



**The INDIAN PANORAMA**

Will bring out a special edition in commemoration of the birthday of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism and the first of the ten Sikh Gurus, on October 31. The actual birthday this year falls on November 5.

Advertisements and articles may please be emailed to salujaindra@gmail.com latest by October 25, 2025. For any question, please email or call 646-247-9458.

# Historic Diwali Celebration at Kings Supreme Court Highlights the Story Behind the Diwali Stamp



Standing (L to R): A.J. Matthew J D'emic, Representative of NYS Courts Asian Jade Society, A.J. Genine D. Edwards, Justice Joanne D. Quinones, Chair of Second Judicial District Equal Justice Committee, Ranju Batra., Chair, Diwali Foundation USA, Supervising Judge Biju J. Koshy, Administrator Lisa Mangal

I.S. SALUJA  
OCTOBER 15, 2025

**BROOKLYN, NY (TIP):** In a landmark event marking the first-ever Diwali celebration within the halls of the Kings Supreme Court on October 15, the festival of lights was honored not only as a cultural celebration but as a symbol of justice, truth, and inclusivity. Addressing the gathering of Honorable Justices, legal dignitaries, and guests, the keynote speaker, Ranju Batra, Chair, Diwali Foundation USA, Inc., extended warm Diwali greetings and reflected on the profound symbolism of seeing the "light of Diwali shining within the Supreme Court - a temple of justice and truth."

The Keynote Speaker's central message echoed the timeless ideals of Diwali - the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil, and justice over injustice - drawing a deep parallel between the festival's spirit and the mission of the judiciary.

CONTD ON PAGE 13

## H-1B FEE VISA HIKE: US CHAMBER SUES TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Photo for representational purpose only.

**OCTOBER 16, 2025 WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** The US Chamber of Commerce has filed a lawsuit against the Donald Trump administration's decision to impose a USD 100,000 fee on all new H-1B visa petitions, describing it as "misguided policy and plainly unlawful" action that could cripple American innovation and competitiveness. The lawsuit, filed Thursday, October 16, in a district court in Columbia, challenges the administration's September 19 proclamation, 'Restriction on entry of certain nonimmigrant workers', arguing that it violates the Immigration and Nationality Act by overriding Congress' authority to regulate the H-1B visa programme. The departments of Homeland Security and State, along with their secretaries, Kristi L Noem and Marco Rubio, respectively, have been named as defendants.

CONTD ON PAGE 60

# Conflicting Claims by US and India on India's Russian oil imports

**OCTOBER 16, 2025 NEW DELHI / WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** India and the United States continued to differ publicly over Russian oil as U.S. President Donald Trump said he had been assured by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that India will stop buying oil from Russia, while the Ministry of External Affairs maintained the two leaders had not spoken about the issue.

However, the MEA said that India was "broad-basing" and "diversifying" its sources of energy according to market needs, and did not specifically deny the claim that it was reducing its intake

The subject of Russian oil, which has led to the U.S. imposing penalty tariffs on India, is also believed to be holding up trade talks between the two countries. While the government has consistently denied it would bow to pressure, data analyzed by The Hindu showed that oil public sector undertakings (PSUs) have



Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters on October 16: "I am not aware of any conversation yesterday between the two leaders (Trump and Modi)"

Photo: X/@MEAIndia via PTI.

dropped their Russian imports by as much as 45% between June and

September this year, even though Russia remains India's biggest supplier overall.

"I am not aware of any conversation yesterday between the two leaders," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters here on Thursday, also clarifying that a call between Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump last Thursday (October 16, 2025) had only dealt with the Gaza peace plan and India-U.S. trade issues.

On Wednesday, October 15, Mr. Trump had said he was confident that India would end its oil imports "soon" but not "immediately". "I was not happy that India was buying oil, and [PM Modi] assured me today that they will not be buying oil from Russia," Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House, with U.S. Ambassador-designate to Delhi Sergio Gor also present. "It's a little bit of a process, but the process is going to be over with soon," Mr. Trump said, adding, "That's a big step."

CONTD ON PAGE 60

**INSIDE**

**THE LIGHT WITHIN AND THE DARKNESS WE MUST CONQUER: ON DIWALI 2025** PAGE 2

**FROM INTERNET TO AI, A STORY OF NON-REGULATION** PAGE 8

**THE CJ'S RESTRAINT AND THE MEDIA'S RECKONING** PAGE 9

**UNEMPLOYMENT IS STILL A CORE ISSUE IN BIHAR** PAGE 10

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## COMMENT

# The Light Within and the Darkness We Must Conquer: On Diwali 2025

As the fragrance of fresh sweets fills the air, markets dazzle with colors, and homes begin to sparkle with rows of diyas, Indians once again enter their most joyous and spiritually profound season-the festival of lights, Diwali. Scheduled this year for October 20, 2025, Diwali is not merely a cultural celebration; it is a festival that embodies the deepest moral and philosophical truths that have guided Indian civilization for millennia. It is the culmination of the long festive season that begins with Navratri and Dussehra, and it symbolizes the eternal victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance.

According to Hindu tradition, Diwali commemorates the return of Lord Rama to his kingdom of Ayodhya after a 14-year exile and his victory over Ravana, the ten-headed king of Lanka who had abducted Rama's wife, Sita. The people of Ayodhya, overjoyed at their beloved prince's return, lit rows of oil lamps to illuminate the path home-a gesture that became a timeless symbol of welcoming goodness, righteousness, and divine justice back into the world. To this day, millions of Hindus across India and the diaspora reenact this ancient story through the Ramayana, celebrating it with fireworks, the exchange of gifts and sweets, and homes radiant with lights.

Yet, Diwali is not only an outward festival-it is an inward journey. Its true spirit calls for more than decoration and festivity; it demands reflection, introspection, and renewal. It asks of each of us: What is the Ravana within me?

For the tale of Rama and Ravana is not only history or mythology-it is also a moral allegory of the human condition. Within each of us, there exists both a Rama and a Ravana-the noble and the ignoble, the compassionate and the cruel, the selfless and the selfish. Every human being is a battlefield between these two forces. To light the lamp of Diwali is, therefore, not only to celebrate Rama's victory in Ayodhya but also to kindle the flame of righteousness in our own hearts.

