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20TH
YEAR

The INDIAN PANORAMA
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We are pleased to announce a special edition to mark the **77th Republic Day of India**. Articles and advertisements may please be submitted at salujaindra@gmail.com by January 18th. For any questions, please email at info@theindianpanorama.news or call 646-247-9458

INSIDE

MAMDANI'S FIRST WEEK AS MAYOR RAISES HOPES FOR THE CITY PAGE 2
WHY IS TRUMP INTERESTED IN GREENLAND? LOOK AT THE THAWING ARCTIC ICE PAGE 8
THE MAGA TURN: GLOBAL FALLOUT AND INDIA'S DILEMMA PAGE 9
TRUMP SETS A PERILOUS PRECEDENT PAGE 10

India-US trade deal didn't happen because Modi did not call Trump: Commerce Secretary Lutnick

Lutnick's remarks come a few days after Trump said that Modi knew he was unhappy with India's purchases of Russian oil and that Washington could raise tariffs on New Delhi 'very quickly'



US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said that India did not move fast enough to clinch the "deal".
File photo : Reuters

**JANUARY 9, 2026
WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)**

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick has said the trade deal with India did not happen because Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not call US President Donald Trump.

In an interview with the 'All-in Podcast' on Thursday, January 8, Lutnick detailed how the India-US trade deal has not happened till now.

"I'll tell you a story about India. I did the first deal with the UK, and we told the UK that they had to get it done by two Fridays from now. That the train was going to leave the station by two Fridays, because I have a lot of other countries doing things, and you know, if

CONTD ON PAGE 42

17 House Republicans vote with Democrats to extend Obamacare subsidies for 3 years



House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries expressed pride in the "bipartisan coalition" created ahead of Thursday's vote on a three-year extension of enhanced Affordable Care Act subsidies.

**JANUARY 9, 2026
WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)**

The House passed a bill on Thursday, January 8, to extend the Affordable Care Act enhanced subsidies for three years by a vote of 230-196 with 17 Republicans

voting with Democrats and defying GOP leaders, Allison Pecorin of ABC News reported.

A tangible path forward that sends legislation through the Senate to the Resolute Desk to address the expired subsidies remains in question.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said Thursday, January 8, that there's "no appetite" for an extension in the upper chamber and pointed instead to ongoing bipartisan talks between senators and House members.

"We've had that vote, as you know, already," Thune said. "But we'll see what happens from the working group, and if they can come up with something that has reforms. And we'll go from there."

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries expressed pride in the "bipartisan coalition" created ahead of Thursday's vote on a three-year

CONTD ON PAGE 42

Anger, outrage spills onto Minneapolis streets after ICE officer's fatal shooting of Renee Good

Hundreds of people protesting the shooting of Renee Good march in freezing rain at night down one of Minneapolis' major thoroughfares



**JANUARY 9, 2026
MINNEAPOLIS (TIP)**

Hundreds of people protesting the shooting of Renee Good marched in freezing rain at night down one of Minneapolis' major thoroughfares,

chanting "ICE out now" and holding signs saying, "killer ICE off our streets", reports AP. Protesters earlier vented their outrage outside a federal facility that is serving as a hub for the

CONTD ON PAGE 42

People gather for a vigil in memory of Renee Nicole Good, who was shot and killed by a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent, in Seattle, Washington, U.S. January 8, 2026.

Photo : Reuters

Venezuelan Regime Issues Decree to 'Search and Capture everyone involved in the Promotion or Support of the US Operation

**JANUARY 6, 2026
NEW YORK (TIP)**



Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodríguez

The Venezuelan regime, now led by interim President Delcy Rodríguez following the capture of Nicolas Maduro, issued a decree ordering police to "immediately begin the national search and capture of everyone involved in the promotion or support for the armed attack" by the Trump administration.

Reuters noted that the decree has been in effect since Saturday but was published in full on Monday.

The decree comes even as Rodríguez called on the U.S. to "work jointly on a cooperation agenda" and appealed for peace and dialogue after assuming the role following the capture of Maduro. In a message published Sunday, January 4, on her official social media channels, Rodríguez said Venezuela's priority was to pursue "balanced and respectful international relations" with the United States and other

CONTD ON PAGE 42



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Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja

VICE PRESIDENT:

Chitagam Saluja

CHIEF EDITOR:

Prof Indrajit S. Saluja

ASSISTANT EDITOR:

Bidisha Roy

SPL. REPORTER UNO:

H.S. Panaser

GRAPHICS DIRECTOR:

Om Parkash Malik

DIRECTOR**ADMINISTRATION:**

Gauri Beri

**CONTRIBUTING
PHOTOGRAPHERS:**

Baldev Singh / BJ Videos

Gunjesh Desai / Masala Junction

Jay Mandal,

Mohammad Jaffer,

SnapsIndia

Mohammad Shahzad,

Zia Khan,

Nisha Rani

Vaaho Photographers,

Vijay Shah - Photo Journalist.

CORRESPONDENTS :**SACRAMENTO:**

Parminder S. Aujla

NEW YORK :

Chitagam

FRESNO:

Tarlochan Singh

DALLAS:

Harjit Dhesi, Amarjit Dhillon

OVERSEAS CORRESPONDENTS**LONDON**

Nirpal Singh Shergill

SPL CORRESPONDENT**DELHI BUREAU CHIEF:**

Chandan Singh

CHANDIGARH:

Manjit Sidhu

LUDHIANA:

A.S. Arora,

R.P.Sharma

JAIPUR :

Dr. Yashpaul Goyal

DALLAS BUREAU CHIEF & VP

Lovliien Kaurr

972-330-3139

editor@theindianpanorama.news

The Indian Panorama

P.O. Box No. 190067, South

Richmond Hill, NY 11419,

Tel: 646-247-9458

Email:

editor@theindianpanorama.news

COMMENT

Mamdani's First Week as Mayor Raises Hopes for the City

The morning, it is said, is the herald of the day. By that measure, Zohran Mamdani's first week as Mayor of New York City has raised genuine hopes that the city is now being led by a man who does not merely promise but means to deliver. In just seven days, Mamdani has attempted to do precisely what he pledged during the campaign: govern like a man in a hurry-because New York's affordability crisis is itself in a hurry.

Sworn in just after midnight on January 1, 2026, Mamdani assumed office with an unusually elaborate "day-one" agenda and a collection of promises that together form a clear governing philosophy: make the city cheaper to live in, and make government feel closer, more responsive, and more humane. It is an ambitious undertaking in any era; it is especially daunting in a city where housing, transit, childcare, and public safety collide daily at the subway turnstile.

So how has he fared in his first week? Judging by the early evidence, Mamdani's start can fairly be described as directionally bold, administratively energetic, and politically combustible.

Housing-the central pillar of his mandate-has been the clearest focus. Mamdani campaigned on freezing rents for rent-stabilized tenants, cracking down on predatory landlords, and expanding housing supply simultaneously. In his opening days, he placed early markers through executive actions aimed at speeding up housing production and strengthening tenant protections. Task forces were announced to identify city-owned land for housing development and to remove long-standing permitting barriers that delay projects and inflate costs. He also ordered citywide "rental ripoff" hearings-public forums intended to expose illegal or abusive practices and convert public testimony into enforcement and policy tools.

This is not yet a rent freeze, nor a completed housing plan. But it is an unmistakable signal: Mamdani intends to deploy the executive authority of the mayor's office to reorganize how City Hall wages the housing battle.

His second notable initiative has centered on civic participation. Mamdani moved swiftly to create an Office of Mass Engagement, designed to coordinate public outreach across agencies and, in his own words, to "revolutionize" how ordinary New Yorkers are heard. Supporters see this as democratic renewal; critics call it political machinery dressed in bureaucratic clothing. Either way, the intent is clear-to institutionalize a continuous feedback loop between neighborhoods and City Hall, something many administrations profess to value but few attempt to systematize so early.

The third development has produced a tangible affordability headline: childcare. On January 8, Mayor Mamdani and Governor Kathy Hochul announced a pathway toward free childcare for two-year-olds in New York City, with a phased rollout beginning in high-need neighborhoods and initial funding commitments from the state. If this initiative survives the inevitable budget negotiations and Albany politics, it could become one of the most consequential early victories of the administration-because for working families, childcare costs function as a second rent.

Yet the first week has also exposed predictable friction points. Mamdani's ideological identity-he has openly embraced the democratic socialist label-along with his appointments, has already drawn intense scrutiny. Controversies surrounding prior statements by at least one appointee illustrate the risk of governing as a movement politician: personnel become policy proxies, and yesterday's rhetoric becomes today's headline.

It bears emphasizing that no mayor delivers fare-free buses, city-owned grocery stores, or a reimagined public safety architecture in seven days. These were among Mamdani's boldest campaign promises, and each requires sustained financing, legal authority, labor negotiations, and cooperation from the state. Week one, therefore, is not about outcomes; it is about seriousness.

On that measure, Mamdani has passed the first test. He appears prepared, he is moving decisively, and he is choosing battles consistent with the mandate voters gave him. The harder test-already approaching-is whether moral urgency can be converted into administrative competence, and competence into durable, measurable results, without allowing ideology to substitute for execution.

New Yorkers did not elect a slogan. They elected a mayor. The first week suggests Zohran Mamdani understands the difference. Now comes the part where the city insists on proof.

When the World Stands at the Edge: A Call for Sagacity and Humanity

The frightening scenario of looming conflicts across the globe should trouble every thoughtful mind. From simmering regional tensions to great-power rivalries hardening into camps, the international atmosphere today bears an unsettling resemblance to a return of the Cold War-except that this time, the heat of an actual war seems alarmingly close. The rhetoric has grown sharper, military posturing more visible, and the space for calm diplomacy dangerously narrow. History warns us that such moments, if mishandled, can slide from hostility to devastation with terrifying speed.

What is most distressing is not merely the presence of disputes-conflicts have always existed-but the manner in which they are being approached. Threats are issued casually, sanctions imposed reflexively, and the language of force has begun to overshadow the language of reason. In this volatile climate, the margin for error is dangerously thin. A miscalculation, a provocation misunderstood, or an act of pride could plunge entire regions into chaos, with consequences that spare no nation, howsoever powerful, howsoever distant it may believe itself to be.

At such times, the world looks not to ordinary citizens, but to its leaders. Leadership, after all, is not conferred merely by elections, crowns, or constitutions. True leadership lies in the capacity to rise above impulse, anger, and populist applause. The common person may rush into quarrels and feuds without pausing to consider the consequences, but leaders are expected to be different. They are entrusted with power precisely because they are supposed to weigh consequences, foresee danger, and act

with restraint.

There is wisdom in the old saying: fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Power should never embolden recklessness; it should cultivate humility. Authority should not amplify ego; it should deepen a sense of responsibility. When leaders speak and act, they do so not merely on their own behalf, but for millions-sometimes billions-of lives whose futures hinge on their judgment. To forget this is to betray the very meaning of leadership.

Power, at its best, should bring grace in conduct and humanity in decision-making. It should sharpen empathy rather than blunt it. A leader who cannot feel the pain of civilians displaced by war, the anguish of parents who lose children, or the economic ruin that follows prolonged conflict has no moral claim to greatness. Without humanity, what distinguishes those at the helm of nations from the ordinary individuals they govern?

The world does not suffer from a shortage of weapons, armies, or alliances. What it lacks is sagacity-the calm wisdom to pause, reflect, and choose dialogue over destruction. Strength today should be measured not by the ability to intimidate or destroy, but by the courage to de-escalate, to negotiate, and to compromise without humiliation.

World leaders must remember that history is an unforgiving judge. Those who lead humanity toward peace and shared prosperity are remembered with gratitude; those who drag the world into conflict and desolation are remembered with regret, if not condemnation. The choice before today's leaders is stark. They can inflame divisions and march toward ruin, or they can rise above fear and pride, and guide the world toward stability and hope.

At this perilous moment, humanity does not need more wars. It needs wiser leaders.

**INDRAJIT
SALUJA**

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Gov. Hochul and Mayor Mamdani unveil free child care plan in New York City

JANUARY 8, 2026
NEW YORK (TIP)

New York City parents may soon have access to free child care for their 2-year-olds, under a plan unveiled Thursday, January 8, by Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Zohran Mamdani - a major boon for the city's mayor on one of his signature campaign promises just days into his new job, an AP report says.

The two Democrats announced the program at a celebratory event in Brooklyn, with Hochul and Mamdani casting the initiative as a transformative step toward easing the city's notoriously high cost of living.

"This is the day that everything changes," Hochul said, also debuting a proposal to expand statewide access to child care in the coming years.

For Mamdani, whose ambitious agenda has been met with heavy skepticism, the announcement was a significant political victory in the opening days of his mayoralty, coming after a campaign that centered on elevating the needs of the city's struggling working-class residents.

"Today we take one step to realizing a city where every New Yorker, every family, every child can afford to keep calling it their home," Mamdani said.

"To those who doubt the power of the



Gov. Hochul and Mayor Mamdani unveil free child care plan in New York City, January 8, 2026

people to make their own destiny, to the cynics who insist that politics is too broken to deliver meaningful change, to those who think that the promises of a campaign cannot survive once confronted with the realities of government, today is your answer," he added.

Hochul, a moderate who is up for

reelection this year, has been politically aligned with the city's new progressive mayor on his plan to offer free child care in the city, though questions remained on how the program could take shape and what it might cost over the long term.

The governor said she is committing to funding the first two years of the city's free child care program for 2-year-olds,

describing it as an expansion of the city's existing universal pre-K and 3-K programs.

The first year will focus on "high-need areas" selected by the city, then expand across the city by its fourth year, according to the statement.

Speaking to reporters after the event, Mamdani said he expects the program to cover around 2,000 children this fall and then continue to expand until it becomes a universal program. He said that the city will work with home-based providers to carry out the plan.

Additionally, Hochul rolled out a sweeping, longer-term proposal to expand access to universal pre-K statewide, with the goal of having the program available throughout New York by the start of the 2028-2029 school year.

She will include the plans in her annual state of the state address, but said she anticipates investing \$1.7 billion for the programs she announced Thursday.

Rebecca Bailin, executive director for the advocacy group New Yorkers United for Child Care, called the plan a "historic moment," adding: "By bringing together the Governor and Mayor around a shared commitment to child care, tens of thousands of families could finally get the relief they desperately need."

(With inputs from agencies)

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR WORLD WITHOUT CHILDHOOD BLINDNESS

January 31, 2026

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"Alone We Can Do So Little. Together We Can Do So Much" -Helen Keller



If interested, contact info@EyefoundationofAmerica.org

Breaking American laws can have serious consequences for student visa: US Embassy

JANUARY 7, 2026
NEW DELHI (TIP)

The US Embassy in India on Wednesday, January 7, said breaking American laws can have "serious consequences" for a student visa, as it termed a sojourn in the country, a privilege, not a right.



Last year, US Embassy had asked those applying for an F, M, or J non-immigrant visa to switch the privacy settings of their social media accounts to 'public' for vetting

Photo for representational purpose only.

The embassy in a post on X cautioned that one could become ineligible for future US visas if they are "arrested or violate any laws."

"Breaking U.S. laws can have serious consequences for your student visa. If you are arrested or violate any laws, your visa may be revoked, you may be deported, and you could be ineligible for future U.S. visas. Follow the rules and don't jeopardize your travel," the embassy posted on X.

"A US visa is a privilege, not a right," it said in an assertion it has made through many posts on X in the past several months.

On June 19, it wrote, "A US visa is a privilege, not a right. US visa screening does not stop after a visa is issued - and we may revoke your visa if you break the law."

(Source: The Tribune)

Two Indian-origin drivers arrested in US with \$7 million cocaine

JANUARY 8, 2026
SACRAMENTO (TIP)

Two Indian-origin truck drivers from California were arrested in the US after authorities discovered 309 pounds of cocaine, valued at approximately \$7 million (approx. Rs 63 crore), hidden inside their semi-truck.

The arrests come amid an ongoing legal and political dispute over the issuance and revocation of commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) for immigrant truckers, particularly Sikhs, in California.

The men, identified as Gurpreet Singh, 25; and Jasveer Singh, 30; were arrested on January 3. Both hold California-issued commercial driver's licenses and are currently being held at the Putnam County Jail on bonds set at \$1 million each. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has placed detainers on both men due to concerns regarding their immigration status.

According to police reports, Jasveer Singh initially told officers that he was transporting an empty tractor-trailer to a restaurant in Richmond to wait for a load. However, officers noticed several cardboard boxes covered with a blanket in the sleeper berth of the truck, which raised suspicion. A free-air K-9 sniff alerted officers to the presence of illegal drugs, and a subsequent search revealed the cocaine.

Authorities said the arrests align with prior Department of Homeland Security (DHS) records related to the men's entry into the country and their legal status. Both men face preliminary charges of dealing in narcotics, classified as a Level 2 felony. Indiana Governor Mike Braun praised the Indiana



Gurpreet Singh, and Jasveer Singh were arrested on January 3 for possession of Cocaine worth \$7 million.

State Police for the seizure, reiterating the state's zero-tolerance approach towards drug trafficking.

The arrests come at a time of heightened scrutiny of truck driving programs and licensing practices across the US. According to an AP report, nearly 44 per cent of approximately 16,000 truck driving programs nationwide could be forced to shut down

following a federal Transportation Department review that found many may not be meeting minimum regulatory requirements.

In California, a group of immigrant truckers has filed a lawsuit against the state's Department of Motor Vehicles, alleging violations of workers' rights after officials moved to revoke commercial driver's licenses. State authorities said about 17,000 truckers were notified last month that their CDLs would be revoked because their license expiration dates extended beyond the period during which they were legally permitted to remain in the US.

The action followed renewed pressure from the Trump administration, which has intensified enforcement against states issuing licenses to immigrants. The federal government has threatened to withhold funding from California, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and New York over the issue.

The Sikh Coalition, along with the San Francisco-based Asian Law Caucus, has filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of affected drivers. Advocacy groups say Sikh truckers have increasingly faced harassment and discrimination, particularly after recent fatal truck crashes in Florida and California involving Sikh drivers.

India advises citizens to avoid non-essential travel to Iran amid unrest

Media reports claim that protests have spread to 26 of Iran's 31 provinces



A man walks near an anti-US and anti-Israeli billboard displayed on a building in Tehran, Iran, on January 4, 2026.

Photo: West Asia News Agency via Reuters

JANUARY 6, 2026
NEW DELHI (TIP)

India on Monday advised its nationals to avoid all non-essential travel to the Islamic Republic of Iran in view of the deteriorating internal security situation triggered by widespread anti-government protests across the country.

In an advisory issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Indian citizens and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), currently in Iran, have been asked to exercise due caution, steer clear of

protest sites and demonstrations, and closely monitor local developments through the website and social media handles of the Indian Embassy in Tehran.

"Indian nationals living in Iran on resident-visas are advised to register with the Indian Embassy, if not already done so," the advisory said, adding that the guidance would remain in force until further notice.

The advisory comes amid a fresh wave of protests in Iran, sparked by a worsening economic crisis, which has now entered its ninth day. Demonstrations were reported on Sunday in Tehran and several provinces, including Fars, Ilam, North Khorasan and Semnan, according to videos circulating online. Media reports claimed that protests have spread to 26 of Iran's 31 provinces since last week, with at least 19 protesters and one member of the security forces killed so far.

The unrest has drawn sharp international attention, with US President Donald Trump renewing warnings of possible American action if Iranian authorities resort to violent crackdowns. "We're watching it very closely. If they start killing people like they have in the past, I think they're going to get hit very hard by the United States," Trump said.

(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian-origin 59-year-old Singapore resident sentenced to 10 years in connection with Wirecard AG fraud

JANUARY 6, 2026
SINGAPORE (TIP)

An Indian-origin Singaporean was on Tuesday, January 6, sentenced to 10 years in jail for involvement in falsification of documents concerning hundreds of millions of dollars by a Singapore-based company linked to Wirecard AG.

Wirecard AG was a German payments company that collapsed in 2020.

A Briton was also given six-and-a-half years in the case.

R Shanmugaratnam, 59, and James Henry O'Sullivan, 51, were each handed jail terms by the State Courts at a sentencing hearing, according to a Channel News Asia report.

Both had been convicted of numerous charges last September following a trial.

Shanmugaratnam, who was given a longer jail sentence, is the director of local accounting firm Citadelle Corporate Services.

O'Sullivan had engaged Citadelle's services to set up companies in Singapore and to provide company secretarial services.

In September, Shanmugaratnam was convicted of 13 charges for falsifying 13 balance confirmation letters between 2016 and 2018 with fraudulent intent.

O'Sullivan was found guilty of five charges for abetting Shanmugaratnam



R Shanmugaratnam was on Tuesday, January 6, sentenced to 10 years in jail for involvement in falsification of documents concerning hundreds of millions of dollars by a Singapore-based company linked to Wirecard AG.

by instigating him to fraudulently issue five of those letters in 2017, according to the report.

Both men had taken instructions from senior Wirecard executives, issuing several false confirmation letters and intentionally misrepresenting to auditors that Wirecard AG had hundreds of millions in euros held in Citadelle's escrow bank accounts in Singapore, according to media reports.

After the sentences were passed, both men told the court through their lawyers that they will be filing appeals against their convictions and sentences.

(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)

Court blocks Indian American Sridhar Vembu, co-founder Zoho, asset transfers amid \$1.7B divorce battle

**JANUARY 8, 2026
SAN FRANCISCO (TIP)**

Sridhar Vembu, co-founder and chief scientist of software company Zoho, is making headlines for reasons far removed from the tech world. A California court has ordered Vembu to post a \$1.7 billion bond as part of a contentious divorce with his ex-wife, Pramila Srinivasan.

The ruling comes amid concerns that asset transfers could leave Srinivasan at a disadvantage, highlighting how personal legal battles can intersect with the management of major tech companies. A California court is moving to protect the assets the couple built over nearly 30 years of marriage, according to The News Minute.

Vembu, known for his support of rural development in India and his preference for a modest lifestyle, has not yet fully complied with the court's directive. The case has drawn attention to the complex ownership structure of Zoho and its potential role in the ongoing divorce proceedings.

In a sharply worded order, the court appointed Kyle Everett of San Francisco as a receiver to oversee several entities tied to Vembu, including Zoho Corporation, Zoho Technologies, Zoho Distribution Corp., and T&V Holdings, along with the personal assets of Vembu and his associate Tony Thomas. Everett's role is to take control of assets, records, and property to ensure they are preserved until the divorce proceedings are fully resolved.



Sridhar Vembu is caught in a contentious divorce with his ex-wife, Pramila Srinivasan.

The court blocked a multi-stage asset transfer that would have moved control of the U.S.-based Zoho Corporation to an entity fully owned by Tony Thomas. Judges rejected Vembu's argument that the transfer was intended for tax purposes, calling it "not credible" and noting that it violated temporary restraining orders meant to protect marital property. "The record in this case demonstrates that Petitioner has acted without regard for Respondent's interests in community assets and without regard for the law," the order stated.

Vembu initially did not post any bond and later proposed amounts up to \$150 million, all of which the court rejected. Srinivasan, meanwhile, posted a \$275,000 bond to initiate the receivership, while related entities secured stays by providing their own guarantees.

The legal battle traces back to Vembu's 2021 divorce filing in California, where he and Srinivasan lived with their son before Vembu relocated to India in late 2019. Under California law, assets

acquired during marriage are generally divided equally unless both parties agree otherwise in writing.

Srinivasan alleges that Vembu secretly transferred significant Zoho shares to family members, including his sister Radha Vembu, who holds a 47.8 percent stake, and his brother Sekar Vembu, who owns 35.2 percent, leaving him with what she claims is only a 5 percent holding in the parent company, Zoho Corporation Pvt Ltd (ZCPL), based in Chennai. She asserts that she supported Vembu financially during Zoho's early days, enabling him to leave his job to pursue entrepreneurship. "I felt shocked to learn only after he filed for divorce that he claimed to own just 5 percent of the company he had spent our marriage building," Srinivasan stated in court filings.

Vembu denies these allegations, maintaining that his stake has always been 5 percent following a 2010 restructuring in which ZCPL purchased the U.S. entity's intellectual property for \$50 million - a transaction Srinivasan contests as unverified. The court noted a lack of financial transparency, raising the possibility of breaches of fiduciary duty that could entitle Srinivasan to a larger share of the company.

The January 2025 order came in response to an application filed by Pramila Srinivasan. The court concluded that Sridhar Vembu acted "without regard for the law" and lacked transparency in transactions affecting the couple's joint assets.

FAMILY OF INDIAN AMERICAN NIKITHA GODISHALA MURDERED BY HER BOYFRIEND IN US SEEKS INTERNATIONAL ARREST WARRANT AGAINST SUSPECT

**JANUARY 6, 2026
WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)**

The family members of Indian American Nikitha Godishala, who was found dead in the US, want the authorities there to issue an international arrest warrant against the suspect in her alleged killing for his quick arrest.



Nikitha Godishala and her boyfriend Arjun Sharma who is her alleged murderer

Godishala's kin are in touch with the US authorities so that her mortal remains can be brought to Hyderabad, a family member said here on Tuesday, January 6.

The 27-year-old woman of Ellicott City in America was reported missing on January 2. Howard County police had said that she was found dead with stab wounds in the Columbia, Maryland apartment of her ex-roommate, Arjun Sharma, 26.

The US police have obtained a warrant for Sharma's arrest on first- and second-degree murder charges, alleging that he killed her and fled to India.

"He (Arjun Sharma) should be arrested by issuing an international arrest warrant and punished sternly," the family member told media.

Nikitha's father Anand and mother, who is a heart patient, have been in grief since they came to know of the tragedy, he said.

The process of completing the formalities related to bringing back the body are under way online.

The family got in touch with Union Coal Minister G Kishan Reddy, who on Monday said he spoke to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to repatriate the body to India.

Citing media reports, Anand on Monday said his daughter came to know that Sharma had taken loans from many people and was planning to leave for India.

He said the suspect called Nikitha on the pretext of returning money which he owed to his daughter but "killed" her.

The Indian Embassy in Washington DC has said on X that it is in contact with Godishala's family and is extending all possible consular assistance.

"The Embassy is also following up the matter with the local authorities," it said.

Nikitha, elder daughter of Anand, was living in the US for the last four years and was employed as a data and strategy analyst at Vheda Health after completing her MS in the US.

Punjab-born community leader Sahibee Anand appointed Northeast England head of Overseas Friends of BJP UK

**JANUARY 8, 2026
LONDON (TIP)**

Punjab-born community leader Sahibee Anand has been appointed as Northeast England Regional Convenor of Overseas Friends of Bharatiya Janata Party UK (OFBJP UK), a voluntary organization focused on diaspora outreach, cultural engagement, and people-to-people connections. Anand hails from Mohali, Punjab, and brings extensive grassroots experience in public service and community organization.



Sahibee Anand has been appointed as Northeast England Regional Convenor of Overseas Friends of Bharatiya Janata Party UK (OFBJP UK)

In his new role, he will work to strengthen coordination, civic awareness, and structured engagement among the Indian diaspora in Northeast England, a region witnessing steady growth in its Indian-origin population. The appointment was announced by Kuldeep Singh Shekhawat, president of OFBJP UK, as part of the organization's efforts to empower regional leadership and deepen community engagement among overseas Indians in the UK.

Indian American Couple from Andhra killed in road accident in US

**JANUARY 5, 2026
WASHINGTON (TIP)**

A couple from Andhra Pradesh settled in the United States died in a road accident in Washington, a police official said on Monday. K Krishna Kishore (49), a native of Palakollu, moved to the US in 1999 and married Asha (45), a native of Kakinada, who had already been settled there.

The couple, Kishore and Asha, who were settled in the United States, lost their lives in a road accident in Washington on Sunday, January 4.



"The couple, Kishore and Asha, who were settled in the United States, lost their lives in a road accident in Washington on Sunday, leaving their families in West Godavari district devastated," the official said.

Kishore's father, Purushottam, who has vision impairment, and his mother continue to reside in West Godavari district.

According to police, the couple had two children-a son and a daughter-while Kishore's sister is also settled in the United States.

The couple had recently visited their native village and returned to the US.

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/GOTHAM HEALTH LAUNCHES PHARMACY HOME DELIVERY PROGRAM ACROSS NEW YORK CITY

New service delivers prescriptions directly to patients' homes, advancing health equity and ensuring faster, more reliable access to essential medications across all five boroughs

**JANUARY 8, 2026
NEW YORK (TIP)**

NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, on January 8, announced the launch of its Pharmacy Home Delivery Program, now available at all 29 Gotham Health locations across New York City. In partnership with ScriptDrop, this innovative program offers patients the convenience of having their prescriptions delivered directly to their homes, addressing one of healthcare's most persistent barriers: access to medication. According to ScriptDrop, 89% of patients found that home delivery improved medication adherence.

The launch of this program enhances healthcare access, particularly for under-resourced populations facing transportation, mobility, or financial challenges. The Pharmacy Home Delivery Program ensures that Gotham Health patients, no matter where they live within New York City, can receive medications promptly and securely at their doorstep. Patients will receive their medications within one business day, with helpful tracking details via text, and they will be required to sign for their medications upon arrival. The program delivers all prescription medications except for controlled substances and refrigerated medications.

"Our goal has always been to remove barriers to care, and access to medications is a key piece of that," said Michelle Lewis, CEO of NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health. "With this program, we're not only improving convenience for patients but also addressing healthcare equity by making it easier for our most vulnerable communities to stay on top of their health. Medication adherence is critical for managing chronic conditions, and this service helps ensure that our patients are getting the medications they need to live healthier lives."

KEY FEATURES OF THE PHARMACY HOME DELIVERY PROGRAM:

- **Access for All:** Available to all Gotham Health



Gotham Health Pharmacy Home Delivery Program

patients, regardless of insurance status, income level, or health condition.

- **Easy Enrollment:** Patients can sign up by contacting their care team through MyChart, phone, or in person during their next visit.
- **Real-Time Tracking and Notifications:** Patients receive a text with the delivery timeframe and can track their order via a secure link. If needed, delivery drivers will confirm addresses and delivery instructions by phone.
- **Speedy Service:** Prescriptions are delivered within one business day, Monday through Friday.

By making it easier for patients to adhere to prescribed medications, the Pharmacy Home Delivery Program is not just about convenience, it is also about improving health outcomes, preventing disease progression, and reducing unnecessary hospital visits. This service is another step forward in Gotham Health's ongoing efforts to provide comprehensive, patient-centered care in communities that need it most.

As healthcare continues to evolve, programs like this are reshaping how care is delivered, providing New Yorkers with the tools they need to manage their health,

wherever they are.

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ABOUT NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/GOTHAM HEALTH

NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health is a Federally Qualified Healthcare Provider formed in 2015 to enable individuals and families to address their health care needs in their own neighborhoods. Serving more than 100,000 New Yorkers annually in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, Staten Island, and Queens, Gotham Health consists of 29 healthcare sites in all five boroughs of New York City. Gotham Health provides easy-to-access, high-quality, affordable health care services with a focus on primary care. It is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and building healthy communities, with a focus upon providing patients and families convenient access to high-quality preventive care, such as annual check-ups and immunizations. Health care teams are trained to help patients manage ongoing conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma, and heart disease.

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NYC Health + Hospitals is the largest municipal health care system in the nation serving more than a million New Yorkers annually in more than 70 patient care locations across the city's five boroughs. A robust network of outpatient, neighborhood-based primary and specialty care centers anchors care coordination with the system's trauma centers, nursing homes, post-acute care centers, home care agency, and MetroPlusHealth-all supported by 11 essential hospitals. Its diverse workforce of more than 46,000 employees is uniquely focused on empowering New Yorkers, without exception, to live the healthiest life possible. For more information, visit www.nychealthandhospitals.org and stay connected on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

New York Department of State Issues Warning to Consumers after Investigations of Med Spa Service Providers

- Over 200 Inspections Conducted Statewide Resulting in Suspensions, Revocations, and Fines
- Improper Services Have Caused Serious Injuries - Case Examples Included Below

**JANUARY 8, 2026
NEW YORK**

A business that is promoting itself as a 'med spa' or offering 'med spa' services MUST be licensed as a medical facility and licensed professionals must be performing the services

Secretary Mosley said, "Consumers need to be aware of the dangers when medical procedures, including cosmetic medical procedures, are being performed by individuals without an appropriate license. Unlicensed or unqualified staff, dirty needles, expired or counterfeit Botox and fillers, and unsanitary conditions can lead to serious injury or even death."

The New York Department of State warns consumers to be cautious about seeking Med Spa services from unlicensed entities after statewide investigations into businesses providing unauthorized med spa services. Phase one of the probe began in New York City. The Department of State's Division of Licensing led the



Man getting a facial at a spa

investigation, partnering with the New York State Department of Health, New York State Education Department and the New York City Office of Oversight and Investigations, inspecting appearance enhancement businesses offering medical procedures, including the injection of Botox, fillers and intravenous infusions.

