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Trump administration could strip some naturalized Americans of their citizenship



Trump plans to strip some of citizenship.

-File photo

DECEMBER 19, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The Trump administration is looking at plans to strip some naturalized Americans of their citizenship, the latest in a series of efforts undertaken by President Donald Trump to crack down on immigration.

A report in the New York Times cited new internal guidance issued on Tuesday, December 16, to US Citizenship and Immigration Services field offices, asking them to "supply Office of Immigration Litigation with 100-200 denaturalization cases per month" in fiscal year 2026.

While federal law provides for stripping naturalized Americans of their citizenship if they committed

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Pope Leo XIV appoints Bishop Ronald Hicks as the Archbishop of New York



Bishop Ronald Hicks listens to Cardinal Timothy Dolan speak at a press conference at St. Patrick's Cathedral on Thursday, December 18, 2025. -Photo : Barry Williams / New York Daily News

your support and your prayers, and I ask God to support us as always." Born in Harvey, Ill., Hicks grew up in South Holland, not far from the Chicago suburb of Dalton, where the pontiff was raised. They "played in the same parks, went swimming in the same pools, liked the same pizza places" he told WG9 earlier this year, when Leo began his tenure as leader of the Catholic church. Their similarities extend to much of their ideologies as well.

Like Leo, Hicks has embraced a more welcoming and inclusive vision of Catholicism, in part inspired by the late Pope Francis, with a specific focus on social justice. Hicks has also already shown a willingness to push back against the Trump administration. (Source: New York Daily News)

DECEMBER 18, 2025

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): Pope Leo XIV has announced fellow Chicagoan, Bishop Ronald Hicks of Joliet, Ill., will serve as the next archbishop of New York, replacing Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who has led the state's 2.8 million Catholics for more than 15 years, says a New York Daily News report.

"I accept this appointment with humility and an open heart," Hicks said. "I ask for

Australia's 'Bondi Hero' handed millions collected from fundraising

DECEMBER 19, 2025

SYDNEY (TIP): A man credited with saving lives by wrestling a gun from one of the alleged attackers during a mass shooting at Australia's Bondi Beach received a cheque for more than A\$2.5 million (\$1.65 million) on Friday, December 19, 2025, after tens of thousands of people contributed to a donation website, says a Reuters report.

Ahmed al Ahmed hid behind parked cars before charging at one of the gunmen from behind, seizing his weapon and knocking him to the ground. Mr. Ahmed suffered gunshot wounds after apparently being fired on by a second perpetrator and remains in hospital after undergoing surgery. The Muslim father-of-two was presented with an oversized cheque at his St. George hospital bed by Zachery Dereniowski,

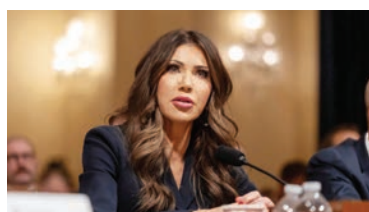
CONTD ON PAGE 54



Influencer Zachery Dereniowski gives a check of A\$99,999 to Ahmed al Ahmed, the bystander who is hailed as the "Bondi hero" after he charged at one of the gunmen and seized his rifle during the deadly shooting at Bondi Beach, in Sydney, Australia in this screengrab taken from social media video released December 19, 2025.

Photo credit:
TikTok/@mdmotivator

Trump suspends green card lottery program that let Brown University, MIT shootings suspect into U.S.



Kristi Noem said in a post on the social platform X that at Mr. Trump's direction she is ordering the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to pause the programme

File | Photo Credit: AP

DECEMBER 19, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): President Donald Trump suspended the green card lottery program on Thursday, December 18, 2025, that allowed the suspect in the Brown University and MIT shootings to come to the United States.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said in a post on the social platform X that at Mr. Trump's direction she is ordering the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to pause the programme. "This heinous individual should never have been allowed in our country," she said.

The diversity visa program makes up to 50,000 green cards available each year by lottery to people from countries that are little represented in the United States, many of them in Africa.

Nearly 20 million people applied for the 2025 visa lottery, with more than 131,000 selected when including spouses with the winners. After winning, they must undergo vetting to win admission to the United States. Portuguese citizens won only 38 slots.



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COMMENT

Guru Gobind Singh: The Conscience of India
and the Price of Human Dignity

History records many warriors, reformers, and martyrs. Yet there is no parallel in world history to the scale and depth of sacrifice made by Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh Guru, in defense of human dignity, freedom of faith, and basic human rights. In a life cut short at 48, Guru Gobind Singh did not merely resist tyranny—he redefined the moral duty of resistance itself.

Seventeenth-century India was a land under strain. The Mughal Empire, particularly during the reign of Aurangzeb, had increasingly embraced religious orthodoxy enforced by state power. Forced conversions, destruction of temples,



Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Tenth Master of the Sikhs and the Founder of the Khalsa. His Prakash Divas (Birth anniversary) falls on December 27, 2025 -AI image/ ChatGPT

discriminatory taxation, and brutal suppression of dissent had become instruments of governance. It was against this backdrop that Guru Gobind Singh emerged—not as a rebel seeking power, but as a moral leader challenging injustice at its very roots.

The foundations of this struggle were laid when Guru Gobind Singh was still a child. At the age of eight or nine, he witnessed one of the most defining moments in Indian history. Kashmiri Pandits, facing forcible conversion, sought protection from his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji. It was the young Gobind Rai who urged his father to stand firm, even at the cost of his life. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom in 1675 was an unprecedented act, a spiritual leader laying down his life not for his own faith, but for the right of another community to practice theirs. It marked a watershed moment in the evolution of religious freedom in India.

This early exposure to supreme sacrifice shaped Guru Gobind Singh's philosophy. For him, spirituality was inseparable from social responsibility. Faith that did not defend the oppressed was hollow; devotion that ignored injustice was incomplete. These beliefs would later find their most powerful expression in the creation of the Khalsa in 1699.

The establishment of the Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib was not merely a religious event; it was a social revolution. By initiating ordinary men into a disciplined brotherhood of saint-soldiers, Guru Gobind Singh dismantled centuries of caste

hierarchy, fear, and submission. The Khalsa was founded to ensure that no individual would remain defenseless in the face of tyranny. It fused moral purity with martial courage, creating a model of resistance grounded in ethics rather than vengeance.

Predictably, such an egalitarian force alarmed both the Mughal authorities and local hill rulers. Guru Gobind Singh spent much of his life in a state of siege—physically, politically, and spiritually. Battles were frequent, resources limited, and betrayals painful. Yet he never deviated from his core principles. His struggle was not against any religion, but against oppression and injustice, regardless of their



The martyrdom day of older Sahibzadas (sons) of Guru Gobind Singh- Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh , falls on December 22, 2025

AI image/ ChatGPT

source.

The most tragic and defining chapter of his life unfolded in December 1704, during the battle of Chamkaur Sahib. Vastly outnumbered by Mughal forces, Guru Gobind Singh took a decision that continues to challenge human comprehension. He sent his two elder sons—Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, both in their teens—into battle. They fought with extraordinary bravery and fell as martyrs. Their deaths were not acts of youthful recklessness, but conscious offerings to the cause of freedom and dignity.

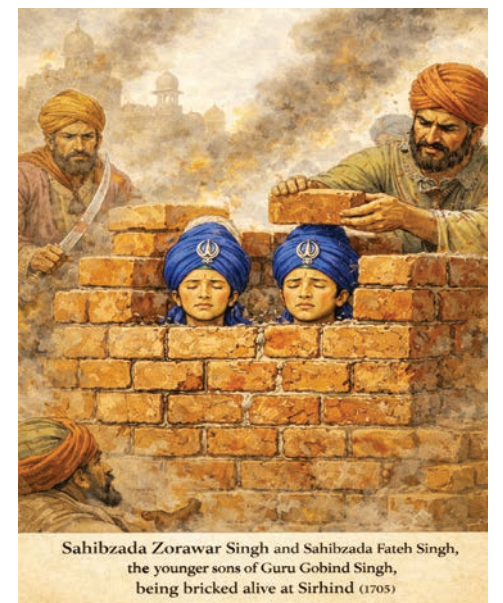
Even this was not the end of his suffering. Shortly thereafter, his younger sons—nine-year-old Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and seven-year-old Sahibzada Fateh Singh—were captured at Sirhind. Offered life in exchange for conversion to Islam, the children refused. They were bricked alive for their faith. Few episodes in history expose the cruelty of religious coercion as starkly as this. Few still reveal the power of moral upbringing so vividly—children choosing death over the surrender of conscience.

What distinguishes Guru Gobind Singh from many historical figures is not merely the magnitude of his loss, but his response to it. Despite losing all four sons, he neither retreated into despair nor sought revenge. Instead, he reaffirmed his faith in divine justice and continued to inspire resistance rooted in righteousness. His writings reflect resilience, courage, and an unshakeable belief that tyranny, however powerful, is

ultimately transient.

Guru Gobind Singh's philosophy was strikingly modern. Long before the language of "human rights" entered political discourse, he articulated and defended its core principles: equality of all human beings, freedom of belief, resistance to injustice, and the dignity of the individual. His life demonstrated that rights are not granted by rulers; they are claimed and defended by people of conscience.

There is a poignant symbolism in the calendar itself. In 2025, the martyrdom of the four Sahibzadas is commemorated from December 22 when the older Sahibzadas—Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh



Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh, the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, being bricked alive at Sirhind (1705)

The martyrdom day of younger Sahibzadas (sons) of Guru Gobind Singh- Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh - falls on December 27, 2025 -AI image/ ChatGPT

were martyred in the Battle of Chamkaur Sahib, on to December 27, when the younger Sahibzadas—Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh—were bricked alive, while Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary falls on December 27. This period, often described as a martyrdom week, encapsulates the essence of his life—where birth and sacrifice, celebration and sorrow, are inseparably intertwined. It is a reminder that the freedoms enjoyed today are rooted in endured yesterday.

In an era when authoritarianism, religious intolerance, and erosion of civil liberties continue to challenge societies worldwide, Guru Gobind Singh's life carries urgent relevance. He teaches that neutrality in the face of injustice is moral failure, that faith must empower ethical action, and that true leadership demands personal sacrifice.

As we observe the Martyrdom Week, commemorating the extraordinary bravery, courage, and steadfastness of the Sahibzadas, and celebrate the Prakash Divas (birth anniversary) of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, let this sacred period be more than remembrance. Let it be a renewed pledge. A pledge to walk in their footsteps, to resist injustice in all its forms, and to protect the fundamental human rights to freedom and dignity of every individual—regardless of race, color, creed, or belief. In honoring Guru Gobind Singh and his sons, we reaffirm not only a chapter of history, but a timeless moral responsibility that remains as urgent today as it was more than three centuries ago.

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By Indrajit Saluja



COMMENT

By Indrajit Saluja



A CHRISTMAS WISH FOR A WORLD AT PEACE

As the world prepares to merrily celebrate Christmas on December 25, with carols, candles, gifts and gatherings my kids have been so enthusiastic about, my thoughts drift, inevitably and uneasily, to people across continents who will mark this season not with joy, but with fear, deprivation and grief. When one surveys the globe today, a grim common thread binds distant lands and diverse societies: conflict. It manifests in many forms-economic, political, ethnic, ideological and military-but its consequences are uniformly cruel. Peace, despite humanity's bitter experiences, continues to elude us.

History offers no shortage of warnings. The twentieth century alone witnessed two World Wars whose scale and savagery reshaped the world. World War I, sparked by nationalism, imperial rivalries and diplomatic failure, left nearly 20 million dead and shattered empires. Instead of ushering in lasting peace, it sowed the seeds of resentment and economic despair that gave rise to fascism and World War II. That second conflagration, the most destructive in human history, claimed over 60 million lives, devastated Europe and Asia, and culminated in the nuclear annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, grim reminders of humanity's capacity for self-destruction.

In the aftermath of World War II, leaders vowed "never again." Institutions such as the United Nations were created to resolve disputes through dialogue, not arms. Yet the decades that followed tell a sobering story. The Cold War divided the world into hostile blocs, bringing proxy wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Africa and Latin America. While nuclear deterrence prevented direct confrontation between superpowers, millions perished in regional conflicts fueled by ideological rivalry.

The end of the Cold War briefly raised hopes for a "peace dividend." Instead, the world entered a new phase of instability. Ethnic conflicts tore apart Yugoslavia. Genocide scarred Rwanda. The Middle East remained trapped in cycles of war and retaliation. The US-led interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, launched in the name of security and democracy, produced long wars whose human and economic costs far outweighed their gains. Terrorism emerged as a global threat, feeding on unresolved grievances and failed states.

Today, conflict has returned with alarming intensity to Europe itself, a continent that once prided itself on having learned the lessons of history. The war between Russia and Ukraine has inflicted immense suffering on ordinary people: cities reduced to rubble, millions displaced, families torn apart, and an entire generation growing up amid sirens and uncertainty. Whatever the geopolitical arguments advanced by either side, the human cost is undeniable and indefensible.

This is not an isolated tragedy. From Gaza to Sudan, from the Sahel to Myanmar, violence continues to uproot lives. Economic conflict, too, is pervasive: trade wars, sanctions, debt crises and widening inequality pit nations and classes against one another. Even societies not directly at war feel the consequences through inflation, refugee flows, energy shortages and a growing sense of global insecurity.

One might ask: how, after centuries of bloodshed, does humanity still fail to learn? Part of the answer lies in the persistence of ego, power politics and short-term thinking among leaders. War is often justified in the language of national interest, honor or security, yet it is invariably paid for by civilians. Children lose schools, the sick lose hospitals, and the poor lose whatever fragile stability they possess. Reconstruction takes decades; trauma lasts generations.

Christmas, at its core, is a celebration of peace, compassion and goodwill. The

image of a child born in a manger has endured precisely because it speaks to humility and humanity, not conquest. At this moment, therefore, it is worth articulating a simple, perhaps unfashionable wish: that this Christmas brings wisdom to leaders who command armies and shape destinies.

In particular, one hopes that Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky pause, even briefly, to reflect not on strategy or prestige, but on their people, the soldiers in trenches, the civilians in bomb shelters, the parents who bury their children. History will not judge them by how long they fought, but by whether they found the courage to stop.

Peace, contrary to popular belief, is not weakness. It requires moral strength to shed ego, to compromise, and to accept that no victory built on ruins can truly be called a triumph. Europe learned this lesson after 1945; it must not be forgotten now.

In this context, any genuine effort toward peace deserves encouragement, regardless of who undertakes it. If President Donald Trump seeks to play a role



AI Image / ChatGPT

in ending the conflict, one can only wish him success. The world has seen enough failed wars and broken promises. A negotiated settlement, however imperfect, is infinitely preferable to endless bloodshed. If peace were to come to a ravaged region through such efforts, it would indeed be a gift worthy of global recognition.

One might even indulge in a Christmas metaphor: Santa Claus, bearer of goodwill, presenting the Nobel Peace Prize not as a personal accolade, but as a symbol of what humanity values most, the saving of lives. Such symbolism matters, because it reminds leaders that history honors peacemakers long after warriors are forgotten.

Ultimately, however, responsibility does not rest with leaders alone. Citizens, media and institutions must resist the idea that war is something normal. We must question narratives that glorify violence and demand accountability for decisions that destroy futures. Future generations will inherit the world we leave behind. They should not look back on us as idiotic warmongers who knew the costs of conflict yet chose it anyway.

As candles are lit this Christmas, let them illuminate not just homes, but consciences. Let the season renew our collective commitment to dialogue over destruction, empathy over enmity, and peace over pride. For without peace, no celebration-Christmas or otherwise-can ever be complete.

Merry Christmas, and may it bring the world closer to the peace it so desperately deserves!

Indian Origin woman detained by ICE despite approved green card petition

BABBLEJIT "BUBBLY" KAUR HAD LIVED IN THE US FOR 30 YEARS



Bubbly had appointment with Immigration and Customs Enforcement as part of process to adjust her immigration status through an approved family-based petition

Photo : Social media

DECEMBER 17, 2025

LONG BEACH, CA (TIP): A 60-year-old Long Beach woman was detained by federal immigration authorities earlier this month during a scheduled biometric appointment related to her pending green card application, according to her family.

Babbiejit "Bubbly" Kaur was taken into custody on December 1 while attending a biometrics scan appointment, her daughter Joti Kaur said.

The appointment was part of the process to adjust her immigration status through an approved family-based petition.

According to the family, Kaur has approved petitions filed by her US citizen daughter and her husband, who is a lawful permanent resident. The

reason for her detention has not been publicly disclosed.

Using the Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainee locator system, the family was initially able to locate Kaur at a facility in the Los Angeles area. She was later transferred to the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in San Bernardino County.

Family members say Kaur has no criminal record. The Department of Homeland Security did not respond to inquiries from local media regarding the circumstances surrounding her detention.

Kaur and her family have lived in the United States since 1994, according to relatives. She and her husband previously owned and operated Natraj Cuisine of India and Nepal, a restaurant in Belmont Shore, for more than 20

years.

Kaur also worked for about 25 years at a Rite Aid in the neighborhood until the chain closed its local stores earlier this year.

The detention has prompted concern from local elected officials. The office of US Rep. Robert Garcia, who represents the area, confirmed it has submitted a request seeking Kaur's release. The family is also exploring legal options that could allow her release on bond.

A GoFundMe campaign organized by family friends has raised more than \$26,000 to help cover legal fees, commissary expenses and communication costs while Kaur remains in custody at Adelanto.

As of this week, Kaur remains detained. No timeline has been provided for a possible hearing or release.

Slain Australia beach shooting suspect native of Hyderabad: Telangana police

Sajid Akram was a resident of Hyderabad and had completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree in India before migrating to Australia in the late 1980s in search of employment

DECEMBER 16, 2025

HYDERABAD (TIP):

One of the two gunmen who carried out the horrific mass shooting at Australia's Bondi Beach, killing 15 people during a public Hanukkah celebration, was originally from India and had migrated to Australia more than three decades ago, a senior government official told The Tribune on Tuesday, December 16.

Australian authorities have identified the attackers as Sajid Akram (50) and his son Naveed Akram (24). Sajid was killed during the operation to neutralize the attackers, while investigations into the incident -- now being treated as a terrorist attack -- are continuing.

Police and government officials in Australia have said the assault, which took place on Sunday, December 14, was driven by Islamic State (IS) ideology. Two homemade IS flags and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were recovered from a vehicle registered in Naveed's name near the beach shortly after the attack.

According to information shared by Indian agencies, Sajid Akram was a resident of Hyderabad and had completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree in India before migrating to Australia in the late 1980s in search of employment. He later married a woman of European origin and settled permanently in Australia. Naveed and a daughter were born in Australia and are Australian citizens.

Sajid, however, continued to hold an Indian passport. Sources said he had



Police patrol in the early morning following a shooting on Sunday at Sydney's Bondi Beach, on Monday, December 15. -Credit : PTI

only limited contact with his family in Hyderabad over the past 27 years and visited India on six occasions, mostly for personal and property-related matters. He is understood not to have returned even at the time of his father's death.

Family members in India have told authorities they were unaware of any radical beliefs or activities and expressed shock at the turn of events. They said they had no knowledge of the circumstances that may have led to Sajid and his son's radicalization.

Indian officials underlined that there is no evidence linking the radicalization of the attackers to India or to any local influence in Telangana. The Telangana Police confirmed that there was no adverse record against Sajid Akram during his stay in India prior to his departure.

"The factors that led to the radicalization appear to have no connection with India," an official said, adding that the state police were in touch

with central agencies and foreign counterparts and would extend full cooperation as required.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the massacre as an act of terrorism inspired by Islamic State ideology and said the country would respond with "the full force of the law".

Authorities in both countries have urged restraint, asking the public and the media to avoid speculation or attribution without verified facts as investigations continue into one of Australia's deadliest terror attacks in recent years.

Meanwhile, reports have also surfaced that the alleged gunmen were reported to have travelled to the Philippines last month but the purpose of their trip is still under investigation.

Following this, the Philippines' and Australia's top diplomats have agreed to "keep each other closely informed" of any developments related to the probe into the incident. Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma Theresa Lazaro and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong made the agreement during a phone call on Tuesday.

"The Philippines stands firmly in solidarity with Australia and underscores strong Philippine-Australia cooperation in security and law enforcement matters. We reaffirm our support for efforts that protect communities from intolerance, hatred, and violence," Lazaro said over X.

(Source: Tribune)

Indian-origin driver accused of raping unconscious passenger while dropping her home

THE VICTIM, WHO HAD BEEN DRINKING, REPORTEDLY FELL ASLEEP DURING THE RIDE

DECEMBER 18, 2025

BAKERSFIELD, CA (TIP):

A 35-year-old ride-share driver in Southern California is facing serious criminal charges following an alleged sexual assault involving a young passenger.

Authorities in Ventura County report that Simranjit Singh Sekhon, of Bakersfield, is accused of attacking a 21-year-old woman who was reportedly unconscious during the incident.

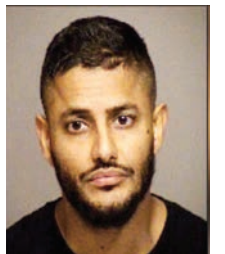
According to law enforcement, Sekhon picked up the victim outside a Thousand Oaks bar at approximately 1:00 am on November 27 to drive her home in Camarillo.

The victim, who had been drinking, reportedly fell asleep during the ride. After the trip should have ended, Sekhon allegedly continued driving the unconscious woman around Camarillo and sexually assaulted her.

The Ventura County Sheriff's Office investigated the case, and Sekhon was arrested in Los Angeles County on December 15, 2025. He has been charged with rape of an unconscious person, with the aggravating factor of the victim being particularly vulnerable.

Sekhon appeared in court for his arraignment and pleaded not guilty. He remains in custody with bail set at \$500,000. His next court appearance, an early disposition conference, is scheduled for December 29.

(Source: Tribune)



Simranjit Singh Sekhon, the driver accused of raping the unconscious passenger

Sikh man who helped restrain attacker at Sydney's Bondi Beach says 'wanted to get attacker down'

AMANDEEP SINGH-BOLA, BORN IN NEW ZEALAND TO INDIAN AND KIWI PARENTS, HELPED TACKLE SUSPECT SAJID AKRAM

DECEMBER 16, 2025

MELBOURNE (TIP): A 34-year-old Indian-origin man who helped restrain one of the alleged shooters of the Bondi Beach attack in Australia said he wanted to help bring one of the assailants down and assist anyone who needed help, according to a PTI report.

Fifteen people were killed after a father-son duo launched a gun attack on the occasion of a Jewish festival being celebrated at the beach on December 14. Forty others, including three Indian students, were injured in the attack.

One of the attackers, Sydney resident Sajid Akram, 50, was shot dead. His 24-year-old Australia-born son, Naveed Akram, was injured.

Amandeep Singh-Bola, born in New Zealand to Indian and Kiwi parents, helped tackle suspect Sajid Akram, SBS News reported.

Singh-Bola ran onto the bridge where the alleged shooter was firing at people, pinning him down with the help of a police officer.

Punjab Government to convene special session over replacement of MGNREGA with VB G RAM G'



A member of the Jewish community stands at a floral memorial in honor of the victims of the mass shooting targeting a Hanukkah celebration on Sunday, at Bondi Beach, in Sydney, on Tuesday, December 16. -Photo : Reuters

"I jumped on top of [the shooter] and grabbed his arms. The police officer helped me and said not to let him go," the report quoted him as saying. "I wanted to

help get one of [the alleged shooters] down, or just help anybody that needed help," he said.

Singh-Bola, who initially dismissed

the gunshots as fireworks, was eating a kebab and watching the sunset over the beach when the shooting occurred.

"It was almost like tunnel vision - just trying to hide behind things and not be seen, just trying to find out where he was. Once I saw where he was, nothing else really mattered," the personal trainer said.

Singh-Bola said police had shot the alleged gunman, and while he lay on top of him, he could feel the shooter dying.

Asserting that he was not sick from the blood when he got up, Singh-Bola said, "I had just smashed back a kebab with spicy sauce on it, so I was actually sick from the run down."

Australia's federal police commissioner Krissy Barrett has described the shooting as "a terrorist attack inspired by Islamic State".

Sajid Akram has been identified as an Indian citizen hailing from Hyderabad, who migrated to Australia 27 years ago. The other suspect Naveed Akram is an Australian citizen.

(Source: PTI)

NRI woman fights for workplace fairness over chronic illness in UK court

SANJU PAL, AN NRI FROM WEST BENGAL, SUFFERS FROM ENDOMETRIOSIS AND HER CASE IS AMONG THE FIRST TO CHALLENGE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE RELATED TO THE ILLNESS UNDER THE UK'S EQUALITY ACT, 2010

DECEMBER 18, 2025

LONDON (TIP): A UK-based professional's six-year battle for workplace fairness for women suffering from a chronic illness and challenging a "cutthroat" corporate culture has progressed to a high court appeal tribunal hearing in London, according to a PTI report.

Sanju Pal, a non-resident Indian (NRI) from West Bengal, suffers from endometriosis and her case

is among the first to challenge disability discrimination in the workplace related to the illness under the UK's Equality Act, 2010.

Represented by law firm Kilgannon & Partners, the 41-year-old is also challenging an "up or out" model used to dismiss consultants for not being ready for promotion as unfair under the UK's Employment Rights Act, 1996.

"In everyday life, people aren't judged on their ability to perform a job at the next level up, they are judged against their ability to do their current job," said Pal.

"With the help of my legal team, I want to challenge the fairness of this cutthroat model, which exists in the consulting sector," she said.

An Employment Appeal Tribunal hearing in London last week also heard about the impact of endometriosis, a condition causing pelvic pain that reportedly impacts around 1.5 million women in the UK.

"Endometriosis is a chronic condition, the symptoms of which I was struggling with prior to my dismissal, yet I was found not to be disabled in law due to this condition. We want to challenge that my endometriosis is a disability. My case could be a turning point in the treatment of women with endometriosis in the workplace," she said. Pal's case dates back to 2019, when she was dismissed as manager for alleged



Photo for representation. iStock

underperformance after not making promotion to the senior manager level at management consulting firm Accenture (UK) Ltd.

She went on to challenge her dismissal at an employment tribunal, which upheld her unfair dismissal claim in May 2022 and awarded her 4,275 pounds as a "basic award".

"Accenture's progression-based model in the 'Client & Market' career track implies that if an employee isn't deemed to be ready for promotion within a certain period of time at their level, they might face dismissal.

"Ms Pal argues that this model is unfair in law on the basis that the Employment Rights Act, 1996, only permits dismissal relating to underperformance in the position the employee held, not on the basis that an employer thinks an employee is not ready for the job at the next level up," Pal's legal team from Kilgannon & Partners explain.

"This is an extremely important argument as it will significantly affect the management consulting industry, where the progression-based model is widely used as a basis to terminate employees," they claim.

The employment tribunal in 2022 was informed that Pal was diagnosed with endometriosis in September 2018, when she underwent surgery for the removal of painful large cysts on her ovaries. She claimed that her employment was terminated three months after her phased return to work ended. However, the tribunal held that Pal had not proven that her endometriosis had an ongoing substantial effect on her normal day-to-day activities.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

3 Indian students among those injured in Australia's Bondi Beach attack



A police officer inspects a bag at a vigil to honor the victims of a mass shooting that targeted a Jewish Holiday celebration on Sunday at Bondi Beach, in Sydney, Australia, December 16, 2025. -Credit : Reuters

DECEMBER 16, 2025

MELBOURNE (TIP): Three Indian students were among 40 people injured in the terrorist attack on Sydney's Bondi Beach in Australia, according to a media report on Tuesday.

Two out of these three students are believed to be receiving treatment in the hospital, The Australia Today news portal reported.

The names of the Indian students injured during Sunday's attack have not been disclosed yet.

The Indian students sustained injuries during the shooting, and their exact condition has not been formally confirmed yet, it said.

Naveed Akram, 24, and his father, 50, opened fire on a gathering during a celebration of the Jewish festival Hanukkah.

At least 15 people were killed in the attack, including a 10-year-old child.

Five of the injured remain in critical condition, while two injured police officers are in serious but stable condition, it added.

New South Wales Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon said the investigation is expanding as new information emerges, including international travel by the alleged attackers and the discovery of extremist material, the report said. (Source: PTI)

Governor Hochul Signs Legislation to Assess Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander History Education and Establish Advisory Committee to Support AANHPI Content in Schools

DECEMBER 17, 2025

ALBANY, NY (TIP): Governor Kathy Hochul signed Legislation S7855E/A8463-E which assesses teaching on Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) history in social studies curricula in New York and establishes an advisory committee on the future of AANHPI content in schools. By signing this bill, the Governor demonstrates her commitment to ensuring all New York students receive a quality education, which includes the integration of historical content covering the AANHPI community.

"AANHPI history is New York history, and our classrooms should reflect that fact," Governor Hochul said. "I am proud to sign legislation affirming our commitment to AANHPI New Yorkers that their story is not just part of, but essential to New York students' education. This law ensures that students across the state will have the tools to understand and appreciate the impact of these communities on our nation."

Today's bill signing is part of Governor Hochul's broader effort to strengthen inclusive history education - supporting African American, Indigenous, Holocaust, and AANHPI history so New York students receive a more complete and accurate understanding of the state and nation's past.

Research and advocacy efforts find that teaching comprehensive cultural history encourages empathy, reduces bias, and strengthens community belonging for all students and promotes cross-cultural understanding, helping students from diverse backgrounds appreciate the rich contributions of all ethnic groups to American history.

Representative Grace Meng said, "I'm thrilled to see this crucial measure become law. Thank you to Governor Hochul for signing the bill and thank you to Senator Liu and Assemblymember Lee for introducing it. In Congress, I have pushed legislation to promote the teaching of AANHPI history in schools across the United States. For generations, AANHPI history has been poorly represented in our education system and



Gov Hochul signs Legislation S7855E/A8463E which Authorizes Commissioner of Education To Conduct a Survey Regarding Instruction on Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander History Within the State; Establishes an Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander History Advisory Committee

File photo

social studies textbooks, and it is way past time for that to change. It is critical for our next generation to understand that AANHPI history IS American history. It IS New York history."

State Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, "I am grateful that Governor Kathy Hochul has signed legislation to direct a statewide survey on how Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander history is taught in our schools and to establish a dedicated advisory committee to guide this important work. Education is one of our most powerful tools to fight ignorance, discrimination, and hate and this law is a meaningful step to building an education system that is inclusive and accurately reflects all communities. I want to thank my colleagues Senator John Liu and Assembly Member Grace Lee for their leadership in sponsoring this legislation, and Governor Hochul for signing it into law."

State Senator John Liu said, "In signing the AANHPI Education Equity Act into law, New York is now one step closer to a statewide AANHPI curriculum that would at long last truly validate the lived experiences of Asian Americans in New York. This survey bill is not

the endgame, but an important step in that direction by measuring how AANHPI history is currently taught in classrooms, and how it is not. Gaining this understanding will help shape our curriculum in the future so we can make sure the education of all students throughout the state accurately reflects the diverse communities that have shaped it."

Assemblymember Grace Lee said, "The AANHPI Education Equity Act is about telling the complete American story. For generations, Asian Americans have helped build this country, yet our histories have too often been left out of our classrooms. This law affirms that our stories matter, that our children belong, and that an inclusive education strengthens our community. I'm grateful to the community advocates for their work on this effort, to Senator John Liu for his partnership and to Governor Hochul for championing an inclusive education that affirms belonging for all students."

New York City Council Member Linda Lee said, "More than 1.2 million New Yorkers of AANHPI descent call New York City home, and we have made, and will continue to make, vital contributions to the fabric of our city, state, and country. As one of the first Korean Americans to serve on the City Council, I am proud to see AANHPI studies included in the curriculum of our schools to foster a more inclusive and enriching educational environment. Thank you to Governor Hochul for signing this legislation for AANHPI New Yorkers."

New York City Council Member Sandra Ung said, "It is essential that New York classrooms reflect the full story of our communities and acknowledge the contributions of the AANHPI community. This legislation is an important step toward that goal by assessing how these histories are currently taught and establishing a committee to support their inclusion. I applaud Governor Hochul for signing this bill and thank Senator Liu and Assemblymember Lee for their leadership."

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS STREET HEALTH OUTREACH + WELLNESS (SHOW) PROGRAM DISTRIBUTES OVER 14,000 CLOTHING ITEMS DONATED BY UNIQLO

- Distribution of UNIQLO's HEATTECH thermal tops, bottoms, and socks provides critical protective layers for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness and prolonged cold weather exposure.
- Since program's launch, SHOW teams have provided over 280,000 engagements to New Yorkers, including 35,000 visits with a primary care provider

DECEMBER 17, 2025

NEW YORK, NY (TIP): NYC Health + Hospitals today announced that its Street Health Outreach + Wellness (SHOW) teams have distributed more than 14,000 items of UNIQLO clothing to patients facing homelessness and prolonged cold weather exposure. Over the last two years, UNIQLO's The Heart of LifeWear initiative has donated thousands of HEATTECH thermal layers and accessories, including tops, bottoms, socks, hats, and gloves, helping SHOW teams protect their patients from hypothermia, frostbite, respiratory illnesses, and other health complications that result from excessive cold exposure. The donation provides meaningful support for SHOW's mission to meet New Yorkers where they are with medical care, behavioral health services, substance use treatment, and housing support to build trust and eliminate barriers to care. Since the program launched in April 2021, SHOW teams have provided over 280,000 engagements with New Yorkers, forging relationships with thousands of patients and connecting them to specialty, harm reduction, social services, and primary care.



