and phosphorus are deposited. Adequate protein intake from sources such as pulses, dairy, eggs, fish, chicken, tofu, and nuts is crucial for maintaining bone strength.

Zinc

Zinc supports bone tissue growth and repair by stimulating the activity of bone-forming cells called osteoblasts. It also helps reduce the breakdown of bone tissue. Foods rich in zinc include pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, whole grains, beans, and shellfish.



Why you don't feel like drinking water in winter

In summer, drinking water feels natural almost effortless. But the moment winter arrives, staying hydrated starts to feel like a chore. You don't feel thirsty, and even when you do, you take a few reluctant sips and stop. It's that season when drinking water feels less like a habit and more like something you force yourself to do.

But this simple change in behaviour is exactly what makes winter dehydration so common and so overlooked.

Cold weather tricks the brain

In winter, your blood vessels tighten to conserve heat. This reduces blood flow to the brain's thirst centre, making you think you're well-hydrated even when you're not. Research shows that cold weather can reduce your thirst sensation by nearly 40%.

Dry air leads to invisible water loss

Winter air holds very little moisture. Every breath you take in cold air and release warm air causes your body to lose water vapour a process known as respiratory fluid loss. You don't notice it, but it adds up.

Layers of clothing cause hidden sweating

Heavy sweaters, jackets and shawls trap heat, causing mild sweating that evaporates quickly in dry air. Because you don't see the sweat, you underestimate how much fluid you're losing.

Indoor heating dries out your environment

Heaters and blowers reduce humidity indoors, pulling moisture from your skin, throat and nasal passages. This is why many people wake up with a dry mouth or scratchy throat during winter.

Hot beverages replace water

When it's cold, a cup of chai or coffee feels more comforting than plain water. But these drinks don't hydrate you as effectively and caffeine can increase fluid loss when consumed in excess.

Meditation for anger control: Techniques that scientifically reduce the body's stress response

Here are scientifically grounded techniques based on the 'Experiment of Stillness' to help manage anger and reduce stress.

The Breath Bridge: Returning To Safety

When anger strikes, the body enters a state of fight-or-flight. The most immediate way to signal safety to the nervous system is through the breath. In yogic philosophy, this practice leads to samatvam, an evenness of mind where emotions lose their sharp edges.

Technique: When you feel your temperature rise, place one hand on your chest.

Action: Breathe in consciously for four counts and exhale for four counts.

Result: This acts as a bridge between reaction and response. It interrupts the neural loop of anger, reminding the body that it is safe and allowing the "chaos" in the mind to settle so the confusion can clear.

Witnessing The "Thought Ledger"

When we are angry, our mind starts creating a narrative. The key focus is to convince our mind that we are thinking in the right direction. We tell ourselves, "They disrespected me" or "This isn't fair." As the text notes, "A single idea, repeated enough times, becomes belief." To break this cycle, we must create distance between the thinker and the thought.

Technique: Instead of voicing your anger, mentally write it down in a "Thought Ledger."

Action: Observe the angry thought as a "passer-by" on the street. Do not censor it, but do not become it.



Result: This practice of non-judgmental observation reduces the power of the emotion. You realize that you are not the anger; you are the sky witnessing the passing storm.

Realigning Bhavana (Thought Replacement)

The concept of bhavana suggests that whatever emotion we rehearse, we amplify. If we rehearse grievance, we live in anger. To rewire the brain (neuroplasticity), we must consciously feed the mind a different input.

Technique: When an angry thought spins, consciously replace it with a healing sentence.

Examples: "I choose calm over control" or "Everything I need arrives in its time."

Result: This is not about ignoring reality, but about training the mind. Over time, new neural pathways form that favor calm over chaos.

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James Webb telescope breaks own record, spots oldest star explosion ever known

The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)'s recent results have once again shifted the boundaries of what astronomers can observe. Scientists now report identifying the earliest supernova ever found, erupting just 730 million years after the universe's birth, approximately five percent into cosmic history.

This milestone not only redefines astronomical records but clarifies how the universe's first stars and supermassive black holes came to be.

On March 14, 2025, the French-Chinese Space-based multi-band astronomical Variable Objects Monitor picked up a gamma-ray burst: GRB250314A. Within 24 hours, telescopes in the Canary Islands and Chile, alongside NASA's Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory, zeroed in on the event.

This event overtakes the space telescope's previous best: a supernova seen from 1.8 billion years post Big Bang.

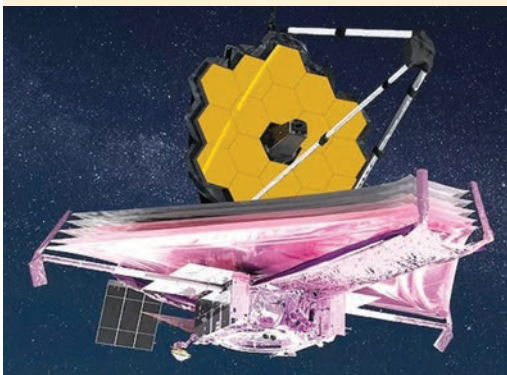
Andrew Levan, the main study's lead author, stated, "With JWST, we were able to immediately demonstrate that this light comes from a supernova—a collapsing massive star. This observation also shows that we can use this space telescope to identify individual stars from a time when the universe was only about 5 per cent of its current age, roughly 0.7 billion years old."

Despite its immense age, the supernova displays strong similarities to those found in nearby cosmic neighbourhoods. However, the research team emphasises the need for expanded datasets to discern any nuanced differences. These forthcoming insights may clarify what transpired within the universe's first billion years.

JWST has also pinpointed the supernova's host galaxy, GS 3073. This galaxy holds a nitrogen-to-oxygen ratio measured at 0.46, a value that far exceeds what usual stellar activity produces. Such a ratio proved pivotal.

JWST has managed to capture light from GS 3073, even from such a remote distance. In JWST's imagery, the galaxy emerges as a dim red speck, squeezed into only a handful of pixels.

The collaborating international group has now secured approval to use JWST for further observations of additional afterglows from related gamma-ray bursts.



Meta updates Facebook so you can see more reels, here's what is changing

Meta is changing the way your Facebook feed works, focusing on updated design elements and improved access to Reels and other popular features. The company hopes to make it easier for users to see content they are interested in.

The update, which will soon reach users globally, centres on a more immersive feed, streamlined navigation bars. According to Meta, these changes are intended to make the platform easier to use while highlighting trending content.

The overhaul will affect several core areas of the app, including search, navigation, feed, and content creation tools. Now, you will see a grid layout for search results and for posts containing multiple photos. The company states that this will make it easier to browse through the different images.

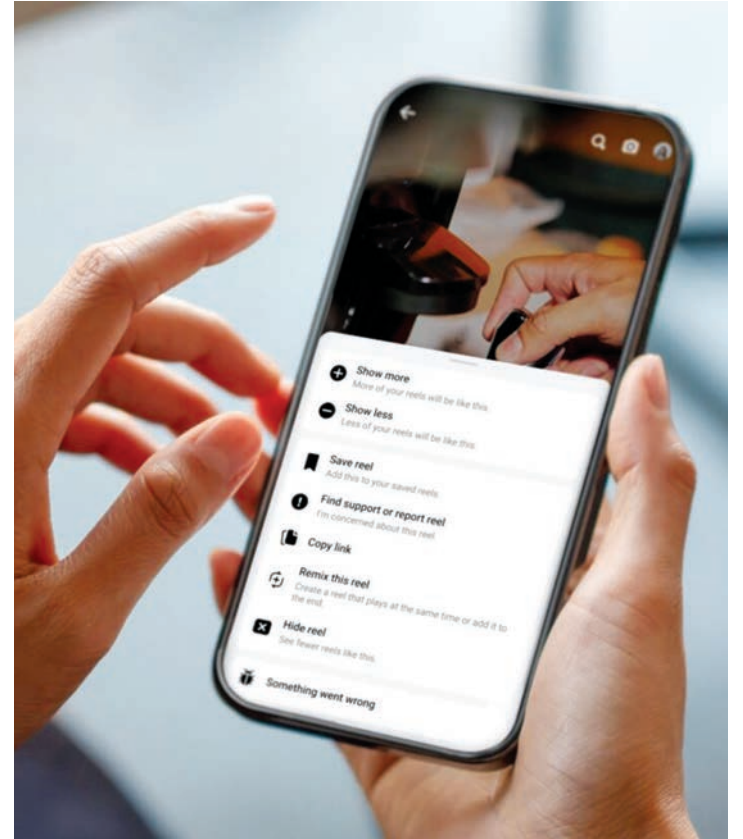
Meta emphasised its goal to streamline the Facebook experience, with particular attention to visual content. Along with Reels, the platform aims to surface more relevant and engaging media within users' feeds.