The symbolism of light conquering darkness extends far beyond religion. Light stands for truth, clarity, empathy, and awareness, while darkness represents ignorance, hatred, greed, and prejudice. In a world that is increasingly divided by race, religion, ideology, and economic disparity, Diwali offers a universal message: that humanity's greatest triumphs come not through violence or domination, but through enlightenment-through the illumination of the mind and spirit.

The Sikh tradition offers a parallel and profound insight. Sikhs commemorate the same day as Bandi Chhod Divas, marking the return of Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji from imprisonment, where he secured the release of fifty-two Hindu kings unjustly detained by the Mughal emperor Jahangir. It is thus a festival of freedom and compassion, emphasizing that true victory lies not in personal gain



but in securing justice and liberty for others. The Sikh teaching, "Man jeete jag jeet"-he who conquers his mind conquers the world-reminds us that the most formidable enemy we face is not outside us but within.

Indeed, the human mind, if left unchecked, can be the most destructive force in existence. It breeds greed, jealousy, intolerance, and the hunger for power that have led to wars, exploitation, and suffering throughout history. Yet the same mind, when disciplined, guided by conscience and compassion, can be the source of boundless creativity, peace, and love. The battle for the mind, therefore, is the true Kurukshetra of modern life.

If humanity could collectively conquer this inner demon-this restlessness, anger, and self-centeredness-the world's most pressing crises would lose their fuel. Conflicts between nations would subside, the cries of the impoverished would lessen, and the exploitation of nature would cease. Diwali, in this sense, becomes not a festival of indulgence, but a call to inner revolution.

As India and Indians around the world prepare for the celebrations-with bustling bazaars, glowing lanterns, and joyous family gatherings-let us not forget that the essence of the festival lies in light, not merely in illumination. Light is symbolic of truth and consciousness, qualities sorely needed in today's times of disinformation and moral confusion.

The fireworks that brighten our skies should remind us of the radiance we must ignite within-the light of understanding and empathy that can outshine the darkness of prejudice and

hatred. The exchange of sweets and gifts should reflect the sweetness of genuine goodwill and the generosity of spirit, rather than material display. The cleaning of our homes should be accompanied by the cleansing of our hearts-of grudges, bitterness, and apathy toward the suffering of others.

In our society today, evil rarely wears the face of Ravana. It is subtler and more pervasive-it takes the form of corruption, inequality, discrimination, and moral apathy. It thrives wherever there is silence in the face of injustice or indifference to human pain. To celebrate Diwali meaningfully, therefore, is to take a stand for truth and compassion in every sphere of life, from our homes to our public institutions.

In the Northern parts of India, where Diwali festivities reach their grandest scale, the enactments of the Ramayana-called Ramlila-draw thousands of spectators each year. But as we watch Rama's victory unfold on stage, we must remember that the true Ramlila is played out daily in our own lives. Every moment we choose honesty over deceit, empathy over indifference, forgiveness over revenge, we allow Rama to triumph once again.

At its heart, Diwali is a festival of hope. In a time when the world seems consumed by wars, environmental crises, and moral decline, its lamps remind us that darkness, however deep, cannot endure when light is kindled. Just as one small flame can ignite countless others, one act of kindness, one word of truth, one moment of courage can transform the moral landscape around us.

So, as diyas are lit across India and the diaspora this October 20, let each flame be a vow-a vow to banish the darkness within and around us, to rise above selfishness and division, to nurture the divine in ourselves and others. Let Diwali not end with the extinguishing of the lamps, but let it live on in our conduct, in our compassion, and in our conscience.

May the light of Diwali 2025 dispel not only the night but also the inner shadows that blind humanity to truth and love. May it inspire us to build a world where the light of reason, the warmth of brotherhood, and the radiance of justice burn brightly and eternally.

For in conquering the darkness within, we achieve what Lord Rama symbolized-the true victory of good over evil, not in myth or memory, but in the living world.

*"Man jeete jag jeet."  
He who conquers his mind conquers the world.  
Let that be the spirit of this Diwali.  
HAPPY DIWALI!*