SHOW team members met with UNIQLO Global CEO Dai Tsukagoshi (middle) to chat about their work and the impact of UNIQLO's donation for New Yorkers in need

"Support from partners like UNIQLO strengthens our ability to reach people experiencing homelessness with compassion, urgency, and dignity," said Deborah Brown, NYC Health + Hospitals Senior Vice President and Chief External Affairs Officer. "Their generosity - and the generosity of so many who stand with us - provides our SHOW teams with essential resources to protect patients from the cold and to build the trust that is the foundation of lasting care. We are deeply grateful for UNIQLO's continued commitment to this work, and

for every partner who helps ensure that all New Yorkers are connected to high-quality health care."

"For our patients, many of whom spend their days and nights outside, staying warm isn't just about comfort - it's about their safety and survival," said Andy Cook, SHOW Program Director. "These HEATTECH items have become an essential part of our hygienical toolkits, allowing our teams to offer patients protection from the cold and to build trust in ways that open doors to more intensive medical and behavioral health care. We are deeply grateful for UNIQLO's continued support of our program and the meaningful impact their clothing donation has had for New Yorkers in need."

"Offering clothing and other material goods is a meaningful intervention that has changed the course of many of our patients' lives," said Dr. Yinan Lan, Medical Director of the SHOW Program. "When we restore our patients' dignity, they often have renewed interest in improving their health and trust in our providers, creating new relationships for many people long disconnected from care. I sincerely appreciate UNIQLO's donation, which has helped forge trust with our patients, and protected thousands from excessive cold weather exposure, allowing us to spend more time addressing their other health concerns."

"Our mission at UNIQLO is to make everyday life better through clothing," said Jean Shein, Global Director of Sustainability at UNIQLO.

Operation Gall Stone: Bloodless, Biley coup



By Priti Prakash

Did you ever pay attention to this small little organ lying unnoticed in the lap of your liver! I always knew my gall bladder was a moody little organ, but I didn't realize it had been running a full-time jewellery business inside me. If anyone had told me a month ago that I was secretly running a gemstone factory inside my abdomen, I would have laughed. Lol. But destiny - and a highly accomplished and charming GI surgeon - had other plans.

It began with the dreaded verdict. When the ultrasound indicated I had gallstones, I imagined a polite handful. Maybe two. Three, if my luck was especially rotten, quietly lounging in my tiny gall bladder like freeloaders enjoying a long-term Airbnb stay.

But twenty plus?

Each one bigger than the size of a molar, 10 mm?

In that tiny gall bladder?

Honestly, if organs had real estate laws, mine would have been evicted decades ago. Nature, however, had set up an entire colony of twenty plus.

The ultrasound graphically screamed from the roof top declaring the cohabitation. To make it sound easier the rather suave Doctor said it's just no problem, they will be out in lesser time than you even fly from Delhi to Jaipur. A time and date were fixed.

Once surgery was scheduled, my first challenge arrived in the form of the mandatory 6-hour fasting. Now, fasting sounds very spiritual and cleansing - until you're actually doing it. The night before surgery, I heroically declared, "I'm strong. I'll manage."

By hour four, I was making emotional eye contact with the refrigerator. By hour three, I was giving motivational speeches to myself like a stranded explorer in a survival movie. Water never tasted so delicious.

The real fun began on the day of my surgery. Morning arrived, and off we went to the hospital, me behaving like a brave warrior on the outside and a hungry squirrel on the inside. After completing endless forms and getting my vitals checked, donning the blue tunic and pyjamas, I landed in the pre-operative waiting area - the limbo between normal life and the mysterious world of the OT. Bracing up for another adventure.

I was wheeled into a waiting hall where other patients were waiting for their turn of getting under the knife some way or the other all pretending not to be nervous.

Then walked in my Anaesthetist, giving me a rundown of the many aftereffects of anaesthesia on my body as I happened to be with auto immune. 'It might trigger flareups' if it does not suit etc. I wondered if I was in the right place. But now I was already committed to throwing out the crystals from the gall so there was no looking back. Half the way into the Operation Theatre, in the 'Blues,' fasting of half a dozen hours, there was no looking back.

Meanwhile, my stomach was auditioning to play thunder in a sound effects studio. Every nurse who walked by probably heard it. My name was eventually called, and a sense of theatrical



Gall Stones. - Photo: Dr. Sanjitha Shampur/ Bengaluru

intensity swept over me. This was it.

The moment I stepped into the operation theatre, my first chance, I felt like Alice entering Wonderland - only the Wonderland here was brightly lit, spotless, and filled with smiling humans wearing masks and hair caps. A part of me wondered if I should greet them like celebrities.

The surgeon's team, however, ran the place like a five-star hotel making the whole scene pretty comfortable. One adjusted my blanket, another asked if I was feeling okay, someone fixing BP monitoring machine, someone ensuring right pulse rate, when one assured me the anaesthesia would kick in soon. At this point, I was convinced they deserved a hospitality award.

Then came the anaesthesiologist - the magician of the OT.

"You may feel a little lightheaded," he said calmly.

Lightheaded?

Sir, within three seconds I was floating like a Bollywood heroine in a dream sequence. If anyone had started singing in the OT, I might've joined in. Within moments, I was levitating emotionally.

And then - poof - blackout. Blissful unconsciousness.

I woke up later in recovery, convinced only five minutes had passed. Meanwhile, my gall bladder had been neatly removed, stitched, packaged, and metaphorically filed in medical history. The internal gemstone factory shut down permanently.

But the real shock came at home. My family, with the enthusiasm of archaeologists, presented me with a container. Inside were 'green stones,' shining like big UNPOLISHED emeralds from a badly run mine. I stared at them in disbelief and they stared back at me.

"These were inside 'me'?"

"Yes," my family said. "All twenty."

I couldn't decide which emotion was stronger - awe, horror, pride or the urge to post them on OLX as "lightly used crystals." Even maybe start a side business selling 'organic internal crystals.' Honestly, they looked like props

from a fantasy movie.

Frankly, the gall bladder had been running a souvenir shop without my permission. No symptoms, no warning,

nothing. Just quietly manufacturing gemstones like a side hustle.

It's incredible how such a tiny organ carried so many uninvited guests without once filing a complaint. Not a warning sign, not a protest. Just quietly running an underground mineral enterprise.

If stones could talk, mine would surely say, "We lived rent-free for years. Thanks for the hospitality."

Looking back, the whole experience was a mix of scientific marvel, personal shock, unexpected glamour and a surprisingly smooth OT adventure made possible by a brilliant, charming and highly accomplished Surgeon, Dr Sumesh Kaistha.

And let's be real - I have the strangest souvenir collection anyone could ever boast of: Twenty plus crystals, limited edition, handcrafted by my own body.

I can now add a degree in manufacturing crystals too among the few other that I have.

Lucky me, right?

(Priti Prakash is a New Delhi based Senior Independent Journalist. She is a political analyst & blogs on Diplomacy.)

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The changing patterns of India's student migration

THE RAPID EXPANSION OF INDIAN STUDENT MIGRATION POINTS TO CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN ASPIRATION AND OUTCOME, AND OPPORTUNITY AND EXPLOITATION



By Ginu Zacharia
Oommen &



By Anu Abraham

"INDIA IS ONE OF THE TOP SENDERS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, WITH THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA AS THE TOP DESTINATIONS (40%), FOLLOWED BY THE UNITED KINGDOM, AUSTRALIA AND GERMANY. THIS SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT IS REFLECTED IN THE REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON THE WELFARE OF INDIAN DIASPORA (2022) WHICH ENGAGES WITH STUDENTS AS ONE OF INDIA'S MAJOR DIASPORA CATEGORIES. MOST STUDENTS MIGRATE THROUGH SELF-FINANCING OR EDUCATION LOANS, OFTEN MORTGAGING FAMILY PROPERTY, WITH THE HOPE OF BETTER EMPLOYMENT AND HIGHER WAGES THAT WOULD REPAY DEBTS AND ENABLE HIGHER LIVING STANDARDS. HOWEVER, FOR MANY, THIS JOURNEY ENDS IN DEBT, UNDEREMPLOYMENT OR FORCED RETURN, A PHENOMENON THAT ECONOMISTS DESCRIBE AS REVERSE REMITTANCES, WHERE INDIAN HOUSEHOLDS SUBSIDIZE FOREIGN ECONOMIES."

India's latest wave of student migration marks a decisive shift that is no longer confined to elite universities or programs that are fully funded. Today's migration is characterized by self-financed education where middle-class households invest heavily in the promise of a global degree and upward social mobility. In Ministry of External Affairs data, more than 13.2 lakh Indian students were enrolled in over 70 countries by 2023, which rose to 13.35 lakh in 2024, and projected to reach 13.8 lakh in 2025.

India is one of the top senders of international students, with the United States and Canada as the top destinations (40%), followed by the United Kingdom, Australia and Germany. This significant development is reflected in the report of the Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Indian Diaspora (2022) which engages with students as one of India's major diaspora categories.

THE TRUE PICTURE

While all this is seen by some as a democratization of foreign education, with doors opening to students from different socio-economic classes, the reality is more

complex. Many of these students are channeled into lower-tier institutions and vocational colleges, into courses often unrelated to their expertise and without much job prospects, due to recruitment agencies that operate in a grey legal zone. The partnership between recruitment networks and less credible private colleges abroad is driven primarily by commissions and profit, reflecting the largely unregulated expansion of the foreign education industry.

The outcome is widespread deskilling and underemployment, with many graduates unable to transition into skilled work. In the U.K., what were once polytechnics have become universities post 1992 that cater primarily to international students, sometimes waiving entry requirements and triggering controversy due to declining academic standards. Reports suggest that approximately only one in four Indian postgraduates in the U.K. secures a sponsored skilled visa.

Student migration from India represents a middle-class aspiration with significant risks. Kerala, historically defined by Gulf labor migration, illustrates this transformation as the Kerala Migration Survey (KMS) 2023 reports that student migration doubled in five years, from 1.29 lakh in 2018 to 2.5 lakh in 2023, which is 11.3% of total emigrants. Outward

standards. However, for many, this journey ends in debt, underemployment or forced return, a phenomenon that economists describe as reverse remittances, where Indian households subsidize foreign economies.

Foreign students contribute significantly to host economies. In Canada, international students contributed about \$30.9 billion to GDP in 2022, supporting over 3,61,000 jobs. In 2023, Canada hosted over 4,27,000 Indian students, which is roughly 45% of international enrolments. In the U.S., roughly 4,00,000 Indian students, in 2024, spent an estimated \$7 billion-\$8 billion annually on tuition, housing and living costs, sustaining universities and local economies.

Across destinations, students shoulder substantial financial burdens, sometimes to the tune of ₹40 lakh-₹50 lakh, to finance studies abroad. Rising rents, restricted working hours, and visa caps exacerbate financial and mental strains. Unable to find skilled work, many take up low-wage unskilled jobs, often juggling multiple part-time jobs, sometimes undocumented, to work longer hours, and facing exploitation. Restrictive visa rules, limited post-study employment options and a lack of placement support from low-ranked colleges exacerbate this downward mobility. For instance, until 2024, the U.K. allowed students to convert student visas into care visas, offering a survival route in a tight job market, but this pathway has since become impossible due to new restrictions.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

This outflow of students needs to be understood within the domestic context that is driving it. Is it the perceived lack of

quality in domestic institutions or an inability to find well-paid domestic employment? With foreign universities establishing offshore campuses in Dubai, Singapore, and other destinations offering western degrees at lower costs, it is telling that Indian students rarely choose them. The reason is more structural. For many, studying in OECD countries is not only about education but about permanent residency, social mobility

and an escape from a third world identity.

Ironically, this wave of student migration has also created a new form of cheap labor for OECD countries, akin to Gulf labor migration except that it is now accompanied by reverse remittances often financed through savings and debt.

This rapid expansion of Indian student migration exposes deep systemic contradictions between aspiration and outcome, and between opportunity and exploitation, resulting in a phenomenon that can be described as brain waste. It calls for stronger regulation of education agents, pre-departure counselling, and bilateral frameworks to ensure institutional accountability abroad.

(Ginu Zacharia Oommen is Chairperson, Kerala State Food Commission. Anu Abraham is Senior Researcher, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO))

Student migration from India represents a middle-class aspiration with significant risks'

Photo for representation only

student remittances from Kerala are estimated at ₹43,378 crore, equivalent to about 20% of total inward remittances from labor migrants.

REVERSE REMITTANCE

Most students migrate through self-financing or education loans, often mortgaging family property, with the hope of better employment and higher wages that would repay debts and enable higher living



The Trump NSS, Europe's existential crisis

With the Trump Administration's National Security Strategy making it clear that American support to Europe is now faint, it remains to be seen how Europe responds



By Priyanjali Malik

Hope is not a strategy. For most of this year, European leaders have hoped that the Trump Administration has not actually meant its President's oscillating support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), its Vice-President's berating his European hosts in Munich over their liberal values and immigration policies, President Donald Trump's tirade against migration at the United Nations, and of course his mercurial support for Ukraine. The hope was that, all things considered, America would ultimately stand with Europe.

The Trump Administration's National Security Strategy - a 33 page document that spends much time congratulating the President for saving America from apparently terminal decline as it charts an unapologetically MAGA-esque America-first mercantilist position - appears not to notice Africa, Australia and New Zealand. It sweeps by Asia as it focuses strongly on perceived trade imbalances with China and lands squarely on a defense of the 'Western Hemisphere' according to American interests while lamenting the decline of Europe. Europe is a problem, not an ally.

THE STAND ON EUROPE

In 'Promoting European Greatness', the NSS warns of Europe's 'civilizational erasure', precipitated by the European Union (EU)'s policies on migration and freedom of speech, 'the suppression of political opposition', and the 'loss of national identities and self-confidence'. In case there was any doubt about which migrants were unwelcome, the NSS declares that if Europe continues on its present trajectory, 'within a few decades ... certain NATO members will become majority non-European.' The U.S. will help Europe regain its 'former greatness' by choosing 'patriotic European parties' to promote what this administration views as 'genuine democracy' and 'unapologetic celebrations of European nations' individual character and history'. To most Europeans, at best this reads as a meddling in the internal politics of sovereign nations, and at worst as regime change.

Europe, the NSS states, needs to stand on its own feet, assume 'primary responsibility for its own defense' and re-establish 'strategic stability with Russia'. NATO 'cannot be a perpetually expanding alliance', a warning of course to Ukraine, but also an interesting glossing over of Sweden and Finland's accession to the alliance after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. In this document, the threat is not Russia and its invasion of a sovereign nation, but Europe's cultural decay. The tramp of the jackboots of 1930s Europe echoes with every mention of civilizational decline.

Of course, an administration's national security strategy is not policy, but a guide to its thinking. They can and have been over-ridden by events, most notably George H.W. Bush's 1990 NSS, which was overtaken by the fall of the Berlin Wall, German reunification and

the first Gulf War. Observers could chart the evolution of the administration's thinking in the two subsequent iterations of 1991 and 1993.

As a high-level document, the NSS often provides the lens through which to interpret an administration's foreign policy goals and is assumed to set the tone for the administration's national defense strategy, its Quadrennial Defense Review and national military strategy. Mr. Trump's famously mercurial nature might caution against viewing it as declared policy. However, given that this is a Congress-mandated document, it is more than just a rhetorical exercise: while it should not be taken literally, it should be taken seriously.

doing whatever it would take to keep America in NATO and Europe. Britain flattered Mr. Trump with an invitation for an unprecedented second state visit. Germany's Friedrich Merz forgot about his observations of February this year as Chancellor-in-waiting that his 'absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe ... so that ... we can really achieve independence from the USA'.

Germany has since abandoned half-explored plans of developing European capabilities and ordered more American military kit, which is dependent on American intelligence to work. NATO's Hague Summit of June this year will be remembered as much for European states agreeing to raise their military spending to 5% of GDP as for Secretary-

THE STATE OF THE WORLD ORDER

How Europe responds will have implications beyond the continent. Mr. Trump's NSS, with its attack on transnational institutions (that he insists 'undermine political liberty and sovereignty'), its dismantling of the post-war trading order in favor of a mercantilist America-first policy; and the signaling of a U.S. retreat into its own 'Hemisphere' (however that might be defined, and with the implication that China and Russia are free to carve up the rest of the world as long as they do not impinge on America's trading footprint) have profound implications for the rest of the world. The post-war world order that America helped shape and uphold is



European Union Flag

WHAT EUROPE'S RESPONSE COULD BE

As the dust settles, Europe now faces three options in responding: it can ignore the NSS and hope that it will go away; its leaders can dial up their flattery of Mr. Trump in the hope that he will change his mind on Europe; or Europe can face up to the prospect that Mr. Trump's America is not a reliable ally and that they will need to fend for themselves.

Europe tried a mixture of the first two strategies after J.D. Vance's outburst at the Munich Security Conference. After some tepid talk of needing to pull together to see off Russian President Vladimir Putin's 'imperialist' ambitions in trying to 'rewrite history' or the need for Europe to wean itself off U.S. dependence, Europe doubled down on

General Mark Rutte's calling Mr. Trump 'Daddy.'

The third option will not be easy. Europe has never defended itself as an entity and there is no concept of integrated European defense. Even limited projects of joint development of military kit tend not to get very far, as the stalled Franco-German project on sixth generation fighter jets demonstrates. If the U.S. pulls American troops out of Europe - as this administration has periodically hinted it might do - then Europe will have a serious manpower problem that experiments in 'voluntary' conscription will not even begin to address. Then there is the question of nuclear deterrence and Britain's uneasy post-Brexit relationship with the EU and Europe.

imperfect and crumbling. The power imbalances at the United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions that help anchor expectations of peace, security, development and trade reflect an outdated world order. But, however imperfect this rules-based system might be, it is still a bulwark against a descent into a Hobbesian free-for-all, where might makes right.

The debate about this National Security Strategy is, therefore, not about a document that might shed light on an administration's thinking. It is about whether Europe chooses to defend a rules-based liberal order or defers to a President whose transactional and racist view of the world will have consequences that stretch far beyond his borders.

(Priyanjali Malik writes on nuclear politics and security)

What's going on with Donald Trump's health?

The president's appearance and schedule have sparked speculation - perhaps fueled in part by his political fortunes



By Moira Donegan

"NOW, QUESTIONS ABOUT TRUMP'S OWN HEALTH AND FITNESS FOR OFFICE ARE BEGINNING TO SIMMER. TRUMP REVEALED THAT HE RECEIVED AN MRI IN OCTOBER, THOUGH HE DECLINED TO ELABORATE ON WHAT HIS PHYSICIANS WERE LOOKING FOR, OR WHAT THEY FOUND. "I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEY ANALYZED," HE ASSERTED TO REPORTERS ON AIR FORCE ONE. "BUT WHATEVER THEY ANALYZED, THEY ANALYZED IT WELL, AND THEY SAID THAT I HAD AS GOOD A RESULT AS THEY'VE EVER SEEN." THE PRESIDENT'S PHYSICIAN SAID IN A LETTER THAT THE SCAN WAS USED TO IMAGE TRUMP'S HEART AND ABDOMEN, AND THAT IT WAS "PREVENTATIVE". BUT EXPERTS COUNTERED THAT AN MRI WOULD NOT TYPICALLY BE USED AS PREVENTATIVE CARE, SAYING THAT THE KIND OF SCAN THAT TRUMP RECEIVED WOULD USUALLY BE REQUESTED TO MONITOR EXISTING HEART CONDITIONS OR ANOTHER UNDERLYING DISEASE."

Recently, he's looked tired. His famous fake tan is a bit more sallow than usual and seems painted on more thickly and clumsily than it was before. He appears to nod off in front of cameras more and more often, including in cabinet meetings and press events in the Oval Office. His public schedule is light: he is often at his golf clubs, has traveled around the country less frequently than at this point in his first term, and now only rarely holds the stadium rallies that once defined his preferred style of politics. He tends to sit, even when others are standing, and has shortened his daily schedule, often not conducting official duties before noon. A New York Times report found that his public appearances have declined by



Is Donald Trump OK?

nearly 40% compared to his first year in office. He sometimes disappears from public view for days as he did in the late summer, and he and his administration have released unclear and conflicting information about his health. His right hand seems to be experiencing frequent injury or discoloration - it will often be covered with a band-aid or smeared with makeup; the White House has claimed, implausibly, that he is bruised from shaking too many hands. In some images, his ankles are visibly swollen.

Trump, at 79, is the oldest man to ever be elected to the presidency. And he ascended to the office after making his own harsh criticisms of Joe Biden, whose age became the subject of scandal after stiff, stumbling, and incoherent public appearances provoked speculation that his staff were concealing the extent of his decline. In 2024, Trump made Biden's age and infirmity into a symbol of the inadequacy of the Democratic party, and the Washington elites' unwillingness to combat America's backward slide. When he took office early in 2025, he placed a picture of an autopen - the device that became a stand-in for Biden's incapacity in the rightwing imagination - in the place where Biden's official portrait would have been on the "presidential walk of fame" that Trump installed. The notion was that Biden, too old to hold the office, was out to lunch, running the administration on autopilot - a kind of virtual stand-in rather than a responsible wielder of power.

Now, questions about Trump's own health and fitness for office are beginning to simmer. Trump revealed

that he received an MRI in October, though he declined to elaborate on what his physicians were looking for, or what they found. "I have no idea what they analyzed," he asserted to reporters on Air Force One. "But whatever they analyzed, they analyzed it well, and they said that I had as good a result as they've ever seen." The president's physician said in a letter that the scan was used to image Trump's heart and abdomen, and that it was "preventative". But experts countered that an MRI would not typically be used as preventative care, saying that the kind of scan that Trump received would usually be requested to monitor existing heart conditions or another underlying disease.

Trump also offered that "I took a cognitive test and I aced it."

It's not clear that anything is specifically wrong with Trump's health, and it would be irresponsible to attempt to diagnose him here. But the speculation about his age and physical decline reflect a reality of his regime: that Trump is mortal, and that he is old. His reign-as the president, as the head of the Republican party, and as the gravitational center of American politics-is going to end.

It is possible that Trump's health would not have become the subject of so much speculation if his polling was better. The president has experienced a dramatic cratering in the public's esteem; recent polls show him underwater in a majority of states and with almost every demographic. The shock-and-awe first months of his second term, in which he made sweeping changes to the federal bureaucracy and

attempted to use the force of the executive branch to impose huge cultural changes at universities, corporations and other institutions reliant on government funding, has given way to a more tepid era, in which Trump's power has diminished as it becomes clear how shallow much of his support really is. People are more willing to push back on him when his approval rating is in the toilet, and this pushback in turn makes him seem less mighty, less effective.

If Trump seems weak physically, then, it might in part be because he is at his weakest politically. The changing winds of public opinion have now seemed to quiet Trump's ambitions to seek an unconstitutional third term, at least for the time being: Republicans are less willing to stick their necks out to help Trump attempt something so obviously illegal when his own ability to pull it off seems so slim. And with that change has come a broad recognition that Trump is a lame duck.

US democracy - or what remains of it - is not safe. It would not be safe if Trump was still at his most formidable, and it would not be safe if he vacated his office tomorrow. But his increasingly obvious mortality is beginning to change everyone's calculations. Even, it seems, his own. Trump seems increasingly ponderous and reflective in his old age, and lately, he's been talking about death more often. "I think I'm not maybe heaven-bound," he said in October. "I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to make heaven."

(Moira Donegan is writer in residence for the Clayman Institute, Stanford University)

Extortions and transnational organized crime are wreaking havoc with Indian community in Canada



--->By Prabhjot Singh

Civic authorities raise hands in helplessness amidst escalating threat of extortions and transnational organized crime



For representation only

DECEMBER 18, 2025

BRAMPTON (TIP): Rapid escalation in threats of extortion and transnational organized crime have been forcing city councils with large and substantial populations of Punjabi immigrants to raise their hands in despair while seeking help from both provincial and federal governments to stem the rot.

After provinces like British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta were rocked by the growing incidence of extortions, now many major regions, cities, and towns in various parts of Canada have started looking out for help "to keep their communities safe."

As a wave of extortion-related crime is sweeping Canada, city councils, too, have started joining the bandwagon of protestors. There have been townhall brainstorming sessions with victims, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies with the elected representatives, but the menace refuses to abate.

The issue has been debated numerous times in the House of Commons but without any respite to those getting threatening telephone calls or their premises, both residential and business, becoming targets of gunfire.

Intriguingly, the worst hit by this wave of extortions and transnational crime is the Punjabi community in general and Sikhs in particular.

The latest to raise a hue and cry is the City of Brampton, one of the most populated cities of Indian immigrants. Its

mayor, Patrick Brown, on Tuesday sent out a scathing letter to both the prime minister, Mark Carney, and the federal minister for public safety, Gary Anandasangaree, saying, "I am writing to you further to a motion adopted by Brampton City Council concerning the escalating threat of extortion and transnational organized crime affecting the City of Brampton and the broader Region of Peel.

"A copy of this motion has been shared with your offices, as well as with the Premier of Ontario and the Ontario Solicitor General, to underscore the seriousness and urgency of this matter.

"Extortion driven by transnational criminal networks has increased at an alarming rate in Peel Region, with small businesses and vulnerable community members being disproportionately targeted through threats of violence, arson, and intimidation. The scale, sophistication, and cross-border nature of these crimes place them well beyond what municipal resources alone can sustainably address.

"We acknowledge and commend the Government of Canada's recent actions in British Columbia, including dedicated federal funding for integrated enforcement teams targeting organized crime, as well as investments in victim support, outreach, and safety planning. These measures recognize that extortion and organized crime are national public safety issues requiring federal leadership, coordination, and resources.

"Peel Region's extortion rates now meet or exceed those that justified federal intervention in British Columbia. As such, equitable treatment demands that federal support follow crime severity rather than geography.

"Without comparable federal investment, communities such as Brampton are left exposed to criminal networks that operate internationally,

exploit digital platforms, and rely on intimidation to silence victims.

"Following Deputy Mayor Harkirat Singh's motion, unanimously approved by our Council, we respectfully request that the Government of Canada take the following actions: Extend dedicated extortion and organized-crime task-force funding to the Region of Peel, mirroring the federal funding and operational model established in British Columbia; provide targeted funding for victim support and community outreach, including culturally informed services, safety planning, and initiatives that encourage reporting and protect those who come forward; establish formal intelligence-sharing and coordination frameworks between federal, provincial, and municipal law enforcement agencies to enable the effective disruption of transnational criminal networks operating across borders and jurisdictions.

"These actions would significantly strengthen public safety, protect vulnerable communities, and ensure a coordinated national response to a threat that is neither local nor isolated. Brampton and Peel Region stand ready to work collaboratively with the federal government and our provincial partners to implement solutions that reflect the seriousness of this challenge," the mayor said.

In a similar missive sent to Premier of Ontario Doug Ford, Patrick Brown said, "I am writing further to a motion adopted by Brampton City Council addressing the growing impact of extortion and transnational organized crime on the City of Brampton and the broader Region of Peel.

"Extortion-related crimes have increased significantly in Peel Region, with small businesses, families, and community members facing threats of violence, property damage, and intimidation. These crimes often go

underreported due to fear and lack of access to culturally appropriate and adequately resourced victim support services.

"The human and economic toll on our communities continues to grow.

The Government of Canada's recent collaboration with the Province of British Columbia provides a strong and effective model. In British Columbia, dedicated provincial and federal investments have supported victims of extortion through safety planning, outreach, protective measures, and trauma-informed services. This approach recognizes that victim support is a critical component of any successful strategy to combat organized crime.

"Given the severity and scale of extortion affecting Peel Region and following Deputy Mayor Harkirat Singh's motion, unanimously approved by our Council, we respectfully request that the Province of Ontario work in partnership with the Government of Canada to establish a dedicated victim support fund, mirroring the funding model implemented in British Columbia. Such a fund would ensure timely, coordinated, and culturally responsive support for victims, while reinforcing public confidence and encouraging reporting of these crimes.

"A provincial commitment to victim support would complement law enforcement efforts, reduce long-term social and economic costs, and demonstrate Ontario's leadership in protecting communities from organized criminal activity that transcends municipal boundaries.

"The City of Brampton stands ready to collaborate with the Province of Ontario and federal partners to design and implement a funding framework that reflects local needs and delivers meaningful support to those most affected," he added.

The worst negative growth of population in Canada in eight decades

DECEMBER 18, 2025

TORONTO (TIP): As pleas by various cities and provinces for review of the changes made in the immigration policy have been overlooked by the federal government, Canada has experienced its worst-ever decline in its population over the last eight decades.

Many businesses in small towns and cities are facing closure due to a lack of workforce. Recently, Canada's leading news network, CBC, highlighted the plight of a young Indian immigrant who had been running a restaurant in Saskatchewan. The owner, who came as an international student in 2010, says that by early next year, her last two chefs, whose work permits were not renewed, will leave for India, jeopardizing her business.

Her story is not an isolated case; the shortage of workforce, both skilled and unskilled, has put many employers in a

difficult situation.

According to Statistics Canada, the country witnessed an unprecedented drop in numbers of its population in the third quarter of this year. The total population, which had touched the 40 million mark a couple of years ago, has declined by 76000.

When the present minority Liberal government headed by Mark Carney presented its first budget, it talked about halving international student permits in coming years. Making clear that it needs brains and not a workforce, the budget said that Ottawa was set to launch an initiative to recruit more than 1,000 top international researchers to Canada, with the budget injecting up to Can \$17 billion (US \$12 billion) into a suite of recruitment measures.

Canada's Finance Minister Francois Philippe Champagne was quoted as saying that Canada wants to attract the

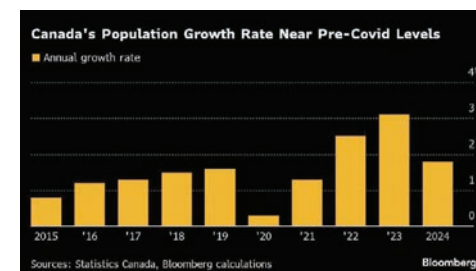
"best and the brightest."

Prime Minister Mark Carney had stated that he wanted to restore immigration rates to "sustainable levels" while attracting the "best talent in the world to help build our economy."

While the impact of the new immigration policy will take a while to reflect its impact on the Canadian economy, the Liberal government had proposed in its budget that it wants to keep new permanent residents at less than 1 per cent of the population beyond 2027, while reducing the number of temporary residents to less than 5 percent by the end of 2027.

The latest figures by Statistics Canada indicate that the impact of the new immigration policy has started reflecting the shift in demographic indicators.

Even the birth rate in Canada has shown a visible decline over the past six



Canada's population growth rate slows, as temporary residents decline

Credit : Financial Post

decades. It was immigration that had been sustaining population growth. Many economists have warned the government a stagnant or negative population growth could harm some sectors of the economy even if it improves the country's per capita productivity.

(Prabhjot Singh is a Toronto-based profusely awarded senior journalist who specializes in Sports and Political reporting)

India's Ambassador to Romania Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra visits Suceava to Promote Regional Level Cooperation

DECEMBER 16, 2025

BUCHAREST (TIP): Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra undertook an extensive visit to Suceava County from 10 to 12 December 2025, aimed at deepening India-Romania cooperation at the regional level across political, economic, academic, and people-to-people domains. The visit underscored India's strong commitment to strengthening partnerships beyond capital cities and engaging meaningfully with Romanian regions of strategic importance.

ENGAGEMENT WITH REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Ambassador Mohapatra met Mr. Gheorghe Soldan, President of the County Council, and Mr. Traian Andronachi, Prefect of Suceava County, for constructive discussions on enhancing bilateral cooperation, with particular emphasis on regional engagement. The talks focused on expanding institutional linkages and economic collaboration. The Ambassador extended an invitation to the Council



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra meeting with Prefect of Suceava, Mr. Traian Andronachi



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra meeting with Prof. Mihai Dimian, Rector of "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava President to lead a delegation to India to explore concrete partnership opportunities. In a separate meeting, Ambassador Mohapatra met



humanitarian support during the early days of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Milisauti had provided shelter and assistance to thousands of Indian nationals,

between the peoples of India and Romania. The Ambassador extended an invitation to the Mayor to visit India. Ambassador also met Mr. Vasile Rimbu, Mayor of Suceava, and Mr. Dan Ioan Cusnir, Deputy Mayor, to discuss avenues for strengthening ties between India and the Suceava region. The discussions highlighted opportunities in trade, investment, education, and cultural exchanges.

ACADEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION

A key highlight was the Ambassador's engagement with "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava. He met Prof. Mihai Dimian, Rector of the University, for productive discussions on expanding academic cooperation, institutional partnerships, and student exchanges between Indian and Romanian universities. Both sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra visited 'Stefan cel Mare' University of Suceava and addressed students alongside Rector Prof. Mihai Dimian and Prefect Traian Andronachi

Mr. Vasile Carare, Mayor of Milisauti, and expressed India's deep appreciation for the town's exemplary

including students. This gesture of solidarity was warmly acknowledged as a lasting symbol of friendship

strengthening educational ties as a cornerstone of long-term bilateral relations. Ambassador Mohapatra also



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra meeting with Mr. Vasile Rimbu, Mayor of Suceava, and Mr. Dan Ioan Cusnir Deputy Mayor of Suceava

CONTD ON PAGE 13

CONTD FROM PAGE 12



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra participating in an event held by In Business Club Suceava



visited the university campus and addressed students and faculty alongside Rector Prof. Mihai Dimian and Prefect Traian Andronachi. In his address, he spoke

like Make in India, PLI schemes, and the India-EU Trade and Technology Council.

The meeting drew active participation from leading

Nicolae Troase, President, and Mr. Lucian Gheorghiu, Executive President, of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Suceava. He invited them to lead a business



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra meeting with Mr. Dumitru Mihalescu, founder of Marelvi



about India's global outlook, rapid economic growth, innovation ecosystem, emerging opportunities for Romanian partners, and India's leadership in new and emerging technologies, including the forthcoming AI Summit. The interaction generated keen interest among students in India's education, technology, and research landscape.

ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS OUTREACH

As part of India's economic diplomacy, Ambassador Mohapatra addressed members of the In-Business Club Suceava. He highlighted India's robust economic performance, with projected GDP growth of over 7% in FY 2025-26, and outlined opportunities for Romanian companies to invest in, source from, and partner with India. He elaborated on priority sectors such as digital transformation, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure, electronics, and advanced manufacturing, while spotlighting flagship initiatives

Romanian companies, including Carpatiss & Fabrica Veche, Ecooptic, Avastar România, Spalatoria din Cartier, Fiziomed, Amis, Denis, Office Consulting, AGN, and Fusion, among others. These firms expressed strong interest in organizing business visits to India to scout investment prospects, participate in trade fairs, and engage with Indian counterparts. The event aligns with the upward trajectory of India-Romania relations, where bilateral trade has surged by over 20% in recent years, reaching new milestones. The Ambassador encouraged Romanian businesses to explore India's dynamic, innovation-driven market and build long-term partnerships.

In a separate engagement, Ambassador Mohapatra met Mr. Dumitru Mihalescu, Founder of Marelvi, Romania's largest electronics distributor. The discussions focused on strengthening commercial ties and exploring new opportunities in electronics and technology sectors. The Ambassador also met Mr.

delegation to India and emphasized Suceava's strategic location and its potential role in Ukraine's future reconstruction, an area where Indian companies have expressed growing interest.



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra meeting with Mr. Nicolae Troase, President, and Mr. Lucian Gheorghiu, Executive President of the Suceava Chamber of Commerce



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra meeting with Mr. Vasile Cîrre, Mayor of Milișești



Ambassador's visit to Suceava featured high-level political engagement, strong academic outreach, and focused economic diplomacy. It significantly reinforced India-Romania relations at the regional level and laid the groundwork for concrete follow-up in trade, education, technology, and humanitarian cooperation. Suceava's strategic relevance and positive disposition toward India position it as an important partner in advancing bilateral and trilateral ties in the years ahead

(Based on a Press Release issued by the Indian Embassy in Bucharest)

Embassy of India in Bucharest Hosts Cultural and Diaspora Engagement Events



Embassy conducted an Open House for members of the Indian diaspora



India's historical and artistic legacy, reinforcing a shared sense of heritage and belonging.

Highlighting the International Day of Meditation, Ambassador Mohapatra emphasized the significance of mindfulness, wellness, and self-awareness for the Indian diaspora. The session encouraged participants to cultivate inner balance, mental well-being, and harmony in today's fast-paced and often stressful environment. This initiative reflected India's global contribution to mental health and spiritual practices while promoting a holistic lifestyle that blends traditional wisdom with contemporary relevance.

Further promoting awareness of India's contemporary vision, the Embassy hosted an interactive quiz on Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India). Through an engaging and informative format,

DECEMBER 16, 2025

BUCHAREST (TIP): Embassy of India hosted a series of engaging events on 13th December, celebrating India's rich cultural heritage, fostering community engagement, and promoting awareness of India's contemporary initiatives. These events reflected the Embassy's continued commitment to connecting with the Indian diaspora and friends of India while showcasing India's diversity, creativity, and modern achievements in a holistic and interactive manner.

The Embassy organized a special movie night, screening Kantara: A Legend - Chapter 1, providing an immersive experience into India's cinematic excellence. The screening offered the audience a glimpse into India's vibrant storytelling traditions, regional folklore, and artistic creativity. Beyond entertainment, the movie night sparked lively discussions on India's cultural narratives, folklore-inspired cinema, and the country's evolving film industry, fostering cross-cultural understanding and strengthening ties between the Indian community and



Commemoration of 150 years of Vande Mataram



This initiative provided an important platform for dialogue on issues ranging from consular services to cultural initiatives, reinforcing the Embassy's role as a bridge between India and its global community.



An interactive quiz on Atmanirbhar Bharat, held at the Embassy



Screening of Kantara: A Legend - Chapter 1 at the Embassy

local audiences in Romania.

In addition, the Embassy conducted an Open House for members of the Indian diaspora, where Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra personally listened to their concerns and grievances. The session emphasized the Embassy's commitment to responsive, inclusive, and people-centric engagement, ensuring that the voices of the diaspora are heard and valued.

The Embassy also commemorated 150 years of Vande Mataram with a mass singing by members of the Indian community. This deeply symbolic event served as a moment of unity, reflection, and national pride, honoring one of India's most enduring expressions of patriotism and cultural identity. The performance highlighted the importance of preserving traditions while inspiring younger generations to connect with



Ambassador highlighted the importance of International Day of Meditation



participants explored India's journey towards innovation, resilience, and sustainable development. The quiz highlighted the country's strides in entrepreneurship, technology, and economic self-sufficiency, sparking curiosity and discussion about India's strategic initiatives and its growing global influence.

Through these initiatives, the Embassy of India in Romania continues to strengthen cultural ties, celebrate India's heritage, and engage meaningfully with the Indian community and friends of India in Romania.

(Based on a Press Release issued by the Indian Embassy in Bucharest)

Canada, U.S. to launch formal talks to review their FTA in mid-January 2026

Mark Carney confirmed to Provincial leaders that Dominic LeBlanc will be the country's point person for U.S.-Canada trade relations

DECEMBER 19, 2025

TORONTO (TIP): Canada and the U.S. will launch formal discussions to the review their free trade agreement in mid-January 2026, the office of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said.

The Prime Minister confirmed to Provincial leaders that Dominic LeBlanc, the country's point person for U.S.-Canada trade relations, "will meet with U.S. counterparts in mid-January 2026 to launch formal discussions," Mr. Carney's office said in a statement late Thursday (December 18, 2025).

The United States-Mexico-Canada trade pact, or USMCA, is up for review in 2026. U.S. President Donald Trump negotiated the deal in his first term and included a clause to possibly renegotiate the deal in 2026.

Mr. Carney met with the leaders of Canada's Provinces on Thursday, December 18, 2025, to give them an update on trade talks with the U.S.

Canada is one of the most trade-dependent countries in the world, and more than 75% of Canada's exports go to the country's southern neighbour. But most exports to the U.S. are currently exempted by USMCA.

Mr. Trump's cut off trade talks to reduce tariffs on certain sectors with Mr.



Dominic A. LeBlanc is a Canadian lawyer and politician who serves as President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy, and Minister of Internal Trade. -Photo credit: X/@DLeBlancNB

Carney in October after the Ontario Provincial Government ran an anti-tariff advertisement in the U.S. That followed a spring of acrimony, since abated, over Mr. Trump's insistence that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state.

Mr. Carney said earlier Thursday, December 18, 2025, that Canada and the U.S. were close to an agreement at the time on sectoral tariff relief in multiple

areas, including steel and aluminum. Tariffs are taking a toll on certain sectors of Canada's economy, particularly aluminum, steel, auto and lumber.

Mr. Carney also said trade irritants flagged this week by U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer are elements of a "much bigger discussion" about continental trade. Mr. Greer said a

coming review of the Canada-U.S.-Mexico trade deal will hinge on resolving U.S. concerns about Canadian policies on dairy products, alcohol and digital services.

Mr. Carney and the Provincial premiers agreed to meet in person in Ottawa early in 2026. Canada is the top export destination for 36 U.S. states. Nearly \$2.7 billion worth of goods and services cross the border each day.

About 60% of U.S. crude oil imports are from Canada, as are 85% of U.S. electricity imports.

Canada is also the largest foreign supplier of steel, aluminum and uranium to the U.S. and has 34 critical minerals and metals that the Pentagon is eager for and investing in for national security.

Mr. Carney said U.S. access to Canada's critical Ministers is not a certainty.

"It's a potential opportunity for the United States, but it's not an assured opportunity for the United States. It's part of a bigger discussion in terms of our trading relationship, because we have other partners around the world, in Europe for example, who are very interested in participating," Mr. Carney said earlier on Thursday, December 18, 2025.

Brown University shooting suspect died from self-inflicted gunshot wound, officials say

DECEMBER 19, 2025

BOSTON (TIP): A man suspected of killing two and wounding nine others at Brown University, and then killing a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor, has been found dead in a New Hampshire storage facility where he had rented a unit, officials said.

Claudio Neves Valente, 48, a Portuguese national and a former Brown student, was found dead on Thursday, December 18 evening from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, Oscar Perez, the Providence police chief, said at a news conference. Perez said as far as investigators know, the suspect acted alone. Leah Foley, the US attorney in Massachusetts, said at a separate news conference in Boston that Neves Valente also killed Nuno FG Loureiro, the MIT physics professor who was shot in his home on Monday, two days after the Brown attack.

"He took his own life tonight," Perez said at a press conference, where he identified Valente and described the chain of events that had led law enforcement to the storage facility.

Peter Neronha, the attorney general of Rhode Island, said Valente was found dead with a bag, and two firearms, as well as evidence in the car "that matches



Claudio Neves Valente, who was found dead in a storage facility, also killed an MIT professor at his Boston-area home

exactly what we see at the scene here in Providence".

Neronha told reporters that a person with information about the suspected shooter played a key role in finding him. After officials publicized a photo of the suspect about 24 hours ago, an individual "came forward to two Providence police officers over on the east side and said he had information that he was that person and that he had information that could help this case".

"He blew this case right open," Neronha said at a press conference. "He blew it open."

The person's information led authorities to a vehicle that helped them find a name, "which led us to the photographs of that individual renting the car, which matched the clothing of our shooter here in Providence, that matched the satchel", Neronha explained.

Neronha said the suspect tried to evade law enforcement by changing license plates.

"This guy was changing plates was one of the reasons," he said. "He knew what he was doing ... we got a main plate and we've got a Florida plate on the same car."

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Houston hosts Diwali celebration marking UNESCO cultural heritage status

THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA IN HOUSTON, IN COLLABORATION WITH BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR, HOSTS THE CELEBRATION



Consul General D C Manjunath highlighted the global significance of the recognition and Diwali's universal message of light, harmony and goodwill. -Photo : X/@cgihou

DECEMBER 18, 2025

HOUSTON (TIP): A special event celebrating the inclusion of Diwali in UNESCO's cultural heritage list was held at the Indian mission here.

The event, organized last week, featured a ceremonial lamp-lighting, cultural performances and a light show, with participation from members of the Indian diaspora and elected officials.

The Consulate General of India in Houston, in collaboration with BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir and other Indo-American diaspora organizations, hosted the celebration to mark Diwali's inscription on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Speaking on the occasion, Consul General D C Manjunath

highlighted the global significance of the recognition and Diwali's universal message of light, harmony and goodwill.

"This global recognition is a moment of pride for the Indian diaspora and friends of India worldwide. We are grateful to the community for coming together to celebrate this auspicious occasion," he said. To mark the cultural recognition, the Indian Consulate General in Atlanta was also illuminated with diyas. UNESCO on December 10 inscribed Diwali (Deepavali) on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2025, recognizing it as a living cultural tradition practiced by millions across India and the global diaspora.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

7-yr jail, Rs 1L fine for hate speech: Karnataka House passes Bill

The Karnataka Assembly on Thursday, Dec 18, passed the country's maiden anti-hate speech legislation, which the BJP termed as a 'Brahmastra' against the opposition and the media with an eye on 'vote bank politics'.

The Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, which has a provision for a fine up to Rs 1 lakh and a jail term of up to seven years, was passed in the House amid din by the BJP MLAs, with the government referring to the Supreme Court observations against hateful remarks.

The Bill was cleared by the Cabinet on December 4, and presented in the House by Home Minister G Parameshwara on December 10.

According to the bill, any expression, which is made, published or circulated in words either spoken or written or by signs or by visible representations or through electronic communication or otherwise, in public view, with an intention to cause injury, disharmony or feelings of enmity or hatred or ill-will against person alive or dead, class or group of persons or community, to meet any prejudicial interest, is hate speech. While discussing the Bill, Parameshwara said the Supreme Court had come down strongly against hate speech, saying that it could not be tolerated. He said hate speech and hate crimes lead to murders, create social unrest and vitiate the society.

India, Oman seal free trade pact as PM Modi holds talks with Sultan Haitham

NEW DELHI/MUSCAT (TIP)

India and Oman on Thursday, Dec 18, signed a free trade agreement as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held wide-ranging talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, seeking to add greater depth and momentum to the bilateral Strategic Partnership.

The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed following the talks at Al Baraka Palace, where Sultan Haitham formally welcomed Modi, who arrived in Muscat on Wednesday on the final leg of his three-nation tour.

The agreement was inked by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef.

The two leaders noted that the conclusion of the CEPA coincides with the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Oman, describing it as a milestone in the evolving partnership.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the leaders explored ways to further strengthen cooperation across multiple sectors and deepen strategic ties.

According to Jaiswal, the discussions covered a broad spectrum of areas, including defence and security, trade and investment, energy, agriculture, technology, culture and people-to-people exchanges, besides issues of regional and global importance.



PM Narendra Modi and Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik witnessing the Exchange of MoUs between India and Oman at Muscat, in Oman on December 18, 2025.

Both sides welcomed the CEPA as a key step that would significantly strengthen economic engagement and reinforce the strategic partnership.

The agreement is expected to improve market access, boost investments and enhance cooperation across critical sectors.

It is also aimed at supporting trade diversification and strengthening supply chain resilience at a time of global economic realignment.

Prime Minister Modi said the CEPA would infuse new confidence and energy into India-Oman relations.

His visit, undertaken at the invitation of Sultan Haitham, is his second to the Gulf nation and holds special significance as it marks seven decades of diplomatic ties. Modi earlier visited Ethiopia and Jordan as part of the same tour.

Oman is India's third-largest export

destination among Gulf Cooperation Council countries. India already has a similar trade pact with another GCC member, the United Arab Emirates, which came into force in May 2022.

Bilateral trade between India and Oman stood at about USD 10.5 billion in 2024-25, with India's exports valued at USD 4 billion and imports at USD 6.54 billion.

India's major imports from Oman include petroleum products and urea, which together account for over 70 per cent of inbound shipments, along with polymers, pet coke, gypsum, chemicals, iron and steel, and unwrought aluminium.

India's exports to Oman include mineral fuels, chemicals, precious metals, iron and steel, cereals, ships and floating structures, electrical machinery, boilers, tea, coffee, spices, apparel and a range of food items.

People don't even have drinking water: SC junks plea on standards

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Supreme Court on Thursday, Dec 18, disapproved of what it termed an "urban-centric approach" to public interest litigation, refusing to entertain a plea seeking fresh and stricter standards for polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles used for bottled water and other food items, remarking that such causes overlook the far more basic problems faced by large sections of the population.

A bench, comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi, lamented that while "luxury" petitions frequently reach the apex court, the concerns of the poor and marginalised often remain unaddressed.

Pointing to the stark reality that many parts of the country may still not have access to safe and potable drinking water, the bench questioned the propriety of invoking the court's jurisdiction to seek judicial intervention on standards governing bottled water, which is largely consumed by the urban population.

The court was hearing a public interest litigation filed by architect and environmentalist Sarang Yadwadkar, represented by senior advocate Anitha Shenoy, which raised concerns about antimony and synthetic chemical DEHP leaching into water and food from PET plastic packaging. Antimony, a metalloloid



used as a catalyst in the manufacture of PET plastic, and DEHP, a phthalate, can migrate into water or food, especially when plastic bottles are stored at higher temperatures, potentially posing health risks.

Shenoy argued that there were inadequate standards governing bottled water and plastic food packaging in India, and that this posed serious public health concerns. She relied on Section 18 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, which lays down guiding principles for food safety, and contended that international standards and scientific evidence had not

been adequately factored in by Indian regulators such as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

The bench, however, was unconvinced. "There is no potable water in many areas and here you have filed a petition for standards of bottled mineral water," remarked the court, observing that bottled water is accessed primarily by urban consumers, while people in rural and remote areas continue to depend on groundwater, wells and other sources.

Describing the plea as reflective of an urban and metropolitan mindset, the bench said it would have been more appropriate had the petitioner approached the court with data on regions still deprived of basic drinking water facilities.

"These are all luxury litigations," said the bench, taking exception to the petitioner's reliance on Canadian, Australian and other foreign guidelines. With India's population size and developmental challenges, the court said, it was not appropriate to press for standards drawn from developed countries without considering local realities.

"Let this country grow at its own pace. Wait for some more years," observed the bench, adding that hardly anyone took up the cause of poor people before the court.

Delhi pollution discussion goes for a toss as Parliament adjourned indefinitely

An expected discussion among lawmakers on Delhi's worsening air pollution did not end up taking place as Parliament's Winter Session ended on Friday, Dec 19, morning. The Session began on December 1 and was marked by the passing of important bills on nuclear energy and rural employment. The latter – the G RAM G Bill that seeks to replace the UPA-era MGNREGA rural employment scheme – was particularly contentious with the Opposition opposing it tooth and nail.

As the Winter Session headed towards its end, it was expected that there would be a discussion on the issue of air pollution in North India. Last week, in a rare show of unity, Rahul Gandhi's passionate pitch for a discussion on the inherent Delhi pollution swiftly received the Centre's acceptance. But, even as the residents of the capital and its adjoining regions continue to choke on severe air quality, the discussion on the same has clearly gone for a toss.

Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav was supposed to reply on the pollution matter in Lok Sabha on Thursday at around 6 pm. However, the House was adjourned merely an hour after resumption amid fierce sloganeering by Opposition MPs as Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan spoke about the G RAM G Bill. It was passed, stirring sharp Opposition remarks, then cleared in Rajya Sabha as well in a midnight drama. Meanwhile, the impending pollution discussion – a vital issue haunting the capital for years – was cancelled. Leading up to the initial expected date of discussion, several Congress leaders had submitted an adjournment notice in Parliament, seeking an immediate discussion on the Delhi pollution.

VB-G RAM G Bill passed in Parl amid Oppn walkout, to replace MGNREGA

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Parliament on late Thursday, Dec 18, night passed the Viksit Bharat-G RAM G Bill amid opposition's protest. The new legislation named - Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill - will replace the MGNREGA Act, to ensure guaranteed employment days for rural workers in the country.

VB-G Ram G has been cleared by the Parliament after it was passed by the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote, hours after the Lok Sabha cleared it, amid strong protests by the opposition over the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the existing rural employment guarantee scheme MGNREGA and financial burden being put on states.

As the discussion was underway on G Ram G, some opposition members protested in Well of Rajya Sabha when the Chairman warned them not to go towards treasury benches.

Several members of the opposition staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha during the passage of the Bill after demanding its withdrawal and raising slogans against the government. The opposition parties later sat on a dharna outside the Samvidhan Sadan in the Parliament complex against the Bill.

The opposition has also demanded that the Bill be sent to a parliamentary panel for further scrutiny.

Responding to the five-hour discussion on the Bill in the Rajya Sabha, Rural Development Minister Shivraj Chouhan accused the Congress of "killing" the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi several times and using his name to further political gains.

Chouhan said that during the UPA's rule, MGNREGA was riddled with corruption and the expected amount of funds was not spent on procurement of



Opposition stages midnight protest against VB G Ram G Bill 2025 in Parliament.

What Is VB-G Ram G?

- VB-G Ram G is set to replace the 20-year-old MGNREGA and guarantees 125 days of wage employment every year.
- The Bill guarantees 125 days of wage employment per rural household, up from the existing 100 days, for adult members willing to undertake unskilled manual work.
- As per Section 22 of the Bill, the fund-sharing pattern between the

Central Government and the State Governments will be 60:40, while for the North Eastern States, Himalayan States, and Union Territories (Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir), it will be 90:10.

- Section 6 of the Bill allows the state governments to notify in advance, a period aggregating to sixty days in a financial year, covering the peak agricultural seasons of sowing and harvesting.

material for designated jobs.

Opposing the Bill, Congress announced a series of nationwide protests on December 17, accusing the BJP and RSS of attempting to "dismantle rights-based welfare". Lok Sabha had passed the bill on Thursday amid protest and sloganeering by opposition members.

During the debate on the bill, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan asserted that it was needed to

fix shortcomings in the old scheme.

What is MGNREGA?

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

IndiGo disruptions: CCI to review mass flight cancellations

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) announced on Thursday that it will investigate complaints received regarding IndiGo's flight disruptions.

The antitrust watchdog did not specify the nature of the competition law violation, but complaints were about an alleged violation of Section 4 of the Competition Act, which deals with abuse of dominance.

"CCI has taken cognizance of information filed against IndiGo in the context of the recent flight disruptions witnessed in the aviation sector, across various routes. Based on the initial assessment, the Commission has decided to proceed further in the matter in accordance with the provisions of the Competition Act, 2002," the regulator said in a statement.

InterGlobe Aviation Ltd, the company operating IndiGo, informed stock exchanges on Thursday that its operations have fully normalized.



"Having completely stabilized operations across the network starting 9 December 2025 with 1,800 plus flights, IndiGo has been gradually and carefully adding capacity and will be operating over 2,200 flights today, in line with the revised schedule," the company said.

"We have been flying to all our 138 operational destinations and maintaining normal on-time

performance, as per IndiGo standards. We continue to maintain full integrity of the revised schedule and remain committed to delivering consistently reliable service to over 3.5 lakh customers daily," the IndiGo spokesperson stated.

Queries emailed to InterGlobe Aviation on Thursday seeking comments remained unanswered.

The disruptions in IndiGo's operations began due to a shortage of eligible crew for flight operations following the government's introduction of new norms aimed at providing pilots with more rest and reducing fatigue. Many flights faced delays or cancellations as the company struggled to find enough personnel to operate the flights.

The flight cancellations led to widespread criticism of the company on social media, as well as in Parliament, prompting CCI's decision to investigate the matter. Experts cautioned against using the antitrust statute to investigate the operational disruption of a company.

India in history this Week

DECEMBER 19 TO DECEMBER 25

19 DECEMBER

1927 The great freedom fighters Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaq Ulla Khan and Roshan Singh were hanged by the British.

1961 Goa got independence from Portugal's slavery. Indian troops entered the border of Goa under Operation Vijay.

1945 The institute in Mumbai was relocated to the Kenilworth bungalow on Pedder Marg. It was inaugurated by the then Governor of Mumbai, Sir John Colville.



1998 Amartya Sen was awarded honorary citizenship by Bangladesh, Sheel Kumar (India) as the best player in world disabled skiing held in Denver (USA).

1860 Lord Dalhousie, who was the Governor General of India from 1848 to 1856, died in Britain.

1937 India's 12th President Pratibha Patil was born in Jalgaon, Maharashtra.

20 DECEMBER

1875 The ICRM renamed the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

1876 The great poet Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay composed the national song 'Vande Mataram'.

1955 Indian Golf Association was formed.

1985 In the Tirupati Balaji temple, Lord Venkateswara was offered a diamond studded crown valued at Rs 5.2 crore.

1990 India and Pakistan agreed not to attack each other nuclear.

1988 The United Nations Convention against Non-Government Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, which controls international crime against the trade of illegal drugs, was signed in Vienna.

1993 A cooperation agreement was signed between India and the European Union in Brussels.

21 DECEMBER

2011 The country's famous nuclear physicist PK Iyengar died.



1911 The first indigenous bank, Central Bank of India, was founded by Sorabji Pochkhanwala.

2008 Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan were included in the list of 50 powerful people of the world by US magazine News Bik.

2009 The first meeting of the Finance Committee

and Executive Board (BoG) of Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi was held.

1974 INS Satavahana, the country's first vessel to offer submarine training, was inducted into the ship fleet at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

22 DECEMBER

1851 The first freight train in our country ran from Roorkee to Piran.

1953 Sharada Devi, the wife of Guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa and spiritual companion was born.



1887 Mathematician Srinivasan Ramanujam was born.

1940 Manvendra Nath Rai announced the establishment of the Radical Democratic Party.

2011 The well-known nuclear physicist P.K. Iyengar died.

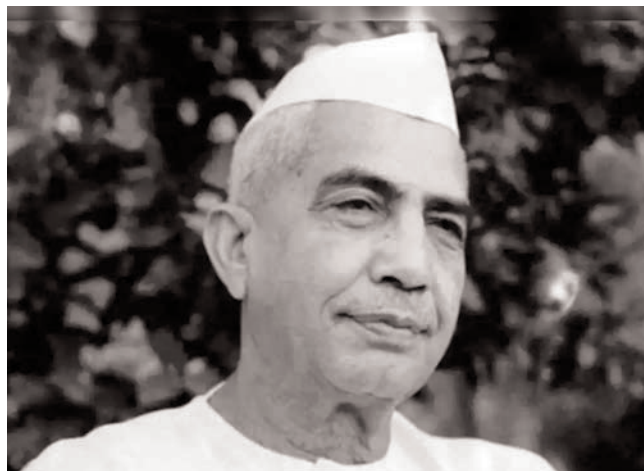
1843 Rabindranath Tagore's father Devendranath Tagore joined the Brahmo Samaj.



1966 Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi was established by the Indian Parliament under the 'JNU Act'.

2006 India and Pakistan set up a joint task force for mutual cooperation in the field of local bodies.

23 DECEMBER



1902 The birth of Chaudhary Charan Singh, the fifth Prime Minister of the country popular as the

leader of the farmers. This day is celebrated as 'Farmer's Day' in the country.

1921 Visva-Bharati University was inaugurated.

1926 Murder of Swami Shraddhanand, a freedom fighter, social reformer, pro-Dalit benefactor, supporter of women's education and Arya Samaj campaigner.

1968 Successful launch of country's first rocket 'Maneka'.

1995 360 people died due to fire in a school program in Mandi Dabwali area of Haryana.

2000 Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal, was officially renamed Kolkata.

2008 The software company Satyam was banned by the World Bank.

2004 9th Prime Minister of India Narasimha Rao died.

24 DECEMBER

1894 First medical conference organized in Calcutta.

1989 The first amusement park in India was opened in Essel World Mumbai.

2000 Vishwanathan Anand became world chess champion.

2002 The Delhi Metro was launched by Shahadra Tis Hazari Line.

2008 55% votes were cast in the last phase of Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections.

2014 It was announced that Bharat Ratna was awarded to Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Madan Mohan Malaviya.

1973 EV Ramaswamy Naikar, social activist and politician who started the Self-Respect Movement. died in Vellore, Tamil Nadu.

25 DECEMBER

2008 One of 11 payloaders of Chandrayaan-1 sent by India to space sent a new picture of the moon.

1861 Madan Mohan Malaviya, an educationist of India and honored with Bharat Ratna, was born.

1924 Former Prime Minister of the country and honored with Bharat Ratna, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was born.

1665 The French East India Company was formed in India to compete with Britain in political, economic and imperialist matters during the reign of Louis XIV.

1763 Maharaja Surajmal of Bharatpur was killed.

1771 The Mughal ruler Shah Alam II sat on the throne of Delhi under the patronage of the Marathas.

1800 Christmas Day was first made a public holiday on an international scale.

1861 Madan Mohan Malviya, a social worker and the leader of the Kashi Hindu University, was born in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh.

1972 Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, the last Governor General of India, died in Madras (now Chennai), the capital of Tamil Nadu.

1994 The 7th President of India, Giani Zail Singh, died in Chandigarh.





ਲਾਮਾਨੀ ਸ਼ਹਾਦਤ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਣਾਮ



Gurmej Singh
917-513-9830

FORMER PRESIDENT
Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Lobana
Sikh Center, New York



Daler Singh
917-849-9033

FORMER PRESIDENT
Baba Makhan Shah Lobana Sikh Center, New York
President, Akal Gatka Gurmat Group Inc. New York

The eternal flame of courage: From Chamkaur to Sirhind, the martyrdom of Sahibzadas

In the Sikh tradition, Shaheedi Pakhwara—literally meaning the fortnight of martyrdom—is not merely a span of dates on the calendar. It is a deeply contemplative and spiritually charged period during which the Sikh community collectively remembers some of the most defining sacrifices in its history. Observed primarily in the latter half of December, this pakhwara commemorates the martyrdoms of Guru Gobind Singh's family members and the extraordinary sacrifices that shaped Sikh identity forever. Unlike festivals marked by celebration, Shaheedi Pakhwara is observed with solemnity, reflection, and inner resolve. It calls upon Sikhs to revisit the values for which their Gurus and Sahibzadas laid down their lives—faith, courage, righteousness, and resistance to tyranny.

The month of December occupies a unique and painful place in Sikh history. It was during this period in 1704-1705 that the Sikh Panth witnessed an unbroken chain of martyrdoms that tested the very soul of the community.

Within a span of just a few weeks: The elder Sahibzadas, Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh, attained martyrdom fighting valiantly at Chamkaur Sahib.

The younger Sahibzadas, Baba Zorawar Singh (9) and Baba Fateh Singh (6), were martyred at Sirhind.

Mata Gujri, mother of Guru Gobind Singh, passed away in captivity after learning of her grandsons' execution.

Guru Gobind Singh himself endured unimaginable personal loss while continuing to lead the Khalsa with unbroken spirit.

'Shaheedi Pakhwara' emerged organically in Sikh memory as a period to collectively remember this unparalleled sacrifice.

Unlike festivals marked by celebration, Shaheedi Pakhwara is observed with solemnity, reflection, and inner resolve. It calls upon Sikhs to revisit the values for which their Gurus and Sahibzadas laid down their lives—faith, courage, righteousness, and resistance to tyranny.

Martyrdom of younger Sahibzadas

Few episodes in the long sweep of Indian history possess the emotional gravity, moral clarity, and civilizational significance of the martyrdom of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh, the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs. Their sacrifice, sealed on December 26, 1705, was not merely an act of cruelty by a tyrannical regime; it was a defining moment when innocence confronted power, when conscience stood against coercion, and when faith revealed its highest form—fearlessness in the face of death.

The story of the Sahibzadas does not belong to one community alone. It belongs to the ethical memory of humanity. Across centuries, their martyrdom has endured as a testament to the truth that moral courage is not measured by age, and that even the smallest voices can thunder through history.

India under Aurangzeb: A climate of fear and orthodoxy

The late seventeenth century was a



period of profound transformation and turbulence in the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal Empire, once known for its relative religious accommodation under rulers like Akbar, had entered an era of rigid orthodoxy under Emperor Aurangzeb. His reign was marked by the reimposition of the jizya tax, systematic destruction of temples, curtailment of non-Islamic practices, and a policy of forced conformity that deeply fractured India's pluralistic ethos. Religious freedom, which had long been woven into India's civilizational fabric, was under direct assault. Communities that resisted faced persecution, exile, or death. It was in this climate that the Sikh Gurus emerged as the strongest moral counterforce to imperial tyranny—not as rebels seeking political power, but

as defenders of human dignity and freedom of belief.

Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur: The Moral Foundation

The roots of the Sahibzadas' sacrifice lie in the martyrdom of their grandfather, Guru Tegh Bahadur, who was executed in 1675 for refusing to convert to Islam and for defending the religious rights of Kashmiri Pandits. His execution in Delhi marked a turning point in Indian history—it was perhaps the first recorded instance where a religious leader sacrificed his life explicitly for the freedom of another faith.

This act redefined Sikh identity. From that moment onward, resistance to injustice became inseparable from Sikh spirituality. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom planted the seed

that would later bloom into the Khalsa and ultimately into the supreme sacrifice of his grandsons.

Guru Gobind Singh: The Making of a Saint-Soldier Civilization

Ascending the Guruship at a young age, Guru Gobind Singh inherited not only spiritual leadership but an embattled legacy. He understood that piety alone could not survive unchecked tyranny. In 1699, through the historic creation of the Khalsa Panth, he reshaped Sikh society into a disciplined, fearless collective committed to justice, equality, and sacrifice.

The Khalsa was revolutionary. It erased caste distinctions, demanded moral integrity, and required absolute commitment to righteousness—even unto death. This transformation deeply unsettled the Mughal authorities and their allied hill rajas, who saw in the Khalsa a force they could neither control nor intimidate.