Reels will now be easier to find and watch, thanks to their dedicated tab in the lower navigation bar. Changes to the navigation layout mean the most-used features—including Reels, Friends, Marketplace, and Profile—are immediately accessible.

Additional refinements have been made to the menu and notification tabs, which Meta describes as "refreshed." Users will also be able to access Meta AI tools and quickly view Stories from friends.

Facebook is also experimenting with new ways for users to engage with content. Search results will soon display as an immersive grid, and Meta confirmed that it is testing a new "full-screen viewer" to allow users to see photo and video results too.

The update also includes enhancements to Facebook's discovery algorithm, aiming to recommend friends and content based on shared interests, such as music, travel, or favourite shows. Users can choose which interests appear on



their profiles and provide feedback on what content they prefer to see, enhancing control and personalisation in their feed.

Content creation has also received a usability boost, with key tools like adding music or tagging friends now easier to access. The changes are designed to help users create and share posts with minimal friction, reflecting ongoing efforts to keep Facebook both familiar and up to date.

Apple iPhone Fold to shake up foldable market in 2026 with huge share and sky high price

Apple is expected to launch its first-ever foldable iPhone in 2026. After years of waiting, the Cupertino giant will likely finally join the foldable race against the likes of Samsung and Google. Now, reports suggest that this device can put Apple at the forefront of the foldable segment, with a market share as high as 34 per cent.

According to International Data Corporation (IDC), the iPhone Fold is expected to capture over 22 per cent of unit sales and 34 per cent of the total market value in its debut year. These estimates come despite the expected price tag of \$2,400 (roughly Rs 2,15,000) for the Apple foldable. For context, the Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 7 is priced at Rs 1,74,999 in India.

Apple's entry in the foldable smartphone segment is seen as a major development that could accelerate growth and competition among established brands. The global foldable smartphone market is forecasted to grow by 30 per cent year-over-year in 2026, a sharp increase from the previous 6 per cent projection.

Multiple high-profile launches are expected to drive this growth, including Samsung's upcoming Galaxy Z Trifold and new models from Huawei. However, Apple's arrival at the end of the year is cited as a 'game changer' in the foldable category.

The iPhone Fold is expected to debut in fall 2026, likely alongside the iPhone 18 Pro lineup. The first-ever Apple foldable is tipped to feature a book-like, inward-folding design with a 5.5-inch exterior display and a 7.8-inch interior display.

Rumoured features for the iPhone Fold also include an under-display selfie camera and a crease-minimising hinge.



The device is expected to be powered by the upcoming A20 Pro chipset, the same as the iPhone 18 Pro models. Apple is also rumoured to pack at least a 5,400mAh battery. If true, this would be larger than most foldables, including the Galaxy Z Fold 7 and the Google Pixel 10 Pro Fold.

Divided Fed approves third rate cut this year, sees slower pace ahead

NEW YORK (TIP)

A Federal Reserve split over where its priorities should lie cut its key interest rate on Dec 10, but signaled a tougher road ahead for further reductions.

Fulfilling expectations of a “hawkish cut,” the central bank’s Federal Open Market Committee lowered its key overnight borrowing rate by a quarter percentage point, putting it in a range between 3.5%-3.75%.

However, the move carried caution flags about where policy is headed from here and featured “no” votes from three members, which hasn’t happened since September 2019.

The 9-3 vote again featured hawkish and dovish dissents – Governor Stephen Miran favored a steeper half-point reduction while regional Presidents Jeffrey Schmid of Kansas City and Austan Goolsbee of Chicago backed holding the line. In Fed parlance, hawks are generally more concerned about inflation and favor higher rates while doves focus on supporting the labor market and want lower rates.

This was the third consecutive “no” vote from Miran, who leaves the Fed in January, and the second straight from Schmid. The previous three-dissent meeting also featured a 2-1 divide from members conflicted between the need for tighter and looser monetary policy.

The post-meeting rate statement repurposed language from the FOMC meeting a year ago.

“In considering the extent and timing of additional adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate, the Committee will carefully assess incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks,” the statement said.

When the language was used in December 2024, it signaled that the committee likely was done cutting for the time being. The FOMC then did not



approve any reductions until the September 2025 meeting.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell, at his post-meeting news conference, said the reduction puts the Fed in a comfortable position as far as rates go.

“We are well positioned to wait and see how the economy evolves,” Powell said.

Stocks rose following the decision, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average adding 500 points. Treasury yields moved mostly lower.

“We’re in the high end of the range of neutral,” Powell added. “It’s so happened that we’ve cut three times. We have we haven’t made any decision about January, but as I said, we think we’re well positioned to wait and see how the economy performs.”

With a third consecutive cut now made, the focus turns to where the FOMC heads from here.

The closely watched “dot plot” of individual officials’ expectations on rates indicated just one cut in 2026 and another in 2027 before the federal funds rate hits a longer-run target around 3%. Those projections were unchanged from the September update, but the plot

reflected divisions within the committee about where rates should head.

Along with the two “no” dovish votes on the rate cut, four other nonvoting meeting participants registered “soft dissents” indicating that they did not go along with the decision. Seven officials also indicated they want no cuts next year. FOMC meetings feature 19 participants among the governors and regional presidents, 12 of whom vote.

“The discussions we have are as good as any we’ve had in my 14 years at the Fed, very thoughtful, respectful, and you just have people who have strong views, and we come together and we reach a place where we can make a decision,” Powell said.

On the economy, the committee raised its collective view of gross domestic product growth for 2026, boosting its September projection up by half a percentage point, to 2.3%. The committee continues to expect inflation to hold above its 2% target until 2028.

On inflation, prices remain stubbornly high, with the Fed’s preferred gauge putting the annual rate at 2.8% in September, the most recent month for which data is available. While that’s considerably off the peaks of a few years ago, it’s still well north of the central bank’s 2% target.

In addition to the rate decision, the Fed also announced it will resume buying Treasury securities, following up on an announcement at the October meeting that it would halt its balance sheet runoff this month. The move comes amid concerns about pressures in overnight funding markets.

The central bank will start by buying \$40 billion in Treasury bills, beginning Friday. From there, purchases are expected to “remain elevated for a few months” and then likely will be “significantly reduced”.

With \$17.5 billion investment, its largest in Asia, Microsoft wants to make India AI first

In a year that has already seen global tech heavyweights court India’s growing digital ambitions, Microsoft has gone all in. The Redmond-based technology giant has pledged a staggering \$17.5 billion to power India’s AI-first future, its largest investment ever in Asia. The announcement came hot on the heels of CEO Satya Nadella’s meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, marking a major milestone in India’s artificial intelligence journey.

“Thank you, PM @narendramodi ji, for an inspiring conversation on India’s AI opportunity. To support the country’s ambitions, Microsoft is committing US\$17.5B, our largest investment ever in Asia, to help build the infrastructure, skills, and sovereign capabilities needed for India’s AI-first future,” Nadella posted on X shortly after the meeting.

In a meeting described as “productive” by the Prime Minister, both leaders discussed India’s AI roadmap and growth priorities. Modi later wrote that the country’s youth would “harness the opportunity to innovate and leverage the power of AI for a better planet.”