By Indrajit Saluja

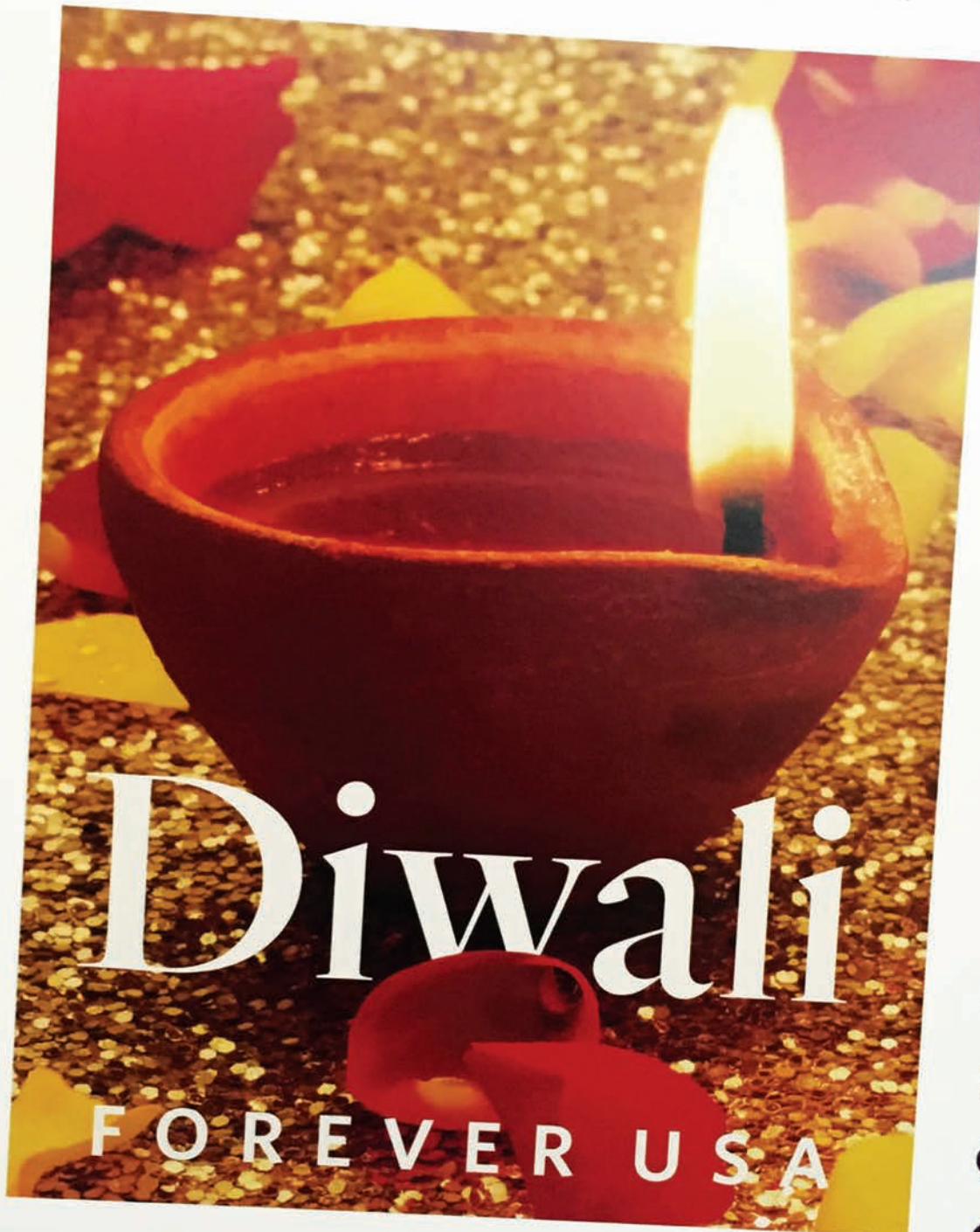


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# Happy Diwali!

An American Landmark



"While my journey to our Diwali Stamp took seven years, the Diwali stamp is ours forever. Now, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists have a stamp to call our own. For over a billion Indians in India, for about 4 million Indian Americans, and for many more around the world, the festival of lights is here. My spirits uplifted, and from this year forward the Diyas will shine brighter! The Diwali stamp will be a matter of pride for generations to come."



**Ranju Batra**  
Chair



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## Indian American Dr. Bob Basu Named President of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons



Dr. Bob Basu has been named president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the world's largest organization of board-certified plastic surgeons.

OCTOBER 15, 2025

**NEW ORLEANS, LA (TIP) :** C. Bob Basu, MD, MBA, MPH, FACS, has been named president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the world's largest organization of board-certified plastic surgeons. Dr. Basu officially assumed the role on October 12, 2025, during the Society's annual scientific conference, Plastic Surgery The Meeting, in New Orleans. His term will conclude on Oct. 18, 2026.

"I am honored to serve as president of ASPS and to represent our more than 11,000 members worldwide. Our mission is clear: to uphold the highest standards in education, ethics, training, research and innovation while advancing public awareness of the vital importance and value of aesthetic and reconstructive plastic surgery performed by board-certified plastic surgeons," said Dr. Basu. "As demand for these procedures continues to grow, our commitment to patient safety and exceptional outcomes has never been more crucial. With this unwavering focus, I look forward to strengthening ASPS's position as the preeminent trusted resource for reliable and balanced education across the field of plastic surgery."

Additionally, Dr. Basu's presidency will leverage the power of A.I. to deepen ASPS's engagement with both domestic and international members. His vision includes modernizing the membership experience through personalized tools and resources tailored to each surgeon's educational interests and practice needs, across all specialties and modes of practice.

As the founder and managing director of Basu Aesthetics + Plastic Surgery, a Houston-based independent private practice specializing in aesthetic plastic surgery of the face, breast and body, Dr. Basu has earned a national reputation as one of America's premier plastic surgeons. He has performed more than 18,000 procedures, underscoring his commitment to exceptional patient results. In his new role as ASPS president, Dr. Basu will build on his legacy of clinical excellence and ethical leadership to emphasize patient safety through education and empowerment.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

## Former Indian American Surgeon General Vivek Murthy joins Common Sense Media Board of Directors

OCTOBER 15, 2025

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA (TIP):** Former Indian American U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has joined the Board of Directors of Common Sense Media to add public health expertise to the organization.

Murthy will bring his decades of medical expertise to Common Sense Media's efforts to build a healthier digital landscape for children and families everywhere, according to a media release.

Dr. Vivek Murthy served as the 19th and 21st Surgeon General of the United States, serving from 2015 to 2017 and 2021 to 2025 in the Obama and Biden administrations.

In 2023, he issued an advisory on the effects of social media on youth mental health. The following year, he called for warning labels on addictive social media platforms, an effort that Common Sense Media strongly supports.

"With Dr. Murthy's extraordinary guidance, Common Sense Media will be able to double down on our efforts to better understand and tackle technology's role in the youth mental health crisis," said Common Sense Media Founder and CEO James P. Steyer.

"He is a truly unique addition to our



Dr. Vivek Murthy has joined the Board of Directors of Common Sense Media to add public health expertise to the organization

leadership team of policy experts, joining our Board at a time when substantive expertise and insights into tech's impact on kids' mental health are needed more than ever. His remarkable wealth of knowledge and global leadership role will be invaluable at a time when AI, including unsafe AI companion chatbots, poses an increasing threat to the mental health and well-being of our kids and families across the nation and globally."

During his two terms as Surgeon

General, Dr. Murthy's initiatives shaped national and international conversations and compelled change across business and non-profit organizations, according to the release.

He has drawn attention to critical and under-appreciated health issues, including the epidemic of loneliness, parental mental health and well-being, the youth mental health crisis, and health worker burnout.

Common Sense Media's ratings, research, and resources reach more than 150 million users worldwide and over 1.4 million educators and more than 100K schools worldwide every year.