The Siege of Anandpur and the betrayal of sacred oaths

Repeated military campaigns were launched against Guru Gobind Singh. The prolonged siege of Anandpur Sahib subjected Sikhs to hunger, deprivation, and constant assault. Eventually, the Mughal authorities and hill chiefs swore solemn oaths—on the Quran and the cow—guaranteeing safe passage if the Guru vacated Anandpur.

Trusting the sanctity of these oaths, the Guru agreed. The assurances were broken almost immediately. Sikh caravans were attacked, families scattered, and chaos reigned. During this tragic exodus, Guru Gobind Singh's family was separated—an event that would lead directly to one of the darkest crimes in Indian history.

Separation, refuge and betrayal. Amid the flooded currents of the Sirsa river, Mata Gujri, along with her two grandsons—Zorawar Singh (9) and Fateh Singh (6)—became separated from the Guru. Cold, exhausted, and vulnerable, they sought refuge in the home of Gangu, a former servant of the Guru's household.

What should have been a moment of compassion became an act of treachery. Tempted by greed and fear, Gangu betrayed them to Mughal officials. The elderly grandmother and the two children were arrested and marched to Sirhind, the seat of Mughal authority in the region.



ਅਦੁੱਤੀ ਸ਼ਹਾਦਤ
ਨੂੰ ਨਮਨ

*Happy 359th Birthday
Anniversary of
Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji.*



BEDI FAMILY, New York

First row (L to R): Kirpa Kaur, Ryanbir Singh Bedi, Paramjit Singh Bedi,
Kuldip Kaur Bedi, Satbir Singh Bedi

Second row (L to R): Simarjit Kaur, Saachi Kaur, Japna Kaur, Asees Singh, Daya Singh

Third row (L to R): Jaswinder Singh, Bisman Singh, Tejvir Singh Raminder Singh,
Ribli Kaur, Tresa Kaur, Gurpreet Singh, Supreet Kaur, Chazbir Singh Bedi

From Page 20

The Thanda Burj: Suffering in silence

At Sirhind, Mata Gujri and the Sahibzadas were confined in the Thanda Burj, a tower designed to provide relief during summer heat but utterly exposed during winter. December winds pierced through its open structure. Food was scarce. Warm clothing was denied.

Yet, within those cold walls, something extraordinary unfolded. Mata Gujri did not allow despair to consume her grandchildren. Instead, she narrated stories of the Gurus' sacrifices, reminding them of who they were and what they stood for. These were not tales meant to frighten children-but lessons meant to prepare souls. The Sahibzadas listened with clarity beyond their years.

The court of Wazir Khan: Innocence versus authority

When the children were produced before Wazir Khan, the Mughal governor of Sirhind, the court expected tears, fear, and submission. What it encountered instead was composure and conviction.

They were promised riches, royal status, and protection-on the sole condition that they convert to Islam. The offer was repeated. Religious scholars attempted persuasion. Threats followed. The children refused.

Their refusal was calm, articulate, and unwavering. They chose faith over life-not out of stubbornness, but out of understanding. In that moment, the court of Sirhind witnessed something it could not comprehend: spiritual sovereignty.

Bricked Alive: The ultimate act of tyranny

Enraged by their defiance, Wazir Khan ordered the unthinkable. The Sahibzadas were to be bricked alive within a wall, a punishment intended to terrorize and humiliate the Sikh community into submission.

As bricks were laid around their small bodies, Sikh tradition recounts that the wall collapsed repeatedly, as though refusing to stand upon injustice. Ultimately, when the wall could not be completed, the executioners beheaded the children.

On December 26, 1705, two young lives were extinguished-but a moral victory was sealed forever.

Mata Gujri's final breath

When news of the execution reached Mata Gujri, the shock proved unbearable. Having endured cold, hunger, imprisonment, and the loss of her grandsons, she breathed her last soon after. Her passing is remembered not as a natural death, but as a martyrdom born of unbearable grief and spiritual surrender.

The martyrdom of the younger Sahibzadas is unparalleled in world history. It symbolizes:

- Courage beyond age
- Faith beyond fear
- Resistance without violence

**■ Victory without survival**

They did not wield weapons, yet they defeated an empire morally. Their sacrifice exposed the emptiness of power when stripped of ethics.

Far from weakening the Sikhs, this atrocity ignited greater resolve. Within years, Banda Singh Bahadur would dismantle Mughal authority in the region, and Sirhind itself would face historical reckoning.

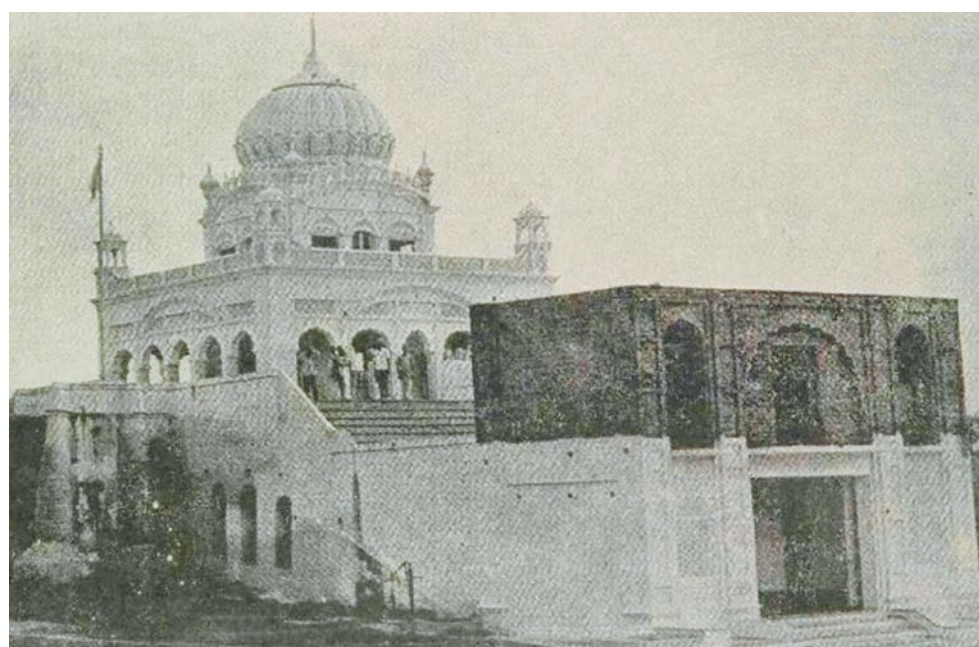
The Sahibzadas became the moral heartbeat of Sikh resistance-a reminder that tyranny must never go unanswered.

Shaheedi Jor Mela: Living Memory

Every year, lakhs gather at Fatehgarh Sahib for Shaheedi Jor Mela, where the martyrdom of the Sahibzadas is remembered not with despair, but with reverence and resolve. Their story is retold so it may never fade into silence.

Veer Bal Diwas: A Nation Acknowledges Its Children

In 2021, the Government of India declared December 26 as Veer Bal Diwas, marking a watershed moment in national remembrance.



The original building of Gurdwara Thanda Burj, where a Gurdwara was built over the original structure before it was completely destroyed and rebuilt in the 1900s.

Veer Bal Diwas (Day of Brave Children) is observed annually in India on December 26th to honor the supreme sacrifice of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh, the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, for refusing to convert to Islam and choosing

martyrdom over renouncing their faith. Declared a national observance by the Government of India in 2022, it's a solemn day to remember their incredible bravery, commitment, and courage against tyranny, inspiring generations to uphold truth and justice.

Continued on Page 23

The Elder Sahibzadas at Chamkaur: Valor Forged in Faith

At Chamkaur Sahib, history witnessed an act of courage so profound that it redefined the meaning of sacrifice in Sikh tradition.

Baba Ajit Singh, barely eighteen, and Baba Jujhar Singh, only fourteen, stood beside their father, Guru Gobind Singh, as a small band of Sikhs faced an overwhelming Mughal force numbering in the thousands.

Surrounded, outnumbered, and fully aware that survival was impossible, the elder Sahibzadas did not seek escape. Instead, they sought honour in righteousness.

When the Guru asked for volunteers to step out of the besieged fortress and confront the enemy, Baba Ajit Singh was the first to rise. His decision was not impulsive bravado, but the natural expression of Khalsa training—where fearlessness is born of faith and life itself is secondary to truth. Armed with resolve and guided by the Guru's blessing, he rode into battle and attained martyrdom after fighting with extraordinary valor.

Soon after, the fourteen-year-old Baba Jujhar Singh followed his elder brother's path. Despite his tender age, his spirit was unyielding.

He engaged the enemy with remarkable courage, embodying the Sikh ideal that age is irrelevant when dharma calls. His martyrdom affirmed that the Khalsa is defined not by years lived, but by the strength of conviction.

The sacrifice of the elder Sahibzadas at Chamkaur symbolises the warrior ethos of Sikhism—a tradition where the sword is raised not for conquest, revenge, or hatred, but solely in defence of righteousness and justice.

Their martyrdom stands as a powerful reminder that Sikh warfare is not aggression, but resistance rooted in moral responsibility.

Together, Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh demonstrated that true bravery lies not in survival at any cost, but in standing firm when truth is threatened, even if it demands the ultimate sacrifice. Their legacy continues to inspire generations, affirming that the Khalsa warrior fights not to dominate, but to protect dignity, faith, and freedom.

Sahibzada Ajit Singh Ji

Sahibzada Ajit Singh (1687-1705) was born to Mata Sunder Kaur and Guru Gobind Singh at Paonta Sahib. Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh are remembered as 'Vade Sahibzada' in Sikh history. Sahibzada Ajit Singh was very intelligent, gifted with Gurbani, and agile from his childhood. At an early age, he mastered horseback riding and gun shooting. On May 23, 1699, while commanding a group of one hundred Singhs, he successfully raided the nearby village of Ranghars, who had once plundered the company of Pothohar Sikhs coming towards Anandpur Sahib. On March 15, 1700, he attacked the Gujars of Bajrur village, who once robbed the caravan of Singhs. On August 29, 1700, when the hill kings



Gurdwara Sri Garhi Sahib, Chamkaur Sahib.

attacked the Taragarh fort, Sahibzada Ajit Singh bravely fought along with the Singhs. Similarly, in October 1700, again, the mountain forces attacked Nirmohgarh. Sahibzada took the lead, fought vigorously, and killed many hilly soldiers. Once, Dwarka Das Brahmin's wife was taken away by the ruler of Bassi Kalan. On March 7, 1703, along with Bhai Uday Singh, Sahibzada and a group of one hundred (100) Singhs rescued the wife of the Brahmin from Basi Kalan and handed her over to the Brahmin. Sahibzada Ajit Singh spent most of his life on the land of Anandpur Sahib. In May 1705, when Anandpur Sahib was besieged by a coalition force of Hill Cheiftians and Mughal forces, he was also there. Both the elder Sahibzadas were with their father while leaving Anandpur Sahib. When forty Singhs fought a fierce battle in the fort of Chamkaur, Sahibzada Ajit Singh went to the battlefield with Singh spirit, showed his bravery, and killed many enemies. "Gur Sobha" testifies to this. Sahibzada Ajit Singh's total age at the time of martyrdom was 18 years, 11 months, and 19 days.

Sahibzada Jujhar Singh Ji

Sahibzada Jujhar Singh (1691-1705) was born to Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Jit Kaur at Anandpur Sahib. Like his elder brother, he too was very intelligent, Gurbani-oriented, and skilled in horseback riding and archery. When Guru Sahib left Anandpur Sahib, he was also a companion. During the war of Chamkaur, he demonstrated his unwavering bravery and skill in a face-to-face fight with enemy forces. Before achieving martyrdom, he fought fiercely and killed many soldiers of the Mughal forces. Such a great personality was Guru Gobind Singh ji that before the start of the battle, he himself



introduced both the Sahibzadas to the tradition of martyrdom. The Battle of Chamkaur was fought between the Khalsas and the joint forces of Mughals and hill chieftains of Shivalik Hills. It started at noon and continued until sunset. Guru Sahib has also mentioned this battle in his historical letter in Farsi, 'Zafarnama' or "Epistle of Victory," addressed to Aurangzeb. The details of this battle are also found in 'Bhattvahi Multani Sindhi'. By evening, only five Singhs were left in this battle.

A council of Punj Pyares was convened and appealed Gurmata to order the Guru Sahib to leave the fort (kachi garhi) with three Singhs. The next morning, December 8, 1705, the remaining two Singhs, Bhai Sant Singh and Bhai Sangat Singh achieved martyrdom fighting the Mughal forces. Thus, the Battle of Chamkaur, fought between 40 odd Singhs and ten lacs of coalition forces led by the Mughals, remained the most unparalleled battle ever fought.

LIONSGATE FILM AND TELEVISION PROJECT IN NEWARK CITY'S SOUTH WARD COMMITS TO BRING HUNDREDS OF NEW JOBS AND MUCH MORE

BY MABEL PAIS

LIONSGATE (NYSE: LGFA, LGFB) (lionsgate.com), global content leader, along with Great Point Studios (greatpointstudios.com), the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC - njpac.org), and the Newark Housing Authority (NHA - newarkha.org), on December 11, 2025 had a groundbreaking celebration of the start of construction on **LIONSGATE NEWARK FILM STUDIO**, a major new film & television production facility set to revitalize the city's South Ward neighborhood and create lasting job opportunities and more for Newark residents.

The community groundbreaking celebration for the new facility was held at the Temple of Hip Hop – an arts and community center located a few blocks from the studio construction site – and was attended by special guests, including Governor Phil Murphy, community representatives, and studio development partners.

The facility will be the first purpose-built, full-service film and television production complex in New Jersey. Owned and operated by Great Point Studios, the facility's long-term anchor tenant, Lionsgate, will receive naming rights to the studio.

Spanning 12 acres on the site of the former Lionsgate Newark will feature multiple soundstages, production offices, set-building facilities, and full on-site production services including grip/electric, equipment storage, catering, props, parking, security, and more.

Watch the video - youtu.be/FW55sbL8D_o

"This initiative is more than just a film studio; it is a profound commitment to the future of Newark and to the future of the film industry in New Jersey," said Governor Phil Murphy. "I am proud of the work that our administration has done to attract leading entertainment companies, such as Lionsgate, to our state. This growing sector will drive economic growth by creating thousands of new jobs, supporting local businesses, and bringing meaningful investments to the community"

"Lionsgate Newark is set to be a major driver of opportunity and artistic innovation for our city," said Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka. "From the opportunities presented by the construction phase to the long-term careers the studio will sustain in rapidly growing industries, this project represents a genuine collaboration with the people of Newark."

The event included the signing of a Community Benefits Agreement, which outlined the studio developers' commitment to ensuring that the studio will benefit both the city and South Ward residents through job creation, new educational programs and other initiatives.

"New Jersey has become one of the most exciting places for film and television production, and this project builds on that momentum," said Great Point Studios Founder and CEO Robert Halmi. "The state's strong support and smart incentives have created the ideal environment for a world-class facility like this. Lionsgate Newark will strengthen the state's growing production industry and create meaningful opportunities for Newark residents."

"This new studio will become a hub of content creation for Lionsgate's projects, and we're excited about the opportunity to partner with the South Ward community to make this neighborhood a new focal point for the entertainment industry," said Joel Meyer, Lionsgate's Executive Vice President & Head of TV Production.

The studio is expected to create more than 600 long-term production jobs in the city, and to generate an anticipated annual economic impact exceeding \$800 million.

During the construction of the studio, 40% of total worker hours will be dedicated to Newark residents. In addition, the developers have made a commitment to



Lionsgate Film & TV Studios Construction Site -Credit : njpac.org



(left to right): John Schreiber, CEO of NJPAC; Fehmi Zeko, Chairman, Great Point Studios; Mayor Ras Baraka; First Lady Tammy Murphy; and Governor Phil Murphy at the official start of construction of Lionsgate's Newark Film & TV Studios.

Credit : njpac.org

offer 25% of total construction contracting to Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) and 7% to Women's Business Enterprises (WBEs).

Once operational, 70% of the studio's full-time employment opportunities — spanning maintenance, engineering, janitorial, administrative, landscaping, security, and other departments — will be reserved for Newark residents, who will also receive priority consideration when applying for all studio jobs. The studio will maintain an ongoing local-vendor preference policy during operations to support the city's small businesses.

Additionally, the studio project partners intend to partner with the Newark Board of Education to develop film, television, broadcast, and related industry curricula for the city's students, as well as training and apprenticeship programs for the city's young people, providing them with a pathway into the growing entertainment industry.

Great Point Studios and NJPAC will help develop these educational programs. The Arts Center has also committed to producing and presenting at least 15 arts and community events in the South Ward annually, providing arts education and cultural programming for young people in the neighborhood's parks, schools and community centers.

"Creating new jobs for New Yorkers and providing career training opportunities for young people in the TV and film industry are two unique and transformative deliverables that Lionsgate Newark will make possible for our community. The unprecedented investment that Lionsgate and Great Point Studios are making in our city will provide life-enhancing pathways to success to our residents," said NJPAC President and CEO John Schreiber.

The studio developers will also make substantial financial investments in the quality of life in the South Ward neighborhood, providing \$300,000 in dedicated community funding. At the project's completion, Great Point will contribute grants to ten local community

organizations, totaling \$200,000. An additional \$100,000 will be contributed to the South Ward Environmental Alliance for environmental improvements and green-jobs programs.

"Not only will the studio bring jobs to the South Ward, but the organizations behind this project are showing themselves to be good neighbors already by offering this level of support to our community groups and our schools. Lionsgate Newark will serve as an economic engine that will drive so many positive changes for our community and for Newark as a whole," said Patrick O. Council, the Newark City Council member who represents the South Ward.

"This studio is the centerpiece of energizing this neighborhood. We look forward to working with the City of Newark and the State of New Jersey to reimagine and revitalize this neighborhood into a thriving mixed-use community with housing for everyone on the income ladder," said Leonard Spicer, Executive Director of the Newark Housing Authority.

The South Ward will also see quality-of-life benefits through studio-sponsored initiatives like a \$50,000 beautification grant from the Newark Department of Economic and Housing Development (matched by Newark Housing Authority) for improvements to the neighborhood's sidewalks, façades, green space, and streetscapes. The studio's strong environmental commitments, including dust control, noise management, environmental reporting, and the installation of solar panels, will also benefit the city.

The 12-acre, \$125 million-plus facility will be owned and managed by Great Point Studios. Matrix Development will serve as the project developer and Gensler, a global architecture, design and planning firm with deep expertise in studio and soundstage design and development with more than 3,500 active clients, has signed on to lead the way with architecture and master planning.

LIONSGATE

Lionsgate (NYSE: LGFA, LGFB) (lionsgate.com) encompasses world-class motion picture and television studio operations aligned with the STARZ premium global subscription platform to bring a unique and varied portfolio of entertainment to consumers around the world. The Company's film, television, subscription and location-based entertainment businesses are backed by a 17,000-title library and a valuable collection of iconic film and television franchises. A digital age company driven by its entrepreneurial culture and commitment to innovation, the Lionsgate brand is synonymous with bold, original, relatable entertainment for audiences worldwide.

GREAT POINT STUDIOS

Great Point Studios is a media-focused company specializing in film and television infrastructure. It was founded by Robert Halmi and Fehmi Zeko. Great Point Studios currently has locations in Yonkers, Atlanta, Buffalo, and Cardiff (Wales, UK), with an additional location under construction in Newark, NJ. Learn more at greatpointstudios.com.

NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

NJPAC located in downtown Newark, New Jersey, is the most diverse performing arts center in the country, and the anchor cultural institution for both the city of Newark and the state of New Jersey. It is an artistic, cultural, educational and civic center where great performances and events enhance and transform lives every day. Visit njpac.org for more information.

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

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY'S STILLMAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS EXPANDS UNDERGRADUATE OFFERINGS



Assistant Dean and Instructor of Finance Mark Schild works with students in the Trading Room, a hands-on learning environment for business students.
-Credit : shu.edu.

BY MABEL PAIS

Seton Hall University's (shu.edu) Stillman School of Business (shu.edu/business) is expanding its undergraduate offerings with the addition of two new undergraduate majors: Forensic Accounting and Wealth Management. Both programs were created in response to industry demand for graduates who are prepared to step into fast-growing, specialized roles in the financial sector.

"These new programs reflect Seton Hall's focus on innovation and preparing students for meaningful careers," said Joyce Strawser, Ph.D. (shu.edu/profiles/joycestrawser), Stillman School dean and associate professor of accounting and taxation. "Forensic accounting and wealth management are fields where the need for ethical leaders is especially critical, and our students will be ready to make a difference."

The new Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (B.S.B.A.) in Forensic Accounting (shu.edu/academics/bsba-forensic-accounting) blends coursework in accounting, business analytics and criminal justice. Students learn how to investigate financial fraud, analyze records and support legal proceedings.

Courses cover topics such as forensic accounting, criminal procedure and evidence, business intelligence and federal taxation. Graduates will be positioned for careers in public accounting firms, corporations, government agencies and law enforcement.

The program also prepares students to pursue the Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE) credential, which can lead to increased career opportunities and higher earning potential.

"With fraud and financial crime becoming more complex, organizations are seeking professionals who can uncover irregularities and help safeguard assets," said Mark Holtzman, C.P.A., Ph.D. (shu.edu/profiles/markholtzman), chair and associate professor, department of

accounting and taxation. "Our graduates will be uniquely prepared to serve both the business community and the public interest."

The Stillman School is **AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accredited in both business and accounting — an achievement earned by less than one percent of business schools worldwide.

The Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (B.S.B.A.) in Wealth Management (events.shu.edu/event/44385-division-of-finance-open-forum) takes a comprehensive approach to preparing students for careers in personal financial advising, investment planning, and financial consulting. A hallmark of the program is its focus on behavioral finance, teaching students to understand client decision-making and build trust-based relationships.

Students in the program will gain practical experience through internships, financial labs, and volunteer opportunities, including the IRS-sponsored Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. They will also earn industry credentials such as the Securities Industry Essentials (SIE) and Bloomberg Market Concepts (BMC) certifications. Graduates will be eligible to sit for the Certified Financial Planner® (CFP®) exam.

"Our wealth management program is designed to go beyond technical knowledge," said Stillman's Associate Dean for Student Success and Instructor of Finance Mark Schild, M.B.A. (shu.edu/profiles/MarkSchild), "We want students to be able to provide trusted guidance to clients, addressing not only investments but the broader financial challenges people face throughout their lives."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs for financial advisors are projected to grow 17 percent by 2033. Forensic accounting also continues to be one of the most in-demand specialties in the profession.

"These majors are the latest examples of how Seton Hall prepares students for success," Strawser said. "Through the

benefit of rigorous academics, hands-on learning and strong industry connections, our graduates are ready to lead and thrive in some of the most important and fastest-growing areas of business."

STILLMAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS - TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

The Stillman School of Business at Seton Hall University was established in 1950 to provide education geared toward the complex, practical needs of business leaders. The School was the first private business school in New Jersey to earn accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International). Decades later, the School continues to maintain professional accreditation from AACSB and is the only school in northern New Jersey with both business and accounting accreditation.

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The Stillman School is recognized by Poets & Quants among the top 50 in the nation for best undergraduate business schools. In addition, the Gerald P. Buccino '63 Center for Leadership Development earned, for the fifth year in a row, a No. 1 ranking in the LEAD Awards sponsored by HR.com.

It's M.B.A. program is included in The Princeton Review's "Best Business Schools" and has been a US News & World Report "top business school for part-time MBAs."

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

One of the country's leading Catholic universities, Seton Hall University has been developing students in mind, heart and spirit since 1856. Home to over 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students and offering more than 90 rigorous majors, Seton Hall's academic excellence has been singled out for distinction by 'The Princeton Review,' 'U.S. News & World Report' and 'Bloomberg Businessweek.'

Seton Hall's 58-acre main campus (shu.edu) is located in the quaint town of South Orange, New Jersey, only 14



Mark Schild, Assistant Dean - Finance, Stillman School of Business, Seton Hall University
--Credit : shu.edu.

miles from Manhattan. The University's nationally ranked School of Law (shu.edu) is located in nearby Newark, N.J. The new Interprofessional Health Sciences (IHS) campus (shu.edu/interprofessional), situated in the towns of Clifton and Nutley, N.J., opened in July 2018. The IHS campus houses Seton Hall's College of Nursing (shu.edu/nursing) and School of Health and Medical Sciences (shu.edu/health), as well as the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (hmsom.edu).

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

**AACSB Accreditation: What does this mean?

THE HALLMARK OF EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

The Stillman School was the first private business school in New Jersey to earn accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International). Decades later, the School continues to maintain professional accreditation from AACSB. Stillman is also the only school in northern New Jersey with both business and accounting accreditation – making it one of only 188 institutions worldwide to hold an additional, specialized AACSB Accreditation.

WHY DOES AACSB ACCREDITATION MATTER?

Recognition by AACSB International means that an institution commits to fulfill its mission, and continues to sustain and improve educational quality of its undergraduate, master's and doctoral degree programs according to the business or accounting standards of AACSB International as interpreted by its peer review team(s), accreditation committees and the Board of Directors. AACSB-accredited schools have the highest-caliber instructors, and offer the leading-edge courses and programs that businesses look for when hiring the leaders they need today — and tomorrow.

- AACSB-accredited schools provide high-quality education to their students
- Many top companies worldwide will only recruit from AACSB-accredited schools
- Business degrees from AACSB-accredited schools are recognized by universities all over the world

INDULGE IN SOME OF THE MOST ICONIC MUSIC OF ALL TIME OF LEGENDARY COMPOSER-FATHER AND CONDUCTOR-SON

BY MABEL PAIS

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) celebrates the illustrious world of Hollywood through a performance by the New Jersey Symphony. The New Jersey Symphony will perform some of the most iconic film music of all time presented on Saturday, January 3, 2026 at 8 PM.

Hooray for Hollywood! Do not miss this opportunity to experience Hollywood in New Jersey with DAVID NEWMAN and SEBASTIAN KNAUER.

Experience some of the most iconic film music ever created, conducted by guest conductor David Newman, an Oscar-nominated film composer who continues the esteemed legacy of his father, Alfred Newman — renowned for his contributions to the golden age of legendary film scoring and the creator of the iconic 20th Century Fox fanfare.

Award-winning German pianist Sebastian Knauer joins the orchestra for an evening of silver-screen favorites. You'll hear music from a variety of celebrated composers, including the Newman family, who have amassed 13 Academy Awards and an incredible 93 nominations. The repertoire will enhance the evening dedicated to beloved silver-screen masterpieces like "A Beautiful Mind," "Spartacus," "The Robe," "How the West Was Won," "Basic Instinct" — and more!



(left) David Newman with Sebastian Knauer. -Credit: njpac.org.

PROGRAM

"HOLLYWOOD IN NEW JERSEY"

JANUARY 3, 2025

David Newman conductor

Sebastian Knauer piano

New Jersey Symphony

Alfred Newman / arr. David Newman

20th Century Fox Theme Song

David Newman Some Time Ago

Alfred Newman / arr. David Newman

Main Title from The Greatest Story Ever Told

Jerry Goldsmith / arr. David Newman

Main Title from "Basic Instinct"

Elmer Bernstein / arr. David Newman

Main Title from To "Kill a Mockingbird"

Alfred Newman / arr. David Newman

"No Good Bye" from "How the West Was Won"

Conrad Pope "Capriccio"

James Horner / arr. David Newman

"An Apparition in the Fields" from "The New World"

James Horner / arr. David Newman

Main Title from "A Beautiful Mind"

Jerry Goldsmith / arr. David Newman

Suite from "A Patch of Blue"

Alex North

Love Theme from "Spartacus"

Alfred Newman / arr. David Newman Love Theme from The Robe

Thomas Newman Shoulder Length

Morton Gould / George Gershwin Rhapsody on Fascinating Rhythm & Someone to Watch Over Me

TICKETS

For tickets to the Hollywood in New Jersey concert, visit NJPAC.org or in person at the NJPAC Box Office located at 1 Center Street, Newark, New Jersey or call 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

Learn more at njpac.org.

LISTEN TO THE MOST PERFORMED FEMALE ARTIST IN CARNEGIE HALL HISTORY



Katya Grineva.

Credit: katyagrineva.com.

BY MABEL PAIS

Acclaimed pianist KATYA GRINEVA returns to Carnegie Hall for her highly anticipated "A Classical Holiday" concert for one night only, Friday, December 26, 2025, at 8:00 p.m.

Celebrating her 23rd Stern Auditorium appearance, Katya has performed at the venue more than any other female artist. In what has become a seasonal tradition for local New York City families and tourists alike, Katya's festive concert is a highlight of the holiday season. Katya's playing is hailed for its fluidity and abundance of poetic expression. A "noted exponent of Romantic repertoire (WNYC Radio)," she captures audiences with her breathless, ethereal concerts. (See

Program details below.)

Watch Katya play and speak - <https://youtu.be/CeBaVj0yfds>

As part of her unwavering commitment to sharing the beauty of classical music with underserved youth, Katya's non-profit organization, "Katya Concerts for Kids," will extend a heartfelt invitation to more than 300 children from Harlem and the Bronx to attend the concert as her special guests. This inspiring initiative offers these young audiences not only the gift of world-class music but also the opportunity to dream bigger, experience the arts firsthand, and feel seen and valued within one of the most prestigious concert halls in the world.

Performing works from her holiday album "A Classical Holiday," Katya showcases new arrangements of Christmas classics including "The Nutcracker," "My Favorite Things," and more. Drawn to spirituality and mysticism, Katya's poetic style brings a different ethereal dimension to this holiday concert. This year's program includes the mystical "O choruscans lux stellarum" by Von Bingen, Gershwin's "Embraceable You," the rarely played Liszt Legendes, and more.

PROGRAM

WHAT: A CLASSICAL HOLIDAY:

Music that Celebrates the Eternal Mysteries

WHEN: Friday, Dec 26, 2025, 8:00 p.m.

WHERE: Carnegie Hall, Stern Auditorium, Corner of 57th St & Seventh Ave, Trains N/Q/R/W 57th St

Katya Grineva (piano)

Selections:

VON BINGEN "O choruscans lux

stellarum" (arr. Gail Smith)

J. S. BACH "Sheep May Safely Graze"

from Cantata No. 208 (arr. Petri)

MOZART Selections from Requiem, K.

626 (arr. Liszt)

OFFENBACH Barcarolle from Les

contes d'Hoffmann (arr. Griffes)

TCHAIKOVSKY "Dance of the Sugar

Plum Fairy" from The Nutcracker

CHOPIN Fantaisie-Impromptu in C-

sharp Minor, Op. 66

RAVEL "Une barque sur l'océan" from

Miroirs

BEETHOVEN Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-

sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 2, "Moonlight"

BEETHOVEN Allegretto from

Symphony No. 7 (arr. Liszt for solo

piano)

LISZT Deux legends

WILD "Embraceable You" (Etude No. 3)

from Seven Virtuoso Etudes for Piano

on Gershwin Songs

RAVEL Boléro

RODGERS "My Favorite Things" (arr.

Byron Duckwall)

BYRON DUCKWALL "Holiday Dream"

TICKETS

Tickets are available at the Carnegie Hall (Stern Auditorium) box office (57th Street and 7th Avenue) on a tiered scale. Students get a 50% discount with valid Student I.D. To purchase, contact carnegiehall.org or CarnegieCharge @ 212.247.7800.

KATYA GRINEVA

Born in Moscow, Katya began studying piano at the age of six, attending the Moscow Music School. She went on to the

Moscow High School of Music under the aegis of the prestigious Moscow Conservatory, where she studied with Professor Pavel Messner. In New York, she was awarded a scholarship to immediately enter the Mannes School of Music graduate program, studying with Nina Svetlanova, followed by private coaching with Vladja Mashke, who played a key role in the young pianist's development.

Katya made her American debut in 1993 with the Baltimore Symphony. In 1998, she made her Carnegie Hall debut. In 2006, Katya was chosen to exclusively perform and record the world premieres of piano sonatas by romantic Viennese composer Marcel Tyberg. In 2023, she had the distinct honor of opening the new Field Arts & Events Hall in Port Angeles, Washington.

Her philanthropic work garnered her accolades, including being the recipient of the Gusi Peace Prize from Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, and Outstanding Women Award from Ercolano, Italy. She has been awarded the honorable title of Steinway Artist, a special honor from the New York State Shields, and recognition from the government of Guam for her special achievements. She has released nine CDs, the latest one being "The Complete Chopin Nocturnes."

Katya splits her time between New York City and Woodstock where she has hosted over 400+ virtual recitals and 75+ in-person house concerts. For more information, visit katyagrineva.com.

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



Tisca Chopra reveals she 'almost got divorced' while writing 'Saali Mohabbat'

Tisca Chopra recently made her directorial debut with *Saali Mohabbat*, which she co-wrote with her husband, Sanjay Chopra. Speaking about her experience, Tisca revealed how they almost ended up divorced due to their creative differences.

In a conversation with Mid-Day, Tisca explained how her writing style is more subtle, while husband Sanjay's is more robust.

She said: "We almost got divorced writing it. So the yin and yang came together nicely in the script. We were told in the beginning [to drop it], but we still went ahead and recorded it. Then we had to dub it to something else. I'm not a big fan of censorship. If at 18 years you can choose a government, why can't you choose what you want to watch?"