During the inspections, investigators observed expired and suspected counterfeit products, as well as the presence of controlled substances, including Fentanyl, Xylocaine, and Propofol. Investigators discovered sharps containers with used needles, new unopened needles, and medical devices for procedures like laser liposuction, buttock augmentation, centrifugation, non-ablative skin lasers, cryotherapy,

and laser tattoo removal. Investigators also identified numerous individuals without the appropriate license providing these medical services.

In total, 223 businesses have been inspected throughout New York State. Of the businesses inspected, 87 were cited for possible violations concerning, among other issues, the unlawful practice of medicine. The majority of inspections are still pending hearing and awaiting resolution, but outcomes following several inspections have ranged from monetary fines to license suspensions or license revocations. The Department of State's Division of Licensing Services is continuing to inspect these types of businesses as part of their annual inspection program.

Based on the results of the Department's inspections, and reports of injuries to Med Spa customers receiving injections of counterfeit drugs by unlicensed individuals, such as allergic reactions, burns, double vision and harmful poisoning, the Department's Divisions of Licensing and Consumer Protection are providing consumers guidance to ensure they are receiving safe care from a licensed professional.

In the matter of the complaint of Department of State, Division of Licensing Services against Fei Min, a criminal complaint was filed alleging the appearance enhancement license under the name 'Princess Beauty, LLC'.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Outrage in NYC after ICE agent in Minneapolis shoots fleeing woman dead

JANUARY 7, 2026
NEW YORK (TIP)

New York elected officials and immigrant advocate groups are reacting with horror and outrage after an ICE agent shot and killed a 37-year-old woman in Minneapolis during an immigration crackdown.

Video circulating online appears to show a female driver blocking the path of federal agents on the roadway with her SUV. When one agent attempted to open the door of the vehicle, the driver looked to pull away - leading a second agent to draw their gun and fire. The woman was shot three times and died, according to preliminary reports.

"Oh my God," a voice could be heard screaming off screen.

DHS officials allege that the unnamed driver attempted to mow down the federal officer, with Homeland Security Advisor Stephen Miller and Kristi Noem, the Homeland Security Secretary, calling it "domestic terrorism" - without providing any proof to back up such a claim.

"An ICE officer, fearing for his life, the lives of his fellow law enforcement and the safety of the public, fired defensive shots," a statement by DHS read.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz responded on social media by instantly denouncing the official narrative.

"I've seen the video. Don't believe this propaganda machine. The state will ensure there is a full, fair, and expeditious investigation to ensure accountability and justice," Walz wrote.

Meanwhile, New York elected officials are echoing Walz's sentiments. U.S. Rep. Dan Goldman, who has been an outspoken critic of ICE tactics in Manhattan's immigration courts, also took to social media to express outrage to Miller.

"We're done with your gaslighting @stephenm. Even if the officer were run over, it's not domestic terrorism. But as you can see from the path of the car after she was shot, she was trying to drive away. You are inciting untrained thugs to murder Americans. This is on you," Goldman wrote.

Mayor Zohran Mamdani addressed the shooting during an unrelated press conference late Wednesday afternoon in



Renee Nicole Good, woman shot by ICE officer, was out 'caring for her neighbors,' Minneapolis officials say.

which he called it horrific.

"We know that when ICE agents attack immigrants, they attack every single one of us across this country. And this is a city that stands up for immigrants across the five boroughs, and I have made it clear to everyone within my city government, and that extends to NYPD, that we are going to uphold our sanctuary city policies," Mamdani said. "We are going to adhere to that. That is why one of the 11 executive orders that we signed was to repeal the previous administration's order to allow for collaboration with ICE on Rikers Island."

The mayor also pledged not to aid immigration enforcement in any way, including making certain the NYPD does not aid ICE.

"What we are going to be doing is following the laws that we have set, laws which have kept New Yorkers safe, and we are going to make it clear to each and every person in the city what their rights are. That's why we took the time to make a Know Your Rights video, because it goes back to the earlier question, if you don't know of your rights, then how can you be expected to actually use those rights?" Mamdani said. "So, we are going to take every opportunity we have to inform New

Yorkers of what they already can do, and also to make it clear to our own city government agencies and departments across the board, including NYPD, that we are not here to assist ICE agents in their work. We are here to follow the laws of New York City."

amNewYork also reached out to New York Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, who has also pushed back on ICE operations in the Big Apple.

"ICE has a total disregard for public safety, and human life. Because of

Trump's reckless, lawless deportation agenda, today a woman was shot to death. And in 2025, 32 human beings died in ICE custody. The Department of Homeland Security is making everyone less safe," Williams said.

State Senator Jessica Ramos, who serves a massive immigrant population in Jackson Heights, Queens, spoke to amNewYork about the fatal shooting.

"ICE relies on fear, chaos, and enforcement tactics that treat entire communities as suspects and creates the conditions for tragedy. Now a woman is dead and we all saw it. We need less muscle memory and more rule of law, restraint, and accountability," Ramos said.

It wasn't only New York politicians who fumed over the fatal shooting. Immigration advocates also let loose.

Murad Awawdeh, President and CEO of New York Immigration Coalition, charged that this is the next step in ICE escalation.

"Today's news from Minneapolis is a tragedy and marks a violent escalation in ICE's tactics and the state's repression of political dissidents. Let's be very clear: ICE and the federal agents are the ones sowing chaos and violence in our cities - and are now killing people who oppose their fascist abduction program. "This tragedy did not happen in a vacuum. It is the direct and predictable result of a federal agency that has been allowed to operate with impunity, secrecy, and unchecked force." (Source: amNewYork)

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Why is Trump interested in Greenland? Look at the thawing Arctic ice

GABY
HINSLIFF



Forecasts suggest that global heating could create a shortcut from Asia to North America, and new routes for trading, shipping - and attack.

Another week, another freak weather phenomenon you've probably never heard of. If it's not the "weather bomb" of extreme wind and snow that Britain is hunkering down for as I write, it's reports in the Guardian of reindeer in the Arctic struggling with the opposite problem: unnaturally warm weather leading to more rain that freezes to create a type of snow that they can't easily dig through with their hooves to reach food. In a habitat as harsh as the Arctic, where survival relies on fine adaptation, even small shifts in weather patterns have endlessly rippling consequences - and not just for reindeer.

For decades now, politicians have been warning of the coming climate wars - conflicts triggered by drought, flood, fire and storms forcing people on to the move, or pushing them into competition with neighbors for dwindling natural resources. For anyone who vaguely imagined this happening far from temperate Europe's doorstep, in drought-stricken deserts or on Pacific islands sinking slowly into the sea, this week's seemingly unhinged White House talk about taking ownership of Greenland is a blunt wake-up call. As Britain's first sea lord, General Sir Gwyn Jenkins, has been telling anyone prepared to listen, the unfreezing of the north due to the climate crisis has triggered a ferocious contest in the defrosting Arctic for some time over resources, territory and strategically critical access to the Atlantic. To understand how that threatens northern Europe, look down at the top of a globe rather than at a map.

By the early 2040s, forecasts suggest global heating could have rendered the frozen waters around the north pole - the ocean separating Russia from Canada and Greenland - almost ice-free in summer. That potentially opens a new shortcut from Asia to North America, not around the planet's middle but over the top, creating new routes for trading, shipping, fishing - and, more ominously, for attack.

A new theatre of conflict is consequently emerging from under the melting ice, and China, Russia and the US are increasingly locked in a battle for dominance over it. Meanwhile as rising temperatures turn the high north into an autocrat's chessboard, territories unlucky enough to be in the way - from Greenland to Canada to the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, long coveted by Russia - risk becoming pawns.

Almost as dangerous for these countries as the threats exposed by a thawing pole are, in a way, the opportunities. Why on earth does the US think it needs to annex friendly Greenland in order to defend this critical Arctic frontier? After all, they've had troops stationed on this autonomous Danish territory since the

J D Vance at the US military's Pituffik base in Greenland, 28 March 2025.

Photo: Jim Watson/Reuters



second world war, and Denmark has obligingly made clear they're more than welcome to bring more. The one benefit that does come uniquely with ownership, interestingly, is rights to the underground riches that could be unlocked as this frozen country heats up.

Greenland is a rare, untapped source not just of oil and gas but of the rare earth minerals used to make everything from electric car batteries to datacenter processors - which are to US hopes of winning a technological race with China as rubber from Malaya or cotton from India were to the old colonial economies. Though it's often a mistake to read too much logical method into the apparent presidential madness, there is no shortage of ideologues and tech bros in Trump's orbit capable of putting all this together and selling it to him. And while mining the Arctic might not be economically viable for many years yet, Trump's grumbles this week about Greenland being "full of Chinese and Russian ships everywhere" suggests someone has convinced him that he can't let rivals beat him to a valuable potential development opportunity, a concept any former real estate mogul can grasp. After all, in Ukraine, Trump sought rights to mine rare earths in exchange for security guarantees, and in Gaza he mused about building hotels on its bombed-out ruins: why not seek

to make a quick buck from environmental catastrophe?

And while to Britons all this looks like a new age of empire, for the Maga faithful perhaps there's an echo of a much more American story, that of settlers making their fortune by joining the wagon trail west, pushing the nation's frontiers endlessly outwards, staking their claim to Indigenous people's lands and holding grimly on to them through a brutal mix of trade and violence. The aim isn't to invade Greenland, US secretary of state Marco Rubio explains, but to buy it, or at least rent exclusive military access. It's a mark of how fast the relationship between the US and its former allies has collapsed - in just over a year - that this is meant to be reassuring: hey friends, we just want to exploit you, not kill you!

Given the president's legendarily short attention span, it's difficult to know what fate awaits Greenland. Maybe he'll simply get bored and move on, especially once the midterms are over and there is less need for drama abroad to distract from failures at home. Or maybe the White House will borrow instead from the Putin playbook, exploiting Greenlanders' yearning for independence from Denmark to foment the kind of domestic unrest that is so easily whipped up in the age of social media - before pitching the US as a benign savior riding into town to keep them safe and make them rich.

But either way, we had better get used to the idea this is the beginning, not the end, of the conflicts that may come as global heating redraws our maps, unpicks old alliances, and creates new deadly rivalries for land, water and natural resources.

Of course, it will be worse for those already living on the edge of sustainability, in deserts too parched for anything to grow or in coastal towns already struggling with rising sea levels, or in places too poor to protect themselves from increasingly violent storms, than it will for lucky old temperate Europe. And of course, these risks could always be better managed by collaborative governments treating events like the unfreezing of the north as a collective challenge for humans to face together, rather than a deadly race for national advantage.

But in the week Trump announced he would be pulling the US out of a raft of international climate initiatives, that clearly isn't the world we live in. So if nothing else, let poor beleaguered Greenland be a reminder that the climate crisis will have geopolitical consequences we have barely yet begun to understand, and that whatever we can still do to cap the rising temperature or mitigate its effects still matters. Even, or maybe especially, if we can't yet undo the damage that has already been so willfully done.

(Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist)

THE MAGA TURN: GLOBAL FALLOUT AND INDIA'S DILEMMA

KC
SINGH



India cannot blame Western xenophobia while succumbing to it at home

"Normally, domestic and foreign policies of countries are inter-related. The Trump administration demonstrates that by aligning its foreign policy with its MAGA supremacism. The BJP managed to largely insulate domestic politics from foreign policy, except in South Asia. While adopting nationalist-majoritarian politics at home, with boundaries between religion and politics removed, its foreign policy continued the old secular line, at least superficially. The US State Department's reports on human rights practices in India berated the constriction of religious, individual and press freedoms. The 2024 report listed the Citizenship Amendment Act and anti-conversion laws as raising concerns. It, however, ignored the BJP's non-liberal political trajectory weakening democracy. India-US relations were considered more crucial to the global American strategy."

US President Donald Trump completes one year in office on January 20. The Economist magazine says he has "turned domestic and international politics on its head". During the campaign, he looked past Project 2025, produced by the conservative Heritage Foundation. However, in office his barrage of executive orders began implementing Project 2025. This included mass, forceful deportation of suspected aliens without hearing, domestic military involvement (now halted by the Supreme Court), dismantling of the bureaucracy, outsourced to Elon Musk, whose Department of Government Efficiency failed drastically.

The external policy changes began with the April "Liberation Day" arbitrary tariffs on imports. Then emerged a closer alignment with Israel, a pro-Russia tilt in handling the Ukraine war, an escalated trade standoff with China and a transitory compromise. European NATO allies played along, preferring non-confrontation while examining self-reliance, to manage the US pullback from defense commitments. The National Security Strategy (NSS) of December 4-5 confirmed

major US policy mutations.

The new foreign policy priorities list the "Western Hemisphere" on the top. It refers to the Americas - North and South - resurrecting the 19th century's Monroe Doctrine, which barred European rivals from interfering in Latin-American affairs. Next comes Asia, with focus on the Indo-Pacific. Unlike the past NSS documents, China is not named as a threat, though it colors the Asian strategy. On December 8, the US allowed the sale to China of Nvidia's advanced H200 chips.

India figures as a subtext, expected to help ensure Indo-Pacific security. Then follows Europe. Under the subtitle "Promoting European Greatness", the NSS document argues that the European challenge exceeds economic stagnation and low military spending. The "real and more stark" prospect is of "civilizational

related. The Trump administration demonstrates that by aligning its foreign policy with its MAGA supremacism. The BJP managed to largely insulate domestic politics from foreign policy, except in South Asia. While adopting nationalist-majoritarian politics at home, with boundaries between religion and politics removed, its foreign policy continued the old secular line, at least superficially. The US State Department's reports on human rights practices in India berated the constriction of religious, individual and press freedoms. The 2024 report listed the Citizenship Amendment Act and anti-conversion laws as raising concerns. It, however, ignored the BJP's non-liberal political trajectory weakening democracy. India-US relations were considered more crucial to the global American strategy.

The BJP would welcome the NSS

Christians, particularly this year, can provoke retaliation against the Hindu diaspora. Occasional lynchings of Muslims did not impact India's relations with the Islamic world because the Modi government had successfully engaged the principal Gulf-ruling families. Pakistan only had Turkey and an isolated Iran to join the condemnation. A divided Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) lacked the thrust to target India. But Pakistan stands diplomatically revived after wooing Trump and engaging Saudi Arabia and the UAE. It is now better positioned for India-baiting.

Plus, Bangladesh may elect next month a right-wing government, probably under Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami's influence. Pakistan and its ISI would celebrate that. Simultaneously, Assam and West Bengal face elections. Communal polarization



Fractured: Trump's worldview is reshaping global power.

-Photo : Reuters

erasure" due to migration policies. Europe's loss of self-confidence is attributed to the regulatory check on the "growing influence of patriotic parties". This refers to the far-right's ascendancy in major European nations. This theory is MAGA-inspired, with the US administration desiring a "new Western order", dominated by governments led by white Christian nationalist-populists.

In the UK, the Nigel Farage-led Reform UK is polling 30 per cent support; while in France, Marine Le Pen's National Rally is at 33.4 per cent and Germany's AfD is scaling 26 per cent. Europeans saw this support-signaling as regrettable interference in their internal affairs. German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul retorted that they did not "need to get advice from any other country or party". German intelligence sees AfD as an extremist group.

In this disrupted post-1945 global order, where does India fit? Normally, domestic and foreign policies of countries are inter-

document now, recommending non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. The US bureaucracy handling those issues stands disbanded. But domestically, the rising xenophobia in the US is impacting the Indian diaspora, especially their religious practices. The New York Times wrote about the troubles of Sikh truck drivers in the US after two August accidents. Sikhs in the trucking business, many on asylum-related visas, number 1,50,000, probably a quarter of the Sikh diaspora. Federal authorities have asked states like California to review their driving license policy. Canada and Australia have capped student visas, raised fees, heightened scrutiny of forms, etc. The transition to work visas may also be tightened. In New Zealand, a Sikh religious procession was last month disrupted by a far-right Christian group.

The rising xenophobia in Christian Anglophone and western nations raises concerns. The BJP surely realizes that Hindu groups in India targeting

helps the BJP electorally, especially by brandishing Bangladeshi illegal migration. Can India blame the western xenophobia while succumbing to it internally?

Punjab may suffer if deportations from the US mount. Narrowing opportunities abroad will block the Punjabi youth's escape route. Thus, Punjab must develop economic opportunities. Green Revolution 2.0 is overdue. The agricultural and dairy sectors need production and supply chain modernization. If over two lakh Sikhs could salvage the Italian dairy industry and parmesan cheese production, why not the same in Punjab? Similarly pioneering work exists in turning rice stubble into biofuel and organic fertilizer. The chemical fertilizer lobby suppresses such new approaches.

Punjab needs pro-innovation leadership. Delhi requires non-partisan statesmanship.

(K.C. Singh is a retired diplomat)

Trump sets a perilous precedent

The use of force by the US in Venezuela raises doubts about the legitimacy of its actions

C UDAY
BHASKAR



"THE FACT THAT THE US ACTION FLOUTS INTERNATIONAL LAW RELATED TO STATE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMANITARIAN RIGHTS PROTOCOLS HAS BEEN HIGHLIGHTED WORLDWIDE AND EVEN WITHIN THE US - BUT TO LITTLE AVAIL. THE TRUMP DOCTRINE (DONROE IS SPECIFIC TO LATIN AMERICA) BOILS DOWN TO BLUDGEONING ANY INTERLOCUTOR WHO DOES NOT TOE THE "DONALD LINE", AND THE USE OF TARIFFS AS A WEAPON IS ALL TOO FAMILIAR."

The outcome of the UN Security Council's emergency meeting on the US military operation, which resulted in the outrageous abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, was predictable. Strategic timidity in the face of the intimidation unleashed by US President Donald Trump is the dominant orientation of the global community. The famed horseshoe table did not issue any statement. Given that the spotlight was on the US, with its veto power as a permanent member of the UNSC, Washington would not have allowed any censure of its Operation Absolute Resolve.

Panama was subjected to a similar action in 1989. There are notable parallels between the US capture of Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega on January 3, 1990, and the kidnapping of the Venezuelan President on the same day in 2026. The latter is the most direct US military intervention in Latin America since the Panama operation.

In both cases, heads of state - sitting (Maduro) and de facto (Noriega) - have been indicted on federal drug trafficking charges; Noriega for racketeering and cocaine smuggling, and Maduro for narco-terrorism and related conspiracies that were deemed inimical to US national security. This action is being interpreted as the first step to implement the new doctrine unveiled by President Trump that builds on the 1823 Monroe doctrine and has been dubbed the Donroe doctrine.

However, notwithstanding Trump's assertion that Latin American affairs are now a top US security priority and that he would authorize military action and intervention at will, rumblings of dissent were evident at the UNSC's January 5 meeting.

The deliberations reflected the

widespread international condemnation of the US action as a violation of international law, sovereignty and the UN Charter's prohibition on the use of force against a state's territorial integrity or political independence. Despite the distinctive backdrop, UN Secretary-General António Guterres was not present at the meeting; his statement, which was read out by an official, emphasized that "the power of the law must prevail" and called for inclusive democratic dialogue respecting human rights and Venezuela's sovereignty. To his credit, Guterres was the first to condemn the US action and voiced the overwhelming global shock

accepted by the global community. It is instructive that no nation, except Argentina and Ecuador, has unambiguously endorsed the belligerent US action against Maduro.

The fact that the US action flouts international law related to state sovereignty and humanitarian rights protocols has been highlighted worldwide and even within the US - but to little avail. The Trump doctrine (Donroe is specific to Latin America) boils down to bludgeoning any interlocutor who does not toe the "Donald line", and the use of tariffs as a weapon is all too familiar.

Hence, most nations have chosen

targeted vessels primarily in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean. A total of 36 vessels were struck on the suspicion of carrying drugs. Should the US military have been part of such an operation against unarmed small vessels? The January 3 operation itself reportedly caused 70-80 fatalities, mostly Venezuelan and Cuban personnel tasked to protect Maduro.

There is little doubt that the US has an impressive array of trans-border military capability that includes delivery of lethal precision-guided ordnance, pinpoint surveillance accuracy, strategic airlift and overwhelming cyber capabilities. All this was demonstrated



Maduro's capture: Belligerent US action against Venezuela has sparked worldwide censure. Reuters

and anguish.

At the UNSC meeting, two of the permanent members, Russia and China, along with Brazil, Colombia (which made a request for the meeting), Cuba and Mexico denounced the operation as an act of aggression, armed attack or "imperialist" intervention. Some demanded Maduro's immediate release and rejected unilateral actions.

Even US allies such as France and Denmark criticized the move for undermining the principles of international order, though some acknowledged Maduro's repressive rule and the need to address drug trafficking and human rights issues through lawful means.

In response, Mike Waltz, US Ambassador to the UN, defended the action as a "surgical law enforcement operation" against indicted "narco-terrorists", not an act of war or occupation, and stated that the US had no plans to occupy Venezuela. This was not

prudence in response to the US military operation. India, Japan and many other countries have issued anodyne statements that do not directly condemn the US action or uphold any normative principle of international law.

The operation has raised disturbing questions. If the US arrogates unto itself the right to abduct/kidnap the head of another state for perceived transgression of American laws, is any global leader safe from such predatory action? Will leaders attending the UN General Assembly meeting in New York be sanguine about their own safety?

The use of force by the US in Venezuela raises doubts about the legitimacy of its actions. At least 115 deaths were reported from US military strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats (including go-fast boats and semi-submersibles) in the months leading to Operation Absolute Resolve.

These strikes were part of a campaign that began in early September 2025 and

both in Abbottabad (the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011) and in the audacious capture of President Maduro. But Trump's resolve to discipline Venezuela will remain tainted for blurring the Weberian dictum about the legitimacy of the use of military force.

More such resolute actions have been mooted - Colombia, Cuba, Iran and even Mexico have been threatened by Trump. Fall in line or else face US ire. Greenland may provide the ultimate Alice in Wonderland scenario. If the next Trump move is to 'acquire' Greenland, and Denmark invokes Article VI of the NATO provisions, it is possible that troops of the US military will defend a NATO ally against the occupying US forces!

Welcome to Trumpland, and all hail Emperor Donroe!

(C Uday Bhaskar is Director, Society for Policy Studies)

India-Romania Economic Partnership Advances

Ambassador Mohapatra Engages Arad County Leaders on Investment Opportunities in Strategic Special Economic Zone



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra met Mr. Iustin Cionca, President of Arad County Council, Mr. Glad Varga, Senator of Arad, & Mr. Ionescu Aurel, VP of Arad Chamber of Commerce

JANUARY 7, 2026
BUCHAREST (TIP)

Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, Ambassador of India to Romania, visited Arad County of Romania and met with key Arad County officials, including Mr. Iustin Cionca, President of Arad County Council, Mr. Glad Varga, Senator of Arad, and Mr. Ionescu Aurel, Vice President of Arad Chamber of Commerce. The dialogue underscored the mutual resolve to deepen economic cooperation, harnessing Arad's unique advantages to attract Indian investments and foster bilateral trade growth.

Arad occupies a pivotal geographical position in western Romania, bordering Hungary and serving as a critical node along Pan-European Transport Corridor IV, which links major European hubs from Germany through Hungary to Turkey. This connectivity, coupled with excellent rail and road infrastructure, including proximity to Timisoara International Airport and the Port of Constanta on the Black Sea, renders Arad an ideal logistics and manufacturing base for Indian companies seeking efficient entry into the European Union market. The Arad Special Economic Zone (SEZ), equipped with modern facilities, tax incentives, and streamlined regulations, further amplifies these benefits, positioning it as a prime destination for sectors like automotive components, electronics, textiles, and renewable energy equipment where Indian firms excel.

India and Romania enjoy a multifaceted bilateral relationship rooted in shared democratic values, historical goodwill, and expanding economic synergy.

Diplomatic ties, elevated through frequent high-level visits and the 19th India-Romania Joint Committee Meeting on Economic Cooperation, have propelled trade volumes beyond 1 billion annually, with robust growth in IT services, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure projects, and defense collaboration. Cultural exchanges, such as Diwali celebrations and Hindi language promotions in Romania, complement these efforts, while emerging domains like artificial intelligence, green hydrogen, and sustainable agriculture hold immense untapped potential. This partnership aligns with both India's and Romania's resolve for greater partnerships, creating win-win opportunities for mutual prosperity.



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra and Mr. Iustin Cionca, President of Arad County Council



President of Arad County Council presenting a reproduction of "The Burial of Christ" to Ambassador

In a key outcome, Ambassador Mohapatra extended an official invitation for a delegation led by President Cionca to visit India, enabling direct interactions with Indian business leaders and government stakeholders. The parties committed to hosting a targeted Business-to-Business (B2B) forum in the second half of January or early February 2026. During this event, Arad representatives will present tailored opportunities within the SEZ to Indian companies expressing keen interest in Romanian investments, emphasizing local supply chain integration, skilled workforce availability, and EU-compliant manufacturing capabilities.

This engagement exemplifies the dynamic momentum in India-Romania relations, promising job creation, technology transfer, and innovation-driven growth. It reinforces Arad's role as a bridge for Indian enterprises into Europe, while advancing Romania's

appeal as a reliable partner for India's global ambitions.

Separately, the Ambassador visited injured Indian national Mr. Rakesh Kumar, who is undergoing treatment at Casa Austria Hospital, and interacted with both the patient and the attending doctors. The



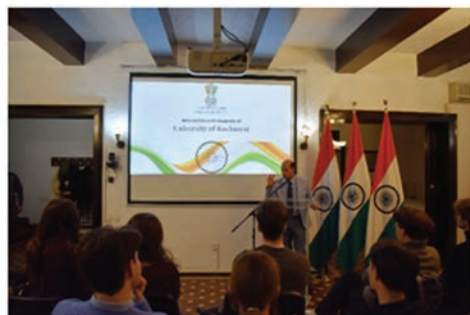
Ambassador met Dr. Nilima Rajpal Kundnani, a local community leader in Timisoara

Ambassador conveyed his best wishes to Mr. Kumar and wished him a speedy recovery.

The Ambassador also met with Dr. Nilima Rajpal Kundnani, a local Indian community leader, to discuss proposed plans and activities for 2026, with particular emphasis on the welfare of the Indian community in Timișoara. The discussions focused on strengthening community support mechanisms, promoting cultural and social initiatives, and enhancing engagement between the Embassy and the Indian diaspora. Views were exchanged on organizing cultural events, community programs, and collaborative activities in 2026 aimed at promoting Indian culture and supporting the well-being and integration of the Indian community in Timișoara.

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

Embassy of India Hosts Interactive Session with University of Bucharest Students



Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra interacted with the students highlighting India's robust economic growth

**JANUARY 7, 2026
BUCHAREST (TIP)**

The Embassy of India hosted an engaging and interactive session with students of the University of Bucharest at the Embassy premises on 7 January, aimed at fostering greater understanding of India's contemporary developments and its rich cultural heritage, with particular emphasis on the cultural diversity of India's states and regions.



Students were presented India's culture, yoga, and Indian dance traditions, highlighting the depth and diversity of India's cultural heritage

Ambassador Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, while interacting with the students, highlighted India's robust economic growth, reform-driven development trajectory, and expanding opportunities across sectors. He underlined India's emergence as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies and discussed the country's increasing role in the global economic landscape, driven by innovation, digital

transformation, manufacturing, and sustainable development. In this context, he also referred to Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) as a flagship initiative, showcasing India's ambition to emerge as a global financial and services hub through world-class infrastructure, regulatory reforms, and a conducive business ecosystem. The Ambassador also encouraged young scholars to explore academic, cultural,



and professional engagement with India. Students from the University of Bucharest made insightful presentations on India, reflecting a deep appreciation of the country's civilizational depth and cultural diversity. Special emphasis was laid on Yoga and Indian classical dance as enduring symbols of India's soft power, holistic philosophy, and living traditions that continue to resonate globally.



Ms. Veronica Mathew conducted special yoga session for the students



A special Yoga session was conducted by Ms. Veronica Mathew, who introduced participants to the fundamentals of Yoga and guided them through select practices. The session offered students a



Ms. Mirela Cristea led an Indian dance session, familiarizing students with basic steps and movements

dance traditions of different states. Through a lively and interactive format, students were introduced to basic steps and movements, providing them with an immersive experience of India's vibrant



firsthand experience of Yoga's physical, mental, and spiritual benefits, while underscoring its relevance in today's fast-paced and stress-filled world.

The cultural engagement continued

cultural expressions. The session also showcased folk dances from the Indian states of Gujarat and Haryana, reflecting the energetic rhythms of Garba and the lively spirit of Haryanvi dance forms,



University of Bucharest Students with Ambassador Manoj Kumar Mohapatra (Standing 9th from the right)

with a special Indian dance session led by Ms. Mirela Cristea, who familiarized students with India's rich and diverse

thereby offering participants a glimpse into the regional diversity and cultural richness of India.

The event served as a meaningful platform for people-to-people engagement, strengthening academic and cultural ties between India and Romania. The Embassy reaffirmed its commitment to promoting dialogue, cultural exchange, and greater awareness of India's cultural diversity of India's states and regions, economy, and timeless traditions among Romanian youth and academic institutions.

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

Housefull Hearts & High Voltage Vibes: The Night Chicago Welcomed 2026 in Grand Desi Style

Balloon Drops, Belly Rolls & Bollywood Beats: The Housefull Revolution of New Year's Eve 2025
Chicago's Desi Dynasty Rings in 2026: One Night, One Venue, One Million Memories



No, it's not cold

**JANUARY 6, 2026
CHICAGO, IL (TIP)**

Chicago's South Asian Community Rings in 2026 with Electrifying Housefull New Year's Eve Celebration at Ashton Place. As the final hours of 2025 counted down on December 31, the grand ballroom at Ashton Place in Willowbrook, Illinois, transformed into a vibrant hub of joy, music, and community spirit. This sold-out "Housefull" New Year's Eve event welcomed families, friends, and revelers from Chicago's South Asian diaspora for an unforgettable night of celebration, marking a heartfelt goodbye to 2025 and a warm hello to 2026.

From the moment guests arrived at 8:00 pm, the atmosphere buzzed with excitement. Dazzling lights illuminated the venue, smiles lit up every face, and beautiful costumes added to the festive energy. The open bar flowed generously, while the unlimited lavish buffet offered a delicious array of dishes that kept everyone satisfied and energized throughout the evening. The entertainment kicked off with high-energy flair. Anusha Reddy was host who did welcome speech.

Professional singer and co-organizer Shraddha Marathe, also known as a composer, songwriter, and CEO of DE Dream Event LLC, welcomed the crowd with infectious enthusiasm. She highlighted the night's highlights: unlimited food and drinks, non-stop fun, and a powerhouse lineup featuring DJ Salman, who kept the beats pumping with a perfect mix of Bollywood classics, energetic hits, and timeless favorites that had every generation on their feet.

Live singing performances brought soul and nostalgia to the celebration. The talented singers Pratibha Jairath, Raju Bankapur, and Dr. Pardeep Sood delivered a medley of popular numbers that filled the room with emotion. The audience sang along, danced freely, and created magical moments as the performers transitioned seamlessly from one beloved song to another, including crowd-pleasers that evoked laughter, romance, and pure joy.

Adding captivating visual spectacles was mesmerizing live acts. Ashorina, a renowned Chicago-based belly dancer from the acclaimed Safire Belly Dancers troupe, delivered powerful, graceful, and



Recognizing Supporters

technically brilliant oriental performances that left the audience spellbound with her elegant movements and cultural authenticity. Her routine blended tradition with dynamic energy, earning cheers and admiration.

Following this, Patti Zikmund brought athletic artistry to the stage with a breathtaking pole dance showcase. Combining strength, precision, and expressive flair, her performance added an exciting new dimension to the evening, drawing enthusiastic applause from the thrilled crowd.

For the younger attendees, thoughtful activities ensured everyone could join the fun-face painting, balloon twisting, and a 360-photo booth right outside captured memorable moments with loved ones.

As midnight approached, the energy reached its peak. The crowd gathered for a spectacular balloon drop that



The Star Performer

showered the room in colorful confetti, accompanied by a celebratory champagne toast to health, happiness, success, and wonderful memories in the year ahead. Hugs, cheers, and renewed dancing carried the party into the early hours of January 1, 2026.

Throughout the night, the emcee-warm, humorous, and engaging-kept the momentum alive. She introduced the visionary promoters and partners: Altaf Bukhari (the positive captain of the ship), Nikhil Gupta (the entertainer), Anusha Reddy (the beautiful



Entertainers all

entrepreneur), Pranav Mathur, Brij Kukreja (personality), Shraddha Marathe, and others. The event also honored key sponsors and community leaders with heartfelt recognition and floral bouquets on stage, including Anil Loomba (successful businessman and philanthropist), Sunil Shah (New York Life founder and FIA chairman), Dr. Bhupinder and Anita Beri (veterinarian and CEO of Animal Care Cross Road Hospital), Manish and Shailja Gandhi, Sudhir Sukheja, and supporters like Mukesh Shah CPA and Prashant Mohanty.