Born in Huddersfield, Yorkshire to immigrants from Karnataka, India, Dr. Murthy is the grandson of the late H C Narayana Murthy, the former director of Mysore Sugar Company, and son of Florida-based H N Lakshmi Narasimha Murthy and Maithreya Murthy.

In 1978, the family crossed the Atlantic to Newfoundland, where his father worked as a district medical officer. When he was three years old, the family relocated to Miami, and his parents established their medical practice.

Dr. Murthy is a graduate of Harvard, the Yale School of Medicine, and the Yale School of Management.

## Indian American Dr. Kumbar becomes Nebraska Medical Center associate dean for research

OCTOBER 13, 2025

**LINCOLN, NE (TIP) :** Indian American researcher Sangamesh Gurappa Kumbar has been named associate dean for research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Dentistry.



Sangamesh Gurappa Kumbar has been named associate dean for research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Dentistry.

Dr. Kumbar, who joined UNMC earlier this year and has his lab on the Omaha campus, took on the role effective Oct. 1, according to a UNMC release.

"Dr. Kumbar is an exceptional scholar whose visionary work bridges basic science and translational innovation," said Gerard Kugel, dean of the college. "His appointment reflects both his remarkable record of discovery and our college's commitment to advancing impactful, interdisciplinary research. I'm confident his leadership will strengthen our research enterprise and inspire the next generation of scientists and clinicians at UNMC."

Dr. Kumbar's own research focuses on synthesizing and characterizing novel biomaterials for tissue engineering and drug delivery. His laboratory specializes in tissue instructive micro, and nanostructures designed to enhance tissue regeneration and control drug delivery.

Dr. Kumbar said collaboration is the key to his vision for his new role. "We often work in silos, focusing on our individual R01, our own projects," he said. "When individuals join forces, they can complete research that could not be accomplished by a single person - in terms of grants, in terms of translational research, on every level."

Dr. Kumbar, a professor in the UNMC Department of Growth and Development, already is working on collaborations with the UNMC Department of Orthopedic Surgery and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Engineering.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))

## Indian American Yale researcher, Damanveer Singh Grewal, likens early solar system to LEGO blocks

OCTOBER 10, 2025

**NEW HAVEN, CT (TIP) :** A new study led by Indian American Yale researcher suggests that from its earliest period Earth's solar system and its planets looked more like a bin of well-used LEGO blocks than slowly-evolving spheres of untouched elements and minerals.

"Far from being made of pristine material, planets - including Earth - were built from recycled fragments of shattered and rebuilt bodies," said Damanveer Singh Grewal, first author of a new study in the journal Science Advances.

"Our research paints a clearer picture of the violent origins of our solar system," said Grewal, an assistant professor of Earth and planetary science in Yale's Faculty of Arts and Science.

Scientists have long known that in the earliest days of the solar system, planets and protoplanets known as "planetesimals" formed via a combination of collisions and core formation, which triggered chemical changes to the cores' composition, according to Yale News. But the level of influence for each of these forces has been unknown. Adding to the mystery, some planetesimals have unusual chemical signatures that would require the presence of highly unlikely metals at the start of a naturally evolving core formation process.

Grewal and his colleagues say the explanation lies with the smash-and-rebuild nature of the early solar system - even before the last of its nebular gas had been consumed.

For the new study, the researchers created simulations of how planetary cores developed in the early years of the solar system based on a reinterpretation of data taken from iron meteorites - the remnants of the metallic cores of the first planetesimals.

(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))



"Far from being made of pristine material, planets - including Earth - were built from recycled fragments of shattered and rebuilt bodies," said Damanveer Singh Grewal, first author of a new study in the journal Science Advances.

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# AIA-NY'S 38TH ICONIC DEEPAVALI FESTIVAL MAKES HISTORY ON LONG ISLAND



Town of Babylon Supervisor Rich Schaffer invited AIA-NY to hold the Deepavali Festival in his Town again next year



Pt S.N. Charka of East-West School of Dance with the cast of Ramayan dance drama choreographed by him. Emmy-nominated filmmaker Tirlok Malik (2nd from left) played Bharat

**OCTOBER 12, 2025**

**BABYLON, NY (TIP) :** The Association of Indians in America, New York (AIA-NY) celebrated its 38th iconic Deepavali Festival at Overlook Beach here on October 11, marking a milestone as the first-ever festival of its kind on

unity, and community engagement." Many lawmakers and dignitaries greeted the audience and congratulated AIA-NY and its President, Beena Kothari, for organizing a colorful extravaganza. US Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer sent a video-

Amb. Binaya Srikanta Pradhan was represented by Consul, Community Affairs, Shri Tsewang Gyaltsen.

The carefully curated programming had something for each age group. The first segment saw classical and folk-



Honorees Sunita Sadhnani, Dr Gurmohan Syali, Dr Abhay Malhotra, and Justice Karen Gopee with the AIA team, guests, and dignitaries, including Congressman Suhas Subramanyam.

Long Island.

An estimated 2,000 people enjoyed cultural performances, spiritual presentations, traditional Indian food, and community celebration throughout the day.

A spectacular live fireworks display lit up Long Island's south shore, creating unforgettable memories.

Amid fulsome compliments for staging a grand show and maneuvering the annual event's move from South Street Seaport in Manhattan, AIA-NY President Beena Kothari said, "This event was a dream come true... promoting culture,

recorded message. Town of Babylon Supervisor Rich Schaffer, impressed by the teeming crowds despite forecasts of bad weather, announced that his Town will also support the Deepavali Festival next year.

US Congressman Suhas Subramanyam came all the way from Virginia to grace the event. New York State Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar said that the Empire State's lead in making Diwali a public holiday has been followed by other states, including California and Pennsylvania.

Consul General of India in New York



New York State Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar said generations of school children in New York will know what Diwali is when they get a holiday for the festival.