She added: "Directing is a mother-of-god hard job. It just never ends. You start your day with a volley of questions. What should be the size of the car's number plate? Should the actor shave his chest or not? If you don't answer, they'll think you don't know your mind. So you just have to make a decision, even if it's wrong. And then you make the right decision."

About *Saali Mohabbat*

Saali Mohabbat is a drama-thriller set against the backdrop of a quaint small town. The story unravels when an ordinary housewife finds her monotonous life uprooted as betrayal, lies, and hidden tensions surface after two disturbing deaths disrupt the delicate balance around her.

Alongside Radhika Apte, Sauraseni Maitra, Divyendu Sharma, Anshumaan Pushkar, and Anurag Kashyap, also play key roles in the film, it is produced by Jyoti Deshpande, Dinesh Malhotra, Vipin Agnihotri, and Manish Malhotra.

Cocktail 2: It's fresh take on love, says Kriti as she teams up with Shahid & Rashmika

After leaving a lasting impact with her performance in intense films such as *Do Patti* (2024) and *Tere Ishk Mein*, Bollywood beauty Kriti Sanon is now busy shooting for a rom com. We are talking about Homi Adajania's *Cocktail 2*, also starring Shahid Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna. The film will serve as the spiritual sequel to the director's iconic 2012 film *Cocktail*, which introduced us to the unforgettable onscreen trio of Deepika Padukone, Saif Ali Khan and Diana Pentz. Well, in a new interview, Kriti has now opened up about working with Shahid and Rashmika, and how the sequel is different from *Cocktail* part 1.

Talking about how she wanted to do a light film, after the intense and heavy *Tere Ishk Mein*, Kriti Sanon told Zoom, "I think *Cocktail 2* just happened at the right time. I was craving for it. I wanted to go into that really young, urban, fun space of a rom-com. And yes, it's a sequel, but it's more of a vibe sequel, I feel. The story is completely different, the characters are completely different, and their backstories are completely different. So everything is different, except for the vibe of *Cocktail*. And of course, Maddock Films and Homi Adajania. So that remains as is."

Kriti shared, "But it's been fun. We've shot about two major schedules. We're going to start another one right now in Mumbai. It's got amazing



music." She went on to add, "I think I'm looking so different from what I have ever looked, which I'm very excited about and it's also very fresh. When you watch *Cocktail 1* also, something about it still feels today. It doesn't make you feel like it's what, 12 years old or something, you know? And you still feel like it's today's film. And I think that's how even this film is. It's very refreshing, the visuals are stunning, it's got a take on modern equations and

relationships. Very relevant to what it speaks about. And I've had a blast shooting with Shahid and Rashmika, and of course Homi is mad, so his craziness kind of keeps us all going for a fun ride."

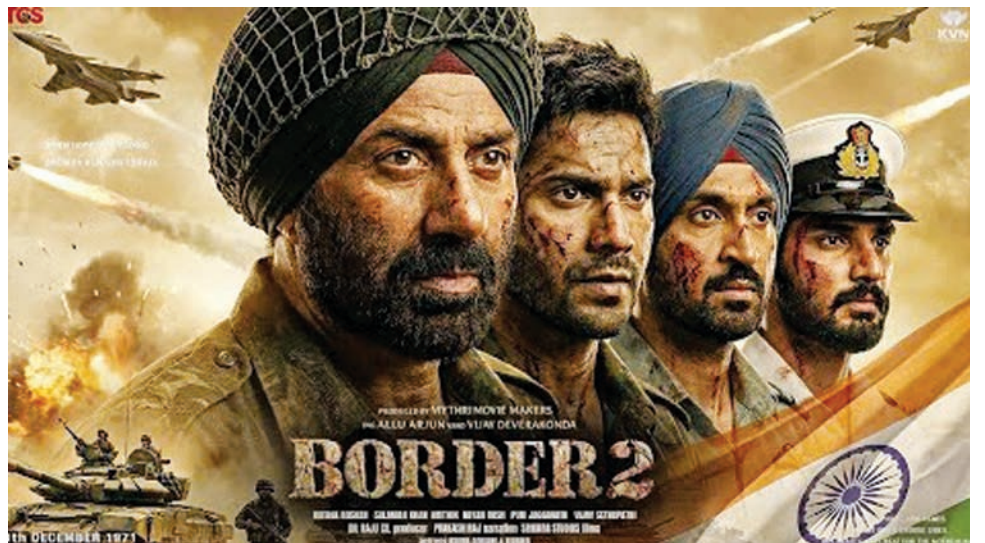
This project marks Shahid and Kriti's second film together, after *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya*, where the latter played the role of a robot. When asked about this reunion, Kriti replied, "But finally I'm human!"

Border 2 teaser review: Sunny Deol war drama banks on nostalgia and patriotism

War dramas are supposed to bank on emotion. They need to be hair-raising, tear-jerking, and most of all, engaging. Think of the best war films India has made - from *Haqueqat* to *Shershaah*, and they all tick all these boxes. *Border*, perhaps, is at the top of that list. 28 years ago, the JP Dutta film used all these tools in its arsenal to sell emotion as no war film has done before. As the teaser for *Border 2* unrolled yesterday (December 16), a similar picture played out - a focus on emotions like nostalgia, pride, and patriotism, rather than technical finesse.

But it worked. *Border 2* teaser, particularly when *Hindustan Meri Jaan* begins to play, hit all the right notes. From Sunny Deol's monologue to the heroes' introductions, the film attempted to be larger-than-life while grounding itself with real stories. Is it perfect? By no means. However, the *Border 2* teaser reveals that the Anurag Singh film isn't aiming for perfection, but rather engagement and entertainment. And in that regard, it has made a good start.

Sunny Deol is the biggest USP of



Border 2, apart from the title itself. With *Gadar 2*, the veteran actor showed that he still has it in him to deliver a blockbuster in his 60s, aided by just solid packaging, and the nostalgia of a successful IP. *Border 2* has both of those things. The three young heroes all get a chance to shine. The diversity Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, and Ahan Shetty provide is a treat for those marketing this film, as most audience

sub-sections have a 'favourite'. And the visuals of naval warfare - a novelty in Indian films - are a cherry on top.

But mostly what *Border 2* gets right is how it uses nostalgia. If the original announcement video perfectly used *Sandese Aate Hain*, the teaser utilised *Hindustan Meri Jaan* in an even better fashion. It is a very clear and smart use of relatable content to reel in the loyal fanbase.

Housemaid first reviews: Critics say Sydney Sweeney film is over the top on purpose

Glossy, twisted and unapologetically wild, *The Housemaid* has arrived, and critics can't quite agree whether it's deliciously deranged or cleverly overcooked. The new crime thriller, directed by Paul Feig, released globally on December 17 (In India on January 2, 2026), and has quickly sparked conversation for both its starry cast and its unabashedly pulpy tone.

The film features a sleek ensemble led by Sydney Sweeney, Amanda Seyfried, Brendon Sklenar and Michele Morrone. While reactions have been mixed, one thing is clear – *The Housemaid* is not playing safe.

Several international critics have described the film as indulgently clever, even excessive, while others have embraced its chaotic energy and twist-heavy narrative as part of the fun.

Writing for *The Guardian*, critic Peter Bradshaw praised the performances and the film's audacity. "We get some tastily over-the-top acting and some huge rewind POV shifts to explain what has really been going on – and, of course, the heady whiff of gaslight as Millie (Sweeney) can't quite be sure she really understands anything that's happening," he wrote. Calling it "silly" but effective, Bradshaw added that Feig and his cast deliver the material "with terrific gusto," labelling it "an innocent holiday treat."

Variety described the film as a "movie of diabolical developments," highlighting the evolving dynamic between Sweeney and Seyfried. The publication noted that their pairing works like a "duet that keeps giving because it keeps evolving."

In his review for the publication, critic Owen Gleiberman framed *The Housemaid* as a knowingly pulpy thriller that thrives amid awards-season seriousness. "The film creates an ideology of male-female relationships that's at once timely, glibly mythological, and born to be milked by a Hollywood thriller," he wrote, adding that it is "the kind of stylishly tricky high-trash movie that can steal some of the limelight."

Meanwhile, *Deadline* Hollywood critic Pete Hammond leaned fully into the madness, calling the film a "psychotic screen version of [a] trashy popular novel." He described it as "on speed," noting that it is a "heightened operatic ride" where shifting character dynamics keep the audience guessing until the very end.



Sofia Vergara confirms dating 39-year-old US businessman Douglas Chabbott

Actor Sofia Vergara has confirmed her new romantic relationship with US businessman Douglas Chabbott. The announcement comes after several months of speculation fuelled by multiple public sightings. However, a recent social media post ended rumours about her personal life.

Vergara, 53, shared a photograph with Chabbott taken at a restaurant. It was accompanied by the message "Te amo (I love you)." The post provided clarity following weeks of public curiosity and media reports linking the two since mid-2025. Chabbott, 39, reportedly serves as vice president at Dasan Inc., a company specialising in luxury jewellery and high-end design. He has maintained a relatively private profile, primarily appearing in business and philanthropic circles.

The pair were first linked after several public appearances earlier in the year, including an event in Pasadena and a birthday celebration in Cerdea. These events contributed to increased speculation about the nature of their relationship before Vergara's public confirmation.

The actor's relationship history has frequently attracted media attention. She married actor Joe Manganiello in 2015, with their marriage lasting nearly a decade before they divorced in 2024.

Avatar: Fire and Ash: Sci-fi adventure series is the longest and worst yet

Avatar and *Avatar: The Way of Water* are two of the highest-grossing films ever made, so you can hardly blame James Cameron for keeping his sci-fi adventure series going. But its third episode, *Avatar: Fire and Ash*, strongly suggests that he should quit while he's still ahead. Each *Avatar* so far has been longer and worse than the one before, and this one – a full half-hour longer than the 2009 original – is 197 minutes of screensaver graphics, clunky dialogue, baggy plotting and hippy-dippy new-age spirituality. It's terrifying to think that Cameron still has two more sequels scheduled. How much longer and more self-indulgent can they possibly get?

The most insulting part is that even with that preposterous, bladder-testing running time, *Avatar: Fire and Ash* doesn't work as a standalone film with a beginning, middle and end. Making no concessions to any viewers who aren't superfans of the franchise, Cameron assumes that we're already deeply invested in the characters, their relationships and their surroundings, so that a complete, propulsive story is surplus to requirements.



It feels as if we're a zillion light years from the excitement of the first film. The idea of that one was that the human race had made such a mess of the planet Earth that they decided to exploit the mineral resources of an Edenic, unspoiled moon named Pandora. This plan wasn't popular with Pandora's blue-skinned humanoid inhabitants, the Na'vi, but a human Marine, Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) had his mind zapped into

the body of a Na'vi-human hybrid, so that he could cosy up to the locals. He then fell in love with a Na'vi princess, Neytiri (Zoe Saldana), and fought alongside her tribespeople against the invaders from Earth. In short, *Avatar* was Pocahontas meets the Smurfs in space – a scenario ripe with conflicts and environmental issues.

mistake. Worthington may not be the world's most charismatic actor, but at least his character was distinctive, whereas it's sometimes hard to tell which of Jake and Neytiri's nearly-naked offspring is which – and they're all equally annoying. Every now and then there will be a big battle, or we'll see some human scientists who haven't been in the film for ages. Sometimes we'll have to sit through long, reverential discussions of the Na'vi's beliefs. And sometimes we'll have tantalising glimpses of the hard-edged empire-vs-rebels eco-thriller that the film could have been. But, essentially, *Avatar: Fire and Ash* is a Californian soap opera in which various forgettable dreadlocked surf dudes ride dragons and shout phrases like, "That was insane, bro," and, "This is sick, cuz!"

The INDIAN PANORAMA

EVER TRUTHFUL



CHRISTMAS

From sacred birth to global celebration



Christmas, celebrated each year on December 25, is today one of the most widely observed festivals in the world. It is both a deeply sacred religious occasion for Christians and a global cultural event embraced far beyond church walls. Yet the Christmas we recognize today—with decorated trees, gift exchanges, carols, Santa Claus, and festive cheer—is the result of centuries of evolution, shaped by ancient pagan festivals, early Christian theology, medieval customs, literature, and modern commercial culture.

To understand Christmas fully, one must look beyond the nativity scene and trace the layers of history, belief, and human storytelling that gradually shaped the festival into what it is today.

How Did Christmas Begin?

In its earliest centuries, Christianity did not celebrate the birth of Jesus. Early Christians were far more focused on Easter, commemorating the resurrection, which they viewed as the central event of Christian faith. Birthdays, in fact, were not widely celebrated in ancient Jewish and early Christian traditions.

The first recorded celebration of Christmas as the birth of Christ appears in Rome in the 4th century CE, during a time when Christianity was transitioning from a persecuted faith to the official religion of the Roman Empire. As the Church sought to establish a structured liturgical calendar, the idea of commemorating Jesus' birth gradually gained importance.

By the mid-300s CE, December 25 began to be observed as the Feast of the Nativity, laying the foundation for what would eventually become Christmas.

Saturnalia and the Pagan Influence on Christmas

One of the most significant influences on Christmas comes from Saturnalia, an ancient Roman festival held in mid-December in honour of Saturn, the god of agriculture. Saturnalia was marked by feasting, gift-giving, role reversals, public merriment, and widespread celebration—a joyful break from social norms.

During Saturnalia:

- Homes were decorated with greenery and lights
- Gifts were exchanged
- Public revelry was encouraged
- Masters and servants symbolically reversed roles

As Christianity spread through the Roman world, Church leaders faced a practical challenge: how to introduce Christian observances without alienating populations deeply attached to existing traditions. Rather than abolish popular festivals, the Church often reframed them, assigning new Christian meaning to familiar customs.

Placing Christmas in late December allowed Christian leaders to absorb and transform Saturnalia's celebratory spirit, redirecting attention from pagan gods to the birth of Christ. Many elements now associated with Christmas—festivity, generosity, communal meals—echo these ancient winter celebrations.



Is Christmas Really the Day Jesus Was Born?

The short answer is: probably not.

The Bible does not specify an exact date for Jesus' birth. In fact, clues within the Gospel narratives—such as shepherds tending flocks outdoors at night—suggest a springtime birth rather than mid-winter, as December nights in Judea would have been too cold for grazing.

Several alternative dates were proposed by early Christian scholars, including March and September. December 25 appears to have been chosen symbolically rather than historically.

Some historians believe the date aligned with:

- The Roman festival of Sol Invictus (the Unconquered Sun)
- The winter solstice, symbolising light overcoming darkness
- The belief that

Jesus was conceived on March 25, making December 25 nine months later

Thus, Christmas became less about historical precision and more about theological symbolism—celebrating Christ as the "Light of the World" entering a darkened world.

The Middle Ages: Christmas Becomes a Popular Festival

By the Middle Ages, Christmas had firmly taken root across Europe. It became a twelve-day festival, running from December 25 to January 6 (Epiphany). Feasts, plays, church services, and community gatherings dominated the season.

Medieval Christmas traditions included:

- Mystery plays depicting the Nativity
- Caroling, originally communal singing
- Yule logs, inherited from Norse winter customs
- Lavish feasts for both nobles and commoners

However, Christmas was not always universally embraced. During the 17th century, Puritans in England and colonial America viewed Christmas as excessive and unbiblical. In some places, celebrations were even banned. It would take time and cultural transformation for Christmas to regain its widespread popularity.

'A Christmas Carol': The Story That Changed Christmas

Few works have shaped modern Christmas more than Charles Dickens' *'A Christmas Carol'*, published in 1843. At a time when industrialisation had deepened social inequality, Dickens reimagined Christmas as a season of compassion, generosity, and moral renewal.

The story of Ebenezer Scrooge, transformed from miser to benefactor, reframed Christmas not merely as a religious holiday but as a time for:

- Caring for the poor
- Strengthening family bonds
- Practising kindness and forgiveness





Dickens' vision deeply influenced Victorian society and helped redefine Christmas as a warm, family-centred festival. Many traditions we associate with Christmas today—festive meals, goodwill, charitable giving—owe much to the moral tone set by 'A Christmas Carol'.

Who Invented Santa Claus? The Making of a Global Icon

Santa Claus, perhaps the most recognisable symbol of Christmas today, did not emerge fully formed. He is the product of centuries of myth-making and cultural blending.

His origins lie with Saint Nicholas, a 4th-century Christian bishop from Myra (modern-day Turkey), known for secret gift-giving and compassion for children and the poor. Over time, Dutch settlers in America brought stories of Sinterklaas, which gradually merged with local traditions.

In the 19th century:

- The poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (1823) popularised Santa as a jolly gift-giver arriving by sleigh
- Illustrator Thomas Nast gave Santa his familiar appearance
- Coca-Cola advertisements in the 20th century cemented the red-suited, white-bearded image globally

Thus, Santa Claus evolved from a Christian saint into a universal symbol of generosity and joy.

The Christmas Tree and Other Traditions

The Christmas tree, now central to celebrations, has roots in Germanic pagan traditions, where evergreen trees symbolised life during winter. By the 16th century, decorated trees were part of German Christmas customs and later spread across Europe and America.

Other traditions include:

- Gift-giving, linked to the Magi and Saturnalia
- Carols, evolving from medieval hymns
- Lights, symbolising hope and divine presence
- Festive meals, reinforcing community and abundance

Each tradition reflects layers of history rather than a single origin.

Christmas in the Modern World

Today, Christmas is celebrated across continents, often adapted to local cultures. In some countries it remains deeply religious; in others it is largely secular. It has also become a major commercial season, prompting debates about materialism versus meaning.

Yet, at its core, Christmas continues to carry a powerful message—hope, renewal, generosity, and togetherness. Christmas did not begin on a single night in Bethlehem, nor was it shaped by one tradition alone. It is the result of faith meeting history, belief meeting culture, and ancient customs meeting modern life.

From Saturnalia to Saint Nicholas, from Dickens to Santa Claus, Christmas has continually reinvented itself while preserving its central spirit. That enduring adaptability may explain why, after two millennia, Christmas remains not just a holiday, but a shared human celebration.



Christmas Around the World: How Cultures Across Continents Celebrate the Season

From midnight masses in Europe to beachside festivities in the Southern Hemisphere, from solemn religious observances to vibrant folk customs, Christmas reflects the cultural soul of each society it touches. What unites these varied traditions is a shared emphasis on family, generosity, light, and renewal, even as climate, history, and local customs shape the way the season unfolds.

Europe: Where Many Christmas Traditions Took Shape

In the United Kingdom, Christmas is deeply influenced by Victorian-era traditions popularised by Charles Dickens. Homes are decorated with holly, mistletoe, and Christmas trees, while carol singing remains a cherished custom. The traditional Christmas meal includes roast turkey, stuffing, roast potatoes, and Christmas pudding, often served with brandy butter.

The Queen's (now King's) Christmas message, broadcast annually, is a modern tradition that reflects on national life and shared values. Boxing Day, celebrated on December 26, continues the festive spirit with family gatherings and sporting events.

Germany: Advent, Markets and the Christmas Tree

Germany is widely regarded as the birthplace of many modern Christmas customs. The Advent calendar and Advent wreath originate here, marking the countdown to Christmas. German towns are famous for their Weihnachtsmärkte (Christmas markets), where stalls sell mulled wine (Glühwein), gingerbread (Lebkuchen), and handcrafted ornaments.

The tradition of decorating a Christmas tree began in Germany in the 16th century and later spread worldwide. Christmas Eve is often the main celebration, when families exchange gifts and attend church services.

France: Midnight Mass and Réveillon

In France, Christmas blends elegance with devotion. Many families attend Midnight Mass before returning home for le réveillon, a long, elaborate late-night feast featuring oysters, foie gras, roast meats, and fine desserts. In Provence, the tradition of thirteen desserts symbolises Jesus and the twelve apostles.

Nativity scenes, known as crèches, are common in homes and churches, reflecting France's strong cultural connection to the story of Christ's birth.

Italy: Faith at the Heart of Christmas

In Italy, Christmas remains deeply religious. Nativity scenes (*presepi*) are central, sometimes more important than Christmas trees. The Vatican's Midnight Mass, led by the Pope, is watched by millions worldwide.

Children often receive gifts not from Santa Claus but from La Befana, a folkloric figure who delivers presents on Epiphany (January 6), extending the festive season beyond Christmas Day.

United States: A Cultural Melting Pot

Christmas in the United States reflects



the country's diversity. Traditions include decorated trees, gift exchanges, stockings, and Santa Claus, alongside church services and family meals. Popular foods vary by region, but roast turkey, ham, and pies are common.

Public displays, Christmas movies, and commercial celebrations play a major role, while December 25 has been a federal holiday since 1870. Despite its commercialisation, Christmas remains a time for charity, volunteering, and family gatherings.

Mexico: Posadas and Community Faith

In Mexico, Christmas is celebrated through Las Posadas, a nine-day re-enactment of Mary and Joseph's search for shelter. Each evening involves prayer, songs, and communal feasts. Christmas Eve (Nochebuena) is the main event, marked by midnight Mass and family celebrations.

Traditional foods include tamales, bacalao (salted cod), and ponche, a warm fruit drink. Piñatas shaped like stars symbolise the triumph of good over evil.

**Brazil: Christmas in Summer**

In Brazil, Christmas arrives in the height of summer. Celebrations often extend outdoors, with fireworks and open-air feasts. Many families attend Missa do Galo (Rooster's Mass) at midnight on Christmas Eve.

Festive meals include tropical fruits alongside traditional dishes. Cities like Rio de Janeiro feature massive floating Christmas trees and elaborate light displays.

Africa: Faith, Music and Community

In Ethiopia, Christmas-known as Genna-is celebrated on January 7, following the Orthodox calendar. The day begins with long church services and fasting, followed by communal meals. Traditional white garments and processions highlight the deeply spiritual nature of the celebration.

Nigeria and Ghana: Joyful Worship and Togetherness

In many African countries, Christmas is marked by lively church services, music, dance, and extended family gatherings.

Urban residents often travel back to their hometowns, making Christmas a major period of reunions.

Asia: Faith, Festivals and Cultural Adaptation

The Philippines celebrates Christmas longer than any other country, beginning as early as September. The season peaks with Simbang Gabi, a series of dawn Masses leading up to Christmas Day.

Festivities centre on family, food, and faith, with colourful parol lanterns symbolising the Star of Bethlehem.

India: Regional Diversity and Harmony

In India, Christmas is celebrated by Christian communities across states such as Goa, Kerala, and the Northeast. Churches host midnight Mass, homes are decorated with stars and cribs, and festive foods vary regionally. In many cities, Christmas has also become a broader cultural celebration, marked by markets, decorations, and shared goodwill across communities.

Japan: A Secular Celebration of Togetherness

In Japan, Christmas is largely secular and commercial. It is seen as a time for couples rather than families. A uniquely Japanese tradition involves eating fried chicken, popularised by marketing campaigns in the 1970s.

Australia and NZ: A Summer Christmas

In Australia and New Zealand, Christmas falls during summer. Celebrations often involve barbecues, beach outings, and outdoor lunches. Traditional Christmas foods are adapted to the climate, with seafood and cold desserts replacing heavy roasts. Carols by Candlelight events reflect the blend of tradition and modern lifestyle. Christmas is celebrated in churches and homes, in snow-covered villages and sunlit beaches, in solemn silence and joyful song. While traditions differ widely, the heart of Christmas remains constant-a celebration of human connection.

In a first-of-its-kind attack, underwater drones hit Russian submarine: Ukraine

Ukraine said its naval drones damaged a Russian submarine in the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, in a special operation it claimed was the first such attack.

Underwater drones known as “sub sea baby” struck the Kilo-class submarine, inflicting “critical damage,” the Security Service of Ukraine, or SBU, said Monday in a post on Telegram. The submarine was equipped with four launch systems for Russia’s Kalibr cruise missiles, according to the SBU.

Moscow denied Ukraine’s claim. “Not a single ship or submarine of the Black Sea fleet stationed in the bay of the Novorossiysk Naval Base, nor their crews, were damaged as a result of the sabotage and are serving as usual,” Russia’s Defense Ministry said in a Telegram post, citing Alexey Rulev, head of the press office of the Russian Black Sea fleet. The SBU posted a video on social media of a large explosion in waters at what it said was the dock in Novorossiysk.

Bloomberg wasn’t able to independently verify the report.

Despite lacking a deployable navy, Ukraine has waged a campaign of attacks during the war targeting Russia’s Black Sea fleet using surface water drones. The strikes forced Russia to redeploy most of the fleet from its Sevastopol naval base in occupied Crimea to Novorossiysk on the eastern Black Sea coast. The fleet’s headquarters in Sevastopol were also hit by a Ukrainian missile in September 2024.

EU leaders to agree Ukraine financing in 2026-27, Belgium’s approval key

BRUSSELS (TIP)

European Union leaders will decide on Thursday, Dec 18, how to finance Ukraine in 2026 and 2027 to keep it fighting Russia’s invasion, with the use of Russian assets frozen in the EU the preferred option, but hinging on Belgium’s uncertain approval.

The EU wants to keep Ukraine financed and fighting because it sees Russia’s war as a threat to its own security. EU leaders are also keen to show European countries’ agency and strength after U.S. President Donald Trump last week called them “weak”.

With U.S. financial help for Kyiv drying up under the Trump administration and EU national budgets already under strain, the EU is looking to use the 210 billion euros of Russian central bank assets frozen in the bloc as a basis for a loan to Ukraine.

The stakes are high because without the EU’s financial help Ukraine will run out of money in the second quarter of next year and most likely lose the war to Russia, which the EU fears would bring closer the threat of Russian aggression against the EU.

“If we do not find an answer to that question (of how to finance Ukraine in 2026 and 2027), we will not enable Ukraine to defend itself,” a senior EU diplomat said. “That would have severe implications ... for the security of the rest of Europe.”

“It would also have severe implications for the credibility of Europe and underline that we are as weak as Trump apparently thinks we are,” the diplomat said.

REPARATIONS LOAN IS “ONLY GAME IN TOWN”

One of the financing options could be for the EU to borrow the needed amount against the security of the EU budget and then lend the money on to Ukraine, but such a move would require unanimity among the 27 EU countries and Moscow-friendly Hungary has already said it would veto it.

Another option would be for each willing EU country itself to raise money on the market and pass it on to Kyiv, but that would mean a rise in the already high debt and deficit levels and a lack of longer-term financing certainty for Ukraine.

Diplomats said the use of the Russian assets was therefore in practice “the only game in town” and favoured by most countries because it ensured a large sum for Ukraine without increasing national debts or any immediate fiscal effort.

But to use it, EU leaders first need to convince Belgium, which holds 185 billion euros of the total 210 billion euros



frozen in Europe, that they will not leave it alone with the bill if Russia successfully sues in international courts over the plan.

Most EU countries are willing to give such guarantees. But Belgian Prime Minister Bart de Wever has argued that because damages awarded to Russia in a successful court case could far exceed the amount held by Belgium and the trial could take place many years from now, he effectively needs a blank cheque from other governments for an indefinite period.

“There are limits to the guarantees member states could give,” another senior EU diplomat said.

“De Wever seems to want indefinite guarantees, and no EU member state can offer indefinite guarantees. No EU government can go to its own parliament and ask for indefinite guarantees for indefinite amounts of euros. That’s simply not possible,” the senior diplomat said.

The discussions among leaders on Thursday will therefore focus on narrowing down the scope of the guarantees to a form that would also be acceptable to other EU countries, diplomats said, stressing a financing solution for Ukraine will be found.

“This is not a European Council where we can part ways on Friday and not have anything,” a third senior EU diplomat said.

Saudi, French and US officials push Hezbollah disarmament plan

PARIS/BEIRUT (TIP)

French, Saudi Arabian and American officials held talks with the head of the Lebanese army on Thursday in Paris aimed at finalising a roadmap to enable a mechanism for the disarmament of the Hezbollah group, diplomats said.

Israel and Lebanon agreed to a U.S.-brokered ceasefire in 2024, ending more than a year of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah that severely weakened the Iran-backed militant group.

Since then, Israel has carried out hundreds of violations. Without evidence, it has accused the Lebanese army of not making enough efforts to disarm Hezbollah. Israeli warplanes have increasingly targeted Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, and sometimes in the east and in Beirut’s southern suburbs.

Speaking after the meeting, France’s foreign ministry spokesperson Pascal Confavreux said the talks had agreed to document seriously with evidence the Lebanese army’s efforts to disarm Hezbollah as well as strengthening the existing ceasefire mechanism.



With growing fear the ceasefire could unravel, the Paris meeting aimed to create more robust conditions to identify, support and verify the disarmament process and dissuade Israel from escalation, four European and Lebanese diplomats and officials told

Reuters.

With legislative elections due in Lebanon in 2026, there are fears political paralysis and party politics will further fuel instability and make President Joseph Aoun less likely to press disarmament, the diplomats and officials said.

“The situation is extremely precarious, full of contradictions and it won’t take much to light the powder keg,” said one senior official speaking on condition of anonymity. “Aoun doesn’t want to make the disarming process too public because he fears it will antagonise and provoke tensions with the Shia community in the south of the country.”

With the Lebanese army lacking capacity to disarm Hezbollah, the idea would be to reinforce the existing ceasefire mechanism with French, U.S. and possibly other military experts along with U.N. peacekeeping forces, the diplomats and officials said.

The parties agreed to hold a conference in February to reinforce the Lebanese army, Confavreux said.

Hezbollah has refused to fully disarm, citing the ongoing Israeli attacks. In his latest speech, the group’s leader Naim Qassem doubled down on his stance.

Cambodia says Thailand bombed casino hub on border, with no truce in sight

Cambodia's defence ministry has accused Thailand's military of bombing the casino hub of Poipet, a major land crossing between the two nations, which are engaged in renewed clashes along their border.

The ministry said in a statement on Thursday that Thai forces had "dropped 2 bombs" in the municipality of Poipet, located in the northwestern province of Banteay Meanchey. At the time of reporting, Thailand had not yet confirmed the strike on the bustling casino hub, which is popular with Thai gamblers. The interior ministry said this week that at least four casinos in Cambodia have been damaged by Thai strikes. Renewed fighting between the Southeast Asian neighbours this month has killed at least 21 people in Thailand and 17 in Cambodia, while displacing about 800,000, officials said.

Thailand said on Tuesday that between 5,000 and 6,000 Thai nationals remained stranded in Poipet after Cambodia closed its land border crossings with its neighbour.

Cambodia's interior ministry said the border closures were a "necessary measure" to reduce risks to civilians amid the ongoing combat, adding that air travel remained an option for those seeking to leave.

Five days of fighting between Cambodia and Thailand in July killed dozens of people before a truce was brokered by the United States, China and Malaysia, and then broken within months. United States President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly intervened in the longstanding conflict this year, claimed last week that the two countries had agreed to a new ceasefire.

NEW YORK (TIP)

Though the Taliban, de-facto rulers of Afghanistan, have managed to keep the ban on opium and narcotics, the "trade continues to dominate informal economy" of the country, United Nations monitors have reported.

"This trade sustains a large network of traffickers, criminal organisations, and even some State actors, who derive economic benefits," a UN report dated 8 December said.

The Taliban seized control of Kabul on 15 August, 2021, after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, and US and allied forces withdrew following two decades of military presence there.

Poppy cultivation and opium production have fallen to record lows after Taliban took control, but large parts of the industry moved across the border, "where Afghan narcotics networks are demonstrating resilience by relocating farmers and equipment," the report noted. Those areas, where the industry is being relocated, could potentially benefit Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL)-

US announces \$11bn weapons sale to Taiwan

WASHINGTON (TIP)

The Trump administration has announced a huge arms sale worth around \$11bn (£8.2bn) to Taiwan, which includes advanced rocket launchers, self-propelled howitzers and a variety of missiles.

This package, which still needs to be approved by the US Congress, will be the second arms sale to Taiwan since Donald Trump returned to the White House in January.

China, which sees self-governed Taiwan as a breakaway province, condemned the move, saying it "severely undermines China's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity".

Taiwan's defence ministry thanked the US and said the deal would help the island in "rapidly building robust deterrence capabilities".

The US has formal ties with Beijing rather than Taiwan, and has walked a tight diplomatic rope for decades. But it remains a powerful ally of Taiwan's and the island's biggest arms supplier.

The latest arms sale has angered Beijing, which has in recent years ramped up pressure over Taiwan with military drills and regular incursions into its waters and airspace.

"The US's attempt to support independence through force will only backfire, and its attempt to contain China by using Taiwan will absolutely not succeed," said its foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun.

"It will only accelerate the push towards a dangerous and violent situation across the Taiwan Strait," he said.

The latest package features High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (Himars) worth \$4bn and self-propelled howitzers worth \$4bn, according to the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency, which announced the details late on Wednesday.



The size of this sale, if it goes through, dwarfs the 19 rounds of arms sales totalling \$8.38bn during the previous administration under Joe Biden.

In his first term, Trump had approved arms sales to Taiwan totalling \$18.3bn - the largest package was worth \$8bn.