The discussions set the stage for Microsoft’s most ambitious India play yet, as Nadella’s visit came amid a series of high-level engagements between the government and top global tech CEOs, including Intel’s Lip-Bu Tan and Cognizant’s Ravi Kumar S.

Microsoft said its new investment would span four years, from 2026 to 2029, focusing on three key pillars, scale, skills, and sovereignty. The goal is to build the digital backbone that will make India a “frontier AI nation”, the company said in a post on its website.

US should sign free trade pact if happy with India's offer: Goyal

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Amid ongoing tensions over trade, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday, Dec 11, that the US should sign the free trade agreement with India on the “dotted lines” if the Donald Trump administration is satisfied with New Delhi’s proposals. He was responding to comments made by US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer in Washington, who described India’s offer as the “best ever” received by the United States.

He welcomed that assessment but declined to disclose the contours of India’s offer. He also refrained from setting any timeline for the conclusion of the long-discussed free trade agreement between the two nations. “His happiness



is very much welcome. And, I do believe that if they are very happy, they should be signing on the dotted lines,” Goyal said. The minister’s comments came as India and the United States concluded two days of trade discussions in New

Delhi. According to commerce ministry sources cited by PTI, both sides reviewed progress on the bilateral trade agreement and exchanged views on market access, regulatory issues and investment frameworks.

He said that five rounds of negotiations have taken place so far and emphasised that the ongoing visit of US Deputy Trade Representative Rick Switzer is not centred around negotiations. Switzer’s trip, the first since taking office three months ago, is intended to build familiarity and strengthen working relationships, Goyal added, describing his talks with the visiting official as “substantial”.

As the discussions concluded in New Delhi, the officials said the discussions were “purposeful and positive” and the

momentum reflected both governments’ intent to narrow differences that have slowed the negotiations in recent years. The high-level US delegation led by Switzer met Goyal, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal and senior officials across several ministries. Indian officials said the visit helped reinforce political direction from leaders to accelerate talks.

India and the US are currently working to complete the first tranche of the trade agreement following instructions from their leaders earlier this year. Six negotiation rounds have been held so far. The initial package is expected to tackle tariff rationalisation, access for services, digital trade and a handful of long-standing irritants that have shaped India-US commercial ties.



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



Aries

ARIES

Ganesha says that the week will start with the removal of any major hindrance related to life. Those who were suffering from some disease will get health benefits. Overall, the people of Aries will get freedom from diseases and bereavement this week. During this time, you will work with a new energy and confidence in your field or business. You will get the support of both your senior and junior. This time is going to be very auspicious and successful for the students who are preparing for the examination competition. Some good news will be received by the end of the week, which will create an atmosphere of happiness in the family. Businesspeople will get the desired benefits in the first half of the week. You will get the desired success in matters related to court. In the second half of the week, you will get opportunities to advance your career and business. People who are wandering in search of livelihood will get new opportunities, then the promotion of employed people is possible. The relationship with the love partner will be strong and you will have a pleasant time with him. Happiness will remain in married life as well. In the second half of the week, the mind will be worried about the health of the elderly woman in the house.



Taurus

TAURUS

Ganesha says that the people of Taurus should avoid getting involved in unnecessary disputes this week. At the beginning of the week, your opponents may be active in the workplace and may try to distract you from your goal. In such a situation, instead of getting entangled in small things, it would be better to focus on your goal. This week you will also need extra hard work and effort to complete your work. In the middle of the week, more money may be spent out of pocket on repairing the house or buying things related to the need. During this, there can be a debate with family members regarding something. A senior person will play an important role in solving this. During this, avoid sticking your leg to someone's fault, otherwise, you may have to go to court without any reason. It would be better to settle disputes related to land and buildings outside the court. People associated with a business will continue to need to take special care while doing transactions. The people of Taurus will need to pay special attention to their health this week. Especially in the second half of



Gemini

GEMINI

the week, you may be a victim of seasonal illness. Misunderstandings can arise in a love relationship, which, instead of dispute, resort to dialogue, otherwise things can get worse.

Ganesha says that this week has brought happiness, prosperity, and success to the people of Gemini. At the beginning of the week, people who are preparing for the exam competition can get to hear some good news. If you have been waiting for a transfer or promotion at your desired place for a long time, then your wish will be fulfilled this week. Unemployed people will get better employment opportunities. Investments made in the past in any scheme or business will lead to huge profits. Will get the benefit of schemes related to power government. In the second half of the week, you will heave a sigh of relief when the dispute related to ancestral property is resolved with the help of an influential person. During this, due to the arrival of a dear person, there will be an atmosphere of happiness in the house. Misunderstandings arising in a love relationship will be removed with the help of a female friend. In spite of this, you have to move forward in this direction very carefully, otherwise, you may have to face unnecessary problems. For a happy married life, do not ignore the feelings of your spouse, and do take some time out for them. Take special care of food and drink along with busy work, otherwise, there may be stomach problems.



Cancer

CANCER

Ganesha says that the people of the Cancer zodiac will have to control their minds, speech, and behavior a lot this week, otherwise, you may have to face all kinds of problems unnecessarily. At the beginning of the week, there can be a debate with colleagues regarding something in the workplace. In such a situation, it would be better not to give importance to the small things of others. Amidst all kinds of upheavals in the workplace, you can also hear good news related to transfer or promotion at the desired place. Those who were thinking of a job change may also get better opportunities this week. Control your speech and behavior while solving any matter related to power or government, otherwise, your things may get spoiled. In the second half of the week, long or short-distance travel is possible in connection with work. During this time, the mind of the students may get distracted from their studies and their mind will be engaged in fun. From the point of view of a love affair, this time will be a little less favorable for you. The mind will be distressed if the distance or meeting with the love partner is not possible. Spouse's health will be a cause of your concern.



Leo

LEO

Ganesha says that this week has brought success and good fortune for the people of the Leo zodiac. At the beginning of the week, the journeys made in connection with career and business will bring the desired success. During this, you will get a lot of support from people both at home and outside. Respect will increase in society. A meeting with a senior and influential person will be beneficial in the future. The money stuck in the market will come out unexpectedly and the wish for expansion in the business will be fulfilled. In the middle of the week, a picnic or party can be organized with family or friends. The wish of buying and selling land and buildings will also be fulfilled. This week, any major achievement related to children will prove to increase your happiness and respect. There will be intensity in the love affair and happy time will be spent with the love partner. Married life will also remain happy. You can get a big surprise gift from your spouse. Health will be normal.



Virgo

VIRGO

Ganesha says that this week will prove to be mixed for the people of Virgo. At the beginning of the week, some problems related to the workplace can be a major cause of your concern. During this time, you will get less support from both your seniors and juniors and extra hard work and effort will be required to fulfill your target. The wait may increase for people looking for employment. In the middle of the week, you have to pay special attention to your health and relationships. During this time your health will act as a hindrance in completing your planned tasks. You may be troubled due to the emergence of seasonal or any chronic disease. During this time, matters related to land and buildings can become a major cause of your concern. Those doing business in partnership have to avoid blindly trusting others, otherwise, they may have to face financial loss. This week, instead of turning a blind eye to the problems facing personal life or a love relationship, it would be appropriate to face them and find a solution. Take the help of dialogue to remove misunderstandings with your love partner.



Libra

LIBRA

Ganesha says that the people of the Libra zodiac may face some difficulties related to careers and business at the beginning of the week. During this time, you will get less support from your seniors and juniors in the workplace and the workload will also be more. Amid these problems related to the workplace, there will be tension in the family about something. Due to a

dispute with your spouse, your mind may remain upset. However, this situation will not last for long, and by the middle of the week, you will see things coming back on track and you will once again get the full support of luck. In the second half of the week, the people associated with the partnership will get the desired benefits. For those who were thinking of expanding their business, their wish will be fulfilled. While making any major decision, you will get the support of all the family members including your siblings. A visit to a religious place is possible in the second half of the week. There will be intensity in the love relationship and there will be better coordination with the love partner.