A half-hour devotional Kirtan Concert was presented by Bhakti Marga devotees. Standing behind the performers are Beena Kothari, Neha Lohia, and Dr Tarun Wasil

Highlights of the daylong program included Kirtan Concert by Bhakti Marga, founded by Paramahansa Vishwananda, and Ramayan Live Dance Drama choreographed by the renowned Pt S.N. Charka of East-West School of Dance in Monroe, Upstate New York. A Cultural Fashion Show by celebrity designer Prashant Goyal added a touch of glamor in the evening. Later, Manpreet Komal and Amit Sharma from Rang de Bollywood in San Francisco had the audience dance to their Garba beats.

dance performances on stage by kids, young adults, and adults. Rangoli and art competitions were keenly contested. Health & Wellness Zone had Yoga & Zumba in another enclosure.

The event kicked off with an auspicious Ganesh Vandana and concluded with Lakshmi Ji Aarti, symbolizing light, prosperity, and togetherness.

Sponsors, presenters, and VIP guests were served a sumptuous vegetarian meal before the fireworks show.



NY President Beena Kothari thanked celebrity designer Prashant Goyal and his models for the Cultural Fashion Show

Four people were honored for their achievements and contributions to community and society: Justice Karen Gopee, Dr Gurmohan Syali, Dr Abhay Malhotra, and Sunita Sadhnani. Ruma Devi, visiting from India, and Kamal Sabri were also honored.

The community celebration opened with the American and Indian national anthems amid a flag ceremony.

About 25 stalls and 5 food vendors were seen doing brisk business.

Main sponsors of the celebration included Bolla Oil, Mount Sinai Health System, New York Cancer and Blood Specialists, Cheap-o-Air, Northwell Health System, Amneal, Navika Group, ICICI Bank, NEC-AIA, and Ranju & Ravi

**CONTD ON PAGE 7**



Children, young adults, and adults gave colorful classical and folk-dance performances.

**CONTD FROM PAGE 6**

Batra. Media partners included Zee Group, Sony, Parikh Worldwide Media, TV Asia, Radio Zindagi, Jus TV, The South Asian Times, The Indian Panorama, The Indian Eye, Hum Hindustani, South Asian Insider, ALotusInTheMud.com, The World Voice, and Bollywood Insider. Many past Presidents of AIA National and AIA-NY were in attendance.

The organizers have thanked the Town of Babylon, local partners, sponsors, and volunteers for their support in making this historic celebration possible.

President Beena Kothari has expressed heartfelt gratitude to the evening program's emcee and culture ambassador, Neha Lohia, and to Gautam Chopra, Kulbhushan Sharma, and culture director Jyoti Gupta for conducting the afternoon shows. "A big shoutout to Dr. Tarun Wasil, Harsh Vyas,

Nilima Madan, Anita Thakkar, Dr. Sharad Kothari, and Dr. Bal Gilja," added Beena Kothari, for their support. "Thank you also to our Past Presidents and NEC President Gobind Munjal for their



Exquisite Fireworks



Crowds dance with abandon

guidance and support. And DJ Parminder for the energetic beats."

**ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF INDIANS IN AMERICA**

AIA is the oldest Indian community organization in America, established in 1967 with the motto 'Indian Heritage American Commitment'.

AIA-NY's achievements include New York City's official recognition of Diwali as a holiday, starting in 2024, and the 2013

release of the USPS Diwali stamp. AIA-NY celebrates Diwali as the festival of joy and happiness, which is common among Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, and people from many different countries, including Indo-Caribbeans.

Contact for more information: Mrs Beena Kothari, Ph: +1 631 988 1280, theaianypresident@gmail.com, website: aia-ny.org

(Based on a press release issued by AIA)

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# From Internet to AI, a story of non-regulation



By Manish Tewari

The objective of the Delhi summit must be to lay down foundational ground rules for the AI era

"If the Internet was transformative, artificial intelligence (AI) is transmogrifying. The critical difference between the dotcom boom and the AI explosion is the substrate upon which it is built. The Internet required a quarter-century to achieve its current ubiquity, a period of gradual, albeit rapid, adoption and infrastructure development. AI, in stark contrast, is being grafted onto the existing, globalized digital nervous system that the Internet created."

The Internet was the most audacious experiment in anarchy, and it has succeeded beyond the wildest imagination of its initial progenitor, the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). It represents the largest ungoverned space on earth. Never before in the history of humankind has so much power concurrently resided on 5.5 billion fingertips around the world.

There is more data that is churned out daily than from the dawn of civilization to the turn of the third millennium. The future of humankind lies on the intersection of a brick-and-mortar civilization that evolved over an eternal length of time and a virtual civilization that is still metamorphosing.

The Internet that came in vogue in the mid-1990s was truly transformative in the way it has shaped life, leisure and work patterns. However, it has also been weaponized by state, semi-state and other nefarious characters, including people who have a grievance as to why they were born in the first place.

The Dark Web or the Deep Net is a classical manifestation of the noxious underbelly of the Internet. However, despite a host of acronyms that ostensibly govern the Internet - Internet Governance Forum (IGF), Internet Architecture Board (IAB), Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and the World Wide Web Consortium (WSC), to name a few - there are no agreed rules of engagement in this virtual civilization.

The First Amendment absolutists of the Silicon Valley and other innovation hubs did not allow a cohesive global governance structure for the Internet to get institutionalized. This has led to myriad challenges, including the balkanization of the Internet into spheres of influence.

If the Internet was transformative, artificial intelligence (AI) is transmogrifying. The critical difference between the dotcom boom and the AI explosion is the substrate upon which it is



Bright side: It must be acknowledged that the AI-driven disruption is inevitable and, in many forms, desirable. -iStock

built. The Internet required a quarter-century to achieve its current ubiquity, a period of gradual, albeit rapid, adoption and infrastructure development. AI, in stark contrast, is being grafted onto the existing, globalized digital nervous system that the Internet created.

The devices, the networks, the data streams - the entire kitchenware, as it were - are already in place, pre-heated and ready for this new recipe. This pre-existing infrastructure, coupled with a global population already accustomed to digital immersion, removes the natural friction that once slowed technological adoption.