The US State Department said this deal serves Washington's interests "by supporting [Taipei's] continuing efforts to modernise its armed forces and to maintain a credible defensive capability".

China has long vowed to "reunify" with Taiwan and has not ruled out the use of force to take it.

It is a threat that Taiwan is increasingly taking seriously. It plans to boost defence spending to more than 3% of its gross domestic product next year

and up to 5% by 2030.

In October, President Lai Ching-te announced the building of a dome-like air defence system to guard against "hostile threats", without mentioning China by name.

China has grown increasingly assertive in the region, often rattling neighbours with unusual moves - in June, Japan protested following an unprecedented naval drill by Chinese aircraft carriers in the Pacific.

More recently the two countries have been sparring over the Japanese prime minister's suggestion that Japan could deploy its own self-defence force if China attacks Taiwan.

Tensions escalated this month as boats from both sides faced off near disputed islands, and Chinese fighter jets locked radar on Japanese aircraft.

Taliban hiding boom in cross-border narcotics trade behind veil of piety, UN monitors say

Khurasan, and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), it said. Taliban's ban on opium cultivation in 2022 led to a reduction of heroin being processed and trafficked out of Afghanistan, but it also triggered an increase in prices of dry opium, "roughly four times higher than prices at the time when the ban was announced," the report said. Dry opium is the main raw product needed for heroin production.

Farmers in Afghanistan, the report noted, have fought back against Taliban's ban on opiates. Two people were killed in May in a showdown between the de-facto authorities and opium farmers. A month later, protests erupted again. Subsequently, authorities in Afghanistan's Badakhshan and Jurm agreed to a 15-day window to allow poppy harvest before the fields were to be



destroyed. According to the report, while opium production has dropped, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime has observed an uptick in crops used to make synthetic narcotics such as methamphetamine, particularly in rural areas of Afghanistan, where revenue sources are few. These drugs, UN monitors said, could slowly replace opium in the international market.

ISIL-K, led by Sanaullah Ghafari, has proved to be resilient in Afghanistan's North and East, the report said, even though Taliban and Pakistan have inflicted losses on its leadership. The Islamic State draws its rank and file from poor central Asian communities, living on both sides of the Afghan border.

The outfit, the UN monitoring report noted, staged successful attacks outside Afghanistan last year, striking at a Shia mosque in Iran's Kerman and at the Crocus City Hall in Moscow, Russia.

The TTP, led by Noor Wali Mehsud, has conducted increasingly lethal attacks on the Pakistani military, with more than 600 ambushes and bombings reported in 2025 alone. The outfit, the report said, maintains over 6,000 cadres in Afghanistan provinces of Khost, Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktika and Paktiya.

Nepal's ousted PM Oli re-elected as party leader

Members of ousted Nepali prime minister KP Sharma Oli's political party voted for him to retain leadership of the organisation on Thursday, meaning he will oversee its preparations for national elections next year.

Members of the Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) cast their ballots during a two-day general convention in the capital Kathmandu, which Oli won by a landslide.

The 73-year-old political veteran's success comes after he stepped down as prime minister during a September youth-led uprising that toppled his government.

Nepal will hold elections in March with a caretaker administration running the country in the meantime.

Oli bagged nearly three times more votes than his nearest competitor, Ishwar Pokhrel, securing 1,663 votes compared to Pokhrel's 564, Rajendra Gautam, the head of the party's publicity department, told AFP.

Oli, often known by his initials "KP", has carefully crafted an image as his party's supreme leader, with life-size cutouts and banners of "KP Ba (father), we love you" seen at some of his rallies.

"I am happy he won," Tara Maya Thapa Magar, 45, who came from Gandaki province in western Nepal to participate in the convention, told AFP.

The four-time prime minister quit office shortly after angry protesters set fire to his house and hundreds of other buildings, including the parliament and courts, during the September protests.

Oli wrote in his resignation letter that he hoped him stepping down would help "towards a political solution and resolution of the problems".

At least 77 people were killed during the unrest that was triggered by anger over a brief government ban on social media, building on public frustration after years of economic stagnation and allegations of entrenched political corruption.

"The incident that occurred is due to international interference. It is only through Oli's leadership that we can overcome this setback and make the country prosperous," said Magar.

After Oli's ouster, 73-year-old former chief justice Sushila Karki was appointed interim prime minister to lead the Himalayan nation until the March 5 elections.

The government has imposed a travel ban on Oli, as well as several other former top officials, as a government commission investigates his role in the deadly crackdown on protesters.

Asim Munir's US challenge as Trump pushes Pak to send troops to Gaza

ISLAMABAD (TIP)

Field Marshal Asim Munir, Pakistan's all-powerful defence chief, is reportedly looking at the toughest test of his expanding stronghold on Islamabad as the United States pushes the South Asian nation to send troops to Gaza. Munir is facing a two-edged sword, as contributing Pakistani troops to the Gaza stabilisation force could spark a domestic backlash, but backing away from the request could annoy US President Donald Trump, according to experts.

Munir is expected to fly to Washington to meet with Trump in the coming weeks, news agency Reuters reported. This will be the third meeting between Trump and Munir in six months that will likely focus on the Gaza force, two sources told Reuters, one of whom is closely involved in Munir's economic outreach to the US.

Trump's proposed 20-point Gaza plan calls for troops from Muslim-majority nations to oversee a transition period following the withdrawal of Israeli forces for reconstruction and economic recovery in the war-torn Palestinian territory. Gaza has been devastated by more than two years of war between Israeli forces and Hamas.

But many nations are wary of the mission to demilitarise Gaza's Islamist group Hamas, which could drag them into the conflict and enrage their pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli populations. Experts told Reuters that the move risks



pulling foreign troops deeper into the conflict and could inflame pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli public opinion at home.

Pressure On Asim Munir

But the situation is more precarious for Munir, as he has built a close relationship with the mercurial Trump to repair years of mistrust between Washington and Islamabad. In June, he was rewarded with a White House lunch – the first time a US president hosted Pakistan's army chief alone, without civilian officials – and he couldn't risk annoying him.

"Not contributing (to the Gaza stabilisation force) could annoy Trump, which is no small matter for a Pakistani state that appears quite keen to remain in his good graces – in great part to secure US investment and security aid," Michael Kugelman, Senior Fellow, South Asia at the Washington-based Atlantic

Council, told Reuters.

Pakistan is the world's only Muslim country with nuclear weapons and has a battle-hardened military, having gone to war with its neighbours several times over the years. It has also tackled insurgencies in its far-flung regions and is currently embroiled in a bruising battle with Islamist terrorists who it says are operating from Afghanistan.

Pakistan's military strength means "there is a greater pressure on Munir to deliver his capacity," said author and defence analyst Ayesha Siddiqi.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said last month that Islamabad could consider contributing troops for peacekeeping, but disarming Hamas "is not our job."

Asim Munir's Rise To Power

Munir was appointed chief of the defence forces earlier this month to head the air force and navy, with a job extension until 2030. He will retain his field marshal title forever, as well as enjoy lifetime immunity from any criminal prosecution under the constitutional amendments that Pakistan's civilian government pushed through parliament late last month.

"Few people in Pakistan enjoy the luxury of being able to take risks more than Munir. He has unbridled power, now constitutionally protected," Kugelman added.

"Ultimately, it will be Munir's rules, and his rules only."

Protests in Bangladesh as India cites security concerns

DHAKA (TIP)

Bangladesh police on Dec 17 stopped protesters from marching towards an Indian diplomatic mission, a day after India's foreign ministry conveyed its concerns over the "deteriorating" security environment in the country.

Ties between the two countries have been frosty since former prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India following a student-led uprising last year.

Dhaka has repeatedly asked for her extradition so that she could stand trial for her alleged crimes, with Delhi responding that it was examining the requests.

On Dec 17, dozens of demonstrators began marching towards the assistant Indian high commissioner office in Rajshahi district which borders India.

Miftahul Jannat, one of the protesters, said the plan was to carry out a sit-in, demanding the "repatriation of all the killers including Sheikh Hasina".

The protest was stalled by the police, who said they "listened to their demands and promised to forward them to the authorities".

"We are not aware of any further plans (for demonstrations) and hope the issue



will be resolved peacefully," Nashid Farhad, a senior officer with the Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, told AFP.

On Wednesday, a group of protesters tried to march towards the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

India's foreign ministry on Wednesday summoned Bangladesh's top diplomat in New Delhi to convey its concerns about the actions of some "extremist elements".

In a statement, the ministry also said

it expected the interim government under Muhammad Yunus to "ensure the safety of missions and posts in Bangladesh in keeping with its diplomatic obligations".

Hasina, 78, was sentenced to death in absentia by a Bangladesh court last month for crimes against humanity.

The country of 170 million people goes to the polls on February 12, with Hasina's former ruling party, the Awami League, banned from running.

Sikh History This Week

DECEMBER 19 TO DECEMBER 25

19th December

1924 Babbar Sada Singh PinDori accepted shahadat in Jail.



1967 Punjabi Bill passed by the Punjab Assembly.

20th December



1520 Guru Nanak Dev Ji visited Baghdad, Iraq.
1704 Guru Gobind Singh Ji evacuated Anadpur Sahib.
1920 Gurudwara Panja Sahib management came



under the Panthic controls.

21st December

1704 Sikhs blocked the advances of the joint Hindu-Moghul army near Sirsa (Ropar district) so that Guru Gobind Singh Ji could reach some safer zone.

1838 Ranjit Singh suffered a stroke and severe attack of paralysis. Remained critical for several days. Speech and sight virtually gone.



22nd December

1666 Parkash Utsav, Patshahi Tenth, Guru Gobind



Singh Ji. Guru Gobind Singh, born as Gobind Das or Gobind Rai, was the tenth Sikh Guru, a spiritual master, warrior, poet and philosopher. When his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed by Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh was formally installed as the leader of the Sikhs at the age of nine, becoming the tenth and final human Sikh Guru. Among his notable contributions to Sikhism are founding the Sikh warrior community called Khalsa in 1699 and introducing the Five Ks, the five articles of faith that Khalsa Sikhs wear at all times. Guru Gobind Singh is credited with the Dasam Granth whose hymns are a sacred part of Sikh prayers and Khalsa rituals.

1704 SHAHEEDHI, Wadhae Sahibjadhae, Sakka Chamkaur.

1899 Birth of freedom fighter Sardar Udam Singh.



23rd December

1667 Birth of Mata Sudari Ji.



1704 Martydom of Bhai Jaita.

24th December

1805 Fateh Singh Ahluwalia sought understanding between General Lake and Jaswant Rai Hulkar.

1921 Kishan Singh Garhgaj attended diwans at Chamjkaur Sahib and Sirhind during Dec. 24-28 and delivered fiery speeches.

25th December

1850 Lord Dalhousie visits Fatehgarh to meet Maharaja Dalip Singh.

1922 First meeting of Babbars is held at Jassowal to decide the reformation of the Jholichuks.

1922 Special issue of "Babbar Akali Doaba" newspaper on Kalghidhar.



*"With Homage and Thanks to my Favorite Guru"
Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji, Creator of Khalsa*

Happy Guru Gobind Singh Ji's 359 th Birth Anniversary

Gidran to main sher banaun

Chirian te main baaz tudaur



Sava lakh se ek ladaun

Tabe Gobind Singh Naam kahaun



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Ranju Batra
CHAIR



Few figures in history embody the rare combination of spiritual depth, poetic brilliance, and fearless courage like Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh Guru. Born in 1666, he emerged as a saint, a poet, and a warrior, shaping not only the Sikh faith but leaving a legacy that resonates across centuries. From his early days in Patna and Anandpur to the creation of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh's life was a tapestry of devotion, intellect, valor, and sacrifice.

As a saint, he exemplified unwavering faith, humility, and moral clarity, guiding his followers toward spiritual growth. As a poet, he expressed profound philosophy, divine praise, and heroic inspiration in works like Jaap Sahib and Bachittar Natak, blending devotion with literary genius. And as a warrior, he led the Sikhs in defense of justice and righteousness, demonstrating that spirituality and courage are inseparable.

Through his teachings, sacrifices, and indomitable spirit, Guru Gobind Singh remains a beacon of fearless faith, ethical leadership, and eternal wisdom, inspiring generations to live with honor, devotion, and courage.

Guru Gobind Singh was born on 22 December 1666 in Patna Sahib, at a time when India stood at the crossroads of intense political turmoil and religious persecution. Born as Gobind Rai, he was the only son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, and Mata Gujri, a woman of extraordinary spiritual strength.

His birth itself was seen as providential—a soul destined to reshape the moral and spiritual destiny of a people. Gobind Rai's early years were marked not by royal luxury but by discipline, learning, and deep spiritual exposure.

From a young age, he was trained in classical languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, and Braj, alongside the study of scriptures, philosophy, history, and poetry. Equally important was his martial training—horse riding, archery, swordsmanship, and military strategy—reflecting the Sikh ideal that spirituality and strength must walk together. The defining moment of his childhood came in 1675, when Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed in Delhi by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb for defending the religious freedom of Kashmiri Pandits. Gobind Rai was only nine years old when he accepted the mantle of Guruship, transforming personal tragedy into spiritual resolve.

From that moment, the child became a Guru—bearing the weight of sacrifice, truth, and leadership with remarkable maturity.

Early Life - The Making of a Saint from Patna to Anandpur

Guru Gobind Singh's birth was celebrated with immense joy by the Sikh community, who saw divine purpose in this child destined to shape the course of Sikh history. Even as an infant, he was said to have an aura of wisdom and composure, inspiring reverence among elders.

From an early age, Gobind Rai displayed a keen intellect, spiritual

Guru Gobind Singh: The divine warrior, saint and poet



inclination, and extraordinary courage. He was trained in martial skills, archery, swordsmanship, and horse-riding, while also studying Persian, Sanskrit, and local languages, as well as Sikh scriptures. His upbringing emphasized the balance between spiritual learning and physical discipline, reflecting the Sikh ideal of the Saint-Soldier.

When his father moved the family to Anandpur, young Gobind Rai witnessed

first-hand the challenges faced by Sikhs under Mughal rule and hostile hill rajahs. These experiences instilled in him a sense of justice, resilience, and leadership that would later define his life. The serene hills of Anandpur became both his classroom and training ground, shaping his mind, body, and spirit for the monumental responsibilities ahead.

The Making of a Guru - Ascension

and Early Leadership

At the tender age of nine, Gobind Rai ascended to the position of tenth Sikh Guru after the martyrdom of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, who sacrificed his life defending the religious freedom of Hindus against Mughal tyranny. Despite his youth, Guru Gobind Singh exhibited exceptional maturity, guiding the Sikh community with wisdom, courage, and clarity. He took immediate steps to strengthen the spiritual and martial foundations of the Sikh community. Under his leadership, Sikhs were trained not only in devotional practices but also in combat, strategy, and governance, preparing them for the challenges posed by oppressive rulers. His early writings, including portions of Bachittar Natak, reveal his poetic brilliance, philosophical depth, and visionary outlook.

During this period, he traveled extensively, visiting villages and towns to preach moral courage, equality, and devotion to God. These formative years set the stage for his transformative contributions to Sikhism and established him as both a spiritual guide and a leader capable of uniting a diverse and dispersed community.

Birth of Khalsa - Forging the Sikh Identity

The creation of the Khalsa on 30 March 1699, during Baisakhi at Anandpur Sahib, remains the defining moment in Sikh history. Guru Gobind Singh envisioned a community of fearless devotees committed to justice, truth, and God. This was a revolutionary step: the Sikh community was now to be identified not just by faith, but also by distinctive symbols, disciplined conduct, and unwavering courage.

On that historic day, Guru Gobind Singh asked who was willing to give up their life for the service of God. Five brave men, later known as the Panj Pyare (Five Beloved Ones), stepped forward. Each was initiated with Amrit (sweetened water stirred with a double-edged sword), symbolizing spiritual rebirth, courage, and equality. This ritual emphasized sacrifice, devotion, and moral responsibility.

The Khalsa was given the Five Ks:

- 1. Kesh (uncut hair) - Acceptance of God's will.
- 2. Kangha (wooden comb) - Discipline and cleanliness.
- 3. Kara (steel bracelet) - Eternal connection to God and moral restraint.
- 4. Kachera (cotton undergarment) - Self-control and modesty.
- 5. Kirpan (sword) - Readiness to protect justice and the oppressed.

This event not only strengthened Sikh identity but also merged spiritual devotion with martial readiness, laying the foundation for centuries of Sikh courage and community resilience.

Happy 359th Birthday Anniversary of Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji.



"ਸਵਾ ਲੱਖ ਸੇ ਏਕ ਲੜਾਉਂ, ਚਿੜੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਬਾਜ਼ ਤੜਾਉਂ,
ਤਬੈ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਮ ਕਹਾਉਂ"



MASTER MOHINDER SINGH

- Former President, Gurdwara Sikh Cultural Society, Richmond Hill, New York
- Founder President, Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Lobana Sikh Center, Guru Tegh Bahadur Marg, Richmond Hill, New York
- Member, Community Board 9, Queens County, New York

Battles & defense of Faith - Courage against all odds

Guru Gobind Singh's leadership was not confined to spiritual guidance; he led the Sikhs in multiple defensive battles to protect religious freedom and human dignity. His strategic brilliance was evident in Bhangani (1688), Nadaun (1691), Guler (1696), Chamkaur (1704), and Muktsar (1705).

These battles were not about conquest, but defense of righteousness, ensuring that the Sikh community could practice its faith freely. The Siege of Chamkaur is particularly legendary: Guru Gobind Singh, with just 40 warriors, faced thousands of Mughal soldiers. His two elder sons sacrificed their lives, yet the Guru held the fort, demonstrating extraordinary valor, resilience, and faith in God.

Through his leadership, Guru Gobind Singh taught that true courage arises from moral conviction, and that defending the weak and upholding justice is a sacred duty.

The Saint-Soldier - Merging Spirituality and Valor

Guru Gobind Singh epitomized the Saint-Soldier ideal, integrating deep spirituality with martial prowess. His writings, including Jaap Sahib, Akal Ustat, and Zafarnama, combine poetry, theology, and philosophical insight, encouraging Sikhs to lead righteous lives while being prepared to fight injustice.

He emphasized Miri-Piri, the balance of temporal and spiritual power, teaching that worldly responsibilities and spiritual growth are intertwined. The Khalsa became the embodiment of this principle, inspiring generations to be both morally upright and courageous defenders of faith.

Teachings of Guru Gobind Singh: Courage, Devotion, and Righteous Living

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh Guru, was a unique combination of saint, poet, and warrior. His life was a symphony of devotion, courage, moral integrity, and leadership. The principles he articulated were not abstract ideals—they were practical guides for living a purposeful, righteous life. His teachings form the cornerstone of Sikh philosophy, but their universal appeal transcends religion, offering lessons in spirituality, ethics, courage, and service for humanity at large.

Fearlessness and Courage - The Foundation of a Saint-Soldier

Guru Gobind Singh's vision of the Khalsa was rooted in the principle of fearlessness. He believed that faith without courage is incomplete, and spiritual growth requires the ability to confront injustice and adversity with steadfast resolve.

The Baisakhi of 1699, when he created the Khalsa, was a powerful manifestation of this principle. The five men who stepped forward for initiation exemplified complete courage, surrendering personal safety for the



cause of righteousness.

The Siege of Chamkaur (1704), where he defended Anandpur with just forty warriors against a massive Mughal army, illustrates his teachings in action: courage, strategic acumen, and unwavering faith.

His poetry in Jaap Sahib repeatedly exhorts the devotee to "be fearless, like the lion, in the face of tyranny."

Fearlessness, according to Guru Gobind Singh, is not recklessness; it is disciplined courage guided by ethics and devotion. Every Sikh is taught to internalize this principle, applying it to life challenges, moral choices, and societal responsibility.

Equality and Social Justice - Upholding Human Dignity

A hallmark of Guru Gobind Singh's teachings was the emphasis on equality and justice. In a society rife with caste discrimination, gender inequality, and religious persecution, he stood for the dignity and rights of all human beings.

By instituting the Panj Pyare, he rejected caste hierarchies, emphasizing that spiritual worth is not determined by birth but by character and devotion.

His life exemplified defending the oppressed. He not only led his followers in battles for religious freedom but also advocated for universal respect and fairness.

His writings encourage Sikhs to actively combat injustice, demonstrating that spirituality and social responsibility are inseparable.

This teaching resonates even today, emphasizing that true faith must manifest in ethical action and protection of human rights.

Devotion to God - The Core of Spiritual Life

At the heart of Guru Gobind Singh's philosophy is unwavering devotion to God (Waheguru). He taught that spiritual life is not limited to ritual but

requires living in constant remembrance of the Divine, cultivating purity of mind, body, and action.

His compositions, including Jaap Sahib, Akal Ustat, and Bachittar Natak, are replete with praise for God's infinite power, wisdom, and justice.

He emphasized direct, personal connection with the Divine, teaching that faith is not inherited but realized through disciplined practice, meditation, and righteous living.

Devotion, in his view, is inseparable from moral courage: true worship requires action in the world.

Self-Discipline and Moral Integrity - The Backbone of Character

Guru Gobind Singh believed that self-discipline is essential for spiritual and worldly success. Physical fitness, mental sharpness, and ethical conduct are all intertwined in his teachings.

Daily discipline included prayer, meditation, physical training, and study.

He emphasized truthfulness, honesty, humility, and compassion as the foundations of character.

The Khalsa was trained to live a life of regulated conduct, balancing spiritual practice with the demands of leadership, service, and community defense.

Self-discipline, for Guru Gobind Singh, was not mere personal restraint; it was preparation for moral and physical responsibility, enabling one to act decisively when confronted with injustice.

Sacrifice and Service (Seva) - The Measure of Devotion

Service to humanity, or seva, was central to Guru Gobind Singh's vision. Spiritual devotion, he taught, is incomplete unless it translates into selfless action for the benefit of others.

His own life was a model of sacrifice. From witnessing his father's martyrdom

to losing four sons in the struggle for justice, he demonstrated that principle comes before personal gain.

Seva extends beyond ritual; it includes protecting the oppressed, feeding the hungry, educating the community, and fighting tyranny.

The Guru emphasized that such service is both a spiritual practice and a civic duty, creating a compassionate, responsible society.

Education, Knowledge, and Wisdom

Guru Gobind Singh stressed the importance of knowledge as a companion to valor and faith. An educated mind, he taught, strengthens spiritual insight and enhances leadership.

He himself was multilingual, proficient in Persian, Sanskrit, Braj, and Punjabi, and composed literary works of immense depth.

Education was not limited to academic learning; it included understanding scripture, philosophy, history, and martial skills.

He believed that intellectual growth empowers moral action, ensuring that courage is guided by wisdom rather than impulse.

The Warrior Ethos - Protecting Justice

While he preached peace and devotion, Guru Gobind Singh recognized that defending righteousness sometimes requires armed action.

The Khalsa identity embodies this principle: a disciplined, spiritual community trained to protect truth, freedom, and the weak.

He distinguished between aggression and defense, teaching that warfare is a duty only in the service of justice.

His life demonstrates that spirituality and martial skill are complementary, enabling individuals to uphold ethical principles in a hostile world.

Universal Values - Lessons Beyond Religion

Guru Gobind Singh's teachings are timeless and universal: courage, devotion, equality, self-discipline, service, and education are values that transcend faith. Leaders and thinkers across India and the world have recognized his wisdom. His message encourages all individuals to live ethically, act courageously, and serve humanity, offering a framework for personal excellence and societal betterment.

Quotes Reflecting Guru's Teachings

"Fear God, do your duty, and keep your word."

"In the midst of darkness, be the flame of courage."

"Those who have no faith in their words have no faith in their soul."

"True worship lies in righteous action and fearless living."

Each quote reflects a fusion of spiritual devotion, ethical responsibility, and moral courage, guiding Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike toward principled living.

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ
ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ
ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਦਿਹਾੜੇ
ਦੀਆਂ ਲੱਖ-ਲੱਖ ਵਧਾਈਆਂ
Happy 359th
Birthday Anniversary
of Shri
Guru Gobind Singh ji



Simarjeet Singh Gilzian
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Makhan Shah Lobana
Sikh Center



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From Page 40

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh Guru, stands as one of history's rare figures who seamlessly combined saintliness, poetic brilliance, and fearless leadership. While he is widely celebrated for founding the Khalsa and leading Sikhs in defense of righteousness, his literary genius as a poet remains equally remarkable. His poetry reflects a fusion of devotion, heroism, philosophy, and moral guidance, offering inspiration not only to Sikhs but to readers across faiths and generations.

Early Literary Genius

From a young age, Guru Gobind Singh demonstrated an extraordinary aptitude for language and literature. Fluent in Persian, Sanskrit, Braj, and Punjabi, he composed verses that were both sophisticated and accessible, conveying spiritual depth and ethical guidance. Even as a child, he combined creative expression with philosophical insight, laying the foundation for a body of work that would inspire courage, devotion, and moral clarity throughout his life. His early exposure to sacred texts, history, and martial training shaped a literary style that merged intellectual rigor with spiritual sensitivity.

Major Literary Works

Guru Gobind Singh's poetic oeuvre is vast and diverse, encompassing hymns, epic poetry, philosophical treatises, and letters. Each work reflects his unique ability to communicate profound truths through lyrical expression.

- Jaap Sahib is a hymn of divine praise, composed in 199 stanzas, celebrating God's omnipotence, omnipresence, and justice. It combines metaphysical depth with devotional fervor and is recited daily by Sikhs worldwide to cultivate courage and faith.
- Akal Ustat focuses on the eternal and all-encompassing nature of God, integrating mystical insight with poetic beauty. It encourages humility and devotion while emphasizing that spiritual realization is inseparable from righteous action.
- Bachittar Natak blends autobiography, epic narrative, and philosophical reflection. Through this work, Guru Gobind Singh recounts his life, spiritual visions, and heroic endeavors, providing moral and ethical lessons alongside accounts of bravery.
- The Zafarnama, a poetic letter addressed to Emperor Aurangzeb, exemplifies his ability to use poetry as a tool of moral persuasion and diplomacy. Written in elegant Persian verse, it challenges tyranny with reasoned courage, blending rhetorical brilliance with philosophical depth.

Other works, such as Chandi di Var, celebrate divine heroism and courage, while selections from Shabad Hazare and Charitropakhyan explore human psychology, ethics, and spirituality. Together, these writings form a rich tapestry of devotion, courage, and wisdom.

Themes in His Poetry

Several recurring themes define Guru Gobind Singh's poetic vision. Devotion and

The poet warrior: Guru Gobind Singh's verse and valor



spirituality permeate his work, emphasizing remembrance of God and ethical living. Courage and valor are central, celebrating heroism while reinforcing the moral imperative to act against injustice. Equality and social justice appear throughout, rejecting caste discrimination and advocating for human dignity. Guru Gobind Singh also explores moral philosophy, addressing virtue, honesty, and righteousness, and demonstrates that art can serve as a medium for teaching, inspiring, and guiding communities.

Literary Style and Craftsmanship

Guru Gobind Singh's poetry is remarkable for its multilingual richness, vivid imagery, and rhetorical brilliance. He blends Persian sophistication with Sanskrit and Punjabi clarity, creating verses that are both lyrically beautiful and philosophically profound. His use of metaphor, allegory, and narrative storytelling makes complex spiritual and ethical concepts accessible. Many works, such as Chandi di Var, were intended to be recited or sung, giving them a musical and devotional quality that reinforces their spiritual and motivational impact.

Influence and Legacy

The influence of Guru Gobind Singh's poetry is profound. His compositions

provide spiritual inspiration, guiding Sikhs in daily devotion, ethical conduct, and courageous action. They also offer cultural and literary significance, shaping Sikh literature, music, and identity. Beyond Sikhism, his poetry communicates universal values: fearlessness, devotion, equality, self-discipline, and service, offering lessons for leaders, poets, and ordinary individuals alike.

Famous Quotes from His Poetry

"In the midst of darkness, be the flame of courage."

"Those who have no faith in their words have no faith in their soul."

"Through devotion, discipline, and courage, one can conquer fear and live with honor."

"Righteous action is the highest form of devotion."

These lines encapsulate the fusion of spiritual depth, moral guidance, and heroic inspiration that characterizes his literary legacy.

Poetry as Leadership

Guru Gobind Singh used poetry not just for devotion but as a tool of leadership and education. His heroic verses motivated warriors before battle, his philosophical passages guided moral conduct, and his letters, like the Zafarnama, challenged injustice with

reasoned argument and poetic elegance. In doing so, he demonstrated that literature can inspire courage, cultivate ethics, and unite communities.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, as a poet, exemplifies the integration of art, spirituality, and action. His literary genius complements his roles as a saint and warrior, offering timeless guidance for living with courage, devotion, and ethical integrity. Through his poetry, he continues to inspire generations to be fearless, righteous, and devoted, securing his place not only in Sikh history but in the broader canon of spiritual and literary achievement.

Legacy - Eternal Light of the Tenth Guru

Guru Gobind Singh's life continues to shape Sikh identity and philosophy. He left the Sikhs a spiritual and martial framework, with the Guru Granth Sahib as the eternal Guru and the Khalsa as living embodiment of his ideals.

Today, Anandpur Sahib, Patna Sahib, and Nanded remain sacred pilgrimage sites, and his writings continue to guide millions toward courage, equality, and devotion. His vision of a fearless, just, and spiritually grounded society remains relevant across generations, making him not only a Sikh leader but a global symbol of integrity, valor, and wisdom.

Continued on Page 44

ਸੰਤ ਸਿਪਾਹੀ ਕਲਗੀਧਰ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਦੇ
ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਦਿਹਾੜੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਮੂਹ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ
ਨੂੰ ਲੱਖ-ਲੱਖ ਵਧਾਈਆਂ

***Happy 359th
Birthday Anniversary
of Shri
Guru Gobind Singh ji.***



Dayal Singh Vohra
Chairman



Balbeer Singh Pahwa
President



Harbans Singh Vohra
Vice President



Harcharan Singh Gulati
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Kulraj Singh Laungani
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Sacrifices - Endurance in the face of tragedy

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh Guru, stands as a timeless symbol of courage, resilience, and unwavering faith. While celebrated for his spiritual guidance, poetic genius, and martial prowess, his life was marked by profound personal losses and sacrifices that shaped the Sikh community and its enduring values. His story is one of endurance in the face of tragedy, teaching that true leadership and devotion often demand immense personal cost.

A Childhood Shadowed by Martyrdom

Even before assuming the role of Guru, young Gobind Rai experienced the shadow of sacrifice and injustice. His father, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, was martyred in 1675 for defending the right of Hindus to practice their faith freely under Mughal oppression. Witnessing his father's steadfast courage and ultimate sacrifice left an indelible impression on the young Guru. This early encounter with loss instilled in him a deep sense of duty, moral courage, and spiritual fortitude. From this foundation, he would go on to lead the Sikh community through some of its most turbulent periods, blending wisdom, bravery, and compassion.

A Sacrifice of Comfort for Principle

In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh initiated the Khalsa, a community of fearless devotees committed to righteousness, equality, and devotion to God. This act required immense moral courage: he challenged his followers to offer their lives in service of truth. The Panj Pyare (Five Beloved Ones) stepped forward, ready to sacrifice everything.

Through this act, the Guru demonstrated that sacrifice is not merely physical but spiritual and ethical. Establishing the Khalsa meant sacrificing comfort, personal safety, and conventional norms to create a community guided by valor, devotion, and justice.

Loss of Family - Enduring Personal Tragedy

Guru Gobind Singh Ji faced devastating personal losses. His four sons, the Sahibzadas, were martyred at young ages while defending the faith and community: Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh fell in the Battle of Chamkaur (1704). Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, his younger sons, were executed in Sirhind under Mughal orders.

These tragedies were unimaginable, yet the Guru remained steadfast, turning personal grief into inspiration for the Sikh community. He taught that sacrifice in defense of truth and justice is a noble duty, reinforcing the spiritual and moral strength of his followers.

Exile and Constant Threats - Endurance Amid Adversity

After repeated battles with Mughal forces and hostile hill rajahs, Guru



Gobind Singh was forced into constant movement and exile. His home, Anandpur Sahib, was besieged multiple times, his family and followers were threatened, and yet he never abandoned his mission.

During these years of hardship, he continued to train warriors, compose spiritual poetry, and guide the Khalsa, demonstrating that resilience and perseverance are as crucial as bravery on the battlefield.

Spiritual Strength Amid Loss

Despite overwhelming adversity, Guru Gobind Singh Ji maintained a profound spiritual composure. He emphasized that attachment to life should never override devotion to God or commitment to righteousness. His writings, including Bachittar Natak and Zafarnama, reflect a heart grieved yet unbroken, offering lessons in courage, hope, and moral clarity.

His ability to turn personal grief into collective inspiration solidified his position as a saint-warrior whose life exemplifies endurance, moral fortitude, and fearless faith.

Lessons from His Sacrifices

- **Courage in Adversity:** True leadership requires steadfastness even in the face of personal loss.
- **Moral Integrity:** Upholding justice and righteousness may demand the highest personal sacrifices.
- **Spiritual Resilience:** Faith in God provides strength to endure tragedy without despair.



- **Inspiration for Others:** Transforming personal grief into motivation for a community leaves a lasting legacy.