Scorpio

SCORPIO

Ganesha says that this week is going to prove to be mixed for the people of the Scorpio zodiac. 'Veer Bhogya Vasundhara' This week, the people of the Scorpio zodiac will always have to remember this line and instead of running away from problems, they will have to face them firmly. The special thing is that whether your challenges are related to the field of work or related to your personal life, you will be able to overcome them by using your intelligence and discretion. Those who are busy preparing for any exam competition will need hard work for success. In the middle of the week, your secret enemies may become active, in which case you will need to be very careful. Do not disclose your plans before completing them in the workplace, otherwise your opponents may put obstacles in them. During this, be very careful in money transactions, otherwise, there can be a financial loss. Love relations will be normal with sour-sweet disputes. Married life will remain happy.



Sagittarius

SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says that the week for Sagittarius people will start with long or short-distance travel. During this time, you can go for tourism with your family. The journey will prove to be pleasant and entertaining. This week is going to prove to be very auspicious for you in terms of career and business. The desired position can be achieved at the beginning of the week itself. You can also be honored for some special achievement, which will increase your respect. During this, some good news can be heard from the side of the child as well. If you were thinking of starting your business for a long time or expanding the already-running business, then your wish can be fulfilled this week. There will be a meeting with a dear person in the second half of the week. Misunderstandings with relatives will be removed and intimate love will

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : DEC 15 TO DEC 21 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

NOVEMBER 15

Ganesha says today is a great day for wisdom and introspection. You may find yourself making connections, understanding complex situations, and uncovering never-before-seen truths. Use this day to learn new things and communicate effectively. Listening to others may provide a solution to a question you have been pondering for a long time.

NOVEMBER 16

Ganesha says this day is inspiring you to embrace your dreams and ambitions. There is an energetic wave of motivation within you that can be used to make progress on projects or ideas you are passionate about. You may face some challenges, but remember, they are meant to make you stronger. Accept them and let them be stepping stones towards your goals.

NOVEMBER 17

Ganesha says today is a day of balance and harmony. You will discover a way to harmonize different aspects of your life, whether it is a work-life balance or aligning your actions with your values. You will feel a sense of balance, and the harmony you achieve today will lay the foundation for future success.

NOVEMBER 18

Ganesha says today calls for introspection and self-awareness. Delve deep into your mind and understand your true desires and motivations. Indulge in activities that help you connect with your inner self. Whether it is meditation, journaling, or simply spending time in solitude, wisdom and peace await you.

NOVEMBER 19

Ganesha says today is a day of expansion and progress. You are on the cusp of an important personal growth phase. This could be learning a new skill, broadening your perspective, or stepping out of your comfort zone. Accept the opportunities that come your way, as they play a vital role in your growth.

NOVEMBER 20

Ganesha says this is a day of creativity and intuition. Your artistic abilities flourish, and your intuition grows. Express your creativity and trust your inner feelings. You may surprise yourself with your insights and your artistic accomplishments.

NOVEMBER 21

Ganesha says today is a day of discipline and determination. Focus on your goals and make a structured plan to



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

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achieve them. Whether it is a professional objective or a personal dream, putting in effort and staying committed will take you closer to your aspirations. Let your determination be your guide, and let discipline be your guide.

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increase. From the point of view of a love affair, this time will prove to be very auspicious for you. Married life will remain happy.

CAPRICORN

Ganesha says that the people of Capricorn will need to focus on their goal this week, not paying attention to the things here and there. At the beginning of the week, any dispute related to land-building will be a major cause of your concern. During this time, more money may have to be spent out of pocket for home repair or any item related to the need. Due to this, your budget can get a little messed up. If you are trying to settle abroad or get employment, then you may have to wait a little longer for this. Do not forget to take the advice of an expert or a well-wisher before investing money in any scheme. In the second half of the week, working women may find it difficult to balance between home and work. However, during this time you will continue to get full support and cooperation from your spouse. People related to love should avoid glorifying or showcasing their love life on platforms like social media, otherwise, you may have to face unnecessary problems. Married life will remain happy.

AQUARIUS

Ganesha says that this week is going to be auspicious for the people of Aquarius in terms of career and business. At the beginning of the week, the journey done in connection with the business will prove to be pleasant and profitable. If you were thinking of taking your business forward for a long time, then with the help of your best friends, your wish will be fulfilled. This time will be very favorable for employed people. Seniors will be kind to him in the workplace and juniors will also get full support. A meeting with an influential person in the middle of the week will lead to big

profits in the future. There will be full cooperation and support from the parents regarding the purchase and sale of land and buildings. Students engaged in the preparation of examination competitions can get to hear some good news. This week will also prove to be auspicious from the point of view of a love affair. If you were thinking of expressing love in front of someone, then doing so will make your point. On the other hand, relatives can give their approval on the marriage of people who are already in a love relationship. Married life will remain happy.

PISCES

Ganesha says that this week is auspicious and successful for the people of Pisces. At the

beginning of the week, all the opportunities related to life will be seen knocking on the doors. People wandering in search of employment will get better opportunities. People associated with politics can get desired positions or responsibilities. Will get the benefit of schemes related to power and government. If you were thinking of going abroad to study or work, then your wish may be fulfilled this week. In the second half of the week, disputes and obstacles related to land-building or ancestral property will be removed. The decision will come in your favor in the case related to the court. Desired profit and progress will be seen in business. However, during this time you have to take special care of your health, otherwise, you may become a victim of seasonal diseases. This week your love vehicle will be seen running fast on the

track. Love relations will be intense and there will be opportunities to spend happy moments with the love partner. Married life will remain happy.

AUTHOR BIO

Chirag Daruwalla is the best astrologer and one of the most famous names in the astrology world. He has more than 18 years of experience. Readers may seek his advice related to career, health, finance, business, money, love and marriage. He has complete knowledge, solutions, and guidance to all the problems related to life. Visit his website chiragdaruwalla.com. He is available for consultations on WhatsApp number +91 8141566266 or by email: info@chiragdaruwalla.com

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Tirupati Balaji Jayanti: A spiritual journey into the grace of Lord Venkateswara

Tirupati Balaji Jayanti is a deeply sacred occasion that celebrates the divine manifestation of Lord Venkateswara, the form of Lord Vishnu believed to have descended on earth to uplift humanity during the age of Kali. Observed with immense devotion, this auspicious day reminds devotees not only of a divine birth, but of the eternal promise that God walks alongside humankind, ready to guide lost souls back to the path of dharma, surrender, and inner peace.

At the heart of this sacred observance is the mystical hill shrine of Tirumala, where Lord Venkateswara is worshipped as the living protector of the world. Known lovingly as Tirupati Balaji, Srinivasa, and Govinda, the Lord is believed to have incarnated here to rescue humanity from the sufferings of the Kali Yuga. Tirupati Balaji Jayanti symbolizes this moment of divine descent — when the infinite chose to take a form accessible to human hearts.

Spiritually, this Jayanti is more than a ritual; it is a reminder of the soul's eternal relationship with the Divine. Lord Venkateswara is seen as the embodiment of compassion, patience, and divine justice. His eyes, half-closed in eternal meditation and half-open in grace, symbolize a perfect balance between inner stillness and outward mercy. Meditating on this form during the Jayanti is believed to dissolve karmic burdens and awaken the dormant divinity within the devotee's heart.

Devotees begin this holy day with purification rituals, waking up before dawn to bathe and wear fresh, clean clothes that symbolize spiritual rebirth. Homes and temples glow with oil lamps, representing the light of divine wisdom dispersing the darkness of ignorance. Sacred chants like "Om Namo Venkatesaya" and "Govinda Namavali" fill the air, creating a powerful spiritual vibration that uplifts the consciousness and brings a sense of divine presence into everyday life.