The success stemmed from dedicated teamwork and community generosity. Promoters Altaf Bukhari, Nikhil Gupta, Anusha Reddy, Shraddha Marathe, and



Time for a dance

Pranav Mathur, along with supporters Pratibha Jairath, Brij Kukreja, and Abhi Trivedi, created this seamless experience. Heartfelt thanks extended to friends including Dinesh K., Leela, Vimi, Meenu S., Rekha B., Deepa G., young Meenu V., Ashwini Ji, Kiran, Preeti, Shashi ji, the Srivastav group, Parveen Ji, and many more who made it possible.

Altaf Bukhari is president of Federation of Indian Associations (FIA)-Chicago IL, Prominent community leader, politician, businessman and promoter in show business. Anusha Reddy who is organizer, host of the evening, owner of AA (Anusha & Ahana) Entertainment who is also an entrepreneur (owns taco maya Arlington heights).



New Year welcome with Champaigne

What truly defined the night was its genuine family atmosphere. Multiple generations danced side by side, shared laughs, reflected on 2025's best moments (in one word), and built new connections. Guests praised the smooth flow, exceptional food, top-notch entertainment, and welcoming vibe that made it feel like a big family gathering.

In a world craving meaningful togetherness, this Housefull celebration at Ashton Place stood as a powerful reminder of cultural pride, gratitude, and collective joy. It wasn't just a party, it was a vibrant testament to unity, hope, new aspirations, and the strength of community.

As attendees departed into the fresh dawn of 2026, they carried memories of laughter, music, dance, and renewed optimism for the year ahead.

"This Housefull New Year's Eve at Ashton Place beautifully captured the essence of community celebration-where laughter, music, heartfelt performances, and shared gratitude turn a simple gathering into something truly magical. The energy, from live singing and captivating dances to the midnight toast, showcased the warmth and unity of our South Asian diaspora. As we embrace 2026, let these moments inspire us to keep building connections, supporting one another, and celebrating life with the same joy and positivity" Suresh Bodiwala Chairman and Founder, Asian Media USA.

(Photographs and Press release / Asian Media USA)



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Jan. 7 that the Trump administration was withdrawing from 66 international organizations, including 31 UN entities, because they were "wasteful," among other reasons. The UN says in response that it will continue to operate its mandates.

JANUARY 8, 2026
WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)

The United Nations says that beyond the social media announcement from the United States government on Jan. 7 about its withdrawal from 66 international and UN entities, the information has not been officially communicated to the world body. Washington has also not followed the legal process required for a country to dissociate from binding international treaties it has signed and ratified, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

"I checked with our legal counsel earlier today, we had not received any official letter," Stéphane Dujarric, the spokesperson for UN Secretary-General António Guterres, told journalists on Jan. 8. "We have not received any further official communication beyond what was posted on the White House website."

Washington announced in the evening of Jan. 7 on social media that it is withdrawing from a broad slate of international organizations and UN bodies, substantiating the threat by President Trump to separate with UN bodies that do not serve his country's interests or that the US considers a waste of Americans' taxpayer money.

The US Has Yet to Notify the UN About Washington's Withdrawal From Entities

The decision by the US to cut ties to 66 international organizations, treaties and UN entities was apparently a result of a review conducted under Executive Order 14199, one of the wide-ranging executive orders signed by Trump in February 2025. The review could be a prelude to the US Congress releasing more funding to the UN general operating budget now that the review is done.

UN REACTS

On Jan. 8, when the UN released its first official response to the news, Guterres expressed "regrets" over the US announcement but added that "all United Nations entities will go on with the implementation of their mandates as given by Member States."

"The United Nations has a responsibility to deliver for those who depend on us," the statement, conveyed from Dujarric by email to the media, continued. "We will continue to carry out our mandates with determination."

Of the 66 organizations, 31 are linked to the UN. They include the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, an organ led by a Chinese national; various regional economic and social commissions; the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; and peace-building agencies as well as others that promote international law, sustainable environmental practices and gender rights, such as UN Women. The UN Population Fund, also listed, was severed by the US in early 2025. (A list of the UN bodies and their roles is explained at the

end of this story.)

Since the Trump administration has taken the reins in 2025, the US has turned its back on matters at the UN related to gender equality, climate change, diversity/equity/inclusion as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

Vanessa Frazier, who leads the office on children and armed conflict, which aims to protect children's rights amid war, said in a post on X that "it is quite unfortunate that the US now seems to be of the opinion that children being collateral of war is OK"

According to the US, "withdrawal" from UN entities is defined as ceasing participation and/or funding to the extent permitted by law.

"POORLY RUN"

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement on Jan. 7, as the White House released the list of 66 entities it was cutting off, the organizations were "redundant, mismanaged, unnecessary, wasteful, or poorly run," and in some cases "captured by the interests of actors advancing agendas contrary to US national interests." He added that continued participation in such bodies was incompatible with American sovereignty and prosperity.

The move marks a major escalation in Washington's shift from multilateral engagement, prompting concern and bewilderment across diplomatic, legal and academic communities. Trump pulled out of some high-profile UN agencies during his first term and again in the beginning of his second term, such as the Human Rights Council and the World Health Organization, but the Jan. 7 actions are more far reaching in scale. And the moves will worsen the dire

financial crisis the organization is struggling to manage.

The US released \$2 billion at the end of 2025 to fund UN-coordinated humanitarian aid for a select list of countries as the US is still withholding at least two years of mandated dues to the organization's regular budget, totaling approximately \$1.3 billion.

It is unclear whether the withdrawals from UN bodies will impact the US paying its assessed contribution - if it does so - but Dujarric said Washington is obligated to pay regardless of unilateral withdrawal from a UN agency or program.

Many of those the US said it would withdraw from are funded by UN assessed contributions paid by member states. Dujarric said some of the agencies rely on funding from "the regular budget, with the vast majority of their work then being funded voluntarily."

"Member states who signed on, joined this club have to pay the dues," he said. "We can, we can, the Charter is not à la carte, as we said, and . . . we know we're not going to renegotiate the Charter. The UN is an organization of 193 member states, two observer states [the Holy See and Palestine]. It is in the interest of all these member states and the two observers to defend the principles that they themselves have created."

According to Article 19 of the UN Charter, a member state risks losing its vote in the 193-member General Assembly if its arrears equal or exceed the amount due for the previous two years, but it is unclear what happens in the Security Council when a permanent member runs afoul of Article 19.

(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)



New York Attorney General Letitia James, joined by AG's of California, Colorado, Illinois, and Minnesota, has sued Trump administration to stop the illegal withholding of over \$10 billion in critical funds to their states that help ensure low-income families can afford childcare, housing, food, and more

JANUARY 8, 2026

NEW YORK (TIP): New York Attorney General Letitia James today led a coalition of four other attorneys general in suing the Trump administration to stop the illegal withholding of over \$10 billion in critical funds to their states that help ensure low-income families can afford childcare, housing, food, and more. On January 5 and 6, the administration sent letters to New York, California, Colorado, Illinois, and Minnesota announcing that the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) was freezing funding for three critical programs: the Child Care

Attorney General James Sues Trump Administration to Protect Billions of Dollars for Childcare and Support for Vulnerable Families

and Development Fund (CCDF); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). Attorney General James and the coalition argue that freezing these funds will immediately jeopardize some of the most important anti-poverty programs in the states, putting vulnerable families at risk. Attorney General James and the coalition are seeking a court order declaring the funding freeze unlawful and preventing the administration from implementing it.

"Once again, the most vulnerable families in our communities are bearing the brunt of this administration's campaign of chaos and retribution," said Attorney General James. "After jeopardizing food assistance and health care, this administration is now threatening to cut off childcare and other critical programs that parents depend on to provide for their children. As New Yorkers struggle with the rising cost of living, I will not allow this administration to play political games with the resources families need to help make ends meet."

In New York, ACF funds provide essential support for hundreds of

thousands of families every year. New York receives over \$2.4 billion in TANF funds, which provide direct cash assistance to over 200,000 families throughout the state to help families pay for housing, food, and other essentials. For Grant Year 2025, New York received \$638 million in CCDF funds, which provide childcare for low-income families. New York also receives \$93 million in SSBG funds, which support foster care, childcare, and other critical social services to prevent neglect, abuse, and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults.

If implemented, the funding freeze would be devastating for families in the coalition's states. Families would lose access to reliable childcare, forcing parents and caregivers into an impossible choice of either missing work or leaving children in a potentially unsafe environment. Childcare providers would lose essential funding, and even children who do not receive ACF-funded care could lose access if facilities are forced to reduce staff or shut down. Employers would lose valuable workers, hurting states' economies, and families would lose critical cash assistance to help them

afford essentials like gas, groceries, and rent.

Attorney General James and the coalition assert that the administration has provided no legitimate justification for freezing these funds. While the letters sent to states claim that the freeze is necessary to prevent "potential" fraud, the administration has failed to provide any evidence of this fraud. Attorney General James and the coalition argue that the administration's actions - which ignore the detailed legal requirements for imposing sanctions under these programs - violate the law and the Constitution. The administration's actions also ignore the laws and regulations governing these ACF programs and violate Congress's power over spending and the constitutional principle of separation of powers. Attorney General James and the coalition are seeking a court order declaring the funding freeze illegal and preventing it from being implemented.

Joining Attorney General James in filing this lawsuit are the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Illinois, and Minnesota.

(Based on a Press Release issued by NY AG office)

BC Premier to visit India before PM Mark Carney

After the overwhelming response to the Canadian Hindu Chamber of Commerce in Assam, UP, and Haryana, BC Premier will lead a delegation to India



BC Premier David Eby has decided to lead a trade mission to India next week
- Photo / Courtesy CityNews, Vancouver

**JANUARY 7, 2026
TORONTO (TIP)**

After a 20-member mission of the Canadian Hindu Chamber of Commerce (CHCC) received an overwhelming response in India, British Columbia Premier David Eby has decided to lead a trade mission to India next week. And these trade mission visits are being viewed in light of the upcoming visit of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to India next month.

Incidentally, the BC trade mission will be headed by its Premier, David Eby, and Jobs Minister, Ravi Kahlon. The BC delegation will visit India from January 12 to 17 and make stopovers in Mumbai, New Delhi, Bengaluru, and Chandigarh. It will be the first visit by a provincial premier to India in recent years.



It was the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, British Columbia, that led to a big spat in the bilateral relations between India and Canada. The BC Premier, while announcing his visit to India, said that he remains profoundly concerned about the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar and the accusation from the then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that the "agents of India" were involved in his assassination.

He said that it is the job of the federal government to work with the Indian government on "issues of shared concern." The BC provincial government works at the level to look after the people of the province, including creating jobs in sectors struggling as a result of tariffs.

"We have challenges with the US; we still work with the United States. We have challenges with China; we still work with China," he added. The BC ministers held that India was an important nation that has the fastest-growing and third-largest economy in the world.

British Columbia is one of the largest

trade partners with India. Last year, the bilateral trade between India and BC was US \$2.1 billion. The BC trade mission will be broadly looking at the forestry and clean energy sectors.

Meanwhile, the CHCC undertook a series of cultural, trade, and business engagements in Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Haryana, aiming at strengthening people-to-people connections, deepening economic cooperation, and exploring long-term trade and investment opportunities between Canada and Assam.

Canadian Hindu Chamber Trade Mission comprises Ashutosh Singh, Kushagra Dutt Sharma, Umesh Raj Unnikrishnan, Mukundbhai Jitendra Sheth, Shankar Kumar Dey, Gagan Kumar, Nareshkumar Narayanbhai Chavda, Bhargav Jambalaya Chavda, Anandkumar Acharya, Rakeshkumar Maravilha Kantaria, Vipulkumar Shankarbhai Rabari, Saurabh Rattan, Falgun Gulabsha Bhandari, Nilay Shaileshbhai Thakkar, Amit Bijoy Chowdhury, Nayankumar Ghanshyambhai Brahmabhatt, Shool Pani Singh, Josh Leslie, Rebecca Greco, and Gopal Krishan Saini have been on tour of India since New Year's Day.

Besides signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University, members of the mission are also enjoying a religious pilgrimage as they were accorded the status of state guests by the Uttar Pradesh government to visit Ayodhya and Prayagraj. Earlier during their stay in Assam, they also paid their obeisance at some of the historic temples, including Kamakhya Temple, one of India's most significant spiritual landmarks. The visit symbolized respect for Assam's rich cultural and spiritual heritage and marked a meaningful beginning to the Chamber's Assam engagements.

The visit of the CHCC has marked a significant step toward strengthening academic, research, and industry collaboration between India and Canada. The MoU with Deen Dayal Upadhyaya University aims to promote student and faculty exchange programs, joint research initiatives, skill development, entrepreneurship, and enhanced cooperation between academia and industry. This partnership reflects a shared commitment to fostering global knowledge exchange, innovation, and capacity building, while creating new opportunities for students, researchers, and businesses across both regions.

Starting its India engagements with a visit to the revered Kamakhya Temple, a high-level Canada-Assam trade & networking meet was successfully held at Hotel Apollo Grand, Guwahati, in collaboration with the Assam Chamber of Commerce. The event brought together senior business leaders, industrialists, and sectoral representatives from across Assam with members of CHCC.



The session was addressed by Rupam Goswami, Chairman of the Assam Chamber of Commerce, who highlighted Assam's growing industrial base, investor-friendly policies, and the importance of long-term international trade partnerships, particularly with Canada. Prominent industry leaders, including Manohar Chowdhury, a leading industrialist, and Rajiv Kumar Burah, a noted hotelier, shared insights on Assam's industrial, hospitality, and tourism potential.

Representing CHCC, Rakesh Kantaria, Secretary of the CHCC, outlined the Chamber's mandate and its role in facilitating trade and investment linkages between Canada and India. Kushagra Dutt Sharma, President of CHCC, presented the objectives of the mission, identifying priority sectors such as tea, oil and gas, energy, agriculture, education, hospitality, infrastructure, and sustainable development as key areas for collaboration between Canada and Assam.

The CHCC Mission conducted a field visit to the 16,000-hectare tea garden of Bhardwaj Tea & Timber Company. The visit offered a breathtaking view of Assam's vast natural landscape and provided an in-depth learning experience on the complete tea value chain.

The general manager shared detailed insights into the journey of tea-from plantation and cultivation to processing and the final product that reaches consumers. The interaction highlighted significant opportunities for the import of regular tea, green tea, and other tea-based products from Assam to Canada and the broader North American market, reinforcing Assam's potential as a key sourcing destination.

The CHCC delegation also held a detailed meeting with Assam Industrial Development Corporation Ltd (AIDC) in Guwahati. Discussions focused on potential investment opportunities in Assam, government support mechanisms, infrastructure development, and policy facilitation. The meeting was described as highly productive, resulting in the identification of multiple investment avenues and

**PRABHJOT
SINGH**



future areas of cooperation.

An important Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University and the Canadian Hindu Chamber of Commerce (CHCC) on January 4, 2026, marking a significant step toward strengthening academic, research, and industry collaboration between India and Canada. The MoU aims to promote student and faculty exchange programs, joint research initiatives, skill development, entrepreneurship, and enhanced cooperation between academia and industry. This partnership reflects a shared commitment to fostering global knowledge exchange, innovation, and capacity building, while creating new opportunities for students, researchers, and businesses across both regions.

Hemant Shah, Chair of the Trade Committee, said that the trade mission has already established a strong and solid relationship between Canada and India. Naresh Chavada, a trustee and founder of the Chamber, and President Kushagr Dutt Sharma, have worked tirelessly to make this trade mission successful.



Photos: CHCC

The engagements on the first three days marked an important step in strengthening Canada-Assam relations through a balanced focus on culture, trade, industry, and institutional collaboration. The CHCC reaffirmed its commitment to continued engagement with Assam's government and business community, with the intention of translating these discussions into tangible trade, investment, and partnership outcomes.

On arriving in Uttar Pradesh, the Hindu Trade mission received a warm welcome from the Chief Minister and the Governor. It called on Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister. It held discussions to explore investment opportunities across MSMEs, religious tourism, and hospitality sectors-reflecting growing global confidence in India's growth trajectory and the emerging opportunities in Uttar Pradesh.

(Prabhjot Singh is a Toronto-based senior journalist. Widely traveled, he writes chiefly on Sports and politics.)

LOOKING AHEAD: WESTERN WORLD WANTS THE BEST AND LEAVE THE REST WHILE TIGHTENING IMMIGRATION CONTROLS

JANUARY 7, 2026
TORONTO (TIP)

"Poaching the best and ignoring the rest" appears to be the new immigration mantra of the developed and flourishing West that it wants to portray and implement in 2026. Conveying a strong message to the nations overflowing with manpower resources, both raw and skilled, the elite group of nations-most sought after by prospective immigrants-has been gradually barricading the borders to minimize the "infiltration." To cap it, member nations of this group have set in motion both legal and inhumane deportation processes to get rid of what they call "dead wood," as most of their ageing sections of society have met their requirements of the

their new home. Those with no skills find the immigration doors closed for them for now.

Donald Trump, soon after starting his second term in office in January of the outgoing year, started sending through full loads of US Air Force aircraft, bereft of basic passenger facilities, with immigration seekers without proper documents to the countries of their origin, including India. And the process has been continuing unabated since then. Hundreds of thousands have already been sent home unceremoniously. Aircraft loads of "unwanted immigrants" are even now leaving the shores of various North American ports for destinations in South Asia, Africa, and other parts of

unabated, thus putting additional pressure on these fund- and resource-starved nations. Producing a doctor with six to eight years in a government medical institution in India costs the state a minimum of Rs 20 lakh. The same is the case with an engineer or IT specialist groomed at a government institution; the money spent by the state is no less than that of a doctor. And once these young, bright doctors, engineers, and IT experts step out of their institutions, the developed nations are out poaching for them. Instead of repaying the society that spent on their training and grooming, they leave their homelands, lured by green pastures overseas.

The result is obvious. Their home

sector at the time of inspections.

It is not health care. Other areas, especially information technology, science and research, engineering, and related areas, would continue to be impacted by the changed immigration policies of Western nations.

Other than these technical or scientific "brains," countries like India are also facing an acute shortage of middle-rung officers in their defense forces. One foremost reason is that pay packages are perhaps not as attractive

WHEN THE NEW LIBERAL GOVERNMENT, LED BY MARK CARNEY, ASSUMED OFFICE IN APRIL THIS YEAR AND PRESENTED ITS MAIDEN BUDGET IN NOVEMBER, IT CLEARLY INDICATED THAT IT WOULD "LOOK FOR THE BEST OF BRAINS" TO HEAD NEW GROUPS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH. BOWING TO THE PRESSURES, THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT NOT ONLY SCALED DOWN IMMIGRATION LEVELS BUT ALSO INTRODUCED DRASTIC CUTS TO THE INTAKE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS. THIS MAJOR SHIFT IN THE IMMIGRATION RIGMAROLE SPELLS DOOM FOR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF YOUNGSTERS WHO WANT OR ASPIRE TO MAKE ONE OF THE DEVELOPED WESTERN NATIONS THEIR NEW HOME. THOSE WITH NO SKILLS FIND THE IMMIGRATION DOORS CLOSED FOR THEM FOR NOW.



Challenges galore for those seeking immigration.

-Photo for representation only

workforce.

When the new Liberal government, led by Mark Carney, assumed office in April this year and presented its maiden budget in November, it clearly indicated that it would "look for the best of brains" to head new groups of scientific research. Bowing to the pressures, the Liberal government not only scaled down immigration levels but also introduced drastic cuts to the intake of international students. This major shift in the immigration rigmarole spells doom for hundreds of thousands of youngsters who want or aspire to make one of the developed Western nations

the world regularly. Incidentally, those being deported exclude the brain doctors, engineers, and scientists.

It is not only the closure of a channel that was taking a lot of loads off the governments of developing nations, but it has now started rebuilding the pressure on shrinking job opportunities and resources in these immigration feeder nations. While their best talent would be leaving the shores of the country, they would be left with numbers that they would find extremely difficult to adjust to under the tightening global economic norms.

The brain drain would continue

turfs suffer from a shortage of doctors, engineers, technocrats, and other professionals. A simple case to illustrate this dilemma is the acute shortage of mental health officers in the country. Despite directions from the Apex Court that each district in the country must have a mental hospital, not even 20 per cent of districts in the country have such a facility. There is an acute shortage of super specialists in a country like India. Many medical colleges fake figures to show specialists and super specialists on their faculties, while in fact their services are requisitioned mostly from the private

as their counterparts' pass-outs from IITs. Then some of the perks associated with jobs in the defense sector have been spiked so much that their added attractions have vanished in recent years. Even a lifetime career in the defense forces is not guaranteed under the Agnipath Yojana. Intriguingly, some of the able-bodied youth, looking for green pastures overseas and shirking jobs in uniform at home, were forced to join the armed forces overseas, as it happened in the case of Russia.

There is an urgent need for a fresh look at the immigration policies of the nations with abundant manpower or human resources. A country like India needs to regulate its brain drain as well as the outflow of its raw human resources. It also comes with a need to audit the education and healthcare infrastructure in the country. India, for example, can market both its education and health care potentials as a retort to the Western world.

Otherwise, developing economies would continue to lose their best to the West and keep the rest for their own use.

(Toronto based Prabhjot Singh is an award-winning journalist recognized for investigative journalism, environment and business reporting, sports and feature writing. A Media Consultant, he has remained associated with various news agencies, including Reuters, and media houses like PTC News (India/Canada), Parvasi Media (Canada) the Liberal World (India), and The Indian Panorama, New York. He is interested in Indian Diaspora and the Sikh Diaspora in particular. His work has appeared in various international and national newspapers, magazines and journals.)

PRABHJOT
SINGH



ED raids spark fiery TMC-BJP standoff in poll-bound WB

The Enforcement Directorate's (ED) searches on Thursday at the offices of a political strategy firm in Kolkata turned into a pitched political battle with West Bengal's chief minister and Trinamool Congress (TMC) chief Mamata Banerjee claiming it was an effort by the agency to glean intelligence on her party's election strategy and candidates, and the Bharatiya Janata Party, the main opposition in the state, countering that Banerjee was shielding the corrupt and interfering in the lawful functioning of a federal agency. The matter has now reached the Calcutta high court which will hear it on Friday, Jan 8.

ED said its searches were linked to an investigation of an illegal coal mining racket in the state that found illegal transfers to I-PAC, the political consultancy advising the TMC. Bengal is scheduled to go to polls in April or May. The federal agency carried out searches at the office of I-PAC and the residence of its director Pratik Jain. But even as the searches were on, Banerjee stormed into Jain's residence, and took away documents and a laptop, accusing ED of seizing her party's internal documents and sensitive data relating to the 2026 assembly polls, including the candidate list. Countering this in a statement, the agency accused the TMC's chief of interfering in the ED's action and taking away evidence.

In parallel developments, additional solicitor general Dhiraj Trivedi, for ED, brought the matter to the notice of the Calcutta high court, seeking its intervention while Jain's family approached the same bench, accusing ED of exceeding its jurisdiction.

Justice Varma's impeachment motion was never admitted in Rajya Sabha: Lok Sabha speaker to SC

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The motion for the removal of Allahabad high court judge, justice Yashwant Varma, was never admitted in the Rajya Sabha on account of being "defective", the Lok Sabha speaker's office has told the Supreme Court, marking the latest twist surrounding the sensational case following the discovery of wads of cash in his official residence in Delhi last year.

The top court was examining the plea of justice Varma finding fault with the speaker's decision to unilaterally proceed with the inquiry on August 12, 2025 when a similar motion was also in the works in the Rajya Sabha.

On December 16, the court had sought the response of both Houses of Parliament, being prima facie satisfied about the grounds of challenge raised in the petition.

The response filed by the speaker's office said that soon after the motion was presented in the Rajya Sabha, a communication was sent to the Lok Sabha, claiming that the same was "defective" and was never admitted in the first place. Acting on this information, the LS speaker admitted the motion on August 11 and proceeded under section 3(2) of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 by constituting an inquiry committee headed by a Supreme Court judge.

"At the time when Chairman, Rajya Sabha intimated the House about the motion having been received, neither any scrutiny of motion was done nor any decision about admission of motion



by Chairman was taken. No decision to admit the motion was taken by Rajya Sabha Chairman nor any order of admission is passed by him either while intimating the House or thereafter," stated the response filed by Lok Sabha secretary general Utpal Kumar Singh on January 1.

On July 21, then vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar resigned on health grounds, hours after he presided over the first day of the monsoon session in the Rajya Sabha. Earlier that day, he had announced that he had received notice of motion to constitute a committee for the removal of justice Varma, signed by more than 50 members — as is constitutionally required for such a motion.

At the time, HT had reported that all 63 MPs who signed the notice were from the Opposition parties and the National Democratic Alliance had no idea that such a notice was being prepared. It had also reported that Dhankhar's move to kickstart the impeachment mechanism

took the government, which wanted the process to go through the Lok Sabha, by surprise, and it was the trigger that prompted the abrupt resignation.

Following that, the Rajya Sabha secretary general presented the motion before the deputy chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh, along with a report stating that the same was found "defective in many scores". The deputy chairman decided "not to admit" the motion on August 11, and the following day, the speaker admitted the motion presented by 146 members of the Lok Sabha, the response said.

Taking up the response, a bench of justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chadra Sharma said, "Prima facie we are not with you (justice Varma) on the construction of proviso and on the power of the deputy chairman to deny admission of the motion."

The court was responding to arguments by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi appearing for the judge that the proviso to section 3(2) of the 1968 Act requires a joint committee to be formed in the event a motion is given in both Houses on the same day.

The court said, "We need to see the intention of the legislature in providing the proviso to section 3(2). If one House rejects and another admits and a committee is constituted, we have to read it that way. If both Houses admit, only then a joint committee is to be formed by speaker and chairman. But if one House rejects, where is the bar on the Lok Sabha to constitute a committee." *Source: HT*

Counter-terror operations targeting terrorist infra, funding must continue in J-K: Amit Shah

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday, Jan 8, said counter-terror operations targeting terrorist infrastructure and terror financing must continue in a "mission mode", asserting that all the resources will be made available to achieve the goal of "terror-free" Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest.

Chairing a high-level security review meeting on the Union Territory here, Shah directed all security agencies to remain alert and continue to work in synergy to ensure that the gains achieved after abrogation of Article 370 are sustained.

He assured that all the resources will be made available in this endeavour. The meeting was attended by J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Director (IB) Tapan Kumar Deka, and the chief secretary and DGP of the UT.

Heads of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and other senior officers were also present in the meeting.

Appreciating the efforts of the security agencies for strengthening security scenario of the UT, Shah stated that "counter-terror operations targeting terrorist infrastructure and terror financing in a mission mode should be continued".



He said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government is committed to lasting peace in J&K and completely eliminating terrorism.

Reiterating the zero tolerance policy against terrorism, Shah said that due to sustained and coordinated efforts of the Modi government, the terror eco-system in J&K has been crippled, according to an official statement.

Karnataka govt to challenge VB-G RAM G Act in court

The Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday, Jan 8, unanimously resolved to reject the implementation of the recently enacted VB-G-RAM-G Act and legally challenge its validity, alleging that it is "against the spirit of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution".

VB G Ram G Act, which guarantees 125 days of wage employment a year, up from 100 days of work provided under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), came into effect on December 21 after receiving the assent of the President following the passage of bill in both houses of Parliament days before. The new law introduces the cost-sharing structure to a 60:40 share between Centre and states.

Indian economy set to grow at 6.6%: UN report

India's economic growth is expected to remain resilient despite rising global uncertainty and trade tensions, even as expansion moderates from last year's highs, according to a United Nations report released on Thursday, Jan 8.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2026 projects India's growth to ease from an estimated 7.4 per cent in 2025 to 6.6 per cent in 2026, supported by robust household consumption, sustained public investment and a more accommodative interest rate environment. Despite external headwinds, India is expected to continue anchoring South Asia's performance, with the region remaining among the fastest-growing globally.

South Asia's gross domestic product (GDP) is forecast to expand by 5.6 per cent in 2026 and 5.9 per cent in 2027, following an estimated 5.9 per cent growth in 2025. This sharply contrasts with the global outlook, where output growth is projected to slow to 2.7 per cent in 2026 from 2.8 per cent in 2025, well below the pre-pandemic average of 3.2 per cent. The UN noted that global growth in 2025 showed unexpected resilience despite sharp increases in US tariffs, supported by strong consumer spending and easing inflation. However, it warned that subdued investment and limited fiscal space across many economies could lock the world into a prolonged phase of slower growth.

MAHARASHTRA CIVIC POLLS

BJP takes a U-turn as CM Fadnavis orders exit from ties with Cong, AIMIM

MUMBAI (TIP)

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Jan 7, directed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to immediately withdraw from local alliances with the Congress and the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) in two municipal councils, declaring such tie-ups "not acceptable."

Reacting to reports of alliances forged ahead of the January 15 BMC council elections, Fadnavis said strict instructions had been issued to break the arrangements in Ambernath (Thane district) and Akot (Akola district).

"Alliance with Congress and AIMIM is not acceptable. It will have to be broken. Accordingly, directives have been issued. The matter will be looked into, and disciplinary action will be taken if anybody has violated orders. The BJP cannot accept an alliance with Congress or MIM. We have made it clear," Fadnavis said.

Ambernath Alliance Sparks Controversy

In Ambernath, located about 60 km from Mumbai, the BJP had formed the Ambernath Vikas Aghadi in an effort to keep the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena out of power. The alliance included 14 BJP corporators, 12 from the Congress, four from the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and one Independent.

A letter announcing the formation of the front and naming Abhijeet Gulabrao Karanjule-Patil as group leader was submitted to the Thane district collector.

Although the BJP secured the municipal chairman's post, the Shiv Sena emerged as the single largest party in the council with 27 seats. Both Chief Minister Fadnavis's party colleague and state BJP chief Ravindra Chavan, as well as Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde, hail from Thane district. Political observers say the alliance was driven by a local power tussle aimed at retaining control of key posts.

BJP-AIMIM Tie-Up in Akot

In Vidarbha's Akola district, the BJP formed another alliance,



the Akot Vikas Manch, in the Akot municipal council. The front included the AIMIM, which won five seats—second only to the BJP in strength.

The alliance also brought together both factions of the Shiv Sena (Thackeray and Shinde), both factions of the NCP (Ajit Pawar and Sharad Pawar), and Bachchu Kadu's Prahar Janshakti Party. The registration of the alliance was submitted to the Akola district collector on Tuesday, with BJP corporator Ravi Thakur appointed as the group leader.

Under the arrangement, all corporators from member parties were required to follow the group leader's whip. The front currently commands the support of 25 out of 33 elected members, with municipal council president Maya Dhule acting as the 26th member.

The alliance was set to vote collectively in elections for the deputy president and co-opted members scheduled for January 13. Dhule had earlier defeated AIMIM candidate Firojabin Sikandar Rana by 5,271 votes in the council president's election.

Meanwhile, six Congress corporators and two members from the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi are expected to sit in the opposition.

When US executed a 'bold contingency plan' to ensure Jaishankar's security during government shutdown

NEW YORK (TIP)

The US Department of State has highlighted a "mission-defining challenge" during External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visit here in November amid the US government shutdown, saying it put in a "bold contingency plan" to ensure his protection and security.

An article dated December 30, 2025, by Supervisory Special Agent Gabriel Macias said that when thousands of commercial flights were grounded due to the US government shutdown last year, Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) special agents from the Dignitary Protection Division (DP), New York Field Office (NYFO), and Buffalo Resident Office (BFRO) faced a "mission-defining challenge." Jaishankar, who was in Canada for the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting on November 11-12, 2025, had then travelled to New York, where he held a bilateral meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the UN headquarters. "The successful execution



of the mission ensured the foreign minister's diplomatic agenda proceeded without disruption, advancing strategic US foreign policy interests fully aligned with the administration's 'America First' policy priorities.

"It also reflected the ethos emphasised by incoming DS leadership: disciplined execution, mission focus, technical proficiency, and unwavering readiness in support of American diplomacy," the article said. The article, released Thursday, said that during Jaishankar's visit to New York, DSS needed to adapt quickly amid restrictions due to the government shutdown to ensure his

timely arrival and "uphold the bureau's core mission: protection."

Given that flights were cancelled nationwide due to the shutdown but diplomatic meetings were imminent, "DSS crafted a bold contingency plan" that involved a seven-hour road journey, one that commenced when agents received Jaishankar at the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge in Niagara in upstate New York and executed a "416-mile interstate motorcade to Manhattan".