Legacy of Endurance

Guru Gobind Singh's sacrifices continue to inspire millions around the world. His endurance in the face of immense tragedy became the spiritual and moral backbone of the Khalsa. The values of courage, justice, devotion, and selfless service that he exemplified remain central to Sikh identity and are universally admired as principles of ethical leadership and moral courage.

Quotes Reflecting His Sacrifices

"Those who have no faith in their

words, have no faith in their soul."

"In the midst of darkness, be the flame of courage."

"The greatest devotion is to uphold justice and righteousness, even at the cost of life."

These sayings encapsulate his belief that sacrifice, faith, and moral courage are inseparable, offering timeless guidance to humanity.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji's life teaches that true greatness lies not in comfort or ease but in enduring hardship with courage, faith, and moral clarity. His sacrifices are not just historical events—they are eternal lessons in resilience, devotion, and the transformative power of selflessness.



Happy 359th Birthday Anniversary of Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji

"ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ
ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ ॥"

- Founder President, GOPIO Long Island, NY
- Director, Long Island 9/11 Memorial
- Vice President , National Federation of Indian Associations
- Chairman, Glen Cove Long Island Gurdwara
- Founder / President , Punjabi Cultural Society
- Founder / President , Sikh Center Gurdwara, Flushing
- (Honored as Sikh role model by Hem Kunt Foundation, USA)
- Founding Patron, World Punjabi Organization (USA) Sikh Forum Inc. Plainview
- Former Vice President , Sikh Forum Inc. Plainview
- Former Chairman, India Association, LI-India Center
- Executive Committee Member, Richmond Hill First Sikh Gurdwara in 1973-74
- Autor of the book - Global Religions



Bagga Plaza III



Bagga Museum



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Firm, fresh, radiant: Timeless ways to tighten your skin

Firm, radiant skin is often seen as a reflection of youth and vitality, but skin tightening and glow are not solely the domain of cosmetic procedures or expensive products. Skin health is deeply influenced by nutrition, lifestyle, internal balance, and consistent care. As collagen levels decline with age and environmental stressors accelerate skin damage, adopting natural, holistic practices can significantly help maintain elasticity, firmness, and a healthy glow-without harsh interventions.

Nourish Your Skin From Within

True skin firmness begins at the cellular level. A diet rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and healthy fats supports collagen production and protects skin from oxidative stress. Vitamin C-rich foods such as amla, citrus fruits, berries, guava, and bell peppers stimulate collagen synthesis, while vitamin E from nuts, seeds, and cold-pressed oils helps preserve skin elasticity. Omega-3 fatty acids from walnuts, flaxseeds, chia seeds, and fatty fish maintain skin suppleness and reduce inflammation that leads to sagging. Adequate protein intake is equally crucial. Collagen is made from amino acids, and without sufficient protein from lentils, paneer, eggs, dairy, tofu, and legumes, skin repair slows down. Including zinc-rich foods like pumpkin seeds and chickpeas further supports tissue renewal.

Hydration: The Simplest Skin Tightener

Dehydrated skin appears dull, loose, and tired. Drinking enough water maintains skin turgor and flushes out toxins that contribute to premature ageing. Herbal teas, coconut water, and infused waters with lemon, mint, or cucumber enhance hydration. Applying hydrating ingredients such as aloe vera gel or hyaluronic-acid-rich formulations helps lock moisture into the skin barrier.

Sun Protection Is Non-Negotiable

One of the leading causes of skin sagging and pigmentation is UV damage, which breaks down collagen and elastin fibres. Daily use of a broad-spectrum sunscreen, even on cloudy days or indoors near windows, is essential. Wearing protective clothing, sunglasses, and limiting midday sun exposure further preserves skin firmness and glow over time.

Facial Massage and Yoga for Natural Lift

Regular facial massage improves blood circulation,



stimulates lymphatic drainage, and enhances nutrient delivery to the skin. Techniques using fingertips, jade rollers, or gua sha tools can reduce puffiness and improve skin tone when done consistently. Face yoga, which involves targeted facial muscle exercises, strengthens underlying muscles and helps counteract sagging, particularly around the jawline, cheeks, and neck.

Exfoliation for Renewal and Radiance

Gentle exfoliation removes dead skin cells that dull the complexion and hinder product absorption. Natural exfoliants like finely ground oats, rice powder, coffee grounds, or fruit enzymes encourage cell turnover without stripping the skin. Exfoliating once or twice a week reveals smoother, brighter skin and supports collagen renewal.

Natural Masks That Firm and Glow

Homemade face packs can be surprisingly effective. Egg white masks temporarily tighten pores and skin, while multani mitti (fuller's earth) helps firm and cleanse oily skin. Aloe vera, honey, yoghurt, and turmeric-based masks nourish, soothe, and promote glow. Regular use improves texture and elasticity over time.

Sleep: The Ultimate Beauty Treatment

During deep sleep, the body repairs skin, produces collagen, and balances hormones. Chronic sleep deprivation increases cortisol, which breaks down collagen and leads to dullness and sagging. Aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep, preferably before midnight, to allow the skin's natural regeneration process to function optimally.

FOOD CORNER

Mughlai Chicken

Ingredients

500 gms Chicken 1 cup Hung Curd 2-3 Green Chillies (Chopped) Salt as per taste 2 tbsp Ghee 2 small Tomato (Chopped) 1 tbsp Ginger-Garlic paste 1 tsp Cumin Powder 1/2 tsp Garam Masala 2 medium Onion (Roughly Sliced) 4-5 Soaked Almonds 1 tsp Red Chilli Powder 1 and 1/2 tsp Coriander Seeds 1 tsp Sugar

Method

- Start by heating ghee/oil in a handi or a large bottomed pan. Then add roughly chopped onion, fry until they turn golden and brown.
- Once done, add in the ginger garlic paste and fry again for a few mins or until the raw smell disappears.
- Now add in the chopped tomatoes, green chillies and continue frying until the tomatoes turn soft and mushy.
- Then add the dry masalas- chilli powder, turmeric powder, cumin powder, salt and half of the crushed coriander seeds mix and stir fry for 2-3 mins.
- Add in the chicken pieces and mix everything well with the masala.
- Continue stirring for 3-4 mins. The chicken will slowly start releasing water. Now cover and cook the chicken for 15-20 minutes on medium heat.
- When the chicken is almost cooked reduce the heat to low.
- Add in the whisked hung curd, nut paste, sugar, kasoori methi and the rest of the coriander seeds and mix everything well.
- Add garam masala powder and give it a good stir. Check the seasoning, add salt and sugar if required. Cook for another 8-10 minutes, stirring frequently.
- Sprinkle some coriander leaves on the top and serve it hot with rice, roti or any bread of your choice.



Glutathione: Nature's master antioxidant and how to boost it naturally

In the growing conversation around immunity, anti-ageing, detoxification, and cellular health, one powerful molecule has quietly taken centre stage—glutathione. Often referred to as the “master antioxidant”, glutathione is produced naturally by the body and plays a vital role in neutralising free radicals, supporting liver detoxification, strengthening immunity, and slowing down cellular ageing. However, modern lifestyles—marked by stress, pollution, poor sleep, processed foods, and chronic inflammation—can significantly deplete glutathione levels. The good news is that nature offers multiple effective ways to restore and enhance this crucial antioxidant without relying solely on supplements.

Sulfur-Rich Foods

Sulfur can be found in several amino acids like methionine and cysteine which are necessary for the production of Glutathione. These foods include poultry, grains like rice, bread, pasta, and vegetables like broccoli,



brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale, watercress.

Foods with Vitamin C

Our favorite water-soluble vitamin does a fantastic job of protecting cells from oxidative damage, but studies have also shown a link between increased Vitamin C intake and Glutathione levels, since they attack the damaging free radicals first, which prevents Glutathione from getting wasted in the process. Citrus fruits like

oranges, kiwis, cauliflower, strawberries, papayas, and potatoes should all do the trick.

Selenium-Rich Foods

The best foods for the same include the delicious cottage cheese, beans, sunflower seeds, mushrooms, brown rice, and Brazilian nuts.

Herbs and Spices

Commonly found and easy-to-use herbs are the easiest way to add a dose of Glutathione-rich foods to your diet. Milk Thistle, for example, is a great source. Known for its antioxidant properties, it contains three active compounds, collectively known as silymarin, which are beneficial for your body. Then there's always Turmeric! It's a common Indian spice used in everyday life, and thankfully for us, studies have shown that turmeric and curcumin extracts help increase Glutathione levels in your body.

Cervical cancer can be prevented: Here's what every woman should know

Cervical cancer is one of the most common cancers affecting women in India. Every year, more than 1.27 lakh new cases are reported, and nearly 79,000 women lose their lives to this disease. What makes cervical cancer particularly dangerous is that it often develops without any noticeable symptoms for years. Yet, unlike many other cancers, it is largely preventable. Modern medicine offers powerful tools such as HPV vaccination, routine screening, and early awareness campaigns that can stop the disease in its tracks. Doctors stress that timely vaccination, regular screening, and breaking myths around the disease are crucial steps in protecting women's health.

With the right approach, India can significantly reduce cervical cancer deaths.

HPV: THE HIDDEN CAUSE OF MOST CERVICAL CANCERS

Over 80% of cervical cancer cases in India are caused by high-risk strains of HPV, mainly types 16 and 18. HPV is more common than people think and spreads through skin-to-skin contact, not just sexual activity. Awareness about this virus is crucial because preventing HPV infection is the first step toward preventing cervical cancer.

VACCINATION WORKS BUT MYTHS HOLD WOMEN BACK

The HPV vaccine can prevent nearly 90% of cervical cancers, yet many girls miss a timely vaccination due to myths about fertility and safety. Scientific studies confirm that the vaccine is safe, has no impact on fertility, and is effective when given to girls between 9 and 14 years old. Open discussions in schools and communities can remove doubts and help families make informed decisions.

SCREENING SAVES LIVES

Vaccination alone is not enough. Regular screening through Pap smears or HPV tests can detect changes in cervical cells years before symptoms appear. Experts



recommend screening every three to five years for women above 30. Early detection allows treatment before the disease becomes life-threatening.

HEALTHY HABITS HELP

Certain lifestyle factors like smoking, poor hygiene, weakened immunity, long-term medication use, and multiple sexual partners can increase susceptibility to HPV. While maintaining good health is important, these habits cannot replace the protective benefits of vaccination and screening.

COMMUNITY ACTION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Hospitals, schools, local organisations, and doctors working together can bring preventive healthcare to more women. Awareness campaigns, free or subsidised vaccination clinics, and open conversations about myths have already improved vaccine uptake in many Indian cities. Community-driven action ensures that girls and women are protected regardless of social or economic barriers.

Cervical cancer is not just treatable; it is preventable. Every girl vaccinated, every woman screened, and every myth corrected brings India closer to a future where this silent killer no longer claims thousands of lives every year.



The morning garlic habit: Small clove, big health benefits

Garlic has been valued as a powerful natural remedy for centuries, both in traditional medicine systems and modern nutrition science. When consumed on an empty stomach, its health benefits are believed to be even more potent, as the active compounds are absorbed more efficiently. Starting the day with garlic may seem simple, but it can have a profound impact on overall health when practiced regularly and sensibly.

One of the most significant benefits of eating garlic on an empty stomach is its ability to strengthen immunity. Garlic contains allicin, a sulfur-containing compound with strong antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties. Consuming garlic first thing in the morning helps the body fight infections more effectively and may reduce the frequency of colds, flu, and other common illnesses.

Garlic is also known to support heart health. Regular intake on an empty stomach may help lower bad cholesterol (LDL) levels, improve good cholesterol (HDL), and reduce blood pressure. By improving blood circulation and preventing plaque buildup in arteries, garlic contributes to a healthier cardiovascular system and lowers the risk of heart disease.

Another key benefit is its role in blood sugar regulation. Eating garlic in the morning can improve insulin sensitivity and help stabilize blood glucose levels, making it particularly beneficial for people with prediabetes or Type 2 diabetes when included as part of a balanced lifestyle.

Garlic is widely recognised for its detoxifying properties, especially for the liver. When consumed on an empty stomach, it stimulates liver enzymes that help flush out toxins from the body. This detox action also supports better digestion and improved nutrient absorption throughout the day.

Digestive health benefits are another advantage. Garlic promotes the growth of healthy gut bacteria and helps reduce harmful bacteria in the digestive tract. It can improve digestion, reduce bloating, and support regular bowel movements when taken in moderation.

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Can diabetes be reversed without crash diets, fads or extreme workouts?

For a long time, the idea of reversing Type 2 diabetes was met with doubt. This skepticism stemmed largely from the way "reversal" was portrayed—often tied to crash diets, punishing workout regimens, or rapid weight-loss programs that were neither realistic nor sustainable. As a result, many people came to believe that diabetes was an irreversible, lifelong condition that could only be managed with medication. Today, however, growing scientific evidence and clinical experience are challenging this belief and offering a more hopeful, balanced perspective.

Type 2 diabetes is now increasingly understood as a metabolic condition driven by insulin resistance, excess fat accumulation in key organs such as the liver and pancreas, chronic inflammation, and hormonal imbalance. When these underlying factors are addressed early and consistently, blood sugar levels can return to the non-diabetic range



without extreme measures. This state, medically referred to as remission, allows individuals to maintain normal glucose levels without medication, as long as supportive lifestyle habits are sustained.

One of the biggest reasons crash diets and fad approaches fail is that they focus on quick results rather than metabolic repair. Severe calorie restriction or overly restrictive eating patterns may temporarily lower blood sugar, but they often slow metabolism, reduce muscle mass, increase stress hormones, and lead to rebound weight gain. In contrast, sustainable reversal relies on nourishing the body adequately while reducing insulin spikes and

improving insulin sensitivity over time.

Balanced nutrition plays a central role in this process. Instead of deprivation, the focus shifts to stabilizing blood sugar through regular meals, adequate protein, fiber-rich vegetables, healthy fats, and whole foods, while limiting refined carbohydrates and excess sugars. This approach supports steady energy levels, reduces cravings, and allows the pancreas and insulin pathways to recover gradually.

Exercise, too, does not need to be extreme to be effective. Consistent, moderate movement—such as daily walking, light strength training, yoga, or cycling—has been shown to significantly improve glucose uptake by muscles, which act as a major storage site for blood sugar. Maintaining muscle mass is particularly important, as it enhances long-term insulin sensitivity far more effectively than sporadic high-intensity workouts

4,000 global glaciers will disappear annually by 2055 as the planet warms

How quickly the glaciers around the globe will disappear has been quantified by a research team.

The approximate prediction of an alarming scenario was done by an international team led by ETH Zurich, the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), and Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

The study, published in *Nature Climate Change*, highlighted that the Alps could reach their peak glacier loss rate between 2033 and 2041, with global peak loss occurring about a decade later.

Depending on warming levels, the rate could rise from 2,000 to 4,000 glaciers vanishing annually at the global peak.

The study revealed that the fate of glaciers is closely tied to how much the planet warms.

If global temperatures rise by 2.7C, projections estimate only about 110 glaciers will remain in Central Europe by 2100, just 3 per cent of current Alpine glaciers. A 4C increase could reduce this number to around 20.

Even medium-sized glaciers, like the Rhone Glacier, could shrink to remnants, and the Aletsch Glacier could fragment into smaller sections. Researchers have documented more than 1,000 glacier losses in Switzerland from 1973 to 2016.

Regions with numerous small glaciers at low elevations or near the equator, such as the Alps, Caucasus, Rocky Mountains, Andes, and African mountains, are especially vulnerable.

"In these regions, more than half of all glaciers are expected to vanish within the next ten to twenty years," said Van Tricht, a researcher at ETH Zurich's Chair of Glaciology and the WSL.

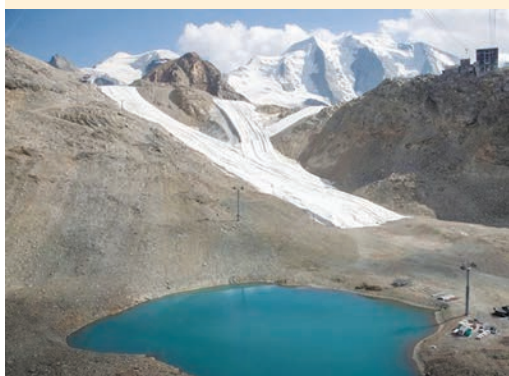
Using three advanced glacier models and several climate scenarios, the researchers provided detailed forecasts for different mountain regions.

In the Alps, a 1.5C scenario would leave about 430 of today's 3,000 glaciers by 2100 (12 per cent), while a 2.0C rise leaves around 8 per cent (270 glaciers).

At a 4C increase, only about 1 per cent of 20 glaciers survive.

For comparison, the Rocky Mountains could retain 4,400 glaciers at a 1.5C rise; 25 per cent of today's 18,000.

The Andes and Central Asia would each lose over 90 per cent of their glaciers in the higher warming scenario. Globally, just 18,000 glaciers would remain at 4C, compared to about 100,000.



OpenAI updates its ChatGPT Images for better and faster performance

If your AI-generated images have ever taken a little too long to render, or come back with mysterious changes you definitely didn't ask for, OpenAI thinks it has a fix. The company has announced a major update to ChatGPT Images that promises to make visual creation faster, sharper and far better at following instructions. In short: fewer surprises, more control, and a lot less waiting around. The update, revealed in a blog post on Tuesday, is part of a wider push inside OpenAI to transform ChatGPT from an impressive novelty into a genuinely practical everyday tool. And this time, the company says, the improvements are not subtle.

According to OpenAI, the revamped image generator offers dramatically improved instruction-following, far more precise editing tools, and image generation speeds that are up to four times faster than before. That combination, it argues, fundamentally changes what users can realistically do with AI-generated visuals.

"The update includes much stronger instruction following, highly precise editing, and up to 4x faster generation speed, making image creation and iteration much more usable," the company wrote. "This marks a shift from novelty image generation to practical, high-fidelity visual creation, turning ChatGPT into a fast, flexible creative studio for everyday edits, expressive transformations, and real-world use."

One of the biggest frustrations with earlier versions of ChatGPT Images was their tendency to overstep. Ask for a small tweak, and the system might quietly rework half the image. OpenAI says that problem has been a key focus of this update.

The company claims the new version is much better at making targeted changes without altering other elements, allowing users to refine images rather than repeatedly start from scratch. For designers, marketers and casual creators alike, this could mean smoother workflows and far less trial and error.

Speed is the other headline change. With generation times



now reportedly up to four times faster, OpenAI is positioning ChatGPT Images as something you can iterate with in real time, rather than a tool that interrupts creative momentum.

The timing of the update is no coincidence. It arrives just weeks after OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman reportedly issued what he described as a "code red" memo inside the company, calling for urgent improvements to ChatGPT's overall quality.

In that internal document, Altman said OpenAI still had significant work to do to improve the chatbot's day-to-day experience, including answering a broader range of questions and boosting speed, reliability and personalisation. The memo was first reported by *The Wall Street Journal*.

The urgency reflects growing pressure from rivals. Competitors have been closing the gap on OpenAI's early lead, with Google last month releasing a new version of its Gemini model that outperformed OpenAI on several industry benchmark tests.

Dhruv64 is India's first 64-bit 1GHz chip, will help make country self-reliant

India has announced a major step in the development of indigenous semiconductors, with Dhruv64, its first indigenous 1.0 GHz, 64-bit dual-core microprocessor. This marks a notable step forward in the country's efforts to become self-reliant in essential industries and defence technology. As the first of its kind developed within the country, Dhruv64 is positioned to strengthen India's domestic semiconductor and processor pipeline, which has traditionally depended on foreign innovation.

Dhruv64 was developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) under the Microprocessor Development Programme (MDP). The microprocessor's debut arrives amid ongoing government initiatives, such as the Digital India RISC-V program, designed to promote the design, testing, and prototyping of homegrown chips. According to a press release by the Press Information Bureau (PIB), Dhruv64 is a direct result of these support mechanisms, which prioritise building indigenous technology to serve national needs.

Dhruv64 is said to have both commercial and strategic use. The press release states that Dhruv64 will help reduce dependence on imported processors, particularly for India's critical infrastructure sectors, especially in defence and high-performance computing. According to the PIB, India consumes 20 per cent of all microprocessors made globally. As such, this new processor provides a homegrown alternative for startups, academia, and industry.

While India has had smaller-scale chip projects in the past, Dhruv64's 64-bit architecture and 1.0 GHz dual-core design mark a significant leap in terms of power and applicability.



This development could pave the way for more advanced, secure, and efficient hardware tailored to India's unique requirements. The processor's increased performance and modern architecture mean it can support a wider range of applications, from embedded systems to high-performance computing tasks, thereby expanding India's technological horizons.

Following Dhruv64's successful development, the next generation of indigenous processors is already in progress. These include the Dhanush and Dhanush+ chips, which are currently under development and expected to further bolster India's self-reliance in strategic technology sectors. The momentum generated by Dhruv64's success is anticipated to inspire additional projects and investments in local chip design, further reinforcing India's ambitions in this domain.

Warner Bros plans to reject Paramount bid for Netflix's smaller offer

NEW YORK (TIP)

Warner Bros. Discovery Inc. is planning to reject Paramount Skydance Corp.'s hostile takeover bid due to concerns about financing and other terms, people familiar with the matter said.

After deliberating and reviewing Paramount's bid, Warner Bros.' board will urge shareholders to reject the tender offer, said the people, who asked not to be identified discussing confidential information. The board of directors still views the company's existing agreement with streaming leader Netflix Inc. as offering greater value, certainty and terms than what Paramount has proposed.

Warner Bros.' response to Paramount's tender offer could be filed as early as Wednesday, the people added. No final decision has been made and the situation remains fluid, they said. Representatives for Warner Bros. and Paramount declined to comment.

Warner-Paramount deal — The Ellison factor

One major sticking point is Warner Bros.' concern about the financing proposed by Paramount, which is led by David Ellison.

The equity is backstopped by a trust that manages the wealth of his father, software billionaire Larry Ellison. Because it's a revocable trust, assets can be taken out of it at any time, and Warner Bros. may have no recourse if that happens, the people said.

One of Paramount's backers dropped out of the deal Tuesday. Affinity Partners, led by US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, told Bloomberg News it was withdrawing from the proposed transaction, citing the involvement of "two strong competitors".

Earlier, Trump criticised Paramount, saying on social media that he has been treated "far worse" by the company's CBS division since the Ellison family took control earlier this year. The Ellisons have touted their friendly ties to the president.

Warner Bros.' board is also concerned about the company's ability to conduct business for the year or more it could take for a sale to win regulatory approval. Paramount isn't offering the company enough flexibility to run its business or manage its balance sheet, the people said.

Paramount, in an exchange filing last week, said that it had addressed Warner Bros. concerns about the company's flexibility in refinancing debt as well as payment of a \$5 billion breakup fee that would be backstopped by the Ellisons.

Paramount has adjusted terms of its bid in response to



Warner Bros.' requests in other ways. Some \$1 billion in financing from China's Tencent Holdings Ltd. was withdrawn over concerns the funding could lead to national security issues with US regulators.

Netflix vs Paramount offer for Warner Bros.

Warner Bros. agreed this month to sell its studios, streaming business and HBO to Netflix for \$27.75 a share, or about \$83 billion including debt, capping off a multi-week bidding war between Netflix, Paramount and Comcast Corp.

Warner Bros. separately plans to spin off cable networks like CNN and TNT to its shareholders before the Netflix deal closes.

Paramount, which owns MTV and the Paramount+ streaming service, has offered to buy all of Warner Bros. for \$30 a share, or more than \$108 billion, including debt. Three days after Netflix and Warner Bros. announced their deal, Paramount took its offer directly to shareholders by launching a public tender offer for Warner Bros. shares.

Paramount has said that its \$30-a-share offer for Warner Bros. isn't its "best and final", implying it has room to raise its bid. Shares of Warner Bros. closed at \$28.90 in New York, suggesting some investors expect the company to fetch a higher price.

Warner Bros.' agreement with Netflix bars it from soliciting proposals from other bidders but it's allowed to entertain proposals that come in. In the event of a superior proposal, it's required to give Netflix the opportunity to match the better offer to try to keep their existing deal intact, according to their agreement.

Tata Electronics gets Rs 1,500-cr boost as Apple manufacturing expands in India

The Tatas have invested an additional Rs 1,500 crore in Tata Electronics, according to the company's latest regulatory filing with the Registrar of Companies, reported The Economic Times.

The equity infusion in October takes the group holding company's total investment in Tata Electronics to Rs 4,500 crore over the past one year.

BACKING CAPACITY EXPANSION

The fresh funding underlines Tata Group's continued support for expanding capacity at Tata Electronics, which has emerged as one of Apple's largest iPhone manufacturing partners in India. A major portion of the company's iPhone production is exported to the United States and Europe, highlighting India's growing role in Apple's global supply chain.

The filing also shows that Tata Electronics has doubled its authorised share capital to Rs 20,000 crore. This move signals the possibility of further capital infusion from the parent company in the future.

While Tata Electronics did not specify the exact purpose of the latest investment, it stated that it would require "additional long-term finance by issue of securities/equity shares" to carry on its business, mentioned the report.

APPLE DEEPENS INDIA PUSH

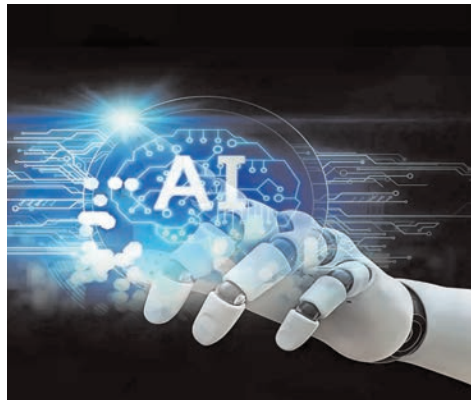
The investment comes amid clear signs of Apple strengthening its manufacturing presence in India. As reported by Reuters, Apple has said it plans to manufacture most of the iPhones sold in the United States in India by the end of 2026. The shift is part of Apple's strategy to reduce its dependence on China, especially in the backdrop of rising trade tariffs.

55,000% rally in Indian AI stock triggers bubble concerns: Report

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The world's best-performing stock has turned into a warning sign for investors chasing quick gains from the artificial intelligence boom. A little-known Indian company has delivered a stunning 55,000% rise in just under two years, raising serious questions about hype, regulation and investor risk, reported Bloomberg.

RRP Semiconductor Ltd, which was largely unknown even within India until recently, has become a social media sensation after its shares surged more than 55,000% in the 20 months leading up to December 17. Bloomberg reports that this makes it the biggest stock gainer globally among companies with a market value above \$1 billion.



The scale of the rally looks even more striking when placed against the company's fundamentals. Bloomberg notes that RRP Semiconductor reported negative revenue in its latest financial results, has just two full-time employees

according to its annual report, and only a loose connection to the global semiconductor spending boom.

The company's transformation began in early 2024. Bloomberg reports that RRP's promoter, Rajendra Chodankar, shifted the company away from real estate and renamed it RRP Semiconductor.

Chodankar, whose earlier business interests included thermal imaging systems and drone camera equipment, took control of the listed company by repaying an Rs 80 million loan owed by G D Trading and Agencies Ltd in exchange for equity.

On April 23, the board approved issuing shares to Chodankar and others at Rs 12 each, around 40% below the market price at the time. This move gave

Chodankar a 74.5% stake and reduced the original founders' holding to less than 2%, according to Bloomberg.

Around the same time, Chodankar set up a private company, RRP Electronics Pvt Ltd, with plans to build an outsourced semiconductor assembly and testing unit in Maharashtra. While the listed firm does not own this private company, Bloomberg notes that both are controlled by Chodankar, which may have added to investor excitement.

Bloomberg points out that the rally was driven by a mix of online hype, a very small free float, and a surge in retail investor participation in India. About 98% of RRP Semiconductor's shares are held by Chodankar and a small group of associates, leaving very little stock available for public trading.



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



ARIES

Ganesha says that the planned work of the people of Aries will be completed on time this week. Efforts and actions in the right direction will yield favorable results. At the beginning of the week, there will be chances of unexpected monetary gains. There will be an increase in business. You will be able to achieve your goal in the workplace too, but keep in mind that no one should be ridiculed while making fun of others, otherwise, even friends can turn into enemies. Be especially careful with secret enemies in the middle of the week in the workplace. Take decisions related to building or property carefully. People associated with politics may have to make more effort and hard work to achieve the goal. There will be full support of the love partner in the love affair, but there will be a need to avoid haste. Sweetness will remain in married life. Most of the time of the students will be spent in fun.



TAURUS

Ganesha says that the people of Taurus need to spend this week looking at their pockets. Expenses will remain more than income. At the beginning of the week, there will be some concerns regarding the child side, but by the end of the week, you will be able to find some solution for it. Incomplete tasks will be done with the help of friends. Brothers and sisters etc. will respect and support your decision to solve a family problem. You can get a new position in the workplace with new responsibilities. In the middle of the week, you may have to travel short or long distances in terms of career business, which will give pleasant results. This week is going to be favorable for you in terms of love affairs. Will have a happy time with the love partner. Will get full support from the marrow partner. Students engaged in the preparation for examination competitions can get some good news.



GEMINI

Ganesha says that the people of the Gemini zodiac will have to try to find an opportunity in disaster. It means to say that if any challenge comes in the field of career, business, or, work, then you can write a new chapter of success by facing it firmly. This week you need to move ahead with your plans and goals with full dedication, you will get the fruit of your work. Avoid postponing today's work for tomorrow, otherwise, you may have to face losses. At the end of the week, you may have to face problems like physical

fatigue or insomnia. Take careful steps in love affairs, otherwise, you may have to give and take. Do not ignore the feelings of your love partner or life partner at all.



CANCER

Ganesha says that this week is very auspicious for Cancerians to make their dreams come true. If you try in the right direction, you will get the achievement. There will be contact with an influential person and there will be opportunities for profit. People wandering in search of employment will get new employment opportunities. New income opportunities will be created. Small businessmen have more auspicious time than wholesalers. At the end of the week, the mind will be worried about some unknown apprehension. During this, take special care of your soundness. Old diseases can emerge. There will be strength in a love relationship. You will get opportunities to spend pleasant moments with your marrow.



LEO

Ganesha says that the people of the Leo zodiac need to pay a lot of attention to both their time and relationships this week. If you want your planned tasks to be completed, then instead of postponing them for tomorrow, try to do them ahead of time. Also, celebrate the angry Sujana who gets angry a hundred times. If for some reason you are having any displeasure with your dear person, then take a step back and try to persuade him, otherwise, the relationship may break. In career business, focus on your goal without giving weight to the small things of people. There may be a meeting with an old friend or family member at the end of the week. Avoid any kind of haste in a love relationship. Do not ignore the feelings of the spouse in married life.



Students will have to work hard to create their goals.

VIRGO

Ganesha says that Virgo people need not panic about any challenge in life because if the good times don't last then the bad times won't last long either. At the beginning of the week, the mind will be troubled by the doubt of any evil, but before the end of the week, all the clouds of doubt will be dispelled. With the advice of a senior person in the house, a major obstacle in life will be removed. There will be a collaboration of seniors in the field. Before investing money in any scheme or business, take the advice of a well-wisher or a senior person. Don't be lax in any kind of paper-related things, otherwise, you may have to worry further. In difficult times, you will feel very relaxed by getting the support of your life partner or love partner. Most of the time women will be spent on religious work.



LIBRA

Ganesha says that the people of the Libra zodiac can achieve more success than expected in their careers and businesses. Those doing work or business-related abroad will be benefited. Buying and selling buildings etc. or investing money in any scheme in the past will bring big benefits. There will be full cooperation from the in-law's side in achieving the goal. Long-distance travel is possible in connection with business. The journey will prove to be joyful and beneficial. To keep married life or love relationship sweet, appreciate your partner's feelings and give them proper time. Be loyal to your spouse, otherwise, the entry of a third person into life can cause discord in the house. The time is auspicious for the students who are preparing for the exam competition.



SCORPIO

Ganesha says that the natives of Scorpio may have to travel long or short distances in connection with careers or business at the beginning of the week. The journey will be pleasant and profitable. All wishes will be fulfilled. Students engaged in the preparation for the examination competition will get good news. Any major concern related to the child side will be solved. But think carefully before investing money in any big scheme or lending money to anyone, otherwise, you may have to repent in the future. If possible, settle personal disputes outside the court, otherwise, you may get stuck in a long legal process. Ignore any kind of haste in love affairs. Sweetness will remain in married life. This week will prove to be normal in terms of health.



SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says that at the beginning of the week, the people of Sagittarius may have to travel long or short distances in connection with work. Take care of both your health and your belongings during the traveling. At the beginning of the week, the mind will be upset due to the loss of a dear thing. There can be a dispute with relatives regarding ancestral property. Do not ignore the feelings of your relatives while making any decision. The wait for people looking for employment may increase slightly. The burden of additional responsibilities in the workplace may fall on your head. It may take some time to withdraw the money stuck in the market. Be loyal to your spouse in love relationships. Try to clear misunderstandings yourself instead of any third person. Take special care of the mother's soundness.