Special prayers are offered at the sacred shrine of Sri Venkateswara Temple, where countless pilgrims gather to seek darshan. The rituals of Suprabhatam, Abhishekam, Alankaram, and Naivedyam on this day are believed to carry multiplied spiritual merit. It is not merely the act of worship that matters, but the surrender of ego, fear, and desire at the sacred feet of the Lord.

The spiritual essence of Tirupati Balaji Jayanti teaches the supreme value of surrender — the act of placing one's worries, pain, and karmic debts into the hands of the Divine. In Vaishnavite tradition, Lord Venkateswara is worshipped as the giver of both material well-being and spiritual liberation. But spiritually, the greatest blessing He offers is not wealth or success, but inner peace, clarity of purpose, and unwavering faith in the divine plan.

Another profound spiritual belief associated with this Jayanti is the idea that



Important information

Tirupati Balaji Jayanti 2025

Friday, 12 December 2025

Ashtami Tithi Start: 11 December 2025 at 01:57 PM

Ashtami Tithi End: 12 December 2025 at 02:57 PM

Lord Venkateswara still resides actively on the Tirumala hills, constantly listening to the prayers of devotees. This living presence transforms Tirupati Balaji Jayanti into a bridge between the earthly and the divine realms. It reminds the seeker that God is not distant, but intimately involved in every breath, every step, and every silent prayer.

Observing fasts, performing charity, feeding the poor, and helping the needy on this sacred day are considered powerful spiritual practices. Such acts are believed to purify the heart and align the soul with the higher laws of compassion and selflessness. Service, in this light, becomes a form of worship, and kindness becomes a prayer in action.

Tirupati Balaji Jayanti ultimately teaches that life itself is a pilgrimage. The soul journeys through ignorance,

suffering, and illusion, seeking the eternal truth that resides in the heart of Lord Venkateswara. On this holy day, devotees are reminded that true darshan is not just seeing the deity with the eyes, but realizing His presence within one's own soul.

In its deepest spiritual sense, Tirupati Balaji Jayanti is a call to awaken. It invites every soul to release fear, surrender pride, and walk the path of devotion with humility and love. It is a celebration of divine descent, but also of human ascent — the rising of the soul toward its eternal source, guided by the compassionate grace of Tirupati Balaji.

Festivals at Tirupati Balaji Temple

Tirupati Balaji temple is the most famous religious place in India. This temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is called the Vaikuntha of Kali Yuga. Thousands of devotees come here every day to have darshan of Lord Balaji.

On the occasion of Tirupati Balaji Jayanti, the entire temple complex is decorated with lamps and flowers. On this day, the idol of Lord Balaji is dressed in special clothes and jewelry. Devotees perform Angapradakshina (circumambulation of the temple) in the temple and express their devotion to the

Lord.

The most special thing about the temple is that devotees offer their hair to Lord Balaji when their wishes are fulfilled. This is called "Keshdan", which symbolizes the renunciation of ego and negativity.

Balaji Jayanti Puja Vidhi and Rituals

Devotees perform special worship on the day of Balaji Jayanti. The day starts with devotees taking a bath at dawn and wearing pure clothes. After this, they go to the temple of Lord Balaji and worship.

Worship Method:

- Bath and Purification: Devotees wake up early in the morning, take a bath and get ready for worship.
- Darshan in the Temple: Long queues are formed to visit Lord Balaji in Tirupati Temple.
- Mantra Chanting: Devotees chant "Om Namo Narayana" and "Govinda Govinda" mantras.
- Mahaarati: A grand aarti is organized in the temple in the evening.
- Prasad Distribution: At the end of the puja, Lord Balaji's prasad is distributed among the devotees.

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Mike Johnson Reveals GOP Health Care Plan as ACA Subsidies Set to Expire

alternative to Obamacare, a promise he has made repeatedly over the years. But he has offered few specifics beyond proposing direct payments to help Americans buy insurance.

WHAT TO KNOW

Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, spent much of Friday behind closed doors with GOP lawmakers, as he had earlier in the week, working to assemble the package as the House enters the final days of its 2025 legislative session. The Speaker said in a statement announcing the Lower Health Care Premiums for All Americans Act that the House plans to vote on the package next week.

Democrats staged the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history this fall in a failed attempt to force Republicans to negotiate over health care. Despite promises of votes, the Senate this week failed to advance both a Republican-backed health plan and a Democratic bill that would have extended the enhanced ACA tax credits for three years.

With just days remaining before lawmakers leave Washington, Congress appears poised to adjourn without a consensus solution.

House Republicans released a package of more than 100 pages that centers on long-standing GOP priorities aimed at reshaping the health insurance market. The plan seeks to expand access to employer-sponsored coverage and increase oversight of pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs, while leaving the enhanced ACA subsidies to expire.

The central element of the proposal would expand access to so-called association health plans, allowing small businesses and self-employed individuals to band together to purchase insurance. Supporters argue that pooling coverage gives employers greater bargaining power to negotiate lower premiums.

Critics, however, warn that association plans often provide fewer benefits and weaker consumer protections than plans sold through the ACA marketplaces.

The proposal also would require PBMs to provide more detailed data, a move Republicans say could help rein in prescription drug costs. PBMs act as intermediaries between drugmakers, insurers and pharmacies, and critics across party lines have accused them of inflating prices and squeezing independent pharmacists.

The GOP package also references cost-sharing reductions for some lower-income ACA enrollees, but those changes would not take effect until January 2027.

Notably absent from the plan is any extension of the enhanced ACA tax credits that millions of Americans rely on to lower their monthly premiums. Those subsidies, enacted during the pandemic, expire Dec. 31. Without congressional action, many families could see their out-of-pocket premiums more than double, and in some cases increase by far more.

Trump has consistently promoted the idea of sending money directly to individuals rather than extending ACA

tax credits. It remains unclear how large such payments would be. A Senate Republican plan that failed this week would have created new health savings accounts funded with \$1,000 annually for most adults, or \$1,500 for people ages 50 to 64.

No such health savings accounts appear in the House plan.

Johnson's approach has put politically vulnerable House Republicans in swing districts under mounting pressure as the subsidy deadline nears.

Frustrated with delays, a group of centrist Republicans has joined Democrats to push alternative proposals to temporarily extend the ACA tax credits to avoid immediate premium hikes.

Those lawmakers are backing several bills and have begun signing discharge petitions, a rarely successful procedural tactic that can force a vote on legislation if a majority of House members sign on.

This year, however, discharge petitions have gained unusual traction. Lawmakers recently used one to force a vote on releasing Jeffrey Epstein-related files held by the Justice Department.

One petition, sponsored by Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., had attracted 24 signatures as of Friday, evenly split between Republicans and Democrats. It would compel a vote on a bill extending the subsidies for two years while adding anti-fraud provisions and PBM restrictions.

Another petition, introduced by Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., has drawn 39 bipartisan signatures and would force a vote on a one-year subsidy extension with new income caps.

Both efforts could succeed if House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries urges his caucus to sign on. So far, he has declined to commit.

Jeffries is also backing a separate Democratic petition with 214 signatures that would extend the subsidies for three years without changes. No Republicans have joined that effort, and Senate Republicans have made clear such a proposal has no chance of passing their chamber.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Johnson said in a statement, in part, "Nearly 15 years ago, the Democrats' Unaffordable Care Act broke the American health care system. Since its inception, premium costs have skyrocketed, networks have shrunk, and the system has become bloated, inefficient, and riddled with waste, fraud, and abuse. While Democrats demand that taxpayers write bigger checks to insurance companies to hide the cost of their failed law, House Republicans are tackling the real drivers of health care costs to provide affordable care, increase access and choice, and restore integrity to our nation's health care system for all Americans."

Trump said late Friday at a White House event, "I want to see the billions of dollars go to people, not to the insurance companies. And I want to see the people go out and buy themselves great healthcare."

Jeffries said Friday, "We're actively reviewing those two discharge petitions and we'll have more to say about it early next week."