The article said that to execute the contingency plan, the mission mobilised 27 agents, including three from DP, who drove to Buffalo and New York to join BFRO and NYFO teams for a "rare long-distance" motorcade movement.

"From the first mile to the last, the detail showcased hallmark DSS tradecraft — adaptability, resilience, technical proficiency, and disciplined execution," the article said.

It outlined that the journey began with BFRO agents coordinating with officials from the Permanent Mission of India to the UN, Royal Canadian Mounted Police

officers who protected Jaishankar while he was in Canada, and US Customs and Border Protection personnel at the international bridge between the US and Canada to expedite a smooth transition at the border.

Agents "meticulously" planned routes through portions of upstate New York, "managed fatigue through structured driver rotations, and ensured seamless continuity of protection while maintaining the foreign minister's comfort across the seven-hour journey."

"Despite freezing temperatures, limited visibility, and shutdown-related constraints, DSS agents executed with calm professionalism and unwavering focus," it said. It further said during the entire operation, a K9 "alerted on the foreign minister's armoured vehicle. Agents quickly secured the area, coordinated with local explosive ordinance disposal technicians, and, after a thorough inspection, cleared the vehicle, which served as an example of the team's poise and adherence to DSS standards under pressure."

India in history this Week

JANUARY 9 TO JANUARY 15

09 JANUARY

1982 The first Indian scientific expedition reaches Antarctica.



1915 Mahatma Gandhi arrives in Mumbai after returning from South Africa.



1934 Mahendra Kapoor, the famous playback singer of Hindi cinema, was born.

10 JANUARY

1916 British Ambassador Sir Thomas Roe meets Jahangir in Ajmer.

11 JANUARY

1922 The first insulin was given to patients with diabetes.

1954 Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi was born who raised a voice against child labor.

12 JANUARY



1863 Swami Vivekananda, who brought Gyan Prakash to India, was born.

1948 Mahatma Gandhi gave his last speech and decided to go on a hunger strike against communal violence. He was deeply saddened by the partition of India in 1947.

13 JANUARY

1709 Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah I defeated his brother Kambakhsh in Hyderabad in a power struggle.

1849 The famous Battle of Chillianwala started during the Second Anglo Sikh War.

1910 Radio was broadcast for the first time. The broadcast could also be heard on a ship 20 km away in the sea.

1923 Famous film producer and director Shakti Samanta was born.



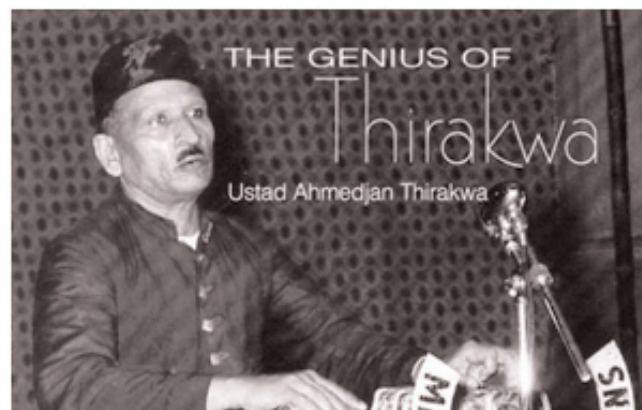
1938 Renowned santoor player Pandit Shivkumar was born.

1948 Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi started a fast unto death in Kolkata to maintain Hindu-Muslim unity.

1949 India's first astronaut Rakesh Sharma is born.



1976 Death of the famous tabla player of India Ahmed Jan Thirkwa.



14 JANUARY

1741 Third war of Panipat started between Marathas and Afghans.

1742 Edmund Haley, who introduced the world to Haley Comet, breathed his last on this day. Edmund Haley is one of England's best known astronomers.

1964 Test bowler Rameshchandra Gangaram Nadkarni set a record for throwing 21 maiden overs.



1977 Narayan Karthikeyan, the first Indian to fill the Formula One race, was born on this day.

1994 For the first time in 300 years, a member of Britain's royal family adopted Catholicism. The Duchess of Kent became a member of the Catholic Church in a private service.

2002 The British government announced that the foot and mouth disease that has been spreading in the country for nearly 11 months will be considered to end



at midnight.

2016 Social activist and famous litterateur Mahashweta Devi was born.

15 JANUARY

1784 Establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

1934 An earthquake measuring 8.7 struck India and Nepal. About 11,000 lives were lost in this earthquake.

1975 Portugal signs agreement for independence of



Angola.

1988 Former India bowler Narendra Hirwani, taking historic feat, took 16 wickets in his debut Test match against West Indies.

2012 India's first female photo journalist Homi Vairala died.

WNYC WITH THE APOLLO CELEBRATES ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY.... MLK26: THE PAN-AFRICANIST - RESTITUTION & RECONCILIATION IN A GLOBAL STATE OF EMERGENCY

BY MABEL PAIS

WNYC celebrates the 20th Anniversary of its annual celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by partnering again with The Apollo for MLK26: The Pan-Africanist — Restitution & Reconciliation in a Global State of Emergency. Held for the first time at The Apollo's new stages at the Victoria Theater, the event will take place on Sunday, January 18, 2026 at 2pm. It will be recorded and broadcast on WNYC and public radio stations across the country on Monday, January 19 (see local listings).

Anchored in the historic moment of Dr. King's 1957 journey to Ghana, the program traces King's vision and commitment to global liberation to the modern-day call for justice. Through conversation, performance, and reflection, this year's gathering connects the struggle against colonialism and segregation to today's fights for equity, freedom, and dignity across the African Diaspora. Together, let's examine restitution and reconciliation not as lofty ideals, but as urgent imperatives, linking Accra to Atlanta, the global past to our shared present.

"For 20 years, WNYC's Annual MLK event has brought together scholars, journalists, activists, and artists to honor Dr. King — not as a symbol of our historic past, but as a multi-dimensional leader whose legacy continues to speak loudly and urgently to our time," said LaFontaine Oliver, President & CEO and Executive Chair of New York Public Radio. "We're proud to do this work in partnership with The Apollo and March On!, and to make this programming available to audiences in New York and worldwide."

"Dr. King called on us to listen deeply, act collectively, and remain accountable to one another," said Michelle Ebanks, President & CEO of The Apollo. "Together with WNYC and March On!, we are honored to create space for reflection and dialogue that invites our communities to engage with Dr. King's legacy — one that continues to shape our present and future."

"Dr. King understood that the fight for justice was never confined by borders," said Kim Callinan, Executive Director of March On!. "We're proud to partner with WNYC and The Apollo to carry that global vision forward — through art, dialogue, and collective reckoning."

The conversation will be hosted by WNYC's Michael Hill, Brian Lehrer, and Janae Pierre, along with WQXR's Terrance McKnight.

GUESTS INCLUDE:

- Dr. Robert Vinson, Director & Chair of the Carter G. Woodson Institute for African American & African Studies at the University of Virginia and author, 'King in Africa'
- Marc Morial, President, National Urban League
- Sandra Babu-Boateng, Diasporic Digital Media Executive
- Brandon Terry, John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Social Sciences at Harvard University and the co-director of the Institute on Policing, Incarceration, and Public Safety at the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research; author of



MLK26, banner -Credit - wnyc.org.

'Shattered Dreams,' 'Infinite Hope' (The NYT's 100 Notable Books of 2025)

LaFontaine E. Oliver, President & CEO and Executive Chair, New York Public Radio; Michelle Ebanks, President and CEO of The Apollo; and Isisara Bey, Artistic Director of March On! will give opening remarks.

Due to capacity constraints at the venue, seating is extremely limited. MLK26: The Pan-Africanist — Restitution &

listeners, producing some of the most beloved nationally-syndicated public radio programs including 'Radiolab,' 'On the Media,' and 'The New Yorker Radio Hour.' WNYC broadcasts on 93.9 FM and AM 820 to listeners in New York and the tri-state area, and is available to audiences everywhere at WNYC.org, the WNYC app, and through major digital radio services, all made possible through the generous support of our members, donors, and sponsors.



Audience at The Apollo Theater. -Credit - wnyc.org.

Reconciliation in a Global State of Emergency will be recorded for broadcast on WNYC on Monday, January 19 at 3pm & 8pm on WNYC 93.9 FM, AM 820, and wnyc.org, as well as on public radio stations across the country and on WNYC and The Apollo's YouTube channels. For more information, please click here.

WNYC

With an urban vibrancy and a global perspective, WNYC is New York's public radio station, broadcasting and streaming award-winning journalism, groundbreaking audio programming, and essential talk radio to the city and beyond. WNYC offers its listeners a unique range of local, national, and international programming, including programming from NPR, American Public Media, and the BBC World Service, along with a roster of WNYC-produced local programs that champion the stories and spirit of New York City and the surrounding region, including 'The Brian Lehrer Show' and 'All Of It.' From its state-of-the-art studios, WNYC is reshaping audio for a new generation of

'Bruno Mars Live at the Apollo'; '100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella'; and the annual 'Africa Now!' Festival.

The non-profit Apollo Theater is a performing arts presenter, commissioner, and collaborator that also produces festivals, large-scale dance and musical works organized around a set of core initiatives that celebrate and extend The Apollo's legacy through a contemporary lens, including the 'Women of the World' (WOW) Festival as well as other multidisciplinary collaborations with partner organizations.

Since introducing the first 'Amateur Night' contests in 1934, The Apollo has served as a testing ground for new artists working across a variety of art forms and has ushered in the emergence of many new musical genres — including jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues, soul, and hip-hop. Among the countless legendary performers who launched their careers at The Apollo are Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, H.E.R., D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Machine Gun Kelly, and Miri Ben Ari; and The Apollo's forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy. For more information about The Apollo, visit ApolloTheater.org.

MARCH ON!

March On!, originally founded in 2013 as the March on Washington Film Festival in Washington, DC, was established to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The inaugural festival drew over 1,000 attendees to ten impactful events across the city over two weeks, laying the groundwork for what has become a powerful platform for storytelling and social justice.

Held annually in Washington, DC, the flagship March On! Festival celebrates and amplifies the untold stories and unsung heroes of the Civil Rights Movement while connecting them to today's movements for equity and justice. Through film screenings, panel discussions, live performances, and community gatherings, the festival fosters dialogue and brings together audiences of all ages, classes, and ethnicities to reflect on history and inspire progress.

Over the past decade, the March On! Festival has grown into a national social justice arts movement, engaging tens of thousands of participants globally. Notable past contributors include literary icons Nikki Giovanni and Ta-Nehisi Coates; Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists Eugene Robinson and Hank Klibanoff; former U.S. Attorneys General Eric Holder and Loretta Lynch; celebrated artists like Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor, Diahann Carroll, Yara Shahidi, and 9th Wonder; and prominent Civil Rights leaders such as Joyce and Dorie Ladner; Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Rep. Raphael Warnock, Julian Bond, and Judge Damon Keith.

Through its programming, March On! continues to honor the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement and inspire action for a more just and equitable future.

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

THE APOLLO

The legendary Apollo — the soul of American culture — plays a vital role in cultivating emerging artists and launching legends. Since its founding, The Apollo has served as a center of innovation and a creative catalyst for Harlem, the city of New York, and the world. In 2024, The Apollo opened The Apollo Stages at the Victoria Theater, marking the first ever expansion and renovation of The Apollo in its nearly 90-year history. In 2025, The Apollo embarked on its first major full-scale renovation and restoration of its Historic theater to modernize and upgrade its facilities and artist and audience spaces, and is expected to be completed in 2026. For more information, visit apollotheater.org.

With music at its core, The Apollo's programming extends to dance, theater, spoken word, and more. This includes the world premiere of the theatrical adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates's 'Between the World and Me' and the New York premiere of the opera 'We Shall Not Be Moved'; special programs such as the blockbuster concert

NEW YORK CITY'S ANNUAL 'DANCES WITH FILMS' RETURNS FOR 4TH YEAR

BY MABEL PAIS

Featuring
Director SHRUTI PAREKH's Short film 'HOMEBODY' World Premiere
Co-Directors SANDRO RAMANI & COREY DEVON ARTHUR's Short film 'IN EXCHANGE FOR FLESH'
Director BAKHTAWAR TAGAR's Short film 'NAAZ'

And many, many more
DFW: Recently cited as one of MovieMaker's "Coolest" film festivals

The Annual 'DANCES WITH FILMS' (DWF) New York City edition of the bi-coastal indie-Film Festival returns for the 4th year, January 15-18, 2026. The new year will present several feature-length narratives, documentaries, and midnight films making their debut, with pilots, family films, and short films also enjoying the singular cinema showcase that DWF provides as part of the only true-indie film festival with a foothold in both Los Angeles and New York City.

Recently selected by MovieMaker Magazine as one of its "25 Coolest Film Festivals", as well as being cited earlier in the year by Dread Central as a top 40 festival programming horror/genre films Dances With Films is now entrenched as a go-to film festival platforming true-indies. In less than five years, it has taken its place alongside NYFF (New York Film Festival) and Tribeca as a prime launching pad and showcase for cinema, while introducing fresh, new filmmaking talent on a big stage for audiences and critics.

This year's highly anticipated DWF NY lineup includes 157 films, including 20 narrative, 9 documentary, and 4 midnight features, 21 television and streaming pilots, 6 family films, and 97 short films (56 narrative, 15 documentary, and 26 midnight). All screenings will take place at Regal Union Square (850 Broadway), New York city.

The 2026 Dances With Films NY Event Lineup

OPENING NIGHT FEATURE

VINDICTA

DIR: Dominik Sedlar; USA/UK; 124m

In just one moment a young girl's world shatters when her parents are murdered in front of her. After fleeing, she seeks refuge with family friends before becoming the embodiment of rage and revenge towards those responsible for destroying her life. An unexpected connection with a handsome young Nazi Officer generates a moment of respite, but she is consumed by vengeance at any cost, no matter what or when.

CLOSING NIGHT FEATURE

ROOF - World Premiere

DIR: Salvatore Sciortino; USA; 89m

Two co-workers facing terrible life choices get trapped on the roof of a skyscraper during a long, hot holiday weekend. The inconvenience becomes a fight for survival as they attempt



Homebody

-Credit : danceswithfilms.com



In Exchange For Flesh

- Credit : danceswithfilms.com



Naaz.

-Credit : danceswithfilms.com

increasingly dangerous ways to escape, while forming a unique and unexpected friendship.

ADDITIONAL NARRATIVE FEATURES

A SIMPLE MACHINE

DIR: Mark Hoffman; USA; 98m

ALIENS ARE COMING!! ON MONDAY!!! - World Premiere

DIR: Geoffrey Davin; USA; 67.5m

BANANA SPLIT - World Premiere

Director: Walter Kim; USA; 93m

BY THE GRAPE OF GOD -

World Premiere

DIR: Colmcille Donston; USA; 96m

THE CEREAL AISLE EFFECT -

World Premiere

DIR: Peter Odiorne; USA; 87m

DAMNED IF YOU DO

DIRS: Evan Metzold, Jake Rubin; USA; 107m

FANBOY

DIR: Bean McKee; USA; 83m

GAZELLE

DIRS: Nadir Saribacak, Samy Pioneer; USA/Turkey; 100m

INFIRMARY - World Premiere

DIR: Nicholas Pineda; USA; 85m

KAISHAKU

DIR: Harry Locke IV; USA; 104m

THE LEGEND OF JUAN JOSE

MUNDO

DIR: Michael Walker; USA; 94m

LOAFERS - World Premiere

DIR: Zach Schnitzer; 87m

NO CHOICE

DIR: Nate Hilgartner; USA; 95m
SMILE... THE WORST IS YET TO COME - World Premiere

DIR: Chloe Lenihan; USA; 84m

STOP TIME - World Premiere

DIR: Paul Schwartz; USA; 78m

DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

DAD GENES - World Premiere

DIR: Craig Downing; USA; 62m

GLENDORA - World Premiere

DIRS: Isabelle Armand, Glendora Collaborative; USA; 74m

HOLY GHETTO - World Premiere

DIR: ILan Azoulai; USA; 83m

KRATOM: SIDE EFFECTS MAY

INCLUDE - World Premiere

DIRS: Jamie Neese, Jason Neese;

USA; 78m

OUR BODY ELECTRIC -

World Premiere

DIR: Dana Reilly; USA; 91m

UNTOUCHABLES: THE STORY OF

ST. BENEDICT'S FENCING - World

Premiere

DIR: Sabbuur Ikhlas; USA; 94m

VELVET VISION

DIR: Bart Everly; USA; 138m

THE WORK... A CONVERSATION

DIR: Eve Annenberg; USA; 89m

ZZASLOW K-427

DIR: Robert Ham;

USA/Afghanistan; 78m

MIDNIGHT FEATURES

There are four midnight features.

PILOTS - TV & WEB

Twenty one films embrace this category.

FAMILY FILMS

There are six family films.

SHORT FILMS

NARRATIVE SHORTS

Fifty six films are in this category.

DOCUMENTARY SHORTS

There are fourteen in this category.

MIDNIGHT SHORTS

Twenty six films are found in this category.

DANCES WITH FILMS (DWF)

Now in its 29th year, Dances With Films champions the unflinching spirit at the very core of the independent film scene. With most film festivals relying heavily on celebrity, DWF have relied on innovation, talent, creativity, and sweat equity that revolutionized the entertainment industry. And that reliance continues to prove successful with alumni moving on to write, direct, and produce celebrity-studded vehicles, star in blockbuster movies, and television series, produce multi-million-dollar films and create hot TV shows.

For more information about the Dances With Films NY film lineup, events, passes, and tickets, go to danceswithfilms.com.

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

CELEBRATE HER 2025 GRAMMY® WIN WITH AVERY SUNSHINE



Avery Sunshine -Credit : njpac.org

BY MABEL PAIS

AVERY SUNSHINE, 2025 GRAMMY® winner will captivate audiences with her smooth, vibrant, radiating power and joyful vocal music at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center on January 16, 2026.

Join in the celebration of Avery Sunshine's GRAMMY® win! She was honored with the award for Best Progressive R&B Album in 2025 for her latest project, 'So Glad to Know You' (SGTKY). The GRAMMY® awards will be presented on February 1, 2026.

Be enchanted by Avery's incredible voice — smooth, vibrant, and filled with power and joy. Her original songs are inspired by '90s R&B, gospel, jazz, and neo-soul, all infused with contemporary lyrics. When Avery Sunshine sings, everyone shines. Her sound is uplifting and vibrant, perfectly embodying her name — filled with sunshine. She brings people together through her captivating stage performances, frank and often humorous banter, and uplifting anthems about love and life.

Born Denise White in Chester, Pennsylvania, her musical roots are

deeply embedded in the church. Together with her Grammy Award-winning creative partner, Dana "BigDane" Johnson, who is a singer, pianist, and composer, Avery has crafted an unforgettable sound.

Avery's signature soulful R&B style has earned her accolades from legendary artists, including Aretha Franklin, who exclaimed, "I love Avery Sunshine!" She has also received praise from icons such as Patti LaBelle, Berry Gordy, and Boy George, who expressed on Twitter, "@averysunshine love this woman's voice." Most recognized for her #1 Billboard chart hit single "Call My Name" from her acclaimed sophomore album *The Sunroom*, Avery and Dana were honored with ASCAP's Rhythm and Soul Song of the Year Award.

Among her numerous awards and nominations are nods for both the Soul Train Award and the BET Centric Award. Avery has achieved significant milestones in her career, including sold-out shows, a UK tour opening for the late B.B. King, a performance on The Jools Holland Show, and four top 20 Billboard hits in the Hot Adult R&B category. As an endorsed artist with the Yamaha Entertainment family, she was honored to perform multiple times for and alongside the late Aretha Franklin.

TICKETS

For tickets to witness the extraordinary voice of Avery Sunshine, visit NJPAC.org or the NJPAC Box Office or call 888. GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

AVERY SUNSHINE

Learn more at averysunshine.com and sogladtoknowyou.com (SGTKY).

PARTICIPATE IN THE FIRST EVER STAGE SPECTACULAR OF 'BRAINS ON!'

BY MABEL PAIS

****BRAINS ON! YOUR BRAIN IS MAGIC!**** is the brand-new stage spectacular of the wildly popular kids' science podcast 'Brains On!' This will be presented at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) on January 17, 2026 at 3 PM.

NJPAC is excited to welcome this hilarious, high-energy, science-themed show which transforms the stage into a mind-bending adventure through the human brain — perfect for curious kids, families, and anyone who loves to learn through laughter. Brains On!® is a science podcast for curious kids and adults from Brains On Universe.

Each week, a different kid co-host joins Molly Bloom to find answers to fascinating questions about the world sent in by listeners. Like, do dogs know they're dogs? Or, why do feet stink? Plus, we have mystery sounds for you to guess, songs for you to dance to, and lots of facts -- all checked by experts.

'Brains On' is hitting the road with a hilarious science-themed show that takes the audience on an adventure through our brains.

Molly Bloom, Marc Sanchez, and Sanden Totten will be there with magic tricks, dance moves, out-of-body experiences, mystery sounds, and even a game show!

All the while, kids (and their grown-ups) learn how our brains take a handful of signals from the eyes and ears and turn them into a vibrant picture of the world.

Join beloved hosts Molly Bloom, Marc Sanchez, and Sanden Totten as they bring the award-winning podcast to life with interactive fun, unforgettable characters, and jaw-dropping science surprises. Packed with magic tricks,



Brains On! team. -Credit : njpac.org

dance moves, mystery sounds, out-of-body experiences, and even a full-on game show, this immersive performance turns complex scientific ideas into excitement, imagination, and pure joy.

Designed to entertain as much as it educates, 'Your Brain Is Magic!' encourages young audiences to explore how the brain works — from memory and perception to creativity and emotions — using humor, storytelling, and hands-on participation.

Watch a sample of 'Brains On! Universe' - youtube.com/BrainsOnShow

TICKETS

Tickets to see Brains ON are available at NJPAC.org or by visiting the NJPAC Box Office at 1 Center Street, Newark, New Jersey or calling 888. GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

BRAINS ON!

Learn more at brainson.org; facebook.com/BrainsOnShow; instagram.com/brains_on

NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

Learn more at NJPAC.org.

CELEBRATE LADINO DAY WITH THE NEW YORK AMERICAN SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY

BY MABEL PAIS

LADINO DAY, around the world since 2013, has been celebrated to honor the Ladino, the Judeo-Spanish, community. January 11th marks New York's 9th Annual Ladino Day hosted by the American Sephardi Federation (americansephardi.org). This will take place at the American Sephardi Federation – Center for Jewish History, 15 West 16th Street, New York, NY, 10011.

Ladino is a bridge to many cultures. A variety of Spanish, it has absorbed words from Hebrew, Turkish, Arabic, French, Greek, and Portuguese. The mother tongue of Jews in the Ottoman Empire for 500 years, Ladino became the home language of Sephardim worldwide. While the number of Ladino speakers has sharply declined, distinguished Ladino Day programs like that of the American Sephardic Federation celebrate and preserve a vibrant language and heritage. These programs are, as Aviya Kushner has written in the Forward, "Why Ladino Will Rise Again."

Message of Greetings from Fortuna....

youtube.com/shorts/8gH_2IXg7EY?feature=share

Postcard: Frederic Leighton's "Old Damascus: Jew's Quarter or Gathering Lemons," c.1873-1874

PROGRAM

The American Sephardi Federation with the Sephardic Foundation on Aging proudly presents: WHAT: Salud i beraha: The 9th Annual NY Ladino Day!

Curated by Jane Mushabac and Bryan Kirschen
Tales and Variations in Ladino with Joe Halio



Fortuna. -Credit: fortunaoficial.com / João Caldas

Tu Ke Bivas: An Illustrated Talk by artist Becky Behar
A Panel of Movers and Shakers of Ladino, with Lily Henley, Yinnon Sanders, and Aaron Shapiro
Fortuna, Brazilian Star of Ladino Song
with Guest Artist Frank London on Trumpet, and Alex Parke on Clarinet, Shoko Nagai on Piano, Satoshi Takeishi on Percussion, and Brian Glassman on Bass

WHEN: Sunday, 11 January 2:00-5:00PM EST

WHERE: In-Person @ the Center for Jewish History

15 W 16th Street, New York City

TICKETS

Tickets, on a 3-tiered basis, are available:
1 \$26 General Admission
(Admission to Ladino Day)
2 \$36 Friend of NY Ladino Day
(Includes a copy of the book: *The Historic Synagogues of Turkey*, and admission to Ladino Day)
3 \$56 VIP Friend of NY Ladino Day
(Includes VIP reception prior to the program, a copy of the book: *The Historic Synagogues of Turkey*, and VIP seating at Ladino Day)

AMERICAN SEPHARDI FEDERATION

The American Sephardi Federation preserves and promotes the history, traditions, and rich mosaic culture of Greater Sephardic communities as an integral part of the Jewish experience.

Connect with the Federation on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter.

Email: info@americansephardi.org

Phone: 1 212.294.8350

Mail: American Sephardi Federation – Center for Jewish History, 15 West 16th Street, New York, NY, 10011

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



Bhooth Bangla: Akshay Kumar's horror-comedy confirms May release

The release date for the upcoming horror comedy *Bhooth Bangla*, headlined by actor Akshay Kumar, has been revised. The announcement confirmed that the film will now arrive in theatres on May 15, 2026.

Balaji Motion Pictures shared the news on social media, writing, "Bangle se ek khabar aayi hai! (The news has come from the mansion)" and added, "The doors open on 15th May 2026 (sic)."

Earlier, the makers had shared that the film would release on April 2, 2026. However, it has now been confirmed that the film will arrive in theatres a month after that. *Bhooth Bangla* brings together Akshay and Tabu after a 25-year hiatus. The duo previously worked together on films like *Hera Pheri* and *Tu Chor Main Sipahi*. Their reunion, under the direction of Priyadarshan, has drawn attention due to the legacy of their past collaborations and the genre's growing popularity.

The film's production team recently shared an image from the Jaipur set, capturing Akshay welcoming Tabu with a warm embrace. The caption read, "Some things get better and iconic with time! @priyadarshan.official, @akshaykumar and @tabutiful are back in action after 25 years for #BhoothBangla in Jaipur (sic)." The reunion has been highlighted as one of the film's notable aspects since its announcement.

The film also stars the late actor Asrani. In an exclusive chat with India Today, Priyadarshan reflected on their last days together on set. "He was in my last two films, 'Bhooth Bangla' and 'Haiwaan'. He is playing a very big role in both films. I wrapped up 'Bhoot Bangla' earlier, and he was not working for a long time before that film. So he told me, 'Nobody calls me. Thank you for calling me.' These are also his last films, and we shot both over just six months. So we actually spent a lot of time together," the director said.

The production of *Bhooth Bangla* is led by Shobha Kapoor and Ektaa R Kapoor's Balaji Telefilms, in association with Akshay's Cape of Good Films. Co-producers Faara Sheikh and Vedant Baali are also involved, and the film's story is credited to Akash A Kaushik.

'Uri' connection: Katrina and Vicky name their newborn son Vihaan

Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal welcomed their first child together, a baby boy, on Friday, November 7, 2025. Earlier today, they took to Instagram to share that they have named their firstborn Vihaan Kaushal.

The caption read, "Our Ray of Light. Vihaan Kaushal. Prayers are answered. Life is beautiful. Our world is changed in an instant. Gratitude beyond words."

Vicky Kaushal played the role of Major Vihaan Singh Shergill in Aditya Dhar's *Uri: The Surgical Strike*. The film which released on January 11, 2019, will be clocking 7 years this week.

Uri is one of the most significant films in Vicky Kaushal's career where he played the lead role as an Indian Army Major in the Para (Special Forces).

Katrina, 43, and Vicky Kaushal, 37, announced their pregnancy in September. Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal got married in 2021 in the picturesque locale of Six Senses Fort Barwara in Rajasthan. It was an intimate wedding that only had the couple's family and close friends in attendance.

While Katrina Kaif maintained a low profile throughout her pregnancy, Vicky Kaushal was often spotted attending social and film events.

In a candid chat with Yuva, Vicky Kaushal recently said how much he was looking forward to fatherhood. "Just being a dad. Really looking forward to it. I think it's a huge blessing and exciting times. Almost there, so fingers crossed. Mujhe lag raha hai main ghar se hi nahi nikalne wala hoon," he had said.

Previously, Vicky Kaushal's younger brother and actor Sunny Kaushal said the whole family was very excited about welcoming the new member of the Kaushal family. "Sabhi ko badi khushi hai and nervousness bhi hai ki kya hoga aage jaake. (Everyone is happy and nervous also. We do not know what will happen ahead). Waiting for that day to come," he told Instant Bollywood.

Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal announced their



pregnancy by sharing an Instagram post on September 23. The couple posted a Polaroid-style photo where Vicky is seen holding Katrina's baby bump. She was dressed casually in a white top and jeans.

On the work front, Katrina Kaif was last seen in the crime thriller *Merry Christmas*, and Vicky Kaushal was most recently seen in the period drama *Chhaava*, one of the highest-earning films of 2025. NDTV reported that Katrina Kaif will take a long maternity break. Sources revealed that she wishes to be a hands-on mother.

Chitrangda Singh would love to play Smita Patil in biopic: 'It would be incredible'

Actor Chitrangda Singh says she would love to step into the shoes of cinema legend Smita Patil if a biopic on the late actor is ever made. She admits it feels special, given how often she has been compared to Patil over the years.

Speaking during a recent interaction with India Today, Chitrangda revealed that she has often been told she resembles Smita Patil. Recalling a particularly striking incident, Chitrangda said Prateik Smita Patil once mistakenly posted her photograph on Mother's Day, believing it to be Smita Patil's picture.

Talking about doing a biopic, Chitrangda said, "I would love to play Smita ji on screen. If there was ever anyone I've been compared to repeatedly, it's Smita Patil. I've been told this so many times, and even her son Pratik has said it to me. In fact, Pratik once accidentally posted my picture on Mother's Day, thinking it was Smita ji. Someone sent it to me and said, 'I don't think this is Smita ji—this is you, right?' And I said, 'Yes, that's my picture.' It was shocking and surreal," she said.

Smita Patil remains one of Indian cinema's most revered actors and is still



remembered for her powerful performances in films like *Bhumika*, *Arth*, *Manthan*, *Chakra*, and *Nishant*. The actor added that the moment made her reflect on the similarities people often point out between her and the late icon. "So yes, if I ever get the opportunity

to play her, I think it would be incredible. When people point out the similarities now, I can see it too. Let's see if it happens someday, we can talk about it," Chitrangda added. She will next be seen in *The Battle of Galwan*, starring Salman Khan.

Sydney Sweeney will return as Millie Calloway in The Housemaid sequel

It is confirmed. Actor Sydney Sweeney is officially stepping back into The Housemaid universe, reuniting with director Paul Feig for a sequel that has now been put into motion following the film's unexpected box office surge. According to a report in Deadline, the studio has greenlit The Housemaid's Secret, the follow-up to the psychological thriller that has rapidly emerged as one of the year's standout theatrical performers.

The sequel draws from the second novel in Freida McFadden's popular trilogy and has been quietly taking shape for months. Production is expected to begin later this year, with Sydney returning as Millie — the enigmatic young woman whose attempt at starting over led her into a deeply unsettling household. Meanwhile, Paul will once again direct, while Michele Morrone is set to reprise his role as Enzo, the Winchesters' groundskeeper and a crucial presence in Millie's journey.

For the unversed, released earlier this year, The Housemaid proved to be a commercial win, earning \$75.7 million domestically and \$133 million worldwide against a \$35 million budget, as reported by Variety. The R-rated thriller also generated strong word-of-mouth and online chatter, capped by an ending that teased Millie's next chapter and featured Taylor Swift's I Did Something Bad over the credits. "It's clear from both the global box office and from the outpouring on social media that audiences have responded strongly — and audibly — to the totally unique and truly theatrical experience of The Housemaid and want to know what happens next," said Adam Fogelson, chair of Lionsgate's Motion Picture Group.

"We believed in these stories from the very beginning, and we are beyond excited to bring the next chapter of Millie's story to life on-screen in collaboration with our outstanding creative partners Todd, Paul, Laura, Carly, Alex, and Sydney. The Housemaid's Secret is another wildly thrilling book in Freida's series that has captivated readers worldwide, and we look forward to translating it into a similarly rousing and riotous moviegoing experience," he added. Paul also reflected on the film's reception and the opportunity to continue the story. "It's been thrilling to see audiences around the world fall in love with The Housemaid and the incredible work of our talented cast and crew. We're lucky that Freida McFadden has already extended Millie's journey on the page, and that we get to work with Rebecca Sonnenshine to bring this next story to audiences," he said.



Priyanka Chopra gets bloody, brutal in first look of The Bluff

Forget Jack Sparrow, Priyanka Chopra is charting a far grittier course into the pirate genre. The actor is stepping into a brutal, blood-soaked world with The Bluff, and the first look at her as the fearsome Bloody Mary charging at her co-star Karl Urban teased no-holds-barred action.