CAPRICORN

Ganesha says that at the beginning of the week, the mind may remain upset because of something related to the younger sister or brother. The burden of additional

responsibilities in the workplace may fall on your head. Wait for the appropriate time to resolve the dispute related to land-building, and avoid taking any major decision in haste. Students may get distracted from their studies. Before signing any paper, read it thoroughly, otherwise, you may have to face losses in the future. Small businessmen have auspicious times as compared to wholesalers. Do not ignore the feelings of your love partner in love relations at all. At the end of the week, the mind may remain worried about the health of the spouse.



AQUARIUS

Ganesha says that the bubbles of happiness, dreams, and sorrow both burst in the same way. This week you will have to tie this thing in a knot. At the beginning of the week, without getting distracted by the obstacles or results in the work, you have to move towards your goal. At the beginning of the week, with the help of a female friend, there will be speed in the stuck work. Misunderstandings with friends or loved partners will be cleared. There will be the collaboration of both seniors and juniors in the field. Short-distance travel is possible at the end of the week. During this, most of the time will be spent on religious works. Take special care of your health. Old diseases can emerge. Students will be able to achieve success only if they work hard.



PISCES

Ganesha says that this week the people of Pisces have to persevere with this mantra till they achieve their goal, because there may be small or big obstacles in your work, but they will be completed. If the disputes related to the court will be settled outside, then it will be beneficial. People looking for employment can get some good news by the middle of the week. There will be chances of unexpected profit for the wholesale traders. If you are working on a plan, you will be able to shape it by the end of the week. Will get an opportunity to spend a pleasant time with the love partner in the love affair. Sweetness will remain in married life. Most of the time the youngsters will be having fun.

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

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : DEC 22 TO DEC 28 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

DECEMBER 22

Ganesha says you will be well rewarded for your efforts today. You will spend more on luxuries and comforts to celebrate your achievements uniquely. You will earn more money and make some sensible long-term investments. Together, you will develop a deep understanding that will make every moment you spend together memorable. You may be worried and upset about your parents' health. You may soon lose your spiritual gains.

DECEMBER 23

Ganesha says your career graph will be steadily rising. Your income will be more than you anticipated, and keep you happy. You may start working on repair or construction projects for yourself or others at the end of the year. Children may be encouraged and share some positive news. Marriage relations for some people are close at the end of the year. Avoid getting embroiled in legal disputes, as they will not give the desired results.

DECEMBER 24

Ganesha says you should stay away

from controversial topics that may get your family members in trouble. Gain, rent, dividends, or interest through the sale of fixed assets is certain to be collected. Save as much as possible to meet unforeseen expenses at the end of the year easily. During these years, you will make many useful connections, some of which will also result in cash rewards. You are the best person to manage both your and others' finances and those of others.

DECEMBER 25

Ganesha says that you often spend too much of your time and energy fulfilling the needs of others, rather than fulfilling your interests. Although you are honest and creative, you need to learn to control your sometimes angry and reckless behavior. If you make investments now, they may give profitable returns. For some, moving, buying a car, or traveling abroad is possible. You may get support from your beloved, both in love and money. Also, this person may sacrifice a lot for your well-being and happiness.

DECEMBER 26

Ganesha says that you are incredibly

independent, have great leadership skills, and enjoy making your own decisions, but you need to control your tendency to be jealous, overambitious, and self-centered at times. Put in more effort to implement the innovative ideas running through your mind. The results may take time to come, but eventually, they may exceed your expectations. You may not be happy with the resolution of a pending legal or property-related matter. Additionally, it would help if you also controlled your spending.

DECEMBER 27

Ganesha says that although you like to live a good, respectable lifestyle and especially love meeting new people, sometimes you need to control your tendency to behave stubbornly, destructively, and vindictively. Having children will be interesting and a source of joy for you. Those who have been struggling to find a life partner so far should be happy, as it seems that marriage is on the horizon. Monetary gains and other benefits will be plentiful, but working under excessive stress will be detrimental to your health.



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

DECEMBER 28

Ganesha says you put in a lot of effort and are honest, but sometimes you are criticized for your tendency to be moody, cunning, and jealous. Those who are willing to take financial and professional risks may prove very beneficial to you. However brief, a new romance may be tempting. Travel or pilgrimage may bring relaxation and peace. Some interesting changes may be seen in the company you work for. Monetary gains are likely to be a result of several factors. You will also benefit from investing in stocks and bonds.

Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at www.bejandaruwalla.com
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Nastur Bejan Daruwalla

Brahma Gauri Punam Fast: A sacred vow for longevity, prosperity and divine grace

The Brahma Gauri Punam Fast, observed on the Tiritiya of Shukla Paksha in the Pausha month, is a revered women-centric vrat rooted in ancient Hindu belief systems, Puranic symbolism, and oral devotional traditions. Dedicated to Jagjanani Brahma Gauri, this fast is believed to ensure the long life of husband and sons, family prosperity, and spiritual merit that leads to heavenly attainment.

Scriptural and Puranic References

While Brahma Gauri Punam is not confined to a single canonical text, its philosophy and rituals draw inspiration from broader Puranic literature, particularly the Skanda Purana, Shiva Purana, and Markandeya Purana, which extensively describe Goddess Gauri as the embodiment of Shakti, fertility, purity, and family protection.

According to Puranic belief, Goddess Gauri is the sustaining power of creation, revered even by Brahma, the creator himself. Hence, the name Brahma Gauri symbolises the goddess who is worshipped by Brahma and who blesses lineage, continuity, and progeny. Scriptures repeatedly emphasise that worship of Gauri grants saubhagya (marital bliss), putra labh (sons), and ayushya vridhhi (longevity).

The concept of chiranjevi-long, protected life-is central to this vrat and finds resonance in various Hindu texts where devotion to the Divine Mother safeguards devotees from untimely death.

The Sacred Vrat Katha

A poor husband and wife lived in the village. Woman who believed in God and recited worship. Her husband did not do any work and consumes alcohol. Women used to work in people's homes and this used to run their household expenses. The husband used to snatch the money that the woman earned from her, if the woman did not give the money, her husband used to beat her. The man used to rob the entire rupee in liquor.

Once that woman was sitting at home with a sad heart. The woman had nothing, no money and no food. Then a monk came and asked for alms from that woman. The woman said with a very sad heart, Baba ji, I have nothing, what can I give you.

The monk said to the woman that daughter, you are looking very sad, I may talk to you, maybe I can relieve some of your sorrow. The woman told her whole story to the monk. The woman told the monk that she has been married for 10 years but she has neither got husband happiness nor child happiness.

The monk asked the woman to observe Brahmagauri fast. By observing this fast, you will also get child happiness and husband will also get happiness. The woman told the monk that when and how to do this fast, please kindly tell the law



Important information

Brahma Gauri Vrat 2025

Tuesday, 23 December 2025

Shukla Paksha Tiritiya Start : 22 December 2025 at 10:52 am

Shukla Paksha Tiritiya End : 23 December 2025 at 12:13 pm

of this fast.

This fast is done on Tiritiya of Shukla Paksha of Paush month. In this fast one fasts for the whole day and meal is taken at one time.

The woman performed Brahmagauri Vrat according to the fast and law prescribed by the monk, due to which her husband started working and also stopped drinking alcohol. The woman also got the happiness of children. Now the life of the woman started living happily and peacefully.

Ritual Observance and Spiritual Discipline

On Brahma Gauri Punam, women rise before sunrise, cleanse themselves, and observe a nirjal or phalahar fast, depending on family tradition. The idol or image of Goddess Gauri is installed and worshipped through

Shodashopachar Puja, the sixteen sacred offerings symbolising complete surrender of body, mind, and soul.

White and yellow flowers, rice, sweets, fruits, and lamps are offered while chanting Gauri mantras or stotras. The fast is concluded after moonrise or the next morning, as per regional custom.

Why This Fast Is Important for Women

In Hindu tradition, women are regarded as the spiritual anchors of the family. The Brahma Gauri Punam Fast strengthens this role, empowering women through devotion and prayer. By observing this vrat, women seek divine protection for their husband's longevity, sons' well-being, and family lineage, while also earning spiritual merit for themselves.

Religious belief holds that women who observe this vrat with sincerity receive:

- Long life and protection for husband and sons
- Family harmony and prosperity
- Freedom from fear of untimely death
- Accumulation of punya leading to heavenly attainment

Faith, Discipline and Divine Reward

The vrat is not merely a ritualistic fast

but a spiritual discipline that reinforces patience, devotion, and faith. Scriptures and folk traditions affirm that women who observe this fast with sincerity receive the divine blessings of Goddess Gauri, ensuring protection for their husbands and children from untimely death and misfortune. It is also believed that the merit gained from this fast helps the devotee and her family attain punya, which ultimately leads to moksha or heavenly attainment after death.

The Brahma Gauri Punam Fast is not merely a ritual but a profound spiritual vow rooted in maternal devotion and divine faith. Through the worship of Jagjanani Brahma Gauri, women reaffirm their role as nurturers and protectors of dharma within the household. Passed down through generations, this vrat continues to illuminate the path of devotion, protection, and spiritual fulfillment.

Brahma Gauri Punam Fast continues to be observed across various regions of India, especially in traditional households where rituals are passed down through generations. The vrat strengthens familial bonds, reinforces spiritual values, and highlights the revered role of women as carriers of faith and tradition.

Bikaner: Where the desert whispers tales of royalty, faith and flavor

Rising from the golden sands of the Thar Desert, Bikaner is one of Rajasthan's most evocative yet understated destinations—a city where history breathes through sandstone walls, camels still rule the roads on festival days, and food carries the bold, unforgettable taste of the desert. Less crowded than Jaipur or Udaipur but equally rich in heritage, Bikaner offers travelers an immersive experience of Rajput valor, desert culture, spiritual traditions and culinary brilliance.

Founded in 1488 by Rao Bika, a Rathore prince and son of Rao Jodha of Jodhpur, Bikaner quickly evolved into a powerful desert kingdom due to its strategic location on ancient caravan routes linking Central Asia with Gujarat ports. Today, the city retains its old-world charm, wrapped in a palette of red sandstone, intricately carved jharokhas and narrow lanes echoing with centuries-old stories.

Junagarh Fort: A Fortress of Grandeur and Intrigue

Unlike most Rajasthani forts perched on hilltops, Junagarh Fort stands proudly on the plains—an architectural marvel fortified by massive walls and defended by moats. Built in the late 16th century by Raja Rai Singh, one of Emperor Akbar's most distinguished generals, the fort is a treasure trove of palaces, courtyards and temples. Inside, the Anup Mahal, Phool Mahal and Karan Mahal dazzle visitors with gold leaf work, mirror panels, frescoes and Italian tiles, reflecting the prosperity and artistic refinement of Bikaner's rulers. The fort's museum houses royal costumes, weaponry, manuscripts and artefacts that vividly narrate the city's royal past, making it one of Rajasthan's best-preserved forts.

Lalgarh Palace: Colonial Elegance in the Desert

A striking contrast to Junagarh's medieval grandeur, Lalgarh Palace showcases Indo-Saracenic architecture infused with European influences. Constructed in red sandstone during the reign of Maharaja Ganga Singh, the palace features latticework balconies, ornate fireplaces and sprawling gardens. Parts of the palace have been converted into a heritage hotel and museum, allowing visitors to experience royal living amidst desert serenity.

Karni Mata Temple: Faith Beyond Fear

About 30 kilometres from Bikaner lies the world-famous Karni Mata Temple in Deshnok, often called the "Rat Temple." Home to thousands of revered rats believed to be sacred manifestations of devotees, the temple is a powerful symbol of unshakeable faith. For believers, spotting a rare white rat is considered highly auspicious. The temple's silver doors and marble carvings add to its mystique, making it one of India's most



unusual yet spiritually significant shrines.

Camel Country and Desert Adventures

Bikaner is synonymous with camels, and a visit to the National Research Centre on Camel offers fascinating insights into the "ships of the desert"—from camel breeding to camel milk products. Desert safaris around Bikaner provide a quieter, more intimate alternative to the crowded dunes of Jaisalmer. Sunset camel rides, jeep safaris, and evenings spent under starlit skies with folk music and traditional cuisine capture the soul of the Thar.

Temples, Havelis and the Old City Charm

The old city of Bikaner is a living museum. Ornate havelis such as the Rampuria group display intricate stone carvings and elaborate façades that rival any in Rajasthan. Jain temples like Bhandasar Jain Temple, adorned with vibrant frescoes, gold leaf paintings and mirror work, reflect the city's mercantile wealth and spiritual diversity.

Walking through Bikaner's bazaars—Kote Gate, Station Road and Bhujia Bazaar—reveals colourful textiles, camel leather products, miniature paintings and traditional jewellery.

A Culinary Capital of the Desert

Bikaner's food is legendary. The city is the birthplace of the iconic Bikaneri bhujia, a spicy gram flour snack exported across the world. Local delicacies such as gatte ki sabzi, ker sangri, bajra roti, and sweets like rasgulla and ghewar reflect ingenious desert cooking that balances spice, preservation and flavour. Food walks through the old city are a sensory delight, offering an authentic taste of Rajasthani hospitality.



CONTD FROM PAGE 1

Trump administration could strip some naturalized Americans of their citizenship

fraud while applying for citizenship or in a handful of other situations, the new guidance "would represent a massive escalation of denaturalization in the modern era," said the report.

It added that such a move could impact people who had made honest mistakes on their citizenship paperwork and "sow fear among law-abiding Americans."

The guidance is the latest in a series of measures announced by Trump in his second term in the White House as part of an intensified crackdown on immigration, both illegal and legal.

The NYT report added that there are about 26 million naturalized Americans in the country, citing Census Bureau data. USCIS estimates show that more than 800,000 new citizens were sworn in last year, most of whom were born in Mexico, India, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic or Vietnam.

"It's no secret that US Citizenship and Immigration Services' war on fraud includes prioritizing those who've unlawfully obtained US citizenship - especially under the previous administration," USCIS spokesman Matthew Tragesser said in the NYT report.

"We will pursue denaturalization proceedings for those individuals lying or misrepresenting themselves during the naturalization process. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Justice to restore integrity to America's immigration system."

Former agency officials have voiced concern over such guidelines.

"Imposing arbitrary numerical targets on denaturalization cases risks politicizing citizenship revocation," former USCIS official Sarah Pierce said.

"And requiring monthly quotas that are 10 times higher than the total annual number of denaturalization's in recent years turns a serious and rare tool into a blunt instrument and fuels unnecessary fear and uncertainty for the millions of naturalized Americans."

The NYT report said the new guidance was part of a document outlining USCIS priorities for the 2026 fiscal year, which began in October and listed goals such as "provide employee feedback opportunities", "strengthen management of high-risk cases" and "pursue denaturalization."

The Justice Department has also said it would make denaturalization a priority this year. In a memo earlier this year, officials said they would target individuals in an array of categories beyond committing fraud in obtaining citizenship.

"Categories of eligible people include gang members, those who committed financial fraud, individuals connected to drug cartels and violent criminals," the NYT report said.

Australia's 'Bondi Hero' handed millions collected from fundraising

a social media influencer and co-organizer of the GoFundMe page, videos posted online showed. More than 43,000 people worldwide contributed to the fundraising, including billionaire hedge fund manager Bill Ackman who gave A\$99,999 (\$90,02,874) and shared the fundraiser on his X account.

Australia's Prime Minister and the State Premier have visited Mr. Ahmed in hospital to praise his bravery.

When handed the cheque, Mr. Ahmed asks, "I deserve it" to which Mr. Dereniowski says, "Every penny", the video shows.

When asked what he would say to the people who donated, Mr. Ahmed said: "To stand with each other, all human beings. And forget everything bad... and keep going to save life."

"When I saved the people, I [did it] from the heart because it was a nice day, everyone was enjoying and

celebrating with their kids; women, men, teenagers, all. Everyone was happy, and they deserve to enjoy," Mr. Ahmed said, raising his uninjured fist in the air. "This country [is the] best country in the world. But we're not going to stand and keep watching. Enough is enough. God protect Australia. Aussie, Aussie, Aussie."

The tobacco store owner did not say what he planned to do with the money. Mr. Ahmed, 43, left his hometown in Syria's northwest province of Idlib nearly 20 years ago to seek work in Australia.

Fifteen people were killed, and dozens were wounded on Sunday (December 14, 2025) after two gunmen opened fire at people celebrating Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights, at the famous Bondi Beach. Authorities allege a 50-year-old father, who was shot dead by police, and his 24-year-old son, who was critically wounded, carried out the attack.

(Source: Reuters)

CONTD FROM PAGE 6 contd from page 6

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS STREET HEALTH OUTREACH + WELLNESS (SHOW) PROGRAM DISTRIBUTES OVER 14,000 CLOTHING ITEMS DONATED BY UNIQLO

"We are grateful to work with partners like NYC Health + Hospitals who are dedicated to improving the lives of their patients. In addition to the incredible health services provided by the SHOW program, we hope our warm winter essentials will help New Yorkers stay warm and healthy this winter season."

The Street Health Outreach + Wellness (SHOW) program deploys a fleet of six mobile health units across New York City to meet unhoused and street homeless New Yorkers where they are, and build engagement and trust through care and services. Access is provided in real-time, with no appointments needed, no insurance requirements, and no cost to the patient. Patients are assessed for urgently needed care, including wound care and vaccinations, and offered physical and mental health screenings, harm reduction education, and social services. SHOW teams - which include a medical provider, social worker, addiction counselor, peer counselor, registered nurse, patient care associate,

community health worker, and clerk - provide services onboard the SHOW unit and walk block-by-block to offer services to those living on the street, often in locations only accessible on foot like parks and subways.

SHOW teams work in concert with the public hospital system's four Primary Care Safety Net (PCSN) at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, Elmhurst, Lincoln, and Woodhull to provide longitudinal, multidisciplinary care to patients experiencing homelessness and patients with complex medical, behavioral health, and social needs. By coordinating care between teams with SHOW and PCSN, clinicians are able to meet patients where they are, address medical issues before they result in emergency room visits and hospital admissions, build relationships of trust with historically stigmatized populations, and establish longitudinal care to drive positive outcomes in both health and housing.

In July 2025, SHOW enhanced its street-based primary care capacities with the addition of point-of-care lab testing (POCT), point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS), and blood draw services. These medical services have further improved SHOW providers' ability to evaluate and manage patient needs in the field and reduce their barriers to critically needed care.

Since the program launched in April 2021, SHOW teams have performed over 280,000 engagements, 35,000 medical consultations, and 33,000 behavioral health engagements. Since the SHOW program began working with the public health system's Safety Net clinics, it has connected over 1,700 patients to primary care, specialty care, or substance use treatment. In addition, over half of patients who have received medical consultations have received care at a SHOW unit two or more times. To date, SHOW teams have distributed over 90,000 hygienic kits, 90,000 vaccinations, 6,000 Narcan nasal sprays, 4,600 fentanyl test strips, and 3,600 xylazine test strips.

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History This Week DEC 19 - 25

DECEMBER 19

December 19, 1946 - War broke out in French Indochina as Ho Chi Minh attacked the French seeking to oust them from Vietnam. This marked the beginning of a thirty-year conflict which eventually led to heavy U.S. involvement and ended with a Communist victory in April 1975 after U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam.



December 19, 1998 - The House of Representatives impeached President Bill Clinton, approving two out of four Articles of Impeachment, charging Clinton with lying under oath to a federal grand jury and obstructing justice.

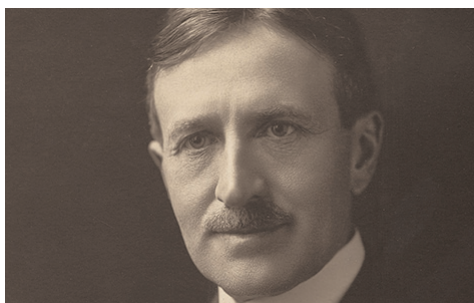
Birthday - British explorer William Parry (1790-1855) was born in Bath, England. He conducted Arctic expeditions and made three attempts to find a Northwest Passage.

Birthday - Historian Carter Woodson (1875-1950) was born in New Canton, Virginia. He introduced black studies to American colleges and universities. His works included; The Negro in Our History and The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861.

DECEMBER 20

December 20, 1956 - The Montgomery bus boycott ended after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling integrating the Montgomery bus system was implemented. The boycott by African Americans had begun on December 5, 1955, after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus to a white man.

December 20, 1989 - The U.S. invaded Panama attempting to capture Manuel Noriega on charges of narcotics trafficking. Operation Just Cause occurred seven months after Noriega had declared unfavorable election results in his country to be null and void. The invasion toppled the Noriega government and resulted in the installation of Guillermo Endara as president. Noriega temporarily eluded capture, but surrendered a few weeks later to U.S. troops. He was then tried, convicted, and imprisoned in the U.S.



Birthday - American industrialist Harvey S. Firestone (1868-1938) was born in Columbiana County, Ohio. He founded Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. and was a close friend of Henry Ford and Thomas Edison.

DECEMBER 21

December 21st - Winter begins in the Northern Hemisphere. In the Southern Hemisphere today is the beginning of summer.



December 21, 1945 - World War II General George Patton died in Germany following a car accident. He had been injured on December 9th near Mannheim and was taken to a hospital in Heidelberg where he died. He was buried in Luxembourg. Nicknamed "Old Blood and Guts," he once stated during the war; "We shall attack and attack until we are exhausted, and then we shall attack again."

December 21, 1972 - East and West Germany established diplomatic ties, ending nearly two decades of Cold War hostility and paving the way for international recognition of East Germany.

December 21, 1988 - Pan American Flight 103 exploded in midair as the result of a terrorist bomb and crashed into Lockerbie, Scotland. All 259 passengers and crew members along with 11 persons on the ground were killed.

December 21, 1993 - The KGB (Soviet Secret Police) organization was abolished by Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Birthday - British statesman Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) was born in London. He led the Tory Party and twice held the post of prime minister. He was instrumental in the expansion of the British Empire into India and the Middle East during the reign of Queen Victoria. He also pioneered the concept of the political novel and produced such works as Vivian Grey, Coningsby, and Lothair.

Birthday - Soviet Russia leader Josef Stalin (1879-1953) was born in the village of Gori in Georgia, Russia (as Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili).

DECEMBER 22

December 22, 1783 - Following a triumphant journey from New York to Annapolis, Maryland, George Washington, victorious Commander-in-Chief of the American Revolutionary Army, appeared before Congress and voluntarily resigned his commission.

Birthday - Italian composer Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) was born in Lucca, Tuscany. Widely considered the greatest Italian opera composer, he is best known for popular works such as Madama Butterfly and La Boheme.

Birthday - "Lady Bird" Johnson (1912-2007) was born in Karnack, Texas (as Claudia Alta Taylor). She was beside her husband Lyndon Johnson on board Air Force One when he was sworn in as the 36th U.S. President following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. She proved to be a gracious

First Lady, remembered for her anti-litter campaign, asking citizens to help "Beautify America."

DECEMBER 23

December 23, 1947 - The transistor was invented at Bell Laboratories by John Bardeen, Walter Brattain and William Shockley, who shared the Nobel Prize for their invention which sparked a worldwide revolution in electronics.



December 23, 1948 - Hideki Tojo was hanged for war crimes. He had been Japanese prime minister from 1941-44. Following Japan's defeat in World War II, he was arrested as a war criminal, tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to death. He was hanged along with six other Japanese wartime military leaders at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo, with the sentence carried out by the U.S. 8th Army.

December 23, 1987 - Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager set a new world record of 216 hours of continuous flight around the world without refueling. Their aircraft Voyager traveled 24,986 miles at a speed of about 115 miles per hour.

Birthday - Mormon prophet Joseph Smith (1805-1844) was born in Sharon, Vermont. He founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Birthday - Japanese Emperor Hirohito (1901-1989) was born in Tokyo. He was Japan's wartime Emperor and was allowed to remain in his position after the war.

DECEMBER 24

December 24, 1942 - The first surface-to-surface guided missile, later known as the V-1 Flying Bomb, was launched by German rocket engineer Wernher von Braun. Called "Buzz Bombs" for the loud buzzing sound of their motor, they were used by Nazi Germany against Britain beginning in September 1944.



December 24, 1943 - General Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force preparing for D-Day.

December 24, 1990 - On Christmas Eve, the bells of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow rang for the first time since the death of Lenin.

December 24, 1992 - Caspar Weinberger and five other Reagan aides involved in the Iran-Contra scandal were pardoned by President George Bush.

Birthday - American patriot Benjamin Rush (1745-1813) was born on a plantation in Byberry, Pennsylvania. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a doctor and humanitarian, whose writings on mental

illness earned him the title "Father of Psychiatry." He also countered the prevailing notion that alcohol was generally good for people and was one of the first to describe alcoholism as a chronic disease.

Birthday - American frontiersman Christopher "Kit" Carson (1809-1868) was born in Madison County, Kentucky. He was a soldier, trapper, guide and Indian agent in the Old West.

Birthday - Howard Hughes (1905-1976) was born in Houston, Texas. He was a movie producer, aviator and industrialist whose legendary desire for privacy generated many rumors and much curiosity. Perhaps best remembered for designing an eight-engine flying boat, nicknamed the Spruce Goose, which was to carry 750 passengers, although it only made one brief test flight.

Birthday - Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) was born in northern Spain (as Inigo de Onaz y Loyola). He founded the Catholic Jesuits (Society of Jesus).

DECEMBER 25

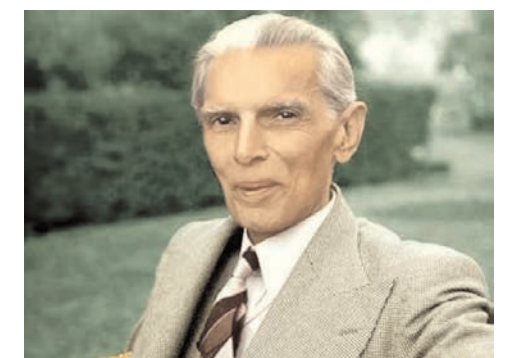
December 25th - Christmas Day, commemorating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Although the exact date of his birth is not known, it has been celebrated on December 25th by the Western (Roman Catholic) Church since 336 A.D.

December 25, 1926 - Hirohito became Emperor of Japan.

December 25, 1989 - In Romania, a television broadcast of a Christmas symphony was interrupted with the announcement that Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife had been executed following a popular uprising. A pro-democracy coalition then took control. Ceausescu, a hard-line Communist, had been ousted from power after ordering his black-shirted state police to suppress a disturbance in the town of Timisorara, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 4,500 persons.

Birthday - Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was born in Woolsthorpe, Lincolnshire, England. He was a mathematician, scientist and author, best known for his work Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica on the theory of gravitation. He died in London and was the first scientist to be honored with burial in Westminster Abbey.

Birthday - American nurse and philanthropist Clara Barton (1821-1912) was born in Oxford, Massachusetts. She served as a nurse during the Civil War and in 1881 founded the American Red Cross.



Birthday - The founder of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) was born in Karachi.

Birthday - Film actor Humphrey Bogart (1899-1957) was born in New York City. Best known for The African Queen, The Maltese Falcon, Casablanca and To Have and Have Not.

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India look to seal series against plucky Proteas as concerns mount around Suryakumar Yadav and Gill

AHMEDABAD (TIP)

India would hope that the challenging home assignment against South Africa, which has exposed a few chinks in the armour and thrown up difficult questions on selection, ends on a positive note when the two sides clash in the fifth and final T20 International here on Friday, Dec 19.

After being blanked 0-2 in the Tests, India bounced back to win the ODI series and now have an unassailable lead 2-1 in the T20Is after the fourth game was abandoned due to poor weather conditions in Lucknow on Wednesday, Dec 17.

That India cannot lose the series should be comforting to embattled head coach Gautam Gambhir given that the other two leaders in the camp — skipper Suryakumar Yadav and his deputy Shubman Gill — are battling challenges of their own with less than two months to go for the T20 World Cup.

For someone who was ranked world No.1 not so long ago, Suryakumar's form has sharply nosedived in the only format he is assured a place in the XI for India.

Having gone through 18 innings in 20 matches this year without a single half-century while averaging a poor 14.20 for his 213 runs, every failure for Suryakumar is adding to the concerns of the Indian camp. Adding to it is the Gill conundrum. Gill's return as vice-captain in the T20I format might have been perceived as one which put Suryakumar on notice a few months ago, but the former's ordinary run with the bat since his comeback and the latest injury setback only hampers the team's cause.

A toe injury suffered before the fourth T20I is set to keep Gill out of the final T20I here as India would want to take a cautious route, more so when there is a ready replacement for the top order slot in Sanju Samson.

Earlier, Gill had missed most of the two-Test affair following an injury to his neck which he suffered in the series-opener in Kolkata, something that also highlighted his busy schedule and growing list of responsibilities in Indian cricket across formats. Samson was never the right fit in the lower order as



the lowest he has batted apart from the top slot is at No.5, where the right-handed batter has scored a mere 138 runs in eight matches at an average of 23.

But each of his three T20I centuries and one half-century have come at the top slot in 14 innings, and in case of Gill's unavailability for the final game, the Kerala wicketkeeper-batter would be keen to make it count.

Aside from this, India have a settled unit with both the all-rounders, Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube, featuring in all three games so far. In the pace attack, Arshdeep Singh is coming into his elements and is also beginning to forge a partnership with Harshit Rana with the ball.

Meanwhile, Jasprit Bumrah, who missed the third T20I due to personal reasons, joined the team's camp before the fourth match. A batting-friendly wicket here would pose a challenge to India's best bowler in the series, Varun Chakravarthy (6 wickets).

For South Africa, who have blown hot and cold, particularly with the bat in the T20I series, Friday's contest will be an opportunity to end with the satisfaction of drawing a series against India.

Ishan Kishan stakes claim for Team India comeback

Jharkhand captain Ishan Kishan smashed a century in the final of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) 2025 against Haryana at the MCA Stadium in Pune on Thursday. With the ton, Ishan Kishan became only the second batter to hit a hundred in a SMAT final.

After being asked to bat first, Jharkhand lost an early wicket, with Anshul Kamboj dismissing Virat Singh in the very first over. However, Ishan Kishan, alongside Kumar Kushagra, launched a sensational assault on the bowling.

Kishan brought up his fifty off just 24 balls and then proceeded to reach his sixth T20 century off just 45 balls, hitting a six off Anshul Kamboj to bring up the milestone. In doing so, Kishan equalled Abhishek Sharma's record for the most centuries in the history of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, marking his fifth overall. This was also his second century of the current tournament, following an unbeaten 113 off 50 balls against Tripura last month.

Kishan's innings eventually ended when he was clean bowled for 101 off 49 balls by Sumit Kumar in the 15th over of Jharkhand's innings. Kishan hit as many as 10 sixes and six fours in his explosive innings against Haryana.

Ishan Kishan became only the second batter to score a century in a SMAT final, after Punjab's Amolpreet Singh (113 against Baroda at Mohali in SMAT 2023-24), and the first captain to achieve the feat. He also set the record for the most sixes by a batter in an SMAT final innings.

KOLKATA (TIP)

Viswanathan Anand is set to face D Gukesh next month at the Tata Steel India Chess Tournament in Kolkata. Anand is among the participants in the tournament, which is scheduled to take place from January 7 to 11. Anand will be headlining the open section with Gukesh, Arjun Erigaisi, R Praggnanandhaa, Aravindh Chitambaram, Vidit Gujrathi, Wesley So, Wei Yi, Volodar Murzin and Hans Niemann.

Speaking in an official press release, Anand said, "I am really very excited to be back at Tata Steel Chess India as a player after a gap of 6 years. Within this period, the world of chess has changed massively with the emergence of talented players across the country specially in India. I am really excited to accept the challenge from the young chess prodigy in this marquee tournament of India."

In the women's section, fans will have the opportunity to see Divya Deshmukh, Vaishali Rameshbabu, Vantika Agarwal, Harika Dronavalli, Rakshit Ravi, Carissa Yip, Stavroula Tsolakidou, Nana Dzagnidze, Aleksandra Goryachkina, and Kateryna Lagno.

This will be Gukesh's second event in India after becoming the youngest-ever world champion. The Indian GM is currently in action at the Global Chess League in India, where he is representing PBG Alaskan Knights.

Gukesh will be hoping to find his form in 2026 and put in a good show in Kolkata. Since becoming world champion, he has been in the spotlight and has also been in poor form. Recently, Anand weighed in on Gukesh's

Viswanathan Anand to face D Gukesh in January



2025 season.

Speaking to The Indian Express, he said, "He's been experimenting in lots of formats. He's willing to travel, he's willing to go out there and try again and again. He's not sitting on prestige (of being world champion). These

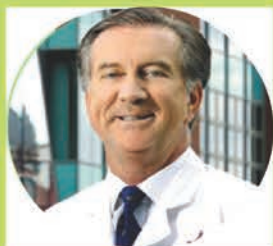
are healthy qualities. His year in classical events, it's fairly acceptable. I mean, losing a tiebreak (at Wijk aan Zee) doesn't mean you've had a bad tournament. His performance in Norway Chess didn't fit any mold, but in its own way, it was hopefully satisfactory."



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



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