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

As Congress nears adjournment, the fate of millions of Americans' health care costs remains uncertain.

(Source: Newsweek)

India's Foreign Secy holds talks with top US diplomat on strengthening US-India Strategic Partnership

initiative, energy cooperation including civil nuclear collaboration, technology, critical minerals, and trusted supply chains.

The discussions also covered regional and global developments of mutual interest, with both sides underscoring their shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Both sides also welcomed the steady progress across existing dialogue mechanisms and agreed to give momentum to the implementation of "Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology (COMPACT) for the 21st Century" to drive transformative cooperation across key pillars of the partnership.

In a post on X, the US Embassy in India said, "Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri hosted Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker for consultations on strengthening the U.S.-India strategic partnership, including through defense, technology, and security cooperation that delivers concrete benefits for the American people."

According to the US embassy, Hooker conveyed the administration's intent to advance collaboration in sectors such as defense, energy, technology, space and supply chain resilience. It said, "The meeting was an opportunity to translate President Trump and Prime Minister Modi's vision from their February meeting into concrete progress that enhances US security, jobs, and competitiveness, while supporting India's long-term goals."

CONTD FROM PAGE 11

International Indian Icon (3iii) Season 9- 2025 Successfully Completed

(USA), Kuldeep Sethi (USA), and Jayanta Mukherjee (USA).

DANCING - JUNIOR CATEGORY RESULTS:

The Dancing Junior winner of 3iii Season?9 is Thejolakshmi Achari (USA), whose choreography and energy earned the top honor. The first runner?up title went to Little Angels (USA), and the second runner?up titles were shared by Saanvi Panda (USA) and Jaanvi Venkatesan (USA). Judges' Choice recognitions were given to Classical Rhythms Dance Academy (USA), Sunshine Reynoldsburg Dance Group (USA), Reet Jain Parakh (USA), and Sataakshi Joshi (USA).

DANCING - SENIOR & SUPER SENIOR CATEGORY RESULTS:

In the Senior category, Classical Rhythms Dance Academy (USA) secured the winner's title for their exceptional stagecraft and precision. The first runner?up was Dance Den Senior (USA),



while the second runner?up recognition was shared by Ritu Jain (USA) and Abhilasha Chawdhary Saxena (USA). In the Super Senior segment, the winner was Asha Mehta (USA), recognized for her expressive and graceful performance.

IGT - JUNIOR CATEGORY RESULTS:

The Junior IGT category winner is Sai Khushel Krishna Bayya (USA), whose unique talent act stood out among the strong competition. The first runner?up title was secured by Sabarish Rajagopal (USA), and the second runner?up was awarded to Avismit Bhattacharya (USA). A Judges' Choice honor was given to Shrihaan Mukherjee (USA).

IGT - SENIOR & SUPER SENIOR CATEGORY RESULTS:

In the Senior category, the winner was Dinesh Sunar (USA), recognized for his unmatched Parkour performance that stunned audiences and judges. In the Super Senior segment, Judges' Choice recognitions were awarded to Cris M. (USA) and Rekha Mahbubani (USA), acknowledging their creativity and artistic uniqueness.

The 3iii Talent Foundation extends heartfelt congratulations to all winners, runner?ups, and participants whose dedication made Season 9 an unforgettable celebration of global Indian talent. Each performer contributed to the cultural richness and artistic excellence of the 2025 edition, inspiring audiences worldwide.

Looking ahead, registrations for 3iii Season?10 2026 will open in March 2026, with State and Country?level competitions scheduled through November 2026. The Grand Finale location and production details will be announced soon, as the organization continues its mission to expand globally and bring Indian arts to international audiences.

(Based on a Press release by Sharan Walia)

Phawngpui and Aizawl: A journey into Mizoram's cloud-kissed paradise

Nestled in the heart of Mizoram, Phawngpui and Aizawl together offer one of Northeast India's most serene and spiritually uplifting travel experiences. Far away from noisy tourist circuits, this region is a realm of rolling blue hills, whispering pine forests, floating clouds, and tribal legends that make every journey feel like a step into a living postcard. From sacred mountains to vibrant hill city culture, this destination promises peace, adventure, and deep cultural immersion.

Phawngpui – The Blue Mountain of Legends

Known as the Blue Mountain of Mizoram, Phawngpui rises proudly on the southern edge of the state near the Myanmar border. It is the highest peak in Mizoram and holds a deeply spiritual place in Mizo folklore. According to local legends, this mountain is sacred and haunted by spirits, adding a mystical aura to its natural beauty.

Trekking to Phawngpui is an unforgettable experience. As you climb, dense bamboo groves, exotic orchids, wildflowers, and colorful butterflies surround you. The summit offers breathtaking views of endless green valleys, distant villages, and drifting white clouds that make you feel like you are standing at the edge of the sky. Sunrise and sunset from this peak are considered among the most beautiful in all of Northeast India.

Camping at Phawngpui is equally magical. Nights are cold and silent, broken only by the sound of wind and forest life. For nature lovers, photographers, and adventure enthusiasts, this mountain is a dream destination.

Aizawl – The Cultural Heart of Mizoram

Aizawl, the charming capital of Mizoram, is a hill city that feels calm, clean, and culturally rich. Built along steep ridges, the city offers panoramic views of mist-covered valleys and colorful houses stacked beautifully along the slopes. Life here moves at a peaceful pace, and the warmth of the Mizo people makes visitors feel instantly welcome.

One of the highlights of Aizawl is its strong sense of tradition. The city is deeply influenced by Christian culture, and Sunday mornings are filled with harmonized hymns echoing through the hills. Traditional Mizo attire, music, and dance remain an inseparable part of daily life. Popular tourist spots in Aizawl include the Mizoram State Museum, which offers insight into tribal history, costumes, weapons, and folklore. Durtlang Hills provide stunning views of the city, while Reiek Tlang is perfect for short treks and sunrise photography.

Best Time to Visit

The best months to explore Phawngpui and Aizawl are from October to April.



During this season, the skies remain clear, temperatures are pleasant, and the mountain views are at their best. The monsoon season, although lush and green, can make trekking difficult due to slippery trails.

Culture, Food, and Local Experiences

Tourism in Mizoram is not just about landscapes; it is also about experiencing a unique culture. Traditional Mizo food is simple, healthy, and flavorful. Dishes primarily consist of rice, boiled vegetables, smoked meat, bamboo shoot preparations, and light spices. Local tea and rice-based beverages are popular among visitors.

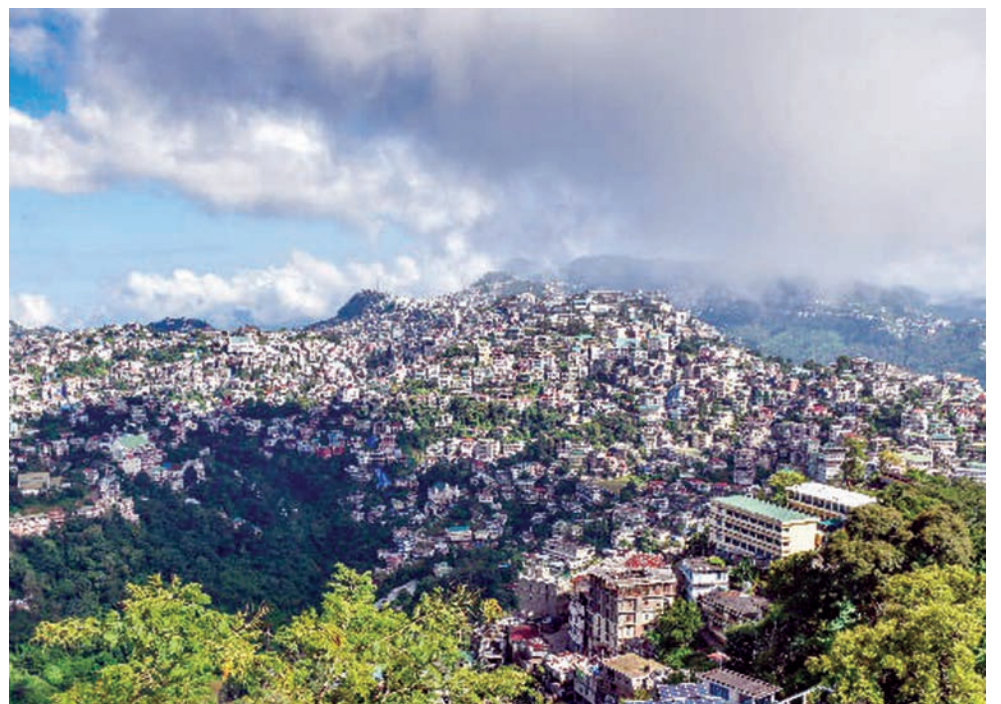
Homestays in and around Aizawl offer an authentic experience of Mizo hospitality. Travelers can participate in local festivals, church gatherings, and community meals, gaining a deeper understanding of the state's lifestyle.