The acceleration is not merely linear; it is geometric. This very fact places a Herculean burden upon governments, which must now comprehend and regulate a force whose ultimate societal and economic impacts are still unfathomable. To leave this force to its own devices, to allow a repeat of the laissez-faire approach of the 1990s, would be an act of profound historical negligence.

Successive global AI summits, commencing in the UK under then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and progressing to France under President Macron, have served as vital, yet ultimately preliminary, diplomatic soundings. They have confirmed a universal recognition of the transformative power cascading from AI, but have thus far failed to forge the substantive, binding consensus required to steer this force.

The current landscape is a patchwork of fragmented and often contradictory approaches, a precarious situation that undermines global security and stalls innovation. The European Union, displaying characteristic regulatory ambition, has not waited for the dust to settle, enacting its comprehensive AI Act.

This is a significant step, but one taken largely in isolation. Across the Atlantic, the US maintains a stance of pronounced antagonism towards stringent regulation, favoring a sectoral, innovation-centric model that risks creating a dangerous regulatory vacuum.

Meanwhile, the technological reality accelerates, indifferent to these political machinations. The proliferation of foundational models, from ChatGPT and Claude to DeepSeek, has been succeeded by the deep integration of AI into the very operating systems of our lives through Apple Intelligence and Google Gemini. This is no longer a niche tool for developers; it is a pervasive layer being woven into the minutiae of human functions, from how we communicate and create to how we navigate our daily tasks.

The stage is, therefore, set for the third act in this consequential trilogy of conclaves, with the India AI-Impact Summit to be hosted in New Delhi on February 19-20, 2026.

The objective of the summit must be to lay down the foundational ground rules for the AI era. The objective is not, at this juncture, to draft a monolithic exhaustive legal code attempting to govern every conceivable application of AI.

Such an endeavor would be both futile and counterproductive, stifling the very innovation that promises so much progress. Instead, the aim must be to establish the first principles upon which all future national and international AI governance can be built.

It must be acknowledged that the AI-driven disruption is inevitable and, in many forms, desirable. The role of regulation is not to limit this growth, but to channel it, to ensure that the creative forces vastly outweigh the destructive ones, and that the benefits are distributed equitably across the globe.

The framework for these first principles must be built upon several core pillars. First, there must be a global commitment to safety, security and robustness, particularly for the most powerful, frontier AI models. This necessitates international standards for rigorous testing and evaluation, a shared understanding of critical risks, and protocols to prevent catastrophic misuse.

Second, the principles of transparency and explainability should be enshrined. Citizens and regulators alike must have insight into when and how AI systems are being used, especially in high-stakes domains like justice, finance and healthcare. Opaque algorithms making life-altering decisions are anathema to democratic accountability.

Third, a global consensus on data governance and privacy is paramount. The fuel for AI is data, and the unchecked harvesting and utilization of personal information without clear, harmonized rules represent a fundamental threat to individual autonomy.

Fourth, we must confront the profound ethical dimensions, establishing red lines against uses of AI that violate fundamental human rights, such as pervasive social scoring or lethal autonomous weapons systems operating without meaningful human control.

The term 'to Google' is on the cusp of becoming an archaic relic, a testament to the breathtaking velocity of this shift. This is merely the opening salvo, the software-based uprising. The true revolution, the confluence of AI with physical robotics and a fully realized Internet of Things, promises a radical reordering of our physical world within the coming decade itself.

(Manish Tewari is Lok Sabha MP and former I&B Minister)

# The CJI's restraint and the media's reckoning

This is the real danger. When outrage turns profitable, civility becomes costly. The judiciary, bound by decorum, cannot compete in that marketplace



By Sanjay Hegde

On a Monday morning, an act of madness breached the quiet dignity of the Supreme Court. A 71-year-old lawyer, Rakesh Kishore, hurled an object at the Chief Justice of India BR Gavai. The projectile missed, but the insult did not. I was in that courtroom. I did not see the act itself, only the sudden stir, the hush that followed, and the CJI's calm voice: "Don't get distracted. We are not distracted. These things do not affect me."

That response defined the day. There was no panic, no outburst, no order to have the man dragged away. The CJI continued to work, unruffled. Within seconds, the rhythm of proceedings resumed. It felt as if the institution, embodied in its pater familias, refused to be shaken.

That composure was constitutional philosophy in action. The CJI's deliberate lack of reaction became the foundation of his decision not to press charges or initiate contempt. In that context, restraint was not leniency; it was majesty. By treating the episode as beneath response, the CJI affirmed that dignity is not lost through insult, but through insecurity.

The attacker did not deserve such grace. Inside court, he mumbled that his act was "intended for Gavai alone." Outside, before cameras, his tone changed. He suddenly alleged that Sanatana Dharma had been insulted. The shift from personal pique to ideological posturing revealed the truth. This was not conviction but opportunism. Inside the court, he was an offender. Outside, in the theatre of social media, he styled himself a crusader.

Interviews, statements and talk-show appearances began. Some TV anchors painted him as a misunderstood rebel. The man turned into content. Click by click, his infamy metastasized into influence.

This is the real danger. When outrage turns profitable, civility becomes costly. The judiciary, bound by decorum, cannot compete in that marketplace.

Till that point, the CJI's restraint drew admiration. But as the offender continued to speak, as social-media clips began to glorify him, the Bench and the Bar stirred. Justice Ujjal Bhuyan called the act "an affront to the institution." The Attorney General for India, R Venkataramani, acting on requests from the Bar, granted consent to initiate criminal-contempt proceedings against Rakesh Kishore - a rare and serious step.

Supreme Court Bar Association president Vikas Singh, along with Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, mentioned the matter before the Bench of Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi, seeking an early listing. Singh went further. He asked the Bench for a John Doe order - an injunction against social media posts glorifying the attack. The concern went beyond one man's misconduct. A wider ecosystem of provocation was emerging, where violence against judges could become an algorithm for fame.

Justice Surya Kant responded calmly. "Hon'ble CJI has been extremely magnanimous... that shows the institution is not affected by these kinds of incidents." He wondered whether reopening the matter might give fresh oxygen to publicity seekers. Justice Bagchi agreed, asking if new proceedings would "revive and give a fillip to all these publicity-hungry elements."