On Jan 7, Priyanka as well as Prime Video released the first look into the upcoming project The Bluff. Priyanka shared the look on her Instagram handle with the caption, "Mother. Protector. Pirate. Meet Bloody Mary #TheBluff February. 25. 2026 Only on @primevideo."

The first-look image from The Bluff freezes a ferocious showdown against a rugged seaside backdrop, capturing Priyanka mid-air as she lunges at Karl Urban with a weapon raised high. Clad in battle-worn pirate gear, Priyanka's face is set in a fierce snarl. Karl is seen in a long dark coat, and has his sword lifted in an attempt to block the blow. In another striking image, Priyanka is smeared in blood and dirt, her hand clenched around a conch shell like a makeshift brass knuckle as she gets ready to attack her enemy.

Other stills capture the film's gritty mood from Priyanka peering through a monocular scope to a frame of her drenched in blood, standing by a window with a gun clenched in her hand.

Nicole Kidman, Keith Urban finalise divorce after 19 yrs of marriage

Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban are divorced and legally single. A Nashville, Tennessee, judge on Tuesday issued an order dissolving the 19-year marriage of the Oscar-winning actor and the Grammy-winning country singer.

The judge said in a court filing that the couple's settlements on splitting assets and child custody are sufficient and granted them the divorce.

Kidman filed for divorce in September. The superstar split was a surprise to most of the public, but it had clearly been in the works for a while. All the legal issues involving assets and custody had been settled and signed the day of her filing.

Tennessee requires a 90-day waiting period for couples with minor children before a divorce can take effect.

Kidman and Urban, both 58, have two teenage daughters together. Their divorce filing said they had "marital difficulties and irreconcilable differences."

The plan they signed states that Kidman would be the primary residential parent to the children. It suggested they would remain living in Nashville, as they have all their lives. The filing states that neither parent would need child or spousal support and lays out a roughly equal division of their joint assets. Two of the biggest stars to come out of Australia in recent decades, Kidman and Urban met in Los Angeles in 2005 and were married in Sydney the following year. They were red carpet fixtures throughout their two-decade relationship, with Urban joining his wife at the Oscars and Kidman attending music events like the Academy of Country Music Awards. The couple had publicly but lovingly described some marital difficulties, yet there were still few outward signs the divorce was coming.

The marriage was the first for Urban and the second for Kidman, who was married to Tom Cruise from 1990 to 2001. Kidman also has two older children with Cruise.



Lohri: The Bonfire Festival that heralds hope, harvest and renewal

As winter tightens its grip over North India, a sudden glow begins to punctuate the cold January nights. Bonfires crackle in village courtyards and urban colonies alike, folk songs rise into the frosty air, and communities gather in warmth and celebration. This is Lohri-Punjab's most evocative winter festival, where fire becomes both symbol and centre, marking the triumph of life over cold, scarcity over abundance, and despair over hope.

Celebrated annually on January 13, Lohri stands at the threshold of seasons, welcoming the gradual retreat of winter and the approach of longer, brighter days. Rooted in agrarian rhythms, folk legends and communal joy, Lohri is far more than a festival-it is a living expression of North India's cultural soul.

The Significance of Lohri

At its heart, Lohri is a harvest festival, deeply connected to the agricultural cycle of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and parts of western Uttar Pradesh. It marks the ripening of the Rabi crop, particularly wheat, which is sown in winter and harvested in spring. For farming communities, Lohri is a moment of thanksgiving-an offering of gratitude to nature for sustaining life through harsh winters.

The festival also coincides with the winter solstice period, when days begin to lengthen. The bonfire, central to Lohri celebrations, symbolises the Sun's return, warmth, energy and renewal. Fire is revered as a purifier and protector, believed to burn away negativity, illness and misfortune.

Traditionally, Lohri holds special significance for:

- Newlyweds, celebrating their first Lohri together
- Newborn children, especially the birth of a son in older traditions (though today the celebration is increasingly gender-neutral)

For these families, Lohri is a public affirmation of joy, continuity and prosperity.

The Legend of Dulla Bhatti: Punjab's Folk Hero

No Lohri celebration is complete without invoking the legendary figure of Dulla Bhatti, a 16th-century Punjabi folk hero who lived during the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar. Often described as the "Robin Hood of Punjab," Dulla Bhatti is remembered for his defiance of tyranny and his compassion for the vulnerable.

According to folklore, Dulla Bhatti rescued poor girls from being forcibly sold or enslaved and arranged their marriages with dignity. Lacking dowries, he is said to have acted as their brother, providing them with essentials and lighting the sacred fire during their



wedding rituals.

Children singing Lohri songs still chant:

*"Sundar mundriye ho!
Tera kaun vichara ho?
Dulla Bhatti wala ho!"*

Through these verses, Dulla Bhatti lives on as a symbol of justice, bravery and social responsibility, embodying the moral values that Lohri celebrates.

The Bonfire Ritual

The most iconic image of Lohri is the bonfire, lit after sunset in open spaces. Families and neighbours gather around it, circling the flames in reverence. Offerings are thrown into the fire-til (sesame seeds), gur (jaggery), peanuts, popcorn and rewri-each carrying symbolic meaning.

- Til and gur represent warmth, sweetness and energy during winter
- Peanuts and popcorn symbolise abundance and fertility
- Fire serves as a witness to prayers for health, prosperity and protection
- People offer prayers, walk around the fire (parikrama), and bow in respect, acknowledging nature's generosity and divine forces.

Music, Dance and Community Joy

Lohri is inseparable from Punjabi folk culture.

As the night deepens, the atmosphere comes alive with the rhythmic beats of the dhol. Men perform the energetic Bhangra, leaping and twirling in celebration of harvest and vitality, while women gather for Gidda, singing traditional songs filled with humour, longing and wisdom.



FROM PAGE 25

The songs of Lohri are both festive and reflective-celebrating fertility, family bonds, bravery and the cycles of life. In villages, children go door-to-door singing Lohri songs and collecting treats, reinforcing the spirit of sharing and community bonding.

Traditional Foods

Food plays a central role in Lohri celebrations, reflecting seasonal produce and rustic flavours. Common delicacies include:

- Makki di roti (cornbread)
- Sarson da saag (mustard greens)
- Til-gur laddoos
- Rewri and gajak
- Warm milk and sugarcane products

These hearty foods provide nourishment during winter while strengthening communal ties as families and neighbors eat together.

The First Lohri

Among all Lohri celebrations, none are as emotionally charged and ceremonially elaborate as the First Lohri of a newborn child or a newlywed bride. These observances transform the festival from a seasonal ritual into a deeply personal milestone, marking entry into new phases of life and family.

The First Lohri of a Child: Welcoming Life and Lineage

The birth of a child-traditionally the firstborn-adds a special glow to Lohri celebrations. The child's first Lohri is considered a blessing-filled occasion, symbolising fertility, continuity and divine grace. In Punjabi households, this Lohri is celebrated with heightened enthusiasm, as elders invoke prosperity, good health and protection for the newborn.

The family hosts a gathering where:

- The child is dressed in new clothes, often in bright reds or traditional Punjabi attire
- The bonfire becomes the centre of prayers, with special offerings made in the child's name
- Elders bless the infant, touching til-gur to the lips as a sign of sweetness and abundance
- Relatives bring gifts, sweets, clothes and sometimes symbolic gold or silver items
- Folk songs sung during this Lohri often reference growth, courage and honour, embedding the child into the shared cultural memory of the community.
- While older customs emphasized the birth of a son, modern celebrations increasingly honour daughters with equal pride, reflecting evolving social values while retaining ritual warmth.

The First Lohri of a Bride: Welcoming a New Daughter

Equally significant is the First Lohri of a newly married woman, celebrated as her formal introduction into her marital home's traditions. This Lohri is both a welcome and a blessing-an acknowledgment of the bride as a bearer of continuity, harmony and prosperity.

The bride's parental family traditionally sends:



- Lohri thaalis filled with rewri, gajak, peanuts and popcorn
- New clothes, jewellery or shawls
- Festive foods and sweets prepared at home

Dressed in finery, the bride participates in the bonfire rituals, often receiving special attention as relatives shower her with blessings and songs. Women gather around her, singing traditional suhag and Lohri geet, celebrating marriage, companionship and shared futures.

This observance underscores the festival's deeper message-that Lohri is not merely about harvests, but about human relationships and generational continuity.

Rituals of Inclusion and Continuity

What unites both these First Lohri celebrations is their emphasis on inclusion-welcoming new life and new relationships into the collective fold. The bonfire becomes a witness to transitions, carrying prayers for fertility, harmony and protection skyward with its flames.

In contemporary times, many families consciously celebrate both bride and child together, using Lohri as a platform to reaffirm equality, gratitude and shared joy.

Lohri in Modern Times

While Lohri's roots lie in rural agrarian life, the festival has gracefully adapted to urban settings. In cities, residential societies organise community bonfires, cultural evenings and folk performances. Social media and digital greetings have added a contemporary touch, but the essence remains unchanged.

Encouragingly, Lohri is also witnessing a progressive shift-celebrated equally for daughters and sons, emphasising joy, equality and inclusiveness over old biases.

A Festival of Warmth in Every Sense

In an age of fast-paced lives and fading traditions, Lohri endures because it fulfils



a deep human need-for warmth, togetherness and hope. Around its flames, generations meet, stories are shared, and the coldest night becomes a celebration of life itself.

More than a harvest festival, Lohri is a reminder that even in the depths of winter, renewal is inevitable, and that community, gratitude and fire can light the way forward.

Makar Sankranti: When the Sun turns north

Each January, as winter slowly loosens its grip and the chill in the air carries the promise of warmth, India witnesses a quiet yet momentous cosmic shift. The Sun begins its northward journey, crossing into Makara Rashi (Capricorn). This celestial transition is celebrated as Makar Sankranti—one of the subcontinent's most ancient, scientifically precise and spiritually resonant festivals.

Unlike most Indian festivals governed by the lunar calendar, Makar Sankranti follows the solar cycle, falling almost unfailingly on January 14 (occasionally January 15). It marks the beginning of Uttarayan, the auspicious half of the year when days lengthen and light triumphs over darkness. Across India's vast geography, this solar event blossoms into harvest celebrations, pilgrimages, rituals of charity and vibrant regional traditions—each echoing the same eternal truth: renewal is inevitable.

The Significance of Makar Sankranti

At its core, Makar Sankranti is a festival of transition—from cold to warmth, from scarcity to abundance, from dormancy to growth. In Hindu cosmology, the Sun (Surya) is not merely a celestial body but the visible manifestation of divine consciousness, the sustainer of life and the regulator of time.

The Rig Veda venerates the Sun as the cosmic witness:

"?ditya? sarva-bh?t?n?? cak?u?"

(The Sun is the eye of all beings)

When the Sun begins its northward ascent, it symbolises spiritual awakening and upward movement—a belief that elevates Makar Sankranti far beyond a seasonal marker.

The Bhagavad Gita reinforces this sanctity:

"Agnir jyotir aha? ?ukla? ?a?-m?s? uttar?ya?am..." (8.24)

(Fire, light, day, the bright fortnight and the six months of Uttarayan...)

Lord Krishna identifies Uttarayan as the path associated with liberation, establishing Makar Sankranti as a cosmic gateway aligned with moksha-consciousness.

Bhishma Pitamah and the Power of Auspicious Time

One of the most profound scriptural moments linked to Makar Sankranti appears in the Mahabharata. Bhishma Pitamah, endowed with *icch?-m?tyu* (the boon to choose the time of death), lies on a bed of arrows through weeks of suffering, waiting patiently for the Sun to turn northward.

His departure during Uttarayan embodies an enduring belief: time itself becomes sacred when aligned with cosmic rhythm. The episode elevates Makar Sankranti into a moment when destiny, discipline and divinity converge.

Legends of Harmony: Surya and Shani

Puranic lore narrates that on Makar Sankranti, Lord Surya visits his son Shani Dev, the ruler of Capricorn.



Despite their strained relationship, this symbolic meeting represents reconciliation, balance and moral order.

The legend quietly shapes the festival's ethical core—setting aside ego, resolving conflict and restoring harmony, much like the Sun's steady, impartial warmth that touches all life equally.

Observances and Rituals

Makar Sankranti is marked by rituals that emphasise cleansing, gratitude and generosity.

Holy Dips and Sun Worship

Before sunrise, devotees take ritual baths in sacred rivers—the Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri—

or at the sea. The act symbolises the washing away of past burdens and a fresh alignment with natural forces.

Pilgrimages such as the Gangasagar Mela in West Bengal and congregations at Prayagraj and Haridwar draw millions, rooted in the belief—recorded in the Puranas—that waters are especially sanctified on this day.

Daana: The Dharma of Charity

Charity is central to Makar Sankranti. The Dharma Shastras emphasise that gifts offered during Uttarayan yield multiplied spiritual merit.

Donations of til (sesame seeds), jaggery, grains, cattle fodder, clothes and blankets are considered especially

auspicious. Sesame, believed to be sanctified by Yama, carries the power to cleanse karmic debts.

The popular saying—*"Til-gud ghya, god god bola"*—is not merely cultural but ethical: let sweetness enter the body and kindness enter speech.

Regional Celebrations

Makar Sankranti is among the most pan-Indian festivals, celebrated under diverse names:

- Punjab & North India: Lohri and Maghi, with bonfires, folk songs and harvest feasts
- Tamil Nadu: Pongal, a four-day thanksgiving to the Sun, cattle and nature
- Assam: Magh Bihu, blending feasting with community bonding
- Gujarat & Rajasthan: Kite festivals filling the skies with colour and joy
- Maharashtra: Exchange of til-gul sweets and warm greetings
- Andhra Pradesh & Telangana: Sankranti with rangoli, bullock festivities and ancestral rituals
- West Bengal: Gangasagar Mela, one of India's largest pilgrimages

Despite regional variations, the essence remains unchanged—gratitude for harvest, reverence for nature and hope for renewal.

Food Symbolism: Sweetness

Against Winter's Edge

Traditional foods prepared during Makar Sankranti reflect both seasonal wisdom and spiritual metaphor. Sesame and jaggery—warming, nourishing ingredients—dominate kitchens across India.

Whether as til laddoos, chikki, pongal or khichdi, these foods symbolise:

- Protection against winter's chill
- Strength and resilience
- Sweetness in human relationships

Ayurveda views this diet as harmonising the body during seasonal transition, reinforcing how ancient practices balanced ritual, health and environment.

Makar Sankranti in Contemporary Times

In modern India, Makar Sankranti continues to evolve—celebrated through community gatherings, eco-friendly kite festivals, charitable drives and digital greetings. Yet its solar precision and philosophical grounding remain untouched.

It stands apart as a festival where science and spirituality coexist seamlessly, reminding people that ancient wisdom was deeply attuned to cosmic order.

A Festival That Teaches Alignment

More than a harvest festival or ritual observance, Makar Sankranti is a lesson in alignment—with time, nature and inner purpose. As the Sun turns northward, the festival invites humanity to rise above inertia, bitterness and darkness.

It affirms a timeless truth embedded in Indian thought: when the cosmos moves toward light, so must the human spirit.

Maghi Mela: Punjab's sacred confluence of faith, sacrifice and liberation

Every January, as the Sun begins its northward journey and Punjab emerges from the depths of winter, thousands of devotees converge at a sacred town whose very name echoes redemption—Sri Muktsar Sahib. Here, on the occasion of Maghi, Punjab observes one of its most solemn and spiritually charged gatherings: Maghi Mela.

Held a day after Lohri and coinciding with Makar Sankranti, Maghi Mela is not a festival of revelry but of remembrance, repentance and renewal. It commemorates the unparalleled sacrifice of the Chali Mukte—the Forty Liberated Ones—whose martyrdom transformed this land into a symbol of spiritual emancipation within Sikh history.

Sri Muktsar Sahib: The Land of Liberation

At the heart of Maghi Mela lies Sri Muktsar Sahib, a revered Sikh pilgrimage centre in southern Punjab. The town derives its name from the historic transformation it witnessed—Muktsar, meaning "the pool of liberation".

Originally known as Khidrana, this site became sacred following the battle fought here in 1705 between Guru Gobind Singh's followers and the Mughal forces. It was here that forty Sikhs, who had earlier renounced their allegiance to the Guru under duress, returned to defend him, driven by remorse and unshakable faith.

After the fierce battle, Guru Gobind Singh personally blessed the martyrs, tearing up the document of renunciation and declaring them "Mukte"—those who had attained liberation. The transformation of Khidrana into Sri Muktsar Sahib stands as one of the most powerful moments of forgiveness and grace in Sikh tradition.

Today, the town is dotted with historic gurdwaras, sacred sarovars and memorials associated with the Chali Mukte, making it the epicentre of Maghi observances.

Origins of Maghi Mela: History Forged in Sacrifice

The origins of Maghi Mela are inseparable from the Battle of Muktsar. During the prolonged siege of Anandpur Sahib by Mughal and hill chieftain forces, forty Sikhs—exhausted and fearful—signed a document disavowing Guru Gobind Singh. However, their conscience soon awakened.

Under the leadership of Mai Bhago, a formidable Sikh woman warrior, the forty Sikhs pursued the Guru and confronted the Mughal army at Khidrana. Despite being vastly outnumbered, they fought with extraordinary bravery, attaining martyrdom while ensuring the Guru's safety.

Their sacrifice was not merely martial—it was moral and spiritual, exemplifying



the Sikh ideals of responsibility, repentance and selfless courage.

Spiritual Significance: From Repentance to Redemption

Maghi Mela occupies a unique place in Sikh spirituality because it commemorates not only martyrdom but the possibility of redemption. The story of the Chali Mukte teaches that spiritual liberation is attainable through sincere remorse and righteous action.

The observance coincides with Uttarayan, reinforcing the symbolism of turning toward light—both cosmically and inwardly. For pilgrims, Maghi becomes a moment of introspection, encouraging them to confront personal failings and renew commitment to truth and justice.

Pilgrimage and the Sacred Sarovar

A defining ritual of Maghi Mela is the holy dip at the sacred sarovar of Sri Muktsar Sahib. Pilgrims arrive in the pre-dawn hours, braving the winter cold to bathe in waters believed to carry the blessings of the Chali Mukte.

After the dip, devotees visit key gurdwaras, including:

- Gurdwara Tuti Gandhi Sahib, marking where Guru Gobind Singh tore the renunciation letter
- Gurdwara Tibbi Sahib, associated with the Guru's strategic position
- Gurdwara Shahid Ganj, commemorating the martyrs

These visits transform the mela into a living historical journey, where faith and memory merge.

Traditions and Observances: Faith in Action Ardas, Kirtan and Katha

Special prayers are offered throughout the day, accompanied by continuous kirtan and historical discourses recounting the battle and its lessons. The emphasis remains on humility, courage and moral responsibility.

Langar: The Spirit of Equality

Massive langars operate day and night, feeding thousands. Volunteers from across Punjab and beyond serve meals selflessly, reflecting the Sikh principle that service to humanity is service to the Divine.

Charity and Community Service

In keeping with the spirit of Maghi and Makar Sankranti, acts of charity—donations of food, clothes and money—form an integral part of the observance.

Maghi Beyond the Shrine: Cultural and Agrarian Dimensions

While Sri Muktsar Sahib remains the spiritual nucleus, Maghi is observed across Punjab as:

- The beginning of the new agricultural year
- A time for settling land leases and accounts
- A marker of seasonal transition and renewed labour

Folk gatherings, local fairs and markets accompany the religious observance, lending Maghi a gentle cultural vibrancy without diminishing its solemn tone.

Maghi Mela in Contemporary Times

Today, Maghi Mela draws pilgrims from across India and the global Sikh diaspora. Modern civic arrangements support the massive turnout, while educational initiatives—exhibitions, lectures and publications—ensure the historical and spiritual essence of Sri Muktsar Sahib is preserved for future generations.

Maghi Mela is ultimately a tribute to the idea that faith is not defined by perfection, but by the courage to return, repent and rise. The Chali Mukte did not erase their past—they redeemed it through sacrifice.

As pilgrims gather each year at Sri Muktsar Sahib, they are reminded that liberation is not distant or abstract. It lies in truthful living, moral courage and unwavering devotion.

In the quiet prayers by the sacred sarovar and the echo of Gurbani across the winter air, Maghi Mela continues to affirm Punjab's timeless lesson:

that even in failure, the path to liberation remains open.

Pongal: Tamil Nadu's festival of gratitude to the sun, soil and sustenance

As the winter Sun climbs higher in the southern sky and the land turns generous after months of cultivation, South India, particularly Tamil Nadu awakens to one of its most cherished festivals-Pongal. Celebrated over four days in mid-January, Pongal is not merely a harvest festival; it is a profound expression of thanksgiving-to the Sun (Surya), the earth, the farmer, and the cattle that sustain agrarian life.

Rooted in ancient Tamil civilization and aligned with the solar transition of Uttarayan and Makar Sankranti, Pongal embodies a timeless philosophy: that human prosperity is inseparable from harmony with nature.

The Origin of Pongal: An Ancient Tamil Thanksgiving

The word Pongal comes from the Tamil verb "ponga", meaning to boil over-a symbolic gesture of abundance, prosperity and overflowing joy. The festival's origins can be traced back more than two millennia, referenced in classical Tamil literature, including Sangam texts, which celebrate agriculture, seasonal rhythms and Sun worship.

Pongal is believed to have emerged as a Dravidian harvest observance, long before its later assimilation into broader pan-Indian solar festivals. Over time, it became closely associated with Makar Sankranti, marking the Sun's northward journey and the end of the winter solstice.

In ancient Tamil society, where agriculture was central to survival and culture, Pongal served as a communal pause-an opportunity to acknowledge nature's benevolence and reaffirm collective responsibility toward land and livestock.

Significance of Pongal: Gratitude as a Way of Life

At its heart, Pongal is a festival of gratitude. It celebrates not conquest or mythic triumph, but the quiet miracle of sustenance-the grain that ripens, the cattle that plough, the Sun that nourishes.

Spiritually, Pongal honors:

- Surya, the life-giving Sun
- Bhumi Devi, the fertile Earth
- Mattu (cattle), partners in agriculture
- Farmers, custodians of food security

The festival reinforces the Tamil worldview that prosperity must be acknowledged, shared and respected-not exploited.

The boiling of Pongal rice until it spills over the pot is accompanied by joyful cries of "Pongalo Pongal!", invoking abundance in homes, fields and hearts.

The Four Days of Pongal:



Rituals and Observances

Bhogi Pongal: Renewal and Release

The festival begins with Bhogi Pongal, dedicated to renewal. Old possessions, broken tools and discarded items are ceremonially burnt, symbolising the shedding of negativity and stagnation.

Homes are cleaned, walls freshly decorated, and intricate kolams (rangoli) drawn at entrances using rice flour-both an aesthetic and ecological act, as they feed birds and insects.

Bhogi honors Indra, the deity of rain, acknowledging the water that sustains crops.

Thai Pongal: The Festival of the Sun

The second and most important day, Thai Pongal, is dedicated to Surya. Families prepare the sacred dish-Pongal-using newly harvested rice, milk and jaggery, often outdoors under the open sky.

As the pot boils over, prayers are offered to the Sun, thanking him for warmth, light and life. The dish is first offered to the deity before being shared among family and neighbours, reinforcing the spirit of community.

Mattu Pongal: Honoring the Silent Workers

Mattu Pongal is a moving tribute to cattle-bulls, cows and buffaloes-acknowledging their indispensable role in agriculture. Animals are bathed, decorated with garlands, bells and painted horns, and fed special meals.

In villages, this day reflects a deep ethical tradition-recognizing labor beyond the human. It also coincides with traditional events such as Jallikattu, a centuries-old sport celebrating valor and cattle rearing, now regulated and symbolic of cultural identity.

Kaanum Pongal: Community and Kinship

The final day, Kaanum Pongal, is



devoted to social bonding. Families visit relatives, exchange gifts and enjoy picnics near rivers or fields.

Women offer prayers for the prosperity of their brothers, echoing themes of protection and familial harmony. The day emphasises that harvest celebrations are incomplete without human connection.

Food, Kolams and Cultural Expression

Food lies at the heart of Pongal, not as indulgence but as ritual. Variants such as Sakkarai Pongal, Ven Pongal and sugarcane delicacies dominate festive tables.

Kolams drawn with mathematical precision reflect Tamil Nadu's unique fusion of art, science and spirituality. Folk songs, rural games and temple festivities add vibrancy, ensuring that Pongal is celebrated as much in the streets as in the home.

Pongal in Contemporary Times

While urbanisation has transformed

lifestyles, Pongal remains deeply relevant. Cities celebrate with community feasts, cultural performances and eco-conscious practices. Schools and institutions use the festival to reconnect younger generations with agrarian values.

Importantly, Pongal has evolved into a symbol of Tamil identity and pride, transcending religious boundaries and uniting people across communities.

A Festival Rooted in Humility and Harmony

Pongal endures because it celebrates the fundamentals of life-food, family and gratitude. In a world increasingly disconnected from nature, the festival serves as a gentle reminder that prosperity is not self-created, but co-produced by sun, soil, rain and labour.

As pots boil over and kolams bloom at dawn, Pongal quietly teaches an enduring lesson: to receive with humility, to share with joy, and to live in harmony with the earth that sustains us.

Swami Vivekananda Jayanti: National Youth Day and the awakening of a nation

National Youth Day is observed every year on January 12, marking the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda—one of India's greatest spiritual thinkers, reformers and global ambassadors of Hindu philosophy. Revered as a true luminary of modern India, Vivekananda is credited with introducing the Western world to the depth, rationality and universality of Hinduism and Vedanta, while simultaneously inspiring generations of Indian youth to rise with confidence, courage and character.

In recognition of his extraordinary faith in young minds, the Government of India declared his birth anniversary as National Youth Day in 1984, and the observance formally began in 1985. The day serves not merely as a tribute, but as a reminder of Vivekananda's timeless call to youth-led nation-building.

Early Life: Narendranath Dutta and the Seeds of Greatness

Swami Vivekananda was born as Narendranath Dutta on January 12, 1863, coinciding with the auspicious festival of Makar Sankranti, in an affluent and culturally refined Bengali family in Calcutta (now Kolkata). He was one of eight children born to Vishwanath Dutta, a successful attorney and influential personality, and Bhuvaneshwari Devi, a deeply religious woman whose spiritual temperament left a profound impression on her son.

From a young age, Narendranath displayed exceptional intelligence, curiosity and fearlessness. While his father exposed him to rational thinking, Western ideas and liberal values, his mother nurtured in him a strong spiritual foundation rooted in devotion, discipline and moral strength.

Education, Intellect and Physical Vigor

At the age of eight, in 1871, Narendranath was enrolled at Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Metropolitan Institution, and later studied at Presidency College in Calcutta. A brilliant student, he was deeply influenced by Western philosophy, Christianity and modern science, while simultaneously exploring Indian scriptures.

What set Vivekananda apart was the breadth of his intellect. On one hand, he immersed himself in sacred Hindu texts such as the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and Vedas; on the other, he studied Western philosophers and thinkers like David Hume, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant. This rare synthesis of Eastern spirituality and Western rationalism would later define his worldview.

Equally important to him was physical strength. Narendranath was passionate about music—both vocal and



instrumental—and actively participated in sports, including gymnastics, wrestling and bodybuilding. He firmly believed that a strong body was essential for a strong mind, a message he later emphasized repeatedly to Indian youth.

Spiritual Quest and Inner Conflict

Although raised in a religious household, Narendranath's exposure to diverse philosophies led him to question

monotheism and rejected idol worship, which resonated with his rational temperament. However, his inner questions remained unresolved.

Meeting Sri Ramakrishna: A Spiritual Turning Point

During this period of intense spiritual turmoil, Narendranath first heard about Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa from William Hastie, the Principal of Scottish Church College. Intrigued, he eventually met Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar Kali Temple.

Narendranath posed a question he had asked many spiritual leaders before:

"Have you seen God?"

Ramakrishna's reply was immediate and disarmingly simple:

"Yes, I have. I see God as clearly as I see you—only in a much deeper sense."

This answer profoundly impacted Narendranath. He began visiting Dakshineswar regularly, and under Ramakrishna's guidance, many of his doubts gradually dissolved. Ramakrishna's teachings of universal religion, divine love and direct spiritual experience reshaped his understanding of God and life.

Hardship, Renunciation and Acceptance of the Guru

After the sudden death of his father, the Dutta family plunged into severe financial distress. In desperation, Narendranath approached Ramakrishna, requesting him to pray to Goddess Kali for material relief. Ramakrishna, however, asked him to pray himself.

Standing before the deity, Narendranath found himself unable to ask for wealth or comfort. Instead, he prayed for conscience, strength and renunciation. This moment marked his spiritual awakening and the beginning of his ascetic journey. He fully accepted Sri Ramakrishna as his Guru, surrendering himself to the spiritual path.

From Disciple to Monk

In 1885, Sri Ramakrishna was diagnosed with throat cancer and shifted to Calcutta and later to Cossipore. Vivekananda and other disciples devoted themselves to nursing him. On August 16, 1886, Ramakrishna attained Mahasamadhi, leaving behind a spiritual legacy that would soon transform India.

Before his passing, Ramakrishna taught his disciples that service to humanity is the highest form of worship. After his demise, fifteen disciples, including Narendranath, took shelter at Baranagar in North Calcutta, which later became known as Ramakrishna Math. In 1887, they formally took vows of monkhood. Narendranath became Swami Vivekananda, meaning "the bliss of discerning wisdom."

FROM PAGE 30

Parivrajak: Walking Through India's Soul

Vivekananda soon left the monastery to embark on a nationwide journey on foot, known as Parivrajaka Sannyasa. Traveling across villages, towns and princely states, he witnessed India's poverty, social injustice, caste discrimination and spiritual decline firsthand.

This journey awakened in him a deep resolve: India's regeneration lay in uplifting the masses through education, spiritual strength and self-confidence.

World Parliament of Religions, Chicago (1893)

Determined to represent India and his Guru's teachings, Vivekananda set out to attend the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Despite financial hardships and initial setbacks, he eventually took the stage on September 11, 1893.

His opening words-

"Sisters and Brothers of America"-

earned him a thunderous standing ovation.

Through his speeches, Vivekananda introduced the world to Vedanta, religious tolerance, universal brotherhood and spiritual humanism, firmly placing India on the global spiritual map.

He spent nearly two and a half years in the United States, founding the Vedanta Society of New York, and later traveled to the United Kingdom, spreading Vedantic philosophy.

Ramakrishna Mission: Service as Spiritual Practice

Upon returning to India in 1897, Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission on May 1, 1897, at Belur Math near Calcutta. Rooted in Karma Yoga, the Mission aimed to serve the poor, sick and distressed as a form of worship.

Its activities included:

- Schools and colleges
- Hospitals and healthcare services
- Disaster relief and rehabilitation
- Spiritual education through seminars and conferences

The Mission remains a living embodiment of Vivekananda's vision of practical spirituality.