How to Reach

Aizawl is connected by air through Lengpui Airport, which has regular flights from major Indian cities. From Aizawl, travelers can hire local taxis or shared vehicles to reach Lawngtlai and the base villages for the Phawngpui trek.

A Journey of Silence and Soul

Phawngpui and Aizawl together offer a rare kind of tourism — one that does not overwhelm but gently heals. The silence of the mountains, the wisdom of tribal legends, and the simplicity of life here create a spiritual connection with nature. Whether you are seeking adventure, solitude, or cultural richness, this region of Mizoram welcomes you with open skies, green horizons, and a peace that stays long after the journey ends.



History This Week

DEC 12 - 18

DECEMBER 12

December 12, 1998 - The House Judiciary Committee approved a fourth and final article of impeachment against President Bill Clinton, charging him with making false statements in his answers to written questions from Congress.



Birthday - American statesman John Jay (1745-1829) was born in New York City. He was a diplomat and the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. He co-wrote (with Alexander Hamilton and James Madison) the Federalist Papers.

Birthday - Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879) was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts. He founded the Liberator anti-slavery newspaper in 1831 and published it for the next fifty years. He also traveled throughout America delivering scathing antislavery speeches, even advocating that the North should secede from the South. In 1854, he burned a copy of the U.S. Constitution, declaring, "So perish all compromises with tyranny!"

Birthday - French author Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) was born in Rouen. Best known for the novel Madame Bovary, a tale of a woman's revolt against middle class society.

DECEMBER 13

December 13, 1937 - The beginning of one of the worst atrocities of World War II as the Chinese city of Nanking (Nanjing) was captured by the Japanese. Over the next six weeks, the Rape of Nanking occurred in which Japanese soldiers randomly attacked, raped and indiscriminately killed an estimated 200,000 Chinese persons.

December 13, 1981 - In its struggle to maintain Communism, the Polish government imposed martial law and took steps to stifle the growing power of the pro-democratic trade union Solidarity.

December 13, 1991 - North and South Korea signed a treaty of reconciliation and nonaggression which also formally ended the Korean War, although actual fighting had ceased in 1953.



Birthday - German writer Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) was born in Dusseldorf. Best known for his statement made a hundred years before the advent of book-

burning Nazis in Germany - "Where books are burned, human beings are destined to be burned too."

Birthday - Mary Todd (1818-1882) was born in Lexington, Kentucky. She became the wife of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th U.S. President.

Birthday - American clergyman and composer Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. He wrote the lyrics for the popular Christmas Carol, O Little Town of Bethlehem.

DECEMBER 14



December 14, 1918 - British women voted for the first time in a general election and were allowed to run for office.

December 14, 1927 - Britain recognized independent Iraq and supported Iraqi admission to the League of Nations.

December 14, 1935 - Thomas Masaryk, founder and first president of the Czechoslovak Republic, resigned and was succeeded by Edvard Benes.

December 14, 1939 - The League of Nations expelled Soviet Russia for its aggression against Finland.

December 14, 1962 - The Mariner II space probe sent back information from the planet Venus, the first information ever received from another planet.

December 14, 1995 - A Bosnian peace treaty was signed in Paris by leaders from the former Yugoslavia. The treaty ended Europe's worst conflict since World War II.

Birthday - French physician Nostradamus (1503-1566) was born in St. Remy, Provence, France (as Michel de Notredame). He wrote astrological predictions in rhymed quatrains, believed by many to foretell the future.

Birthday - World War II General James Doolittle (1896-1993) was born in Alameda, California. On April 18, 1942, he led a squadron of B-25 bombers launched from the aircraft carrier Hornet to conduct the first American air raid of the war against mainland Japan. He also headed the Eighth Air Force during the Normandy invasion and was awarded the Medal of Honor.

DECEMBER 15

December 15, 1939 - Gone with the Wind had its world premiere in Atlanta, introduced by producer David O. Selznick and featuring appearances by Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable.

December 15, 1943 - The Battle of San Pietro took place during World War II as a German panzer battalion devastated American forces trying to take the 700-year-old Italian village. Hollywood director John Huston, serving as an army lieutenant, filmed the battle and left behind a graphic account.

December 15, 1961 - Nazi SS-Colonel Adolf Eichmann was sentenced to death in Jerusalem for his role in the Holocaust. Eichmann had organized the deportation of Jews from all over

occupied Europe to Nazi death camps.

December 15, 1964 - Canada adopted a new national flag featuring a red maple leaf on a white background.

December 15, 1989 - The dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet ended in Chile. Pinochet had come to power in 1973 after a military overthrow of the democratically elected government.

December 15, 1993 - The GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) Treaty was approved by delegations from 117 countries. The treaty was designed to reduce international tariffs, eliminate trade quotas, and protect intellectual property.

December 15, 1995 - European Union leaders announced their new currency would be known as the Euro.



Birthday - French engineer Alexandre Eiffel (1832-1923) was born in Dijon, France. He designed the Eiffel Tower for the Paris International Exposition of 1889. He also helped design the Statue of Liberty.

DECEMBER 16

December 16, 1835 - A massive fire erupted in New York City, destroying more than 600 buildings, causing an estimated \$20 million in damages.



December 16, 1944 - American big-band leader Glenn Miller disappeared in a small plane over the English Channel and was presumably killed. Best remembered for Moonlight Serenade and In the Mood.

December 16, 1944 - During World War II in Europe, the Battle of the Bulge began as the Germans launched a big counter-offensive in the Ardennes Forest along a 75-mile front, taking American troops by surprise. Aided by foggy, snowy weather, the Germans penetrated 65 miles into Allied lines by the end of December. The German advance was eventually halted by Montgomery on the Meuse and Patton at Bastogne. As the weather cleared, Allied aircraft attacked German ground forces and supply lines and the counter-offensive failed. There were an estimated 77,000 Allied and 130,000 German casualties.

December 16, 1969 - The British House of Commons voted 343-185 to abolish the death penalty in England.

December 16, 1991 - The United Nations voted to revoke Resolution 3379, originally approved on November 10,

1975, which had equated Zionism (a movement supporting the Jewish national state of Israel) with racism.

Birthday - Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was born in Bonn, Germany. He created powerful, emotional music and is widely considered the greatest orchestral composer who ever lived. He suffered from hearing loss before he was 30 and by the time of his last (Ninth) symphony, he was completely deaf. In 1824, he conducted the Ninth Symphony at its world premier in Vienna although he was unable to hear either the orchestra or the applause. In all, he composed nine symphonies, 32 piano sonatas, five piano concerti, 17 string quartets, ten sonatas for violin and piano, the opera Fidelio, the Mass in C Major, Missa Solemnis, and other chamber music.

Birthday - British novelist Jane Austen (1775-1817) was born in Hampshire, England. She wrote love stories concerning the lives of gentry in rural England. Best known for Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Northanger Abbey, and Emma. In recent years her works have been made into very popular TV mini-series and movies.