Their worry was understandable. Every judicial action, however justified, risks becoming a hashtag battle. A contempt case could easily become Episode No. 2 of the same media drama.

Justice Bagchi said, "It is because of our behavior in court that we survive and get the confidence of the people." The Solicitor General described the Chief Justice's forbearance as "a gesture of majesty." He warned, however, that continued social media valorization was "a matter of institutional integrity." Vikas Singh agreed, noting that Kishore had shown no regret and kept "making statements glorifying his act."

The imagery grew more striking when Singh invoked



Faith in law : A man hurling a shoe at the CJI should be a figure of disgrace, not an algorithmic star. -Photo / ANI

**THAT COMPOSURE WAS CONSTITUTIONAL PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION. THE CJI'S DELIBERATE LACK OF REACTION BECAME THE FOUNDATION OF HIS DECISION NOT TO PRESS CHARGES OR INITIATE CONTEMPT. IN THAT CONTEXT, RESTRAINT WAS NOT LENIENCY; IT WAS MAJESTY. BY TREATING THE EPISODE AS BENEATH RESPONSE, THE CJI AFFIRMED THAT DIGNITY IS NOT LOST THROUGH INSULT, BUT THROUGH INSECURITY.**

faith. "Some people say Lord Vishnu will justify it. Lord Vishnu will never justify this kind of violence. It is an insult to Lord Vishnu also." Justice Kant agreed. "Our holy scriptures never condoned violence."

The moral argument was complete. Even in the language of the faith the offender claimed to defend, his act stood condemned.

Ultimately, the Bench decided to list the matter after the Diwali vacation.

Beyond this courtroom lies a larger unease. Judges across the system watch these events closely. They may draw a discouraging moral. If the CJI can face such an attack, and if institutions hesitate to respond for fear of feeding the media fire, disengagement sets in. The quiet extra-mile work that keeps the system functional becomes rarer. Institutions do not always collapse with a bang. They hollow out through small withdrawals of spirit. The relationship between the Bar and Bench, that compact of mutual trust, also begins to fray. The Bar's immediate condemnation and the Supreme Court Bar Association's decision to terminate the offender's membership sent a clear signal of professional self-

correction. The Bar Council of India's suspension order reinforced that line.

The hardest test lies before the media. When coverage morphs into celebration, when exclusive interviews with offenders are promoted for views, journalists cease to be chroniclers of justice and become profiteers of chaos.

Social-media platforms, as Justice Bagchi noted, treat such incidents as money-spinning ventures. That is the heart of the problem. A man hurling a shoe at the CJI should be a figure of disgrace. If he becomes an algorithmic star instead, we are complicit in dismantling our own faith in law.

The need now is for a measured but firm institutional response. Not hysteria. Not witch-hunt. The judiciary and the Bar must issue a unified statement that such acts are beyond the pale. Freedom of expression does not extend to assault, and ideological pretexts cannot launder violence.

A John Doe injunction against glorifying such acts may raise questions about free speech. Yet, if narrowly tailored to restrain promotion rather than discussion, it can serve a limited but vital purpose. It can signal that contempt of court cannot be monetized. Sometimes the law must act not to punish the past, but to protect the future.

Ultimately, this episode is about the faith of a billion citizens who still believe that, whatever the chaos outside, justice inside the SC proceeds with reason and restraint. Every attack on a judge is an attack on that faith. Every indulgent click, share, or laugh that follows such an attack erodes it a little more. Institutions must build structural safeguards and social consensus that violence against judges is unacceptable.

The lesson of that Monday morning is twofold. First, the Chief Justice taught us the power of calm. Second, the aftermath reminds us that calm must not mean complacency. Let the offender face due process. Let the Bar remain vigilant. Let the media find its conscience again.

And for all our sake, let us hope that the sooner the hype around this incident ends, the better it is.

(Sanjay Hegde is a senior advocate at the Supreme Court)

# Unemployment is still a core issue in Bihar

Bihar needs a strategy to revive education, create formal jobs and stem the outmigration of its workforce



By Jignesh Mevani

Unemployment has consistently emerged as one of the most pressing political issues in Bihar. In the last two Assembly elections, jobs and livelihood were among the top concerns. In 2015, post-poll surveys conducted by Lokniti-CSDS showed that 'unemployment/jobs' was the most important issue for 9.1% of voters. By 2020, this percentage rose to nearly 21.0%, making it the second most important issue for voters. With the employment scenario still grim, it is an issue that is likely to dominate voter priorities in the forthcoming polls.

The situation needs to be looked at objectively, for which official statistics are useful. Under the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), the latest State-level indicators on employment are the April-June 2025 quarterly report and the July 2023-June 2024 annual report, with insights on Bihar.