Philosophy and Teachings

Vivekananda's teachings were grounded in Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual realizations and his own interpretation of Advaita Vedanta. He believed that:

- The ultimate goal of life is freedom of the soul
- All religions are valid paths to the same truth
- Strength, fearlessness and service are essential virtues

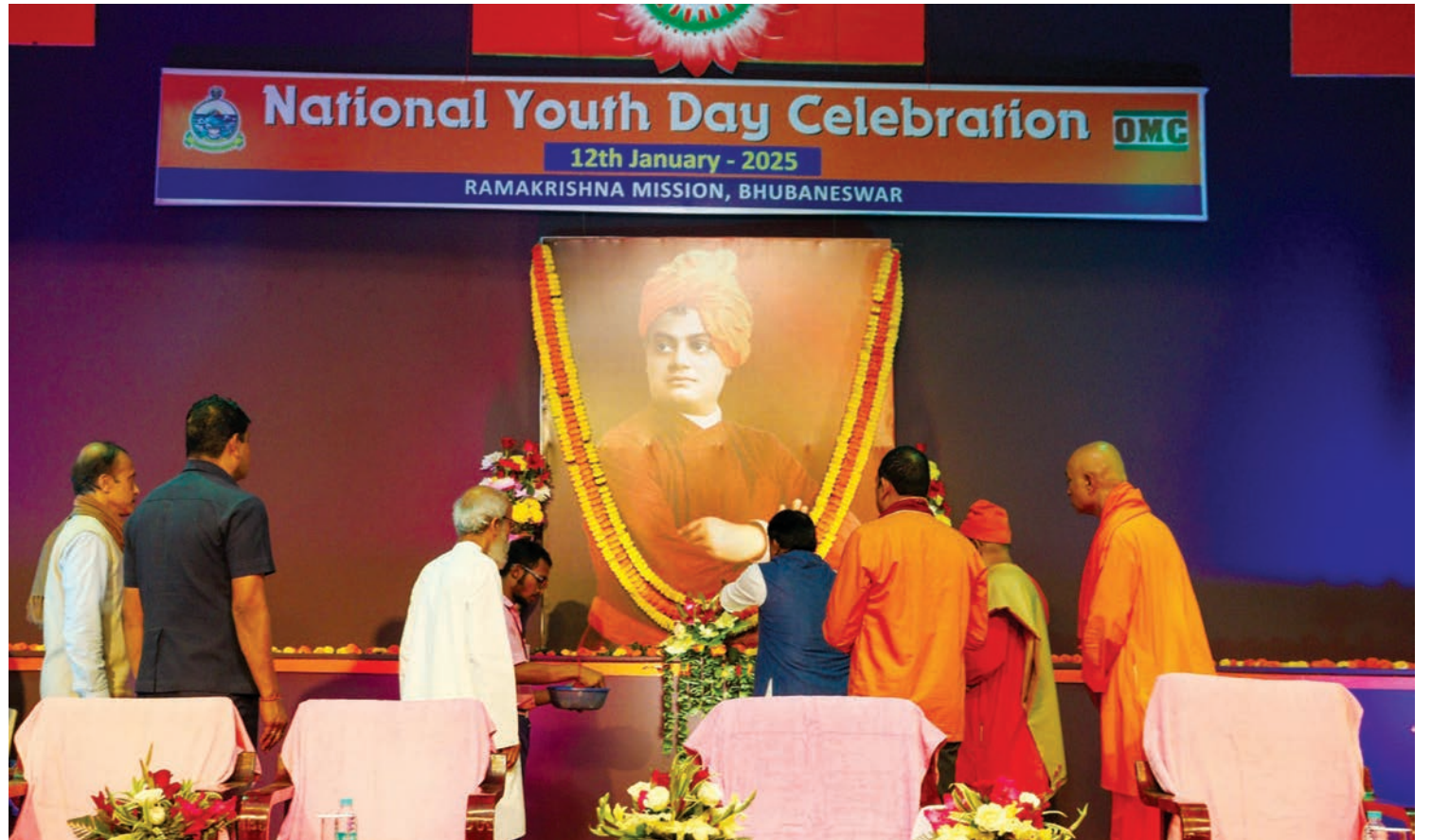
His clarion call to youth-

"Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached"-

continues to inspire millions.

Mahasamadhi: A Life Fulfilled

Swami Vivekananda once predicted that he would not live beyond forty. On July 4, 1902, at the age of 39, he passed away while meditating, attaining Mahasamadhi. He was cremated on the banks of the River Ganga, leaving behind a legacy that transcends time.

**National Youth Day: A Living Legacy**

National Youth Day is more than a remembrance-it is a call to action. Swami Vivekananda's life stands as a beacon for India's youth, urging them to combine knowledge with character, strength with compassion, and faith with reason.

Even today, his words echo with urgency and hope, reminding the nation that the future belongs to fearless, enlightened and selfless youth.

National Youth Day celebrations

Across schools, colleges and universities, the day begins with special assemblies, lectures and interactive sessions highlighting the life, philosophy and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Students participate in debates, essay-writing competitions, quizzes and speeches that focus on leadership, character-building and social responsibility. These programs aim to make Vivekananda's ideas relevant to contemporary challenges faced by young people.

At the national and state levels, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, along with various youth organizations, holds youth conventions, leadership programs and National Youth Festivals around January 12. These events bring together young participants from different regions, encouraging cultural exchange, innovation and a spirit of unity. The celebrations often feature discussions on education, employment, entrepreneurship and civic responsibility.

Cultural expression plays an important role in the observance. Dance, music, drama and street plays depicting episodes from Vivekananda's life or conveying his message of universal brotherhood and service are staged in educational institutions and public spaces. Exhibitions displaying photographs, books and archival material related to his life and teachings are also organized, allowing people to



engage with his legacy in a visual and accessible way.

In keeping with Vivekananda's emphasis on physical and mental strength, yoga sessions, meditation programs and fitness activities are widely conducted on National Youth Day. Public parks, campuses and community centers host group yoga practices and mindfulness sessions, reinforcing the idea that a strong body and a focused mind are essential foundations for personal and national growth.

Community service forms the moral core of the celebrations. Inspired by Vivekananda's belief that service to humanity is the highest form of worship, many youth groups and institutions organize blood donation camps, cleanliness drives, tree plantation programs, free medical camps and rural outreach initiatives. These activities encourage young people to translate ideals into action and develop a sense of social commitment.

The Ramakrishna Mission and its centers across India and abroad observe National Youth Day with special prayers,

spiritual discourses and youth conventions. Belur Math, the headquarters of the Mission, becomes a focal point for reflections on Vivekananda's teachings, particularly his vision of harmonizing spirituality with social service.

In recent years, National Youth Day has also expanded into the digital space, with educational institutions, government bodies and youth organizations sharing inspirational quotes, videos, webinars and online discussions on social media platforms. These digital initiatives help carry Vivekananda's message to a wider, tech-savvy audience.

Observed on January 12 each year, National Youth Day ultimately serves as a day of reflection, inspiration and renewal. It reminds India's youth of Swami Vivekananda's enduring call to rise above fear, build character and dedicate themselves to the service of society-affirming his timeless belief that the future of the nation rests in the hands of awakened and empowered young minds.

Taiwan detects 23 Chinese aircraft, 6 vessels, official ship around itself

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense detected the presence of 23 Chinese military aircraft, six naval vessels and an official ship operating in its territorial waters as of 6am (local time) on Friday, Jan 9.

In a post on X, the MND said, "23 PLA aircraft, 6 PLAN ships and 1 official ship operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 19 out of 23 sorties crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern, central, southwestern and eastern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded."

Earlier on Thursday, Taiwan's MND detected 21 sorties of PLA aircraft and five PLAN vessels.

In a post on X, the MND said, "Overall 21 sorties of PLA aircraft in various types (including J-10, H-6K, KJ-500, etc.) were detected from 1456hr today. 19 out of 21 sorties crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered the northern, central and southwestern ADIZ in conducting air-sea joint training along with other PLAN vessels. ROC Armed Forces have monitored the situation and responded accordingly." Earlier in the day, it had said, "9 sorties of PLA aircraft, 5 PLAN vessels and 1 official ship operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 9 out of 9 sorties crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded."

Russia says any foreign forces in Ukraine would be 'legitimate targets', after UK and France pledge troops

MOSCOW (TIP)

Russia doubled down on its longstanding position of declaring Western forces in Ukraine "legitimate targets" on Thursday, days after France and the UK pledged to send troops there in the event of a peace deal.

"The Russian Foreign Ministry warns that the deployment of military units, military facilities, warehouses, and other infrastructure of Western countries on the territory of Ukraine will be classified as foreign intervention," spokesperson Maria Zakharova said in a statement.

She was responding to a "declaration of intent" signed by UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday at the latest meeting of the so-called Coalition of the Willing, where they agreed to deploy a multinational force to guarantee Ukraine's security.

Russia has long opposed the presence of any Western troops in Ukraine. "These warnings have been voiced repeatedly at the highest level and remain relevant," Zakharova said, characterizing the agreement reached by Ukraine's allies as a "new militaristic declaration."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has long insisted his Western allies provide robust security guarantees as part of any peace deal to deter a future Russian invasion.

The precise nature of the guarantees that Europe and the US are willing to offer has gradually taken shape following months of meetings. Tuesday's agreement set out the legal framework for allowing British and French troops to operate in Ukraine, Starmer said, after the two countries had previously stated their willingness to deploy troops there.

Zelensky said Thursday that the agreement reached on security guarantees is now "essentially ready for finalization at the highest level with the president of the United States," after further negotiations in France on Wednesday.

But, even if the US, Europe and Ukraine reach their own agreement, Moscow's statement underlines just how far apart the two blocs remain in these negotiations.



French soldiers pictured taking part in exercises during a joint military manoeuvre between the French and British army in northeastern France last year. Sameer Al-Doumy/AFP/Getty Images

Russia has only intensified its attacks in recent weeks, targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure to take out power with the winter cold at its most intense.

Authorities in Kyiv warned residents Thursday to stock up on water, batteries and warm clothing in anticipation of further attacks, as temperatures plunge as low as -20 degrees Celsius (-4 degrees Fahrenheit).

"We can only get to a peace deal if Putin is ready to make compromises," said Starmer on Tuesday. "For all Russia's words, Putin is not showing that he's ready for peace."

China hacked e-mails of US Congress staff: Report

NEW YORK (TIP)

China has hacked e-mails used by staff members of committees in the US House of Representatives as part of a cyberespionage campaign known as Salt Typhoon, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

China accessed e-mail systems used by some staffers on the House China committee, as well as aides on panels covering foreign affairs, intelligence and the armed services, the report said.

One person familiar with the alleged hacking told the Financial Times that it was unclear whether the attackers had accessed lawmakers' e-mails in the intrusions, which were detected last month.

Reuters could not immediately verify the report.

The White House had no immediate comment.

In November last year, the US Senate sergeant at arms notified multiple congressional offices of a "cyberincident," in which hackers might have accessed communications between the Congressional Budget Office, which provides key financial research data to lawmakers, and some Senate offices.

US officials have previously alleged that the hacking group is prepositioning itself to paralyze critical US infrastructure in case of a conflict with China.



Beijing has repeatedly denied being behind the intrusions.

Early last year, the US imposed sanctions on alleged hackers, accusing them of being involved in Salt Typhoon.

China yesterday said that it was against "politically motivated disinformation" in relation to the report.

"We have always opposed and lawfully combated hacker activities, and we are even more opposed to spreading false information related to China for political purposes," Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Mao Ning told a news conference when asked about the cyberattack.

Israel strikes Gaza launch site after failed rocket fire

Israel's military said on Thursday, Jan 8, it had carried out a targeted strike on a rocket launch site near Gaza City after identifying a failed launch, as questions mount over when the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire will begin. The military said the projectile did not cross into Israeli territory and that the launch site was struck shortly after the attempt was detected. It accused Hamas of violating the ceasefire twice in the past 24 hours. A source from the Palestinian militant group told Reuters it was checking the allegation. Israel is awaiting the handover of the final body due under the current stage of the truce. An Israeli official close to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel will not move to the next phase of the ceasefire until Hamas returns the remains of the last Israeli hostage still held in Gaza.

100 died in US attack that ousted Maduro, says Venezuela's minister

Venezuela's interior minister Diosdado Cabello said late on Wednesday that 100 people died in the US attack which removed President Nicolas Maduro from power.

Caracas have not previously given a number for those killed, but the army posted a list of 23 names of its dead. Venezuelan officials have said a large part of Maduro's security contingent was killed "in cold blood," and Cuba has said 32 members of its military and intelligence services in Venezuela were killed. Maduro's wife Cilia Flores, detained alongside him, suffered a head injury during the US raid, Cabello said, and Maduro an injury to his leg.

Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodriguez, who Cabello praised during his weekly show on state television as "courageous", on Tuesday declared a week of mourning for members of the military killed in the raid.

As tensions escalated, the White House confirmed that the United States plans to control Venezuela's oil sales "indefinitely". The move follows the US military's seizure of an estimated 50 million barrels of Venezuelan crude stranded in tankers and storage facilities, as well as the capture of vessels linked to Russia and Iran. The administration has already signalled it intends to sell up to \$3 billion worth of Venezuelan oil into the global market. US Energy Secretary Chris Wright said Washington would oversee all future crude sales, with proceeds ostensibly earmarked for the Venezuela.

Venezuela's Interim Prez says citizens did not deserve 'vile aggression'

CARACAS (TIP)

Venezuela's Interim President Delcy Rodriguez said in a message to the US that Venezuelans "did not deserve this vile, warmongering aggression," El Cooperante reported.

Rodriguez also announced the upcoming construction of a monument in honor of all citizens who died in the US military incursion into Venezuela on January 3.

"No one surrendered here; there was a fight for this homeland, for our liberators, for Chavez, and for Venezuela. That is our greatest satisfaction, and that is our answer. We will face them, one-on-one, and we will show them what the children of Bolivar are made of," she said as quoted by the Spanish El Cooperante news outlet.

Rodriguez emphasized that weapons in Venezuela are used to "defend" the population, country, sovereignty and dignity, and not for acts of "aggression" against other nations.

She added that Venezuela will give the US a "lesson" in diplomacy, because, he said, the country has a universal legacy dating back to Simon Bolivar. "Our liberator never taught our men and women in arms to be warmongers or to use supremacy to humiliate anyone."

Rodriguez stressed that the Venezuelans and Cubans who died during the US incursion are "children of the homeland," asserting that they gave their lives for humanity.



Venezuela's Interim President Delcy Rodriguez.

She also announced the creation of a commission for the families of the deceased citizens, as per El Cooperante.

Meanwhile, Nobel Peace Prize recipient Maria Corina Machado asserted this Thursday that she will not rest until all "political prisoners" in the country are freed, following the government's announcement regarding the release of a group of Venezuelans, as per El Cooperante.

"Today, the truth that was persecuted and silenced for years is finally breaking through, despite the arbitrariness, the cruelty, and the fear. For many months,

many years, even decades, their families have borne the fierce weight of a sentence that wasn't in any file, the sentence of waiting, of silence, of the home that remained standing while the country seemed to be collapsing around them," she said.

Machado acknowledged the strength and determination of the detainees' families and asked them to see this moment as an "act of moral restitution," confirmation that their fortitude was not in vain. "Dignity knows how to wait without surrendering and ultimately triumph," as reported by El Cooperante.

PARIS (TIP)

Security forces used tear gas and live fire to disperse protesters in Iran, rights groups said on Thursday (Jan 8), as people angered by economic crisis kept up their challenge to the authorities and exiled opposition groups urged new protests as well as strikes.

Twelve days of protests have shaken the clerical authorities under Ayatollah Ali Khamenei already battling economic crisis after years of sanctions and recovering from the June war against Israel.

The movement, which originated with a shutdown on the Tehran bazaar on Dec 28 after the rial plunged to record lows, has spread nationwide and is now being marked by larger scale demonstrations.

Authorities have blamed unrest on "rioters" and the judiciary chief has vowed there would be "no leniency" in bringing them to justice.

On Wednesday, Jan 7, an Iranian police officer was stabbed to death west of Tehran "during efforts to control unrest", the Iranian Fars news agency said.

Reza Pahlavi, the son of the shah ousted by the 1979 Islamic revolution and a key exiled opposition figure, said the turnout on Wednesday had been "unprecedented" in this wave of demonstrations and called for major new protests Thursday evening. He said in a message on social media he had received reports the "regime is deeply frightened and is attempting, once again, to cut off the internet" to thwart the protests.

New clashes hit Iran as opposition urges protests, strikes



Iraq-based Iranian Kurdish opposition parties, including the Komala party which is outlawed by Tehran, called for a general strike on Thursday in Kurdish-populated areas in western Iran which have seen intense protest activity.

SOLEIMANI STATUES ATTACKED

The HRANA monitor published a video of

protesters in Kuhchenar in the southern Fars province cheering overnight as they pulled down a statue of the former foreign operations commander of the Revolutionary Guards Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in a US strike in January 2020 and is hailed as a national hero by the Islamic republic.

Persian-language TV channels based outside Iran also posted images of a statue of Soleimani in the central city of Kashan being set on fire. It was not immediately possible to verify the images.

HRANA said according to its count protests had taken place in 348 locations over the last 11 days in all of Iran's 31 provinces.

It also published a video of people massing late at night in the Tehran satellite city of Karaj and lighting fires in the streets and also images of security forces using tear gas to disperse a protest in the Caspian Sea town of Tonekabon.

Images it said were taken Wednesday, Jan 7, in the western city of Abadan showing security forces firing on protesters.

The Norway-based Iran Human Rights group said security forces on Wednesday "opened fire on protesters, used tear gas and violently assaulted civilians" during a protest in the key southeastern hub of Kerman.

Another BNP leader Azizur Rahman Musabbir shot dead in Dhaka

Former Swechchhasebak Dal leader Azizur Rahman Musabbir was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka on Tuesday, January 6, night, police and party sources said, in the latest incident of political violence ahead of elections. The killing comes amid increasing violence in Bangladesh, with the model code of conduct in force ahead of voting scheduled for February 12. Just days ago, a Jubo Dal leader was shot in a separate incident. Earlier, on December 12, Osman Hadi, a prominent anti-India leader, was also shot dead.

Musabbir, who previously served as general secretary of Dhaka Metropolitan North Swechchhasebak Dal, the volunteer wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, was targeted in the Dhaka's Karwan Bazaar area around 8.30 pm (local time).

Police said the attack took place near the Super Star Hotel, close to the Bashundhara City Shopping Complex, a crowded commercial zone in central Dhaka. According to initial accounts, assailants opened fire at close range, killing Musabbir at the scene.

Another person was wounded in the shooting and rushed to hospital for treatment. Authorities said the injured individual's condition was stable.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Tejgaon Division of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Fazlul Karim, confirmed to local media that two people were shot in an alley beside Star Kabab in Karwan Bazaar. Musabbir later succumbed to his injuries at a private hospital in the Panthapath area, Karim said, adding that he had suffered a gunshot wound to the abdomen.

Pakistan bows to China, lets Beijing set up security posts on its soil

ISLAMABAD (TIP)

Pakistan has quietly conceded unprecedented security space to China, agreeing to allow the establishment of Chinese-controlled "security posts" inside its territory amid mounting pressure from Beijing over repeated attacks on Chinese nationals. According to senior security sources cited by CNN-News18, the move marks a significant erosion of Pakistan's sovereignty and reflects Islamabad's deepening strategic dependence on China as it struggles to control militant violence on its own soil.

The decision follows sustained Chinese anger over Pakistan's failure to protect workers and assets linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, despite years of military deployment. Nearly 90 Chinese citizens have been killed in Pakistan since 2014, exposing what Beijing sees as a chronic security breakdown. With Islamabad unable to guarantee safety, China has now pushed its way deeper into Pakistan's internal security architecture.

China pushes for inner security posts inside Pakistan

Sources told CNN-News18 that Pakistan's commitments were finalised during a recent China-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue in Beijing, where Chinese officials raised sharp concerns over continuing militant attacks on Chinese engineers, technicians, and construction workers.

During the visit, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi reportedly signed a confidential agreement with China's Ministry of Public Security. Under this arrangement, Pakistan has agreed to allow the creation of Chinese "inner-posts" or security nodes located close to Chinese personnel and assets, going well beyond conventional perimeter protection.

Islamabad has also agreed to expand Special Protection Units that will operate exclusively for Chinese nationals. These SPUs are being deployed across Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Sukkur, Peshawar, Gwadar, and Gilgit-Baltistan, supplementing the military forces already guarding major CPEC projects.

Sources say Beijing has been blunt in its assessment that Pakistan's existing security framework has failed. China has therefore demanded layered, localised protection closer to Chinese sites, along with joint police training, deeper intelligence sharing, and a coordinated counter-terrorism mechanism involving both countries' security agencies.

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Interior Minister Naqvi have assured Chinese officials that Islamabad is taking "strong measures at all levels" to plug security gaps. Both sides have also agreed to conduct joint security reviews every 90



days, effectively institutionalising Chinese oversight of Pakistan's internal security arrangements.

Beijing's non-negotiable terms and Pakistan's vulnerability

Despite pumping nearly \$60 billion into Pakistan's infrastructure, China remains deeply dissatisfied with the security environment. Sources told CNN-News18 that Beijing placed just two non-negotiable demands before Islamabad.

The first is absolute security for Chinese nationals operating in Pakistan. The second is a one-window operational system that allows Chinese investments, logistics, and financial flows to bypass Pakistan's slow and opaque bureaucracy.

For Pakistan, the concessions underline its growing inability to say no to its primary economic lifeline. Analysts say the expanding Chinese security footprint raises uncomfortable questions about transparency, civilian oversight, and how much control Islamabad is willing to surrender in exchange for financial survival.

The developments carry serious implications for India. The expansion of Chinese security infrastructure in Pakistan, particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan, brings Chinese personnel closer to India's sensitive northern frontiers. It also deepens China's physical presence in territories that India considers illegally occupied by Pakistan.

More importantly, the growing integration of Chinese and Pakistani security mechanisms strengthens the strategic nexus between Beijing and Islamabad. This risks turning Pakistan into a forward operating zone for Chinese interests in South Asia, with potential spillover effects for regional stability.

ISLAMABAD (TIP)

Pakistan's air chief met Saudi Arabia's top air force commander and discussed opportunities to expand military cooperation between the two longtime allies, the military said here on Thursday.

Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Chief, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, this week visited the Gulf Kingdom, where he met Commander of the Royal Saudi Air Force Lt Gen Turki bin Bander bin Abdulaziz and Chief of the General Staff General Fayiadh bin Hameed Al-Rowaily.

According to a statement by the Pakistan military on Thursday, bilateral cooperation, regional security dynamics and future defence collaboration were discussed during the meetings.

It said that the Saudi defence leadership praised the robust bond of fraternity between the two brotherly nations and commended the close, enduring cooperation that exists between their respective Air Forces.

"Acknowledging the growing significance of Multi Domain Operations

Pakistan air force chief meets Saudi military leadership discusses ways to expand military ties

in addressing the complexities of modern warfare, the military leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia conveyed strong interest in leveraging Pakistan Air Force's rich operational experience through enhanced joint training and operational collaboration," the statement said.

"They also appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability," it added.

"Both sides expressed satisfaction over the existing level of cooperation and agreed to further enhance engagement through joint training, operational collaboration and exchange of professional expertise," the statement said.

Sidhu highlighted the historic, time-tested and fraternal relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, founded on



shared religious values, mutual respect and strategic alignment.

He reiterated his unwavering commitment to enhancing existing ties in the realm of military-to-military cooperation through bilateral and multilateral exercises. He underscored

the profound transformation of the PAF in recent years, with particular emphasis on its evolution into a robust Multi-Domain Force.

Sidhu emphasised that this enhanced capability, seamlessly integrating space, electronic warfare, cyber, niche technologies and artificial intelligence domains, was decisively manifested during the May conflict in 2025, reflecting PAF's operational prowess, adaptability and combat effectiveness, the statement said.

It further said that his visit "underscores the depth of the enduring strategic partnership between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and reflects the shared commitment of both nations to further strengthen cooperation in the defence and aviation sectors".

Sikh History This Week

JANUARY 9 TO JANUARY 15

9th January

1961 Fateh Singh broke his fast after assurances regarding Punjabi Suba from the Indian Government.

1983 Akali Dal organized a convention for GurSikh intellectuals in connection with the Dharam Yudh Morcha.

10th January

1770 Sikhs attack Delhi from Panipat side.

1943 Harbans Singh Babbar of Sirhala was arrested.

11th January



1666: Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji released from prison.

1843: A friendship treaty was signed between Maharaja Sher Singh and Amir Dost Mohamed Khan, ruler of Kabul. This treaty was signed during Mohamed Khan's visit to Lahore.

12th January

1758 Baba Aalla Singh attacked Abdul Samand Khan of Sirhind and reached a mutual agreement.

1797 Shah Zaman lost 20,000 soldiers against Sikhs in a battle in Amritsar during his 3rd invasion. In a reckless hand-to-hand fighting at Amritsar, Shah Zaman lost 20,000 of his choicest soldiers against 15,000 Sikhs. During his 3rd invasion, Shah Zaman reached Peshawar in Nov. 1796 and entered Lahore in Jan. 1797. Sikh Sardars vacated Lahore and assembled at Amritsar to face Shah Zaman. Shah Zaman was defeated at Amritsar and returned to Lahore. The Sikhs pursued the retreating Afghans up to the outskirts of Lahore. Ranjit Singh with his 9000 troops was made responsible for security of the holy city. This marked the beginning of the rise of Ranjit Singh. Sikhs cut off his supply lines and forced Shah Zaman to return back.



1922 British government announced its decision to finally withdraw from the management of the Darbar

Sahib at Amritsar. The British government announced its decision to finally withdraw from the management of Sri Darbar Sahib at Amritsar and leave the administration in the hands of the Sikh community. The government had mistakenly believed that the Sikh community wanted to use the Gurudwara resources for political purposes. Despite its intense efforts, it found no Sikh willing to accept the office of Sarbrah at its hands. Finally, the government was left with no option but to negotiate with the SGPC, conceding the demands of Baba Kharak Singh, the uncrowned King of the Sikhs.



1922 The Akalis under Mula Singh Bahawal took control of Anandpur Sahib.

1922 The militant Akalis under Kishan Singh Garhgaj helped capture the Gurudwara of Kiratpur Sahib. Akalis forcibly captured the Kirtapur Gurdwara, despite the SGPC's disapproval of such measures. The Akalis were helped by the Chakravarti Jatha under the leadership of Kishan Singh Garhgaj.

1923 Letters of the solidiers published in Babbar Akalis Doaba newspaper. These letters expressed the gist of their talks with District Commissioner of Jalandhar.

1982 Harsimran Singh, Chief organizer of Dal Khalsa, arrested. Harsimran Singh, Mukh Panch (chief Organiser) of the Dal Khalsa was arrested from Mohali near Chandigarh. The Dal Khalsa leaders believed that that was possible because of a conspiracy by some member of the Organisation. Harsimran Singh was tortured by the police and forced to read out a written statement if he wanted to save his life. The police told him that they had the permission of the Government to kill him in a fake encounter near the Indo-Pakistan border. Such atrocities were perpetrated on various Sikhs arrested during that period.

13th January

1588: Foundation stone of Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, laid by Sain Mia Mir.

Foundation stone of Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, was laid down by the renowned Sufi Saint of Qadiri order, Mir Mohamed Khan, popularly known as Hazarat Mian Mir of Lahore. Sri Harimandir Sahib, unlike any other place of worship, was built at a lower level than the surrounding area. It has doors on all four sides, signifying both humanity and universalism and that it was open to people of all the denominations.

1761: Janam Din Akali Phula Singh Ji.

PHULA SINGH AKALI was son of Siha village (Bangar) resident Eshwar Singh. After being introduced to amrit through Nihangh Singh (of Naena Singh Shaheedhi misl), he assumed the name Phula Singh. He was one of the precious flowers of Kalgidhar's Akali garden. He led the Akali movement in restoration of our Gurudwaras and general improvement of the whole Panth. He traveled extensively in pursuit of Gurudwara reforms. However,

he maintained his residence in Amritsar. Even today there is a "burgh" and an establishment, named after him, in Amritsar. Akali Phula Singh helped Maharaja Ranjit Singh fight and successfully win numerous wars. He was so true to his faith and strong in his principles that he did not hesitate in pointing Maharaja Ranjit Singh's lapses in public forums. Further he actively sought appropriate punishment (Tankha) for such lapses.

1764: Conquest of Sirhind by the Khalsa Dal.

Sirhind was attacked and successfully conquered by the Khalsa Dal. The city was plundered and the walls of the fort were pulled down. Sirhind is the place where the younger sahibzadas, Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Fateh Singh Ji, were bricked alive at this place. Ahmed Shah Abdali's proclamation to blow up Sri Harminder Sahib was answered by the total demolition of Sirhind.

1849: Battle of Chellianwala fought between Khalsa Army and East India Company resulting in tremendous loss of lives on both sides.

1913: Walls of the Gurudwara RakabGanj forcibly demolished by the British Government.

1974: Harbhajan Singh Yogi was honored with the title of "Bhai Sahib" at Sri Akal Takhat, Amritsar. He had been honored for his contributions for the American Sikh movement that accounted for 500,000 of American decent.

14th January

1553: Guru Amar Das visits Kurukshetra.



The solar eclipse of "Abijit Nakshatra (recurring after about 25 years) brought Guru Amar Das and his Sikhs to Kurukshetra for preaching Guru Nanak's mission to the vast multitude. It led to discussions with yogis, naked ascetics, sanyasis and the followers of all the six schools of Hindu philosophy. The earlier solar eclipse had taken Guru Nanak to Kurukshetra, known as a big centre for pilgrimage on such an occasion.

1705: Mela Maaghi (Muktsar) in remembrance of 40 Muktas.

Mela is observed every year at Muktsar. Guru Gobind Singh cast off the blue dress that he used for his escape at Dhilmi. He then moved on to Talwandi and was at Rohi when a group of 40 Sikhs from Majha, accompanied by Mata Bhag Kaur, visited him. They were visiting to convey their condolences at the death of his four sons and his mother, and also to offer their services to mediate a compromise between the Guru and the Mughal authorities. However, the Guru put them on the defensive by narrating the series of Mughal atrocities from Guru Arjan's martyrdom through Guru Hargobind's incarceration for several years at Gawalior, Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom to the laying of the siege of Anandpur.

1761: Abdali destroyed Panipat but the Sikhs faced him in Goindwal and rescued their honor.

15th January

1350: Bhagat Namdev Ji passed away. Annual mela observations are held in village Ghumaan, district Gurdaspur.

Scented by nature: Essential oils you can wear like perfume

As people move toward cleaner beauty and more conscious lifestyle choices, essential oils are emerging as elegant alternatives to synthetic perfumes. Drawn from flowers, woods, resins, and citrus peels, these oils offer natural, layered fragrances that evolve gently on the skin. Worn alone or blended, essential oils not only smell exquisite but also carry subtle emotional and therapeutic benefits-making them timeless aromatic companions.

Here is a detailed look at some essential oils that effortlessly double up as aromatic perfumes, along with their fragrance profiles and emotional resonance.

Sandalwood (Chandan)

Sandalwood essential oil is among the most revered fragrance materials in the world, particularly in India. Its aroma is soft, creamy, woody, and deeply grounding, with a lingering warmth that feels both sacred and sensual. Traditionally used in spiritual rituals and classical perfumery, sandalwood acts as an excellent base note, helping lighter scents last longer on the skin.

As a natural perfume, sandalwood conveys calmness, depth, and quiet confidence. It is especially suited for evening wear and meditative moods, and blends beautifully with floral oils like rose and jasmine, as well as spicy notes like cardamom.

Rose (Gulab)

Rose essential oil-often called the "queen of oils"-offers a rich, romantic, slightly sweet floral fragrance with subtle green and honeyed undertones. Highly prized in both Ayurveda and perfumery, rose oil unfolds gradually on the skin, making it a luxurious natural perfume. Beyond its scent, rose carries emotional symbolism associated with love, balance, and emotional healing. When worn as a perfume, it feels elegant and timeless, suitable for both day and evening. It pairs exquisitely with sandalwood, patchouli, and citrus oils for a modern floral blend.

Jasmine

Jasmine essential oil is intoxicating, sensual, and deeply floral, with warm, almost animalic undertones. Often described as heady and hypnotic, jasmine has been a cornerstone of traditional attars and high-end perfumes for centuries. As a standalone natural perfume, jasmine feels bold yet feminine, making it ideal for special occasions or nighttime wear. It also has uplifting and confidence-enhancing properties, making it as



emotionally potent as it is aromatic.

Vetiver (Khus)

Vetiver essential oil has a deep, earthy, smoky, and slightly sweet aroma that evolves beautifully over time. Extracted from the roots of the vetiver grass, it is grounding, cooling, and remarkably long-lasting-qualities that make it a prized base note in perfumery. Worn as a natural perfume, vetiver feels understated, elegant, and androgynous. It is particularly popular in warm climates due to its cooling effect and blends well with citrus oils, lavender, and sandalwood.

Lavender

Lavender essential oil is instantly recognizable for its fresh, herbal, floral aroma with soft woody undertones. While often associated with relaxation and sleep, lavender also works wonderfully as a light, everyday natural perfume. Its clean and calming scent makes it ideal for daytime wear, especially for those who prefer subtle fragrances. Lavender blends effortlessly with citrus oils, rosemary, patchouli, and bergamot, allowing for easy customization.

Patchouli

Patchouli essential oil is bold, earthy, and musky, with sweet and woody nuances that deepen with age. Once associated with counterculture movements, patchouli has re-emerged as a sophisticated perfume ingredient in modern niche fragrances. As a natural perfume, patchouli exudes warmth, mystery, and sensuality. It lasts exceptionally long on the skin and works well as a base note.

FOOD CORNER

Egg Fried Rice

Ingredients

- Basmati Rice - 2 cups, Eggs - 10, Onions - 2 Spring, Onions - 1 bunch, Beans - 10, Carrot - 2, Capsicum - 2, Cabbage - 100 gms
- Pepper Powder - 1/2 tbsp, Green Chillies - 2, Tomato Puree - 2 to 3 tbsp (or as required), Ajinomoto - 3 tsp (optional), Soy Sauce - 4 tbsp, Salt as per taste, Oil - 3 tbsp, Coriander Leaves - few, chopped

Method

- Pressure cook the rice until 1 whistle and remove.
- Chop all the vegetables finely and keep aside.
- Grind together the green chillies and mix well 2 tbsp water.
- Heat oil in a pan.
- Sauté the onions for a minute.
- Add the chopped vegetables one by one and cook for a minute or two.
- Add the green chilli paste and tomato puree.
- Add salt and ajinomoto.
- Mix well and add soy sauce.
- Break the eggs into the pan and stir-fry for 3 to 4 minutes.
- Add the cooked rice and mix until all ingredients are combined.
- Garnish with coriander leaves.
- Serve.