Birthday - Anthropologist Margaret Mead (1901-1978) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She studied primitive peoples in the Southwest Pacific and was known for her outspoken manner regarding social issues such as women's rights, child rearing, population control and world hunger.

DECEMBER 17

December 17, 1971 - The war between India and Pakistan over East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) ended as 90,000 Pakistani troops surrendered.

December 17, 1903 - After three years of experimentation, Orville and Wilbur Wright achieved the first powered, controlled airplane flights. They made four flights near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the longest lasting about a minute.

Birthday - Poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts. His books of poetry include Legends of New England and Snowbound.

DECEMBER 18



December 18, 2019 - Donald Trump, the 45th U.S. President, was impeached by the House of Representatives on charges of Abuse of Power and Obstruction of Congress. The charges alleged that Trump sought help from Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden, to interfere with the 2020 presidential election, and that Trump attempted to obstruct the House's impeachment inquiry by directing his aides to ignore subpoenas for documents and testimony. Trump was acquitted on February 5, 2020 when the U.S. Senate failed to reach the two-thirds majority needed for conviction.

Failed experiments, De Kock carnage: SA level series as India capitulate

CHANDIGARH (TIP)

Quinton de Kock's blazing knock and a forgettable outing for India's batters culminated in a crushing 51-run defeat in the second T20I at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Mullanpur on Thursday, Dec 11.

South Africa piled up 213 and followed it up with a disciplined bowling performance to level the five-match series 1-1. What began as a day of celebration in Mullanpur ended on a sour note. This was India's first international match at the venue, and to mark the occasion, stands were unveiled in honor of Yuvraj Singh and Harmanpreet Kaur. The pitch, however, continued to live up to its reputation for unpredictability.

Mullanpur had seen IPL teams consistently defend 200-plus totals earlier this year, and PBKS had even managed to protect 111 against KKR on this very surface. That's why it was surprising to see Suryakumar Yadav's decision opt to bowl first—perhaps swayed by the prospect of dew, with the PCA having sprayed anti-dew solution well before play began.

Most fans expected a high-scoring contest and an entertaining chase, but De Kock flipped the script. After two overs where there was some lateral movement, the South African opener began to dismantle India's bowling attack. Coming off back-to-back ducks, De Kock looked determined to remind everyone why he remains one of the most dangerous T20 batters, especially with the IPL auction and the T20 World Cup approaching.

He blasted 90 off 46 balls, striking five fours and seven sixes, before Jitesh Sharma produced a spectacular catch to end his assault. While the rest of the top order struggled, a late surge from Donovan Ferreira and David Miller powered South Africa to 213/4. For India, Varun Chakravarthy offered the lone bright spot. He bowled Reeza Hendricks with his very first delivery and kept things tight from one end. But outside of the mystery spinner's control, the rest of the attack steadily unravelled.

Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh leaked 99 runs between them in eight overs. Bumrah, in particular, looked completely off-rhythm, repeatedly dishing out low full tosses that the Proteas punished. It became his third-worst bowling performance in T20Is.

India's run chase got off to the worst possible start, with



Shubman Gill falling off the first ball. Axar Patel was surprisingly promoted to No.3 — a move that puzzled many — but he couldn't keep up with the scoring rate.

Abhishek Sharma fell for 17 in the second over, and South Africa tightened their grip. Suryakumar Yadav departed after a successful review, and only Tilak Varma offered resistance. By the time Axar was dismissed for 21 (21), India were 67/4 in 7.3 overs, and the writing was on the wall.

Hardik Pandya, the hero from Cuttack, struggled to rotate strike as South Africa bowled with great discipline. Tilak's fifty off 27 deliveries brought some temporary hope, but with no support at the other end, it was never enough.

Baartman then crushed India's lower order with three wickets in the 19th over, before Ngidi wrapped up the innings by dismissing Tilak for a valiant 62, sealing a comfortable victory.

Watching World Cup 2026 from stadium just got costlier as FIFA implements another ticket price hike

Catching your favourite team live at the FIFA World Cup 2026 is turning into a costlier dream with every passing month. FIFA has increased ticket prices for the 2026 edition yet again — the third consecutive monthly hike — with several matches now significantly more expensive following the release of the tournament draw and full schedule. The draws are out for the biggest World Cup in football history, with 48 teams participating in it set to be played across the USA, Canada and Mexico. FIFA has sharply pushed up ticket prices for the 2026 World Cup, with some now listed at \$700. A lower-tier seat for the final has soared to \$8,680 — almost \$2,000 higher than what it cost in October. When FIFA first announced prices in September, tickets on its website ranged from \$60 for early group matches to \$6,730 for the final. However, with dynamic pricing being introduced for the first time at a World Cup, those figures have continued to climb.

FIFA offers tickets in four categories, with Category 1 being the premium seating.

With the draw completed, every nation now knows its group and the potential route it must navigate. One storyline already generating buzz is the possibility of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo crossing paths in a quarterfinal showdown in Kansas City—provided Argentina and Portugal finish atop their groups.

Australia depth shows up England's Ashes 'failures'

SYDNEY (TIP)

A well-drilled Australia are on the cusp of retaining the Ashes after just six days of cricket — not bad for a team lambasted by England great Stuart Broad before the series began as its weakest since 2010.

The hosts take a 2-0 lead into the third Test at Adelaide on December 17 needing only a draw to keep the famous urn and pile more humiliation on Ben Stokes's tourists.

Australia have put themselves on the brink despite missing injured pace spearheads Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, with the performances of stand-ins Michael Neser and Brendan Doggett a reflection of their depth.

"The great and the healthiest thing for Australian cricket right now is that they've got almost a second XI or an Australia 'A' side that could come in and play some outstanding cricket too," said former Australia Test quick Brett Lee.

"The guys who have had their opportunity, the Doggetts and the Nesers, have stood up. They've taken their opportunity and taken it with both hands, which is brilliant."

The strength of the country's talent pool was driven home by Australia 'A' crushing England's second-tier side by an innings and 127 runs at Allan Border Field while Stokes's men were being thrashed down the road



in the second Test at the Gabba.

Young prospects Fergus O'Neill, Cooper Connolly and Campbell Kellaway stood out, while discarded Test batsman Nathan McSweeney fired a double-century reminder to selectors.

It is a far cry from the pre-Ashes war-of-words where England were hyped as having their best chance in a generation to win a series in Australia, with seamer Broad's comments coming back to haunt him.

"It's probably the worst Australian team since 2010 when England last won and it's the best English team since 2010," said Broad, who retired in 2023 and is now working as a pundit.

"It's actually not an opinion, it's fact."

At the time, he pointed to questions over the make-up

of Australia's batting line-up and a perceived lack of bowling depth.

Both have been blown out of the water.

Australia went into the first Test in Perth dogged by uncertainty, with the uncapped Jake Weatherald as Usman Khawaja's sixth opening partner since David Warner retired nearly two years ago.

In a quirk of fate, Khawaja was unable to bat in the first innings because of back spasms with Marnus Labuschagne replacing him.

But it was when he pulled out again in the second innings and Travis Head stepped up that the tide turned on England with his stunning 69-ball match-winning century.

"Ever since Travis Head stuck his hand up to open when Khawaja got hurt in Perth, Australia have looked like a different team," said Australian legend Glenn McGrath.

Labuschagne said Head and Weatherald's confidence trickled down to the lower order in Brisbane, where himself, Steve Smith and Alex Carey all blasted quick-fire half centuries.

It leaves selectors with a dilemma for the third Test: recall now-fit 85-Test veteran Khawaja or persist with Weatherald and Head, whose home ground is Adelaide.

Smith, who stood in for Cummins as skipper in the first two Tests, attributed Australia's success so far to being able to adapt "in real time."



An Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh combating avoidable blindness in children.

On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MD. I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautiful facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses, and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion.

Best Wishes, Peter



Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



New Goutami Institute to be constructed 2024



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