## LOOKING BEYOND THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

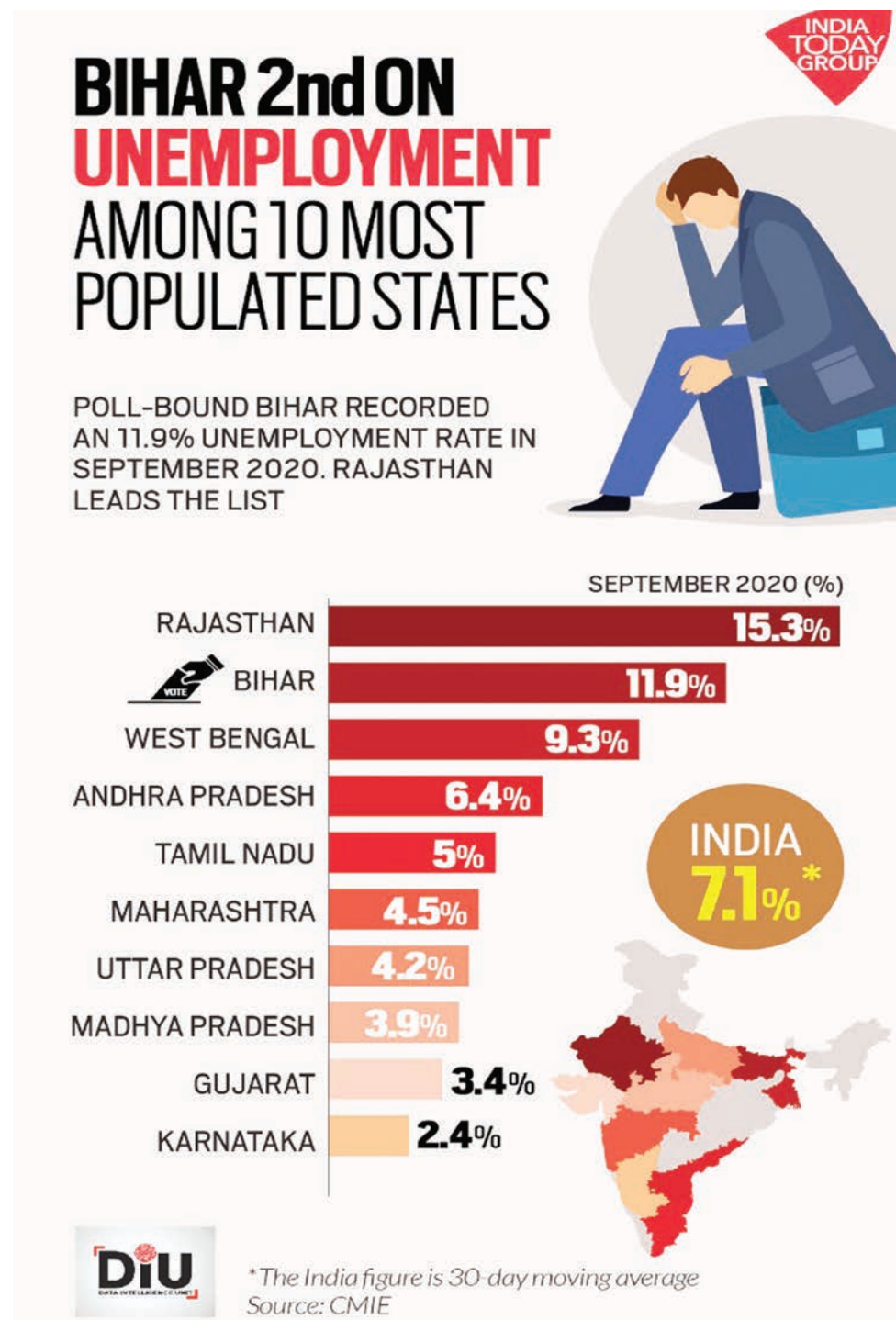
The quarterly and annual releases cite Bihar's unemployment rate as 5.2% and 3%, respectively, whereas it was 5.4% and 3.2%, respectively, at the national level for ages 15 and above. To the casual reader, Bihar's employment/unemployment picture seems decent to good. However, such a superficial reading is misleading. To truly understand employment conditions, one must understand three interrelated indicators in the PLFS - Worker Population Ratio (WPR) or share of the population that is employed; Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) or the share of the population either employed or actively seeking work, and Unemployment Rate (UR) or share of the labor force that is unemployed and actively looking for work.

Looking at the UR in isolation conceals the true picture. The same quarterly and national releases cite the WPR for Bihar at 46.2% and 51.6%, respectively while the national WPR is 52% and 58.2%, respectively, which shows that the share of those employed in the working age population is much lower in Bihar.

On checking the WPR and LFPR in the table, Bihar has low WPR, low LFPR, and therefore low UR. A more holistic interpretation is grim because many in Bihar are not working (low WPR), and many are not even looking for work (low LFPR). Since those not working are not even looking for work, the unemployment rate looks deceptively low. This is a classic manifestation of the "Discouraged Worker Effect" wherein people without jobs lose hope of finding employment opportunities and completely withdraw from the labor force.

A comparison of Bihar with similar/comparable States strengthens the inference and shows how bad employment conditions are in Bihar. But it is important to compare Bihar against States of a similar size and economic background. In this, two factors are crucial in determining similarity: population and per capita income.

For a meaningful comparison, Bihar



The State has underperformed be it education, job creation, industrialization and formalization'.

was grouped with nine large, low-income States (population above three crore as in the Registrar General of India's 2024 projections, per capita income below national average for 2025-25).

There are nine States that fall under this criteria, which are Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

When Bihar's indicators are compared with the chosen group of States, the results are alarming. Bihar ranks the lowest across WPR and LFPR. Uttar Pradesh fares marginally better but still hovers near the bottom.

The quarterly PLFS (April-June 2025) shows that among youth (15-29 years), the picture is even bleaker: only 28 out of 100 are working. Bihar is at the bottom in terms of youth work participation and youth labor force participation. For a generation that should be building its future, the doors of employment remain closed.

Since quarterly figures may be influenced by seasonal fluctuations in

employment, it is important to look at the annual PLFS estimates as well. Quarterly estimates are based on Current Weekly Status, in which the reference period used to determine a person's employment status is just seven days.

The annual report also presents Usual Status: principal+subsidiary status, or figures which give a more comprehensive and stable picture of employment over a long term, minimizing the distortions caused by short-term variations such as festivals, illness or crop cycles. It also captures people's subsidiary work. However, these annual figures too reinforce the same conclusion. For those aged 15 years and above, Bihar's WPR stands at 51.6% and LFPR at 53.2%, which are abysmally low. Only Bihar and Uttar Pradesh fall below 60% in WPR.

The situation is grave for women. Bihar's female WPR is only 30.1%, or out of 100 women aged 15 years and above, only 30 are working. The situation is

even more distressing for young women. In the 15-29 age group, Bihar's female work participation rate stands at 31.2%, while neighboring Jharkhand records 49.3%, which is nearly 20 percentage points higher.

The quality of jobs in Bihar is equally troubling. Only 8.7% of workers are engaged in regular wage/salaried jobs, the lowest among comparable States. Bihar is the only State - not just in this group but also in the entire country - with a single digit proportion. At the same time, 23.8% of workers are employed as casual laborers, the highest share after Odisha across these States. This indicates a lack of secure and formal employment opportunities.

Such outcomes