Home remedies to help advance menstruation

Delayed or irregular menstruation is a common concern among women and can be influenced by stress, hormonal fluctuations, travel, lifestyle changes, or dietary imbalance. Across cultures, especially in traditional Indian households, certain home remedies have long been believed to help stimulate or regulate menstrual flow. These remedies are generally aimed at improving circulation, warming the body, and supporting hormonal balance rather than forcefully inducing periods.

Parsley

Parsley has been traditionally used for inducing menstruation for centuries. Apiol and myristicin, two substances

contained in parsley, stimulate contractions of the uterus.

Cumin

Cumin seeds, also known as jeera in Hindi, belong to the same family as parsley and also have a similar effect.

Carom seeds (Ajwain)

A concoction of carom seeds and jaggery will help in inducing periods besides relieving menstrual cramps. You can boil 1 tsp carom seeds with 1 tsp jaggery in 1 glass of water and consume it empty stomach in the morning.

Papayas

It's the most effective home remedy

available to prepone periods. Raw papaya stimulates contractions in the uterus and can help in inducing periods. The carotene present in papaya stimulates the estrogen hormone thereby inducing early period.

Ginger

Ginger tea is one of the most powerful emmenagogue (herbs with magical properties that stimulates menstrual flow, resulting in promotion of menstruation), but unlike parsley it can have some side effects, like acidity. For extremely delayed periods, a combination of parsley and ginger tea is recommended. Ginger is thought to increase the heat around the uterus, thus promoting contraction.

Coriander seeds

Coriander seeds are said to be the most effective home remedy for irregular periods because of its emmenagogue properties. You can boil 1 tsp. of coriander with 2 cups of water and wait until the water reduces to just one cup. Use a strainer to remove the seeds and drink the concoction thrice a day for a couple of days before your monthly period.

Fennel seeds (Saunf)

Fennel seeds can be boiled in water to make a fragrant tea that should be consumed every morning on an empty stomach in order to regulate your period and have a healthy flow.

Iron rich foods for anaemia: What to eat to boost haemoglobin

Anaemia, often caused by low iron levels, is a common nutritional concern, especially among women and children in India. Iron is essential for making haemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen throughout the body. The good news? A balanced diet with iron-rich foods can significantly help improve iron levels and reduce symptoms like fatigue, dizziness and weakness.

WHY IRON IS IMPORTANT FOR THE BODY

Iron plays a key role in oxygen transport, energy production and immune function. When iron intake is inadequate, the body cannot produce enough healthy red blood cells, leading to iron-deficiency anaemia.

BEST PLANT-BASED IRON-RICH FOODS

Vegetarian sources of iron are widely available and effective when paired with vitamin C.

- Spinach, amaranth and beetroot leaves
- Lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans and soybeans
- Jaggery, dates and raisins
- Pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds and peanuts

Tip: Combine these foods with lemon, amla or oranges to enhance



iron absorption.

BEST ANIMAL-BASED IRON-RICH FOODS

Animal sources contain heme iron, which is more easily absorbed by the body.

- Chicken and turkey
- Fish and shellfish
- Eggs

These foods are especially beneficial for people with moderate to severe anaemia.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES THAT SUPPORT IRON ABSORPTION

While some fruits are not iron-

rich, they help the body absorb iron better.

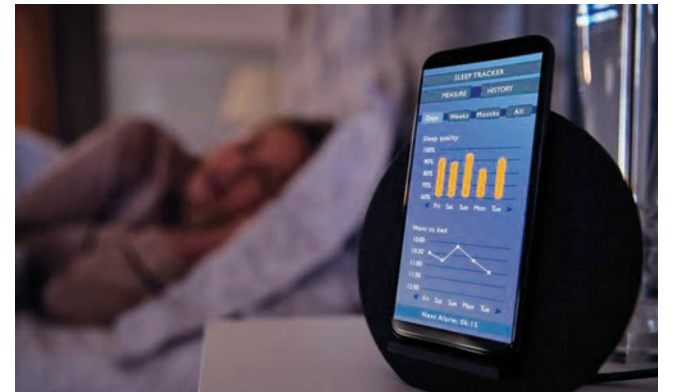
- Oranges, guava and kiwi
- Amla and berries
- Tomatoes and bell peppers

FOODS TO AVOID WITH IRON-RICH MEALS

Certain foods can reduce iron absorption if consumed together.

- Tea and coffee
- Excess dairy
- Highly processed foods

It's best to consume these at least one to two hours away from iron-rich meals.



Researchers develop AI model that predicts disease risk from sleep data

Researchers have developed an artificial intelligence model that can predict one's risk of developing over a hundred different health conditions using sleep data.

Named 'SleepFM', the model was developed by researchers, including those from the US' Stanford University, and trained on nearly six lakh hours of sleep data, collected from 65,000 participants.

The AI system, described in a paper in the journal Nature Medicine, was initially tested on standard tasks involving sleep analysis, such as tracking different stages of sleep or diagnosing severity of sleep apnoea.

The model was then used to predict the future onset of disease by analysing sleep data, with health record data sourced from a sleep clinic.

More than 1,000 disease categories in the health records were looked at and 130 could be predicted with reasonable accuracy using a patient's sleep data, the researchers said.

"We record an amazing number of signals when we study sleep. It's a kind of general physiology that we study for eight hours in a subject who's completely captive. It's very data rich" senior author Emmanuel Mignot, professor in sleep medicine at Stanford University's department of psychiatry and behavioural sciences, said.

Polysomnography — considered the gold standard in sleep studies — is a common means of collecting sleep data that uses sensors to record brain activity, heart function, respiratory signals and eye movements, among other aspects. The AI model was able to incorporate multiple streams of data — such as electroencephalography (electrical activity of brain), electrocardiography, electromyography (electrical activity of muscles), pulse reading and breathing airflow — and glean how they relate to each other, the researchers said. The team developed a new technique for training the AI, called 'leave-one-out' contrastive learning. This essentially hides one modality or stream of data and challenges the model to reconstruct the missing piece based on the other signals.

Protein, fiber rich meals help you lose weight faster

Weight loss isn't just about eating less, it's about eating smarter. Research consistently shows that meals rich in protein and fibre help people lose weight faster by improving satiety, stabilising blood sugar, and reducing overall calorie intake without extreme dieting.

Weight loss is often reduced to counting calories or skipping meals, but growing evidence suggests that what you eat matters as much as how much you eat. Nutrition research over the past decade has shown that building meals around protein and fibre can significantly improve weight loss outcomes without extreme dieting or hunger. These two nutrients work together to control appetite, stabilise blood sugar levels and support metabolism, making weight loss more sustainable in the long run.

Protein is known to increase satiety, meaning it helps you feel full for longer after a meal. It also requires more energy to digest compared to fats and carbohydrates,



which slightly boosts calorie burn. Fibre, especially soluble fibre found in fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains, slows digestion and delays stomach emptying. This helps prevent sudden spikes and crashes in blood sugar that often trigger cravings and overeating.

When meals are low in protein and fibre, people tend to feel hungry sooner and snack more frequently, often choosing ultra-processed foods high in sugar and refined carbs. In contrast, diets that

prioritise protein and fibre-rich foods have been consistently linked to better portion control, improved gut health and gradual fat loss. Rather than focusing on restriction, this approach shifts attention to nourishment, helping people lose weight in a healthier, more realistic way.

Protein takes longer to digest and keeps you full for longer. Studies show high-protein meals reduce hunger hormones while increasing satiety hormones, helping people naturally eat fewer calories through the day.

Fibre slows digestion and improves gut health. Soluble fibre forms a gel-like substance in the gut, delaying stomach emptying and reducing cravings. High-fibre diets are consistently linked with lower body weight.

When protein and fibre are combined in meals, such as dal with vegetables or eggs with whole grains, they stabilise blood sugar, prevent energy crashes, and reduce snacking, making weight loss more sustainable.

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DR. SATISH AND GITANJLI ANAND



DR. SATISH ANAND
Former Chairman, Board of Trustees, AAPI National
E-Mail: sanandmd@gmail.com

GITANJLI ANAND
Former President, India Association of Long Island (IALI)
E-mail: gitanjlianand@gmail.com

Humans might have left Earth by the time Voyager-I reaches another Solar System

In September 1977, Nasa launched a message in a bottle into the cosmic ocean. Today, Voyager 1 is no longer just a planetary scout; it is a silent ambassador drifting through the cold, dark void of interstellar space.

After a 35-year journey, Voyager 1 reached interstellar space in 2012.

Having long since bid farewell to our solar system, the 48-year-old probe is now on a journey so vast that human history seems like a mere blink in comparison.

The most distant human-made object is currently moving at approximately 61,155 kilometres per hour, yet even at this breakneck speed, the Milky Way galaxy is a very big place.

While many imagine Voyager 1 heading straight for a specific target, space is mostly empty. It is not exactly aiming for a "new Earth," but rather drifting where gravity and its initial momentum take it.

In about 40,000 years, the spacecraft will make its closest approach to a star called Gliese 445. Located in the constellation Camelopardalis, this star is actually moving toward our solar system while Voyager moves toward it. Despite this mutual "handshake," the probe will still be 1.6 light years away from the star at its closest point.

THE OORT CLOUD AND BEYOND

Before it can even dream of meeting



Gliese 445, Voyager 1 must navigate the Oort Cloud. This is a massive, spherical shell of icy debris that surrounds our solar system. It is so large that it will take the probe about 300 years just to reach the inner edge, and perhaps 30,000 years to fly out the other side. This highlights the sheer scale of the "final frontier" that pop culture so often makes look easy.

Voyager 1 is effectively a ghost ship, as its power sources will likely die out long before it reaches the next star.

Ultimately, Voyager 1 represents the ultimate endurance test for human engineering. By the time it reaches the vicinity of Gliese 445, the Earth it left behind will be unrecognisable. Whether humanity still exists to track its progress is a question for philosophers, but for now, the gold-plated record on its side carries the sounds of our world into infinite silence.

It remains a testament to our desire to be known, even if the "hello" takes 40,000 years to arrive.

Finland working on transmitting electricity without wires

Finland continues to make progress in the field of wireless electricity transmission, an area of research that aims to send power through the air without the use of traditional cables or plugs.

Recent demonstrations and experiments by Finnish researchers have highlighted steady advancements in technology that could one day reshape how devices are powered, though widespread commercial deployment remains distant.

In controlled experiments, engineers have shown that electricity can be transmitted through the air using highly controlled electromagnetic fields and resonant coupling techniques, conceptually similar to the way data is sent via Wi-Fi but tailored for energy transfer. These approaches build on decades of research into magnetic resonance and inductive power transfer, which seek to send energy efficiently across short distances without physical contact between transmitter and receiver.

Studies conducted at Finnish institutions such as Aalto University have contributed to the theoretical and experimental foundation of the technology. Past research from the university demonstrated that magnetic loop antennas can transfer power wirelessly at relatively high efficiency over short ranges, offering insights into how to optimize coupling and reduce energy losses.

Apple planning unexpected chipset for next affordable iPhone

Apple is gearing up for its first iPhone launch of 2026 with the purported iPhone 17e. The device will be the second device in the Cupertino giant's affordable iPhone e series. Ahead of its rumoured release, leaks have emerged signalling a last-minute change for the iPhone 17e. The affordable iPhone, which was earlier expected to use the same A19 chip from the vanilla iPhone 17, is now believed to use a downclocked version of the processor. Here is what this means for you.

As per tipster Smart Pikachu on Weibo, Apple may use a downclocked version of the A19 chipset in the iPhone 17e. While we do not know the official reason behind such a move, this would likely not only save costs but also better differentiate the affordable iPhone from its more expensive counterparts. If the leak is accurate, you can expect the iPhone 17e to be less powerful than the base iPhone 17. However, the A19 chipset remains one of the most powerful processors out there, and even a downclocked version would still be quite capable. The real-world performance of the iPhone 17e with this chipset is tipped to be similar to that of the iPhone 15 Pro.

Arattai vs WhatsApp: Features that might make you switch today

Zoho's messaging platform, Arattai, had a big 2025. The homegrown messaging app skyrocketed in popularity and even topped the charts on app stores. Now, the company has shared its 2025 'Wrapped,' detailing the major new features it introduced in the past twelve months, which may even entice you to ditch WhatsApp in favour of the Indian app.

The official Arattai X handle shared the list in a thread. The thread covers the entire year, listing each update pushed by the platform in an effort to bring more convenience to users.

The list includes -

- End-to-end encryption: While E2E encryption was rolled out later in the year, it was arguably the most important Arattai update. End-to-end encryption ensured that direct chats on the platform remain secure.
- Share screen during calls: Arattai allows users to share their screen when on a call on the platform.
- Start meetings without an account: Users on Arattai can start meetings without having to create an account.
- Quick reactions: You can react to a message on Arattai by simply double-tapping.
- Add captions to GIF: Ever wanted to give context to your GIF? On Arattai, you can add a caption to make your friends better understand why you sent a GIF.
- Chat list filters: Arattai comes with chat filters, allowing you to find the chat you are looking for with ease.
- Lock meetings: To ensure your meeting on Arattai is not disturbed, you can lock the meeting and prevent anyone else from joining in.



- Display picture updates: Get notified when your close ones change their profile picture.
- Message-based reactions: React to any message as you want with different emojis.
- Reaction alert: Be notified when someone reacts to your message
- Story likes: You can like someone's story on Arattai to let them know you appreciate what they posted.
- Story notifications: You can get notified when someone posts on a story on the app
- Repeat meetings: You can schedule recurring meetings on the platform.
- Language support: Arattai supports 17 different languages.

Oil prices recover, stocks ease as investors weigh geopolitics: US data

SINGAPORE (TIP)

Oil prices have steadied after their recent slide, while stocks retreated as investors assessed the implications of deepening geopolitical tensions and mixed U.S. labour market data.

Top U.S. officials said on Wednesday the country needs to control Venezuela's oil sales and revenue indefinitely to stabilise the latter's economy, rebuild its oil sector and ensure it acts in America's interests.

That came as the U.S. seized two Venezuela-linked oil tankers in the Atlantic Ocean the same day, one sailing under Russia's flag, as part of President Donald Trump's aggressive push to dictate oil flows in the Americas.

Developments in Venezuela continue to dominate headlines following the toppling of Nicolas Maduro, with most of the market reaction thus far playing out in commodities.

Oil prices have slid this week on the prospect of higher Venezuelan crude output, though they recovered on Thursday, with U.S. crude rising 0.54% to \$56.29 a barrel, while Brent crude futures advanced 0.55% to \$60.29 per barrel.

"The market's negative reaction to the Trump comments on controlling Venezuela's oil looks a little misplaced," said Daniel Hynes, ANZ's senior commodity strategist.

"U.S. control of oil sales could actually mean ongoing sanctions or restrictions remaining in place in the short term, which would be bullish for oil prices. I suspect that is why prices are recovering this morning."

Elsewhere, stocks mostly traded lower in the Asian session, following a strong start to the New Year that lifted markets to fresh highs despite geopolitical fractures globally.

"It seems the Asian markets are just taking a breather after a strong start to 2026," said Charu Chanana, chief investment strategist at Saxo.

"Geopolitical headlines are in the driver's seat. China's dual-use export ban to Japan, and talk of potential rare earth risk, is making investors trim Japan beta."

Shares in Japanese chemical manufacturers fell on Thursday while those of their Chinese rivals jumped after China's commerce ministry said it is launching an anti-dumping probe into imports of chemicals used in chipmaking, as tensions between the two nations escalate.

U.S. NONFARM PAYROLLS UP NEXT

Geopolitics aside, investors also had their eye on the U.S. jobs report due on Friday, which could provide further clarity on the Federal Reserve's rate outlook.

Analysts at Goldman Sachs said they are forecasting an above-consensus 70,000 rise in nonfarm payrolls in December, while expecting the unemployment rate to edge down to 4.5%.



Overnight, a slew of data releases painted a mixed picture of the U.S. labour market, which appears stuck in a "no hire, no fire" state.

"The November JOLTS report signals that labor turnover remains muted. The low churn environment has underpinned a tenuous balance between labor demand and labor supply," said economists at Wells Fargo in a note.

"With firms still cautious about expanding headcount, we expect job growth to remain subdued."

The readings did little to alter market expectations of two more Fed cuts this year and in turn kept currency moves muted on Thursday, with the euro little changed at \$1.1681 while sterling last bought \$1.3458.

The yen rose slightly to 156.67 per dollar, while the dollar index was little changed at 98.71.

Elsewhere, spot gold was down 0.71% at \$4,420.43 an ounce. U.S. oil companies want "serious guarantees" from Washington before they make large investments in Venezuela, as President Donald Trump urges them to back his bid to reshape energy markets. U.S. officials held talks with top energy executives in Miami, the FT reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

The talks come as Washington and Caracas progress in negotiations to supply up to 50 million barrels of Venezuelan oil to the United States and President Donald Trump presses American oil companies to invest in the South American country's energy sector.

Nifty 50 likely to deliver modest 7.6% returns by end-2026 as valuations remain high: Bernstein

The Nifty 50 index is expected to deliver only around 7.6 per cent returns by the end of 2026 as India enters the year as one of the most expensive equity markets globally, according to a report by Bernstein.

The report said that even after assuming steady earnings growth, returns from Indian equities are likely to remain modest due to high valuations. Bernstein highlighted that while 2025 was a moderate year for earnings, its estimates still point to limited upside for the benchmark index in 2026.

It stated "we reach our Nifty target of 28,100 by the end of 2026 - which is a modest 7.6 per cent returns in the year"

According to the report, assuming a 13.5 per cent earnings compound annual growth rate (CAGR) up to FY28 and applying a 19 times multiple on two-year forward earnings per share (EPS), the Nifty 50 target comes to 28,100. This implies a return of around 7.6/7.5 per cent, which Bernstein described as modest.

Based on this outlook and its focus on absolute returns, the brokerage said it has cut its stance on India to "neutral".

At the end of 2025, with the Nifty at 26,150, the index was trading at 20.4 times one-year forward earnings. Bernstein assumed a 15 per cent EPS growth for 2026/FY27, after adjusting for exceptional items, and 12 per cent growth for the following year.

Based on these assumptions and a 19 times two-year forward P/E, the Nifty target of 28,100 by the end of 2026 implies returns of about 7.6 per cent, much lower than the 11 per cent returns seen in 2025.

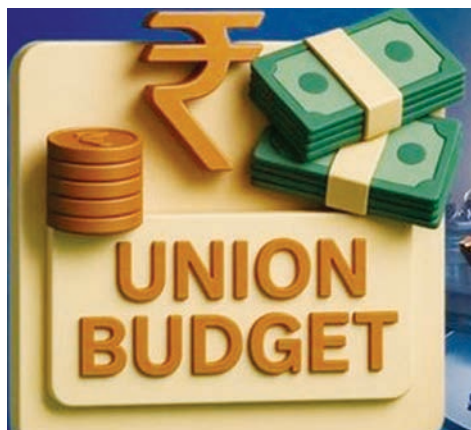
Union Budget to be presented on Feb 1; Economic Survey on Jan 29

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Union Budget for the financial year 2026-27 will be presented in the Lok Sabha on February 1, while the Economic Survey will be tabled on January 29. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for a record ninth time.

The Budget Session of Parliament will kick off on January 28 with President Droupadi Murmu's address to a joint sitting of both Houses in the Central Hall. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, all the other top ministers, and Members of Parliament are set to attend the presidential address.

This will be only the second time the



Union Budget will be presented on a Sunday. The previous occasion was on February 28, 1999, when then Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha presented the Budget for 1999-2000.

As Union Budget 2026 approaches, those income tax changes continue to shape how individuals assess relief, choose between tax regimes, and plan their finances.

Investor and entrepreneur Amit Baid commented, "Budget 2025 marked an inflection point in India's personal tax framework. It reshaped the new tax regime through revised slabs and a higher rebate, effectively exempting income up to Rs 12 lakh and up to Rs 12.75 lakh for salaried taxpayers after the standard deduction".

Budget 2025 delivered meaningful relief to a large section of salaried taxpayers, sharply narrowed the gap between the old and new tax regimes, and set the direction for how personal taxation would evolve going forward.

Expectations from Budget 2026, however, are more measured.

"With substantial relief already extended in the previous Budget and recent GST reductions easing consumer costs, the government is unlikely to introduce additional cuts to income tax slabs this year," Baid said. He added that only limited tweaks may be possible.

"Some incremental adjustments such as a modest increase in the standard deduction under the new regime remain possible, particularly to offset inflation," he said.

Santhosh Sivaraj, Partner – Global Mobility Services, Tax and Regulatory Advisory at BDO India, said certain old-regime deductions may come up for review.



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



Aries

ARIES

Ganesha says this week is a great time for you to focus on various aspects. With hard work and dedication, you will be able to achieve your goals. In your personal life, spending time with your loved ones will keep your mind light and energetic. Talk and share your feelings, this will strengthen relationships. Focus on new projects at work. Collaboration will be important for you, so try to work together with your colleagues. Your hard work will be rewarded soon. Be cautious from a financial point of view. Avoid unnecessary expenses and focus on your savings. You can move towards a good financial position. In terms of health, take regular exercise and a balanced diet. Meditation and yoga can help you with mental health. There is a possibility of change and improvement this week. Adopt positive thinking and an active attitude, so that you can attract positivity in your life.

TAURUS



Taurus

Ganesha says some important events may happen for you this week, which will affect your personal and professional life. Your colleagues and friends will prove to be helpful to you, so increase communication with them and share ideas. From an economic point of view, this is the time to be careful. Control expenses and avoid unnecessary purchases. This week is not favorable for investment, so take steps wisely. Family members will support you. A solution to a family problem can be found, which will keep the atmosphere at home pleasant. If you are in a relationship, then spending more time with your partner will prove beneficial for you. It is important to rest and maintain mental balance in terms of health. Yoga and meditation will give you peace. Think positive this week and keep moving towards your goals. Maintain patience and stability for good results.

GEMINI



Gemini

Ganesha says this week is a time of increasing excitement in his personal and social life. Your communication skills and curiosity can lead you to new opportunities. Conversation with colleagues and friends at the workplace will give positive results. New ideas and plans may come to your mind, which you can implement effectively. Spending time with family will give you happiness, but keep in mind that sometimes it is also important to respect the feelings of others. In terms of health, you may need

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - JAN 12 - JAN 18, 2026

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

to add a little exercise and meditation to your routine. Taking a little break and taking time for yourself will give you mental peace. Finally, this week can also inspire you to build new relationships. Try to strengthen your friendships. Remember, a lot can be achieved by communicating with an open mind.

CANCER



Cancer

Ganesha says this week will bring some new opportunities for Cancerians. Harmony and love will increase in your relationships, which is great for your mental health. Spending time with family members will make you feel satisfied and happy. In the field of career, you will get the fruits of your hard work. If you are working on a productive meeting or project, you may get positive results. Expressing your ideas clearly will increase your influence on others. In this session, you can make new plans to increase your income. There is a need to be careful in matters of investment, so proceed only after thinking. In terms of health, it will be beneficial to adopt regular exercise and measures for mental peace. These will keep you fresh and energetic. Meditating in your moments of solitude will increase your inner strength. This week is a time of balance and dedication for you, which you can use to bring positive changes into your life.

LEO



Leo

Ganesha says a new wave of energy and enthusiasm is going to come this week for Leo natives. You will feel more confident in your actions and it is time for you to express your ideas clearly. Despite facing challenges in work life, your colleagues will appreciate your hard work. Your creativity will be at its peak this week, making it a great time to bring in a new project. Do not hesitate to nurture your passion; it will help increase your satisfaction. In personal life, you will get an opportunity to spend time with family. Planning a short trip with family or cooking something good together will strengthen your relationships. Health-wise, meditation and yoga can help improve your mental health this week. Also, take care of the right diet so that your energy levels are maintained. Try to turn the energy around you into positivity this week. Your confidence and charm will attract everyone.

VIRGO



Virgo

Ganesha says this week, Virgos will have many opportunities. Your systematic and clear approach will help you succeed in your tasks. Your efforts will be appreciated at the workplace and you may get a chance to work on some new projects for your work. Your tendency to pay attention to your health will keep you strong mentally and physically as well. Focusing on meditation and yoga

will give you relief from stress. Spending time with family members will boost your morale and strengthen your emotional stability. This week, there is a need to be cautious in financial matters. Control expenses and avoid unnecessary purchases. Apart from this, your friendships and social connections can open new doors for you. Your communication skills will increase, allowing you to express your thoughts more clearly. Ultimately, this week will provide you with a good chance to establish a balance in your personal and professional life. Focus on your goals and move forward with positivity.

LIBRA



Libra

Ganesha says this week will bring new possibilities and opportunities for you. Your social life will be bright and you will get a chance to reconnect with old friends and relations. This is also a great time to express your art and creativity. Do not hesitate to share your thoughts and feelings, it will bring freshness to your thoughts. You may get some new responsibilities in your professional life, but you do not need to be afraid of them. Your efficiency and strength will help you face all these challenges. Maintain positive and healthy relationships with colleagues at your workplace, this will help you achieve your goals. You will experience satisfaction and happiness in the time spent with your family. Maintain harmony and harmony at home, it will be beneficial for your mental health. Sweetness will remain in love and relationships, spending time with each other will strengthen your relationship. Take some time for meditation and peace this week. Doing yoga or meditation will give you mental clarity and you will be able to understand your feelings better. This week is the time for you to establish balance and harmony, so pay attention to your inner voice and do what is right for you.

SCORPIO



Scorpio

Ganesha says this week, a lot of positive energy is spreading for Scorpios. The flow of communication will improve in your personal and professional life. Mutual understanding in relationships will increase, which will help you resolve mutual disputes. During this time, you will feel your intuition strong, which will help you make important decisions. Your efforts will be recognized at the workplace and seniors will appreciate your hard work. However, pay attention to your health. You may feel the need to rest for a few days, so take proper rest and take care of a balanced diet. This week can be a time of introspection for you. It will be beneficial for you to consider old issues and move forward after understanding them. Be cautious in family matters and give priority to communication so that harmony is maintained. Inclination towards spirituality will increase, and

you will get mental peace through meditation. The key to this week is to maintain balance and take care of your abilities by going deep within yourself.

SAGITTARIUS



Sagittarius

Ganesha says this week is the time for you to welcome new possibilities. You may find some new friends in your social life, who will become a source of inspiration for you. Your hard work at work will pay off and you may be successful in an important project. In terms of health, try to do meditation and yoga this week. This will not only improve your mental health but will also increase physical fitness. Try to spend time with your loved ones on family matters. Sharing your thoughts and feelings will make the relationship even stronger. Be careful in financial matters. There may be some sudden expenses, so take care of your budget. This week is also a time of personal growth for you. Identify the things that are right for you and implement them in your life. Confidence will remain your companion, so do not miss adopting it.

CAPRICORN



Capricorn

Ganesha says this week is a time of change and growth for Capricorn natives. Some new opportunities may emerge in your work area, which are coming as a result of your hard work. Although you are working hard to achieve your goals, some kind of restraint is required. Be patient and focus on your plans, as some difficulties may be faced. In personal relationships, you will value the time spent with your friends and family. This week it will be important for you to increase communication with your loved ones and listen to them. This will increase mutual understanding and strengthen the relationship. In terms of health, you need to be a little calm. Resort to meditation and yoga to avoid mental stress. Regular exercise and a balanced diet will help keep your body and mind healthy. In short, this week you need dedication, restraint, and communication. Move forward with positive thinking, so that you can move faster towards your goals.

AQUARIUS



Aquarius

Ganesha says this week a new energy seems to be flowing for Aquarius people. At this time, you can give a new direction to your creativity and imagination. If you have thought of starting a new project or hobby, then this is the right time. Your ideas will not only be unique, but you will also be successful in them. You will also experience warmth in personal relationships. Spending more time with family or friends will not only strengthen mutual relationships but will also spread happiness. Expressing your thoughts openly will increase mutual understanding and you will get support.

CONTD ON PAGE 41

**BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : JAN 12 - JAN 18, 2026
BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA****JANUARY 12**

Ganesha says that today your expenses may increase, due to which it may be difficult for you to save. Investments made during this time may eventually give good returns, even if not immediately. Academic excellence and participation in extracurricular activities may be acknowledged by students. Although slow progress at work and arguments over petty matters may annoy you and even affect your health, at the end of the year, you may be happy and satisfied with your achievements. Despite your erratic behavior, your spouse will remain supportive.

JANUARY 13

Ganesha says that today, there may be financial gains from various sources, but uncertainty about your relationship may leave a blot on your record of success and achievements. Socializing, celebrations, and pleasant outings may all be frequent and enjoyable. Wedding bells may ring for those who are qualified, and others may seek romance to keep their relationship going. Do not rely on others excessively. Planning and managing your

time may be important.

JANUARY 14

Ganesha says promotions or an increase in responsibilities may be a source of happiness for you at this time. There may be some sophistication in your profile with new initiatives. At home, there may be a healthier, more loving environment that may promote prosperity and excellent health. Professionals seeking to work abroad may be welcomed. Housewives may have to deal with frequent visits from family and friends. Going on a spiritual journey to a distant place is possible.

JANUARY 15

Ganesha says you should not spend your time and money this year. Make the most of the opportunities that come your way to increase your income and standard of living. You will have a lot of confidence and motivation, and you will probably receive many favors during this time. Attending cultural events may be entertaining and educational. New collaborations may be profitable, and investments may pay off. Your status in the social group may improve.

JANUARY 16

Ganesha says that you will get the opportunity to raise your standard of living through the new contacts you make this year. You should focus on your professional growth as it may yield the expected results. Your parents' health may be a cause for concern, but your spouse and children may be supportive. If you go out and join clubs and social activities, you will be quite successful socially. Some of you have a distant pilgrimage on the horizon.

JANUARY 17

Ganesha says that people at the workplace constantly give you important responsibilities because they trust you. Unresolved issues may get resolved. You may get rewards and acceptance for entering this new phase of your life. Your parents' health may be a cause for concern, but your spouse and children may be supportive. Additionally, your financial situation may improve, and you will feel more secure and satisfied in all your endeavors. Marriage relations for a select few lovers. Religious rituals and pilgrimages may provide peace.



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

JANUARY 18

Ganesha says gains in your career are almost certain, but rising costs may make you anxious. There may be occasions when your achievements exceed your expectations, but in most cases, you may have to work hard to get the best results. Your relationship with your spouse may be friendly and balanced, but you should restrain yourself from being too stubborn, as it may create an uncomfortable situation at home.

Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at www.bejandaruwalla.com
info@bejandaruwalla.com | +91 81412 34275

CONTD FROM PAGE 40

In terms of health, there is a need to be a little cautious this week. Focus on regular exercise and a balanced diet. Incorporating meditation or yoga will be beneficial for mental health. Be careful in the financial aspect. It is not good to take risks in big investments or financial transactions. Take decisions wisely and maintain balance in your expenses. Overall, this week is to focus on growth, relationships, and health. Take advantage of opportunities and move forward with positive thoughts.

**PISCES**

Ganesha says your week will be full of positive energy and opportunities. Your creativity is going to touch new heights at this time. Your ideas will be appreciated at the

workplace and your colleagues will be ready to adopt your point of view. In your personal life, focus on communicating with your loved ones, it is important to understand their feelings and needs. In terms of health, you will need to maintain mental and physical balance.

Yoga and meditation can prove to be highly beneficial for you. If you focus, you will be able to overcome your worries and fill yourself with more positivity. In financial matters, this week is suitable for realizing financial planning. However, make financial

decisions wisely so that there is no inconvenience in the future. The biggest learning of this week will be that you can make your dreams come true by paying attention to your insights and feelings. Be confident and keep your intentions clear.

AUTHOR BIO

Chirag Daruwalla is the best astrologer and one of the most famous names in the astrology world. He has more than 18 years of experience. Readers may seek his advice related to career, health, finance, business, money, love and marriage. He has complete knowledge, solutions, and guidance to all the problems related to life. Visit his website chiragdaruwalla.com. He is available for consultations on WhatsApp number +91 8141566266 or by email: info@chiragdaruwalla.com

॥ SHREE GANESHAY NAMAH ॥



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Nastur Bejan Daruwalla

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

India-US trade deal didn't happen...

someone else is first, they're first. President Trump does deals like a staircase," Lutnick said.

"(The) first stair gets the best deal. You can't get the best deal after the first guy," he said.

Lutnick said Trump does things that way "because that way it incents you to come to the table".

He recalled that after the UK deal, everyone asked Trump which country will be next and while the president talked about a variety of countries, "but he named India a couple of times publicly".

"And we were talking (with) India, and we told India, 'you have three Fridays'. Well, they have to get it done," he said.

Lutnick said that while he would negotiate the contracts with the countries and set the whole deal up, "But let's be clear, it's his (Trump) deal. He is the closer. He does the deal. So I said 'You got to have Modi, it's all set up, you have to have Modi call the President. They (India) were uncomfortable doing it, so Modi didn't call."

Lutnick said that after that Friday, the US announced trade deals with Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

He added that Washington was negotiating with other countries and "assumed India was going to be done before them".

"I have negotiated them at a higher rate. So now the problem is the deals came out at a higher rate. And then India calls back and says, 'Oh, okay, we are ready'. I said, 'ready for what, it was like three weeks later'," he said.

"I go, 'Are you ready for the train that left the station three weeks ago?' So what happened is they just...there's sometimes there's that seesaw, and people are just on the wrong side of the seesaw," the trade secretary said.

"So what happened is India just was on the wrong side of the seesaw, and it was just they couldn't get it done," Lutnick said, imitating a seesaw with his hands.

"And so what happened is all these other countries kept doing deals, and they're (India) just further in the back of the line," he said.

Lutnick said he wanted the trade deal with India to happen "in between the UK and Vietnam because that's what I negotiate".

"And they remember, and I remember, and they say, 'but you agreed'. And I said, 'then, not now, then'. So that's the problem. India will work it out, but there's a lot of countries and they each have their own deep internal politics, and to get something approved by their parliament... these are deeply complex things," he added.

Lutnick's remarks came a few days after Trump said that Modi knew he was unhappy with India's purchases of Russian oil and that Washington could raise tariffs on New Delhi "very quickly".

The threat by the US president came at a time when the two countries were negotiating a bilateral trade agreement.

So far, six rounds of negotiations have been held. The pact includes a framework deal to resolve the 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods entering the US.

17 House Republicans vote with...

extension of enhanced Affordable Care Act subsidies after nine Republicans crossed the aisle Wednesday night to set up passage in the House.

"I hope today there will be more Republicans joining this leader," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, gesturing towards Jeffries at a news conference Thursday.

Jeffries called the vote "an opportunity to take a meaningful step forward to lower the high cost of living for everyday Americans, particularly as it relates to health care, but it's a battle that we will continue to wage on behalf of the American people."

9 Republicans vote with Democrats to set up House vote on 3-year extension of ACA subsidies

Wednesday's procedural vote passed by a 221-205 margin with nine Republicans voting with Democrats to pass it.

Saul Loeb/AFP via Getty Images - PHOTO: Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and US House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries hold a press

conference on Capitol Hill in Washington, January 8, 2026.

The subsidies, which expired at the end of 2025, were enhanced during the COVID-19 pandemic to increase the amount of financial assistance to those who were already eligible and to expand eligibility to more people.

A bipartisan group of House members and senators met for about an hour over lunch Thursday to grapple over various health care provisions, telling reporters afterward that they've struck an agreement to address widespread fraud, such as phantom accounts.

"We're trying to see if we can get to some agreement that's going to help them, and the sooner we can do that, the better," New Hampshire Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen told reporters as she left the meeting. "So there was agreement on addressing fraud."

Shaheen did not divulge details of an impending deal but said the next step will be crafting bill text in the coming days.

Many conservatives want to add Hyde Amendment protections to ensure that an extension of the ACA tax credits won't provide federal funds for abortion services, generating Democratic opposition to GOP proposals.

But several moderates, including Reps. Don Bacon and Dan Meuser, conceded that the ACA already includes Hyde protections, so there is an ongoing debate among appropriators on whether that's sufficient cover for conservatives if an extension of the subsidies does not explicitly codify those protections.

Nevertheless, some Republicans believe a bipartisan deal is within reach.

"Things are still being hashed out. There's always the details -- the so-called devil's in the details, or maybe the angel's in the details," Meuser said, adding lawmakers hope to conclude discussions "as soon as possible."

"I mean, it's certainly a sense of urgency, to say the least," he said.

Lawmakers did not reveal whether they scheduled another meeting but signaled that bill text could be ready soon.

"They're very close," said GOP Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, adding that the bill mirrors the language of a bill that he and Lawler and Democratic Reps. Tom Suozzi and Jared Golden introduced.

Suozzi said it was "a very hopeful feeling when you participate in a meeting like this," citing an even split of Democrats and Republicans at the meeting while emphasizing everyone's commitment to "moving beyond this toxicity and trying to find some common ground."

The Senate last month rejected a three-year extension of the subsidies when the measure fell short of the 60-vote threshold, though four Republicans -- Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Josh Hawley of Missouri, and Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan of Alaska -- all crossed the aisle in support of the measure.

An estimated 22 million of the 24 million ACA marketplace enrollees are currently receiving enhanced premium tax credits to lower their monthly premiums, and many are seeing their premiums soar in 2026.

Rod Lamkey/AP - PHOTO: Senate Majority Leader John Thune speaks during the Senate Republican policy luncheon news conference at the Capitol, Jan. 6, 2026, in Washington.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates the bill would increase the federal deficit by about \$80.6 billion over the next decade.

If the measure is enacted, the number of people with health insurance would increase by 100,000 people in 2026, 3 million in 2027, 4 million in 2028 and 1.1 million in 2029, relative to current law, the CBO reported.

According to the CBO, the 4 million increase in 2028 would result from changes in several types of coverage: 6.2 million more people would be enrolled through ACA health insurance marketplaces; 400,000 million more people enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program; 500,000 fewer people would purchase nongroup coverage outside the marketplaces; and 2.1 million fewer people would have employment-based coverage.

Senate back to square one on health care after both bills fail

President Donald Trump has publicly expressed his

opposition to extending the enhanced subsidies.

"I'd like not to be able to do it. I'd like to see us get right into this. I don't know why we have to extend -- this can be done rapidly if the Democrats would come along," Trump said on Dec. 18 in the Oval Office.

After Speaker Mike Johnson resisted pressure to allow a vote on the subsidies late last year, a quartet of House Republicans -- Fitzpatrick, Lawler, Bresnahan and Mackenzie -- banded together before the holiday break and signed on to a Democratic discharge petition to force a vote on an ACA extension, much to the chagrin of GOP leaders. (Source: ABC News)

Venezuelan Regime Issues Decree to...

countries in the region, based on "sovereign equality and non-interference." She said the government is prepared to collaborate with Washington on an agenda "oriented toward shared development, within the framework of international law."

"President Donald Trump: our peoples and our region deserve peace and dialogue, not war," Rodríguez wrote, adding that Venezuela "has the right to peace, development, sovereignty and a future." She described peace as essential not only for Venezuela but for regional and global stability.

Rodríguez's statement came a day after Venezuela's Supreme Court ordered her to assume the presidency on an interim basis following the aforementioned operation that captured not only Maduro but his wife, Cilia Flores, and included airstrikes in Caracas and nearby states.

Her call for cooperation also followed sharp warnings from Washington earlier on Sunday. Trump said in an interview with The Atlantic that Rodríguez would "pay a very high price, probably higher than Maduro," if she failed to act in line with U.S. expectations. He later said she was "willing to do what we consider necessary," but stressed that U.S. pressure would continue if American interests were not respected.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, on his end, has said the administration will judge Rodríguez based on her actions.

The administration has so far not propped up opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, with The Washington Post claiming that it is because she accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, which Trump has long wanted for himself.

One person close to the White House told The Washington Post that Machado's acceptance of the award was the "ultimate sin" for Trump. "If she had turned it down and said, 'I can't accept it because it's Donald Trump's,' she'd be the president of Venezuela today," the person added.

Anger, outrage spills onto Minneapolis...

administration's latest immigration crackdown on a major city. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, President Donald Trump and others in his administration have repeatedly characterized the Minneapolis shooting as an act of self-defense and cast Good as a villain, suggesting she used her vehicle as a weapon to attack the officer who shot her.

Vice President JD Vance said the shooting was justified and Good, a 37-year-old mother of three, was a "victim of left-wing ideology."

"I can believe that her death is a tragedy while also recognizing that it is a tragedy of her own making," Vance said, noting that the officer who killed her was injured while making an arrest last June.

But state and local officials and protesters rejected that characterization, with Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey saying video recordings show the self-defense argument is "garbage."

The shooting happened on the second day of the Trump administration's immigration crackdown on the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, which Homeland Security said is the biggest immigration enforcement operation ever. More than 2,000 officers are taking part, and Noem said they have made more than 1,500 arrests.

It provoked an immediate response in the city where police killed George Floyd in 2020, with hundreds of people turning up to the scene to vent their outrage at the ICE officers and the school district cancelling classes for the rest of the week as a precaution.

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Lord Shiva-Mahadeva is undoubtedly the most profound, complex, and philosophically expansive deity within Hindu thought. He is Shiva, the Auspicious One; Rudra, the Terrible and Fierce; Nataraja, the Lord of the Cosmic Dance; Vishwanatha, the Lord of the Universe; and Mahakala, the Master of Time itself. He is the Destroyer, yet never merely destructive—rather, he is the great Transformer, dissolving forms so that renewal and regeneration may occur. Shiva is limitless and transcendent, unchanging and eternal, formless yet manifest, without beginning and without end. He is not simply a deity to be worshipped but the very metaphysical foundation upon which existence rests.

The word "Shiva" itself means that which is auspicious, benevolent, and eternally pure. Yet Shiva simultaneously embodies ferocity and detachment, reminding humanity that auspiciousness does not always appear gentle. In Sanatana Dharma, destruction is not chaos but a sacred necessity, for without dissolution there can be no transformation. Just as the universe cannot be fully grasped by the human intellect, Shiva too eludes complete description. Still, guided by scriptural wisdom and philosophical inquiry, humanity has continually attempted to understand his infinite nature.

From a Vedantic perspective, Shiva is the reality from which Brahman arises, in which it abides, and into which it ultimately dissolves. Brahman here does not merely denote the visible universe but the eternal, self-existing substratum—the supreme consciousness that is both the cause and support of all creation. It is the principle that sustains existence itself. Shiva is thus revered as Sarva-karana-karanam—the cause behind all causes. To perceive Shiva as a human-like god with limited attributes is a fundamental misunderstanding. The scriptures describe him as both Nirguna Brahman, beyond qualities and attributes, and Saguna Brahman, manifesting attributes for the sake of creation and devotion.

The Three Existential States of Shiva

Shiva's infinite nature is traditionally understood through three interrelated states, each revealing a deeper dimension of ultimate reality.

In his Nirguna state, Shiva is entirely formless, attribute-less, and beyond sensory perception. In this state, the whole cosmos exists within him, yet he remains untouched by it. There is no division, no name, no form—only pure, undifferentiated consciousness. This is Shiva as the Absolute Truth, transcending time, space, causation, and individuality.

In his Saguna state, Shiva becomes immanent within creation. He manifests as the universe itself, with his divine essence (ansha) present in every atom, tree, insect, animal, and human being. All life forms—male and female alike—carry his presence. Although countless forms arise from him, none can fully define or limit him. He is simultaneously the creator, the creation, and the indwelling consciousness within all

Lord Shiva: The infinite reality beyond form, time and thought



beings. The bridge between these two realities is the Nirguna-Saguna state, in which Shiva is worshipped as the Shivalingam. The term Shivalingam originates from the Sanskrit roots Shiva (the Lord) and Lingam (sign, symbol, or mark). The Shivalingam thus represents the symbolic presence of the formless divine within the manifested world. Philosophically, it signifies the cosmic source from which all forms arise. Everything in existence originates from a rounded or condensed source—a seed, a cell, a cosmic body. Even the planets and galaxies follow this primordial geometry. This universality of form is seen as the signature of Shiva's creative principle. Since Shiva cannot be fully conceptualized, devotees worship his mark—the totality of Brahman

symbolized through the Shivalingam.

Thus, Shiva remains essentially formless, though he lovingly accepts every form through which devotees approach him. All images belong to him, yet no image can ever contain him.

The Sacred Symbolism of Lord Shiva

Symbolism has been central to Hindu spiritual expression since the earliest Vedic period. Each symbol associated with Shiva carries profound metaphysical, ethical, and spiritual meaning, guiding seekers toward deeper realization.

The crescent moon (Ardha-Chandrama) adorning Shiva's forehead symbolizes mastery over time. In ancient civilizations, the lunar cycle governed the measurement of days,

months, and seasons. By wearing the moon, Shiva demonstrates that he stands beyond temporal limitations. The moon's influence over tides further illustrates that control over time is also control over natural forces. As Chandrashekhara, Shiva transcends time itself, existing eternally in the present moment.

The ashes (Bhasma) smeared upon Shiva's body signify the ultimate truth of existence—impermanence. These ashes, drawn from cremation grounds, remind humanity that all material forms inevitably dissolve into dust. Ash represents renunciation, detachment, and transcendence over ego and bodily identity. As the god of dissolution, Shiva teaches that liberation lies not in clinging to form but in realizing the eternal beyond birth and death.

Shiva's matted hair (Jata) reflects his ascetic nature and supreme mastery over vital energies. Symbolically, it represents his dominion over Vayu—the life force or breath. Every living being breathes because of him. As Pashupatinath, Shiva is the compassionate lord of all creatures, both wild and domesticated, embodying guardianship over life itself.

The sacred river Ganga, flowing from Shiva's matted locks, symbolizes divine grace, purification, and cosmic balance. According to tradition, the celestial river would have shattered the earth with its force had Shiva not restrained and moderated its descent. By allowing it to flow gently through his hair, Shiva made the divine accessible to humanity. As Gangadhara, he is revealed not only as a destroyer but also as a sustainer—one who channels purity, fertility, peace, and spiritual renewal.

The third eye, for which Shiva is known as Trinetra or Tryambakam, represents inner wisdom and higher perception. Human vision, limited to two eyes, often fails to grasp truth. The third eye symbolizes spiritual insight, discernment, and the annihilation of ignorance and desire. Ethically, it teaches restraint, balance (samata), purity of conduct (sadhuta), and expansive vision (doordrishti). From a yogic perspective, the awakening of the third eye—or pineal center—elevates consciousness beyond space-time limitations, enabling profound spiritual realization.

The serpent coiled around Shiva's neck represents time in its three dimensions—past, present, and future. Its cyclical coiling signifies the repetitive nature of existence. Shiva's calm adornment of the serpent indicates his complete mastery over time and death. The snake also symbolizes Kundalini Shakti, the dormant spiritual energy residing within every being, awaiting awakening through discipline, devotion, and awareness.

Madhya Pradesh: Where India's many worlds meet

Madhya Pradesh occupies a unique place on India's map and in its cultural imagination. Located at the geographical centre of the country, the state derives its name from its position, yet its true identity is far more layered. Popularly known as "The Heart of Incredible India," Madhya Pradesh is a microcosm of the nation itself—where ancient history, sacred traditions, artistic brilliance, wildlife, cuisine, and modern life converge within a single landscape.

Surrounded by other Indian states on all sides, Madhya Pradesh lies largely across fertile plains and forested plateaus that form part of one of the oldest inhabited regions of the subcontinent. Much of this land was once known as Gondwana, the ancestral homeland of the Gond tribes, whose cultural legacy continues to shape the state's rural and forest communities. Spiritually significant and historically rich, Madhya Pradesh is also one of the four sites of the Kumbh Mela, held every twelve years in the holy city of Ujjain.

The state's vast cultural canvas includes everything from medieval temples and Buddhist monuments to royal palaces and colonial-era structures. Indore's rare glass temple, Ujjain's revered Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga, the sculpted marvels of Khajuraho, and the serene Sanchi Stupa near Bhopal collectively narrate India's spiritual and architectural journey across centuries. Complementing this heritage is the state's extraordinary natural wealth, with dense forests and wildlife reserves that rank among the finest in Asia.

Khajuraho: Stone Poetry of a Bygone Era

The temple town of Khajuraho, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, stands as one of India's most extraordinary artistic achievements. Located in the Bundelkhand region, Khajuraho is renowned for its intricately carved Hindu and Jain temples built between 950 and 1050 AD under the Chandela dynasty. These temples depict not only religious devotion but also everyday life, music, dance, and human intimacy.

The famed erotic sculptures—often misunderstood—are deeply symbolic, reflecting ancient Indian philosophies that viewed desire as an integral part of existence and spiritual evolution. Once home to nearly 85 temples, the complex today preserves around 25, having survived centuries of invasions and natural decay. Yet what remains continues to astonish visitors with its boldness, symmetry, and artistic finesse.

Pachmarhi: The Quiet Charm of Satpuras

Tucked away in the Satpura range, Pachmarhi is the only hill station in Madhya Pradesh and its highest point. Known affectionately as "Satpura ki Rani," the town sits at an altitude of about 1,067 metres and forms part of a UNESCO-recognised Biosphere Reserve. Dense forests, waterfalls, and ravines create a tranquil environment that contrasts sharply with the plains below.

According to legend, the Pandavas spent part of their exile here, leaving behind five sandstone caves that



continue to attract pilgrims. Discovered in the 19th century by British officer Captain James Forsyth, Pachmarhi also retains colonial-era churches and bungalows, blending myth, nature, and history into a peaceful retreat.

Gwalior: Echoes of Royalty and Ragas

The city of Gwalior rises dramatically around its magnificent hilltop fort, one of the most formidable and visually striking forts in India. Founded by King Surajesan, Gwalior has long been associated with power, culture, and royal patronage. Its palaces and temples reflect centuries of architectural grandeur and strategic importance.

The opulent Jai Vilas Palace is among its most remarkable landmarks, famed for housing the world's largest carpet and two massive chandeliers weighing nearly 3.5 tonnes each. Gwalior also holds a special place in India's musical heritage as the birthplace of Tansen, one of the greatest exponents of Hindustani classical music. The annual Tansen Music Festival, held near his tomb, draws musicians and connoisseurs from across the country.

Bandhavgarh National Park: Realm of the Royal Tiger

Once the private hunting grounds of the Maharajas of Rewa, Bandhavgarh National Park is today one of India's most celebrated tiger reserves. Known for having one of the highest densities of Bengal tigers, the park offers exceptional opportunities for wildlife sightings. In addition to tigers, it shelters over 22 species of mammals and nearly 250 species of birds.

The park derives its name from the ancient Bandhavgarh Fort, perched atop towering cliffs. Though now in ruins, the fort provides sweeping views of the surrounding forests. Jeep safaris remain



the primary way to explore this rich and dynamic ecosystem.

Kanha National Park: Into the Wild Heart of Central India

Sprawling across nearly 940 square kilometres, Kanha National Park is the largest national park in central India and ranks among the finest wildlife reserves in Asia. Established in 1955 and designated a Project Tiger Reserve in 1974, Kanha has been instrumental in

wildlife conservation efforts, particularly in saving the rare Barasingha from extinction.

The park's diverse landscapes—lush meadows, sal forests, and water bodies—are home to tigers, leopards, wild dogs, sloth bears, jackals, hyenas, deer, and a variety of reptiles. Immortalised through Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, Kanha continues to attract nature lovers, photographers, and wildlife enthusiasts from across the globe.

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History This Week

JAN 9 - JAN 15

JANUARY 9



January 9, 1960 - With the first blast of dynamite, construction work began on the Aswan High Dam across the Nile River in southern Egypt. One third of the project's billion-dollar cost was underwritten by Soviet Russia. The dam created Lake Nasser, one of the world's largest reservoirs, at nearly 2,000 square miles and irrigated over 100,000 acres of surrounding desert. The dam was opened in January of 1971 by President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and President Nikolai Podgorny of the Soviet Union.

Birthday - Richard M. Nixon (1913-1994) the 37th U.S. President, was born in Yorba Linda, California. He served as vice president under Dwight D. Eisenhower from 1953-61, then made an unsuccessful run for the presidency, narrowly losing to John F. Kennedy. Nixon ran for governor of California in 1962 and lost. He then told reporters he was leaving politics. However, he re-emerged in 1968 and ran a successful presidential campaign against Hubert Humphrey. He won re-election by a landslide in 1972, but resigned two years later amid impeachment proceedings resulting from the Watergate scandal.

Birthday - Carrie Lane Chapman (1859-1947) was born in Ripon, Wisconsin. She was the women's rights pioneer who founded the National League of Women Voters in 1919.

JANUARY 10

January 10, 1920 - The League of Nations officially came into existence with the goal of resolving international disputes, reducing armaments, and preventing future wars. The first Assembly gathered in Geneva ten months later with 41 nations represented. More than 20 nations later joined, however, the U.S. did not join due to a lack of support for the League in Congress.



January 10, 1922 - Arthur Griffith was elected president of the newly formed Irish Free State.

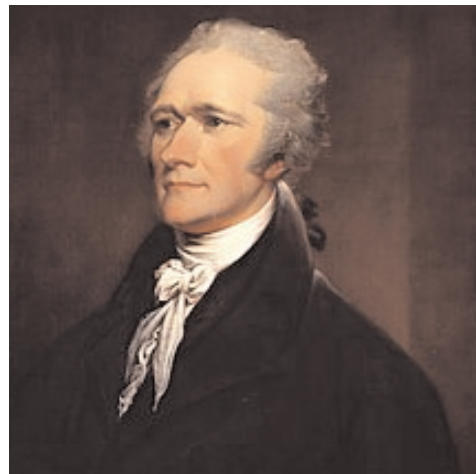
January 10, 1946 - The first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly took place in London with delegates from 51 countries. The U.N. superseded its predecessor, the League of Nations.

January 10, 1984 - The U.S. and Vatican established full diplomatic relations after a break of 116 years.

JANUARY 11

January 11, 1964 - The U.S. Surgeon General declared cigarettes may be hazardous to health, the first such official government report.

January 11, 1990 - In Lithuania, 200,000 persons demanded political independence from Soviet Russia after Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the Soviet Union, publicly warned that separatism could lead to tragedy. Independence was achieved in September of 1991, three months before the collapse of the Soviet Union itself.



Birthday - Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804) was born in the British West Indies. He was a founder of the United States who favored a strong central government and co-authored the Federalist Papers, a series of essays in defense of the new Constitution. He was selected by George Washington to be the first Secretary of the Treasury. He died from a gunshot wound received during a duel with Aaron Burr.

JANUARY 12

January 12, 1932 - Hattie W. Caraway, a Democrat from Arkansas, was appointed to the U.S. Senate to fill the term of her deceased husband. Later in the year, she became the first woman elected to the Senate.

January 12, 1990 - Romania outlawed the Communist Party following the overthrow of Dictator Nicolae Ceauescu who had ruled for 24 years.



January 12, 1991 - Congress authorized President George Bush to use military force against Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait.

January 12, 1996 - The first joint American-Russian military operation since World War II occurred as Russian troops arrived to aid in peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia.

January 12, 1999 - President Bill Clinton sent a check for \$850,000 to Paula Jones officially ending the sensational sexual harassment legal case that ultimately endangered his presidency.

The president withdrew \$375,000 from his and Hillary Rodham Clinton's personal funds and got the remaining \$475,000 from an insurance policy. The lawsuit had exposed the president's affair with Monica Lewinsky and resulted in investigations by Independent Counsel Ken Starr that led to Clinton's impeachment by the House of Representatives and subsequent trial in the Senate.

Birthday - John Winthrop (1588-1649) was born in Suffolk, England. In 1630, he joined a group of Puritans emigrating to America and became the first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, establishing a colony on the peninsula of Shawmut, which became Boston.

Birthday - Irish orator, politician and philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was born in Dublin. Best known for his essays and pamphlets including Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents (1770), On American Taxation (1774), On Conciliation with the Colonies (1775) and Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790).

Birthday - American statesman and patriot John Hancock (1737-1793) was born in Braintree, Massachusetts. He was elected president of the Second Continental Congress in 1775, was the first signer of the Declaration of Independence, and went on to become the first elected governor of Massachusetts.

JANUARY 13

January 13, 1935 - The population of the Saar region bordering France and Germany voted for incorporation into Hitler's Reich. The 737 square-mile area with its valuable coal deposits had been under French control following Germany's defeat in World War I.

January 13, 1990 - Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the first African American governor in the U.S. as he took the oath of office in Richmond.



January 13, 2021 - President Donald Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives on a charge of "Incitement of Insurrection" following a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol by his supporters seven days earlier. The charge alleged Trump encouraged the January 6th insurrection to interfere with Congressional certification of the 2020 presidential election, after losing to Democrat Joe Biden. Trump was acquitted on February 13, 2021 when the U.S. Senate failed to reach the two-thirds majority needed for conviction.

Birthday - Author Horatio Alger (1834-1899) was born in Revere, Massachusetts. He wrote over 100 books for boys, many featuring "rags to riches" themes of poor boys triumphing over life's obstacles.

JANUARY 14

January 14-23, 1943 - President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met at

Casablanca in Morocco to work on strategy during World War II. At the conclusion of the conference, Roosevelt and Churchill held a joint news conference at which Roosevelt surprisingly announced that peace would come "by the total elimination of German and Japanese war power. That means the unconditional surrender of Germany, Italy and Japan."

Birthday - Benedict Arnold (1741-1801) was born in Norwich, Connecticut. He was the American Revolutionary War hero who turned traitor, sending information to the British in exchange for money. After obtaining command of West Point in 1780, he conspired to turn over the garrison to the British. However, his plans were discovered and he fled to British headquarters in New York. After the war, he lived in England.

Birthday - Philosopher-physician Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) was born in Upper Alsace, Germany. He served as a medical missionary in Africa and received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his work on behalf of the brotherhood of all nations.



Birthday - American film pioneer Hal Roach (1892-1992) was born in Elmira, New York. His output included nearly 1,000 movies of all lengths, including the classic Laurel and Hardy comedies.

JANUARY 15



January 15, 1973 - Golda Meir became the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit the Pope.

Birthday - Martin Luther King (1929-1968) was born in Atlanta, Georgia. As an African American civil rights leader he spoke eloquently and stressed nonviolent methods to achieve equality. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968. In 1983, the third Monday in January was designated a legal holiday in the U.S. to celebrate his birthday.

After Tilak Varma's injury setback, BCCI left with no choice but to turn to Shreyas for T20 World Cup squad

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Tilak Varma's surgery has dropped an uncomfortable question into India's T20 World Cup build-up: What if he can't medically be cleared in time, and who then could be his replacement? Reports quoting a BCCI official claim that Tilak reported acute pain in Rajkot while with the Hyderabad team for the Vijay Hazare Trophy, was diagnosed with testicular torsion, and underwent successful surgery.

The issue isn't only that India loses a left-handed batter in the top three for the series against New Zealand. If Tilak's recovery is delayed, it may force India to make a last-minute change to the squad for the marquee tournament.

Who can replace Tilak Varma and why?

The most sensible argument for replacing Tilak Varma should be a ready-made top middle-order batter who can handle pressure and allow India to keep their existing batting plan intact. In that brief, Shreyas Iyer fits the best. Tilak's strongest value is how he keeps India functional in the overs 7-15, the phase that decides most T20s, when teams throw matchups, and boundary riders at you. The replacement India pick must be comfortable living in that phase, not just visiting it. Shreyas Iyer is naturally a No.3/4 operator, someone who has built his career around reading fields, managing spin-heavy stretches, and then shifting gears. Even if he doesn't replicate Tilak's handedness, he replicates a far more important thing: a top-four batter who can keep the innings from stalling in the middle overs.

Iyer's inclusion avoids the extra opener trap

Several alternative names being floated in the ecosystem are top-order specialists, excellent players, but often openers by design. The issue with picking a specialist opener as a squad replacement in this case is simple: it quietly pushes India into an unwanted reshuffle. Someone must move, roles change, and suddenly the replacement becomes the centre of the batting



order. Iyer does the opposite. He allows India to keep their template intact because he is already shaped for the same functional lane Tilak occupies: a top-four responsibility with middle-overs weight. That reduces decision-making friction in-game, which is what teams strive for in World Cups.

Form and readiness without role confusion

If India has to make a late squad switch, they will prefer a player who walks in with clarity. Iyer ticks that box, and he has recent, tangible evidence of rhythm too, returning to competitive cricket with 82 off 53 balls for Mumbai in the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

He has also been declared fit after clearance from the BCCI's Centre of Excellence, which is significant because it removes the grey area around availability and allows selectors to focus purely on cricketing fitness.

Malaysia Open: Sindhu, Satwik-Chirag secure quarterfinal spots

Star shuttler PV Sindhu produced an impressive performance, defeating Japan's Tomoka Miyazaki to book her spot in the women's singles quarterfinals but India's challenge ended in the men's singles at the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday, January 8.

Former world champion Sindhu, returning after a long injury lay-off, defeated the eighth-seeded Miyazaki 21-8, 21-13 in 33 minutes.

Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, will take on third-seeded Japanese Akane Yamaguchi, a three-time world champion, who defeated China's Gao Fang Jie 21-11 4-21 21-17 in another match.

Top men's pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, who won a second bronze at world championships last year, also sailed into the quarterfinals with a 21-18 21-12 win over Malaysia's World No. 17 Junaidi Arif and Roy King Yap in 39 minutes.

The former World No. 1 Indians, who reached the finals of Hong Kong Open and China Masters in 2025, thus extended their head-to-head record against the Malaysian pair to 4-0.

The Asian Games champions will next face the winners of the clash between Chinese Taipei's Chen Zhi Ray/Lin Yu Chieh and sixth seeds Fajar Alfian/Fikri Muhammad of Indonesia.

However, it was curtains for ace Indian men's player Lakshya Sen and young Ayush Shetty who both lost at the pre-quarterfinal stage.

Australia win final Test to complete 4-1 Ashes triumph over England

SYDNEY (TIP)

There were a couple of wobbles along the way but at 2.30pm on the final day in Sydney, Australia had knocked off a target of 160 to win the fifth Test by five wickets and claim this Ashes series by a 4-1 scoreline.

Like their tour as a whole, there was a nagging sense of what might have been for England with a few more runs on the board, or better catching and tighter bowling earlier in the contest. But there could be few quibbles from the injured Ben Stokes as he watched the final rites from first slip.

This has been a chastening tour for Stokes and his men, the Ashes lost in a record-equalling 11 days and just that two-day shootout victory in Melbourne to show for it. High hopes were followed by crushing lows, even if Jacob Bethell's 154 in this fifth Test was a genuine moment of promise.

Australia simply played superior cricket across the bulk of the series, with the flashing blade of Travis Head, the left-arm majesty of Mitchell Starc, and Scott Boland's accuracy standing out. England



underwhelmed with the bat, while their bowling prompted the words "cut for four" far too often.

Another difference was Alex Carey's campaign both behind the stumps and with bat in hand, Australia's cherubic wicketkeeper going on to deliver the

winning moment with a succulent drive through extra cover off Will Jacks.

The run chase delivered a few moments for a crowd of 26,000 that took the match attendance past 200,000 for the first time in the SCG's history. Among these was one last snarling blow-up from Brydon

Carse after review for caught behind off Jake Weatherald on 16 which was declined despite a low murmur on Snicko.

Up in the third umpire's box, Kumar Dharmasena had felt there was not enough evidence to overturn the decision, with English minds cast back to a similar one that saw Jamie Smith dismissed back in Perth. Consistency is the key, even if Snicko's shortcomings have been shown up all series.

After a lively start, Head's monstrous series ended with 629 runs at 69.2 when he stuck one up the shoot off Josh Tongue on 29. Another lifter from England's most encouraging seamer on tour then did for Weatherald on 34 to bring lunch, Australia were 71 for two with 89 more runs required.

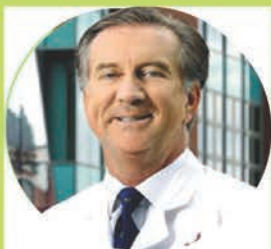
Jacks bowling Steve Smith with a beauty for 12 after the resumption brought Usman Khawaja to the crease through a guard of honour. A fine Test career soon ended on six, however, Khawaja bowled by Tongue off the inside edge and stopping to perform a sajdah on the outfield as he walked off.



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 beautifully facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses, and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion.

Best Wishes, Peter



Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



New Goutami Institute to be constructed 2024



In 2018 Prasanth, Sushanth and Nisanth were diagnosed and treated and Prematurity Retinopathy. An illness in premature babies which can cause blindness.

Luckily through GEMROP an initiative funded by EFA to screen premature babies throughout hospitals in India, the triplets were able to receive an expensive surgery free of charge. The boys are now the age of 4 with perfect vision.

3.5 + million served
325,000 + vision restoring surgeries
30,000 + surgeries on children

Services include :

- Treating disease and vision problems
- Performing free cataract surgeries
- Distributing glasses and visual aids
- Conducting community research
- Providing education to physicians and the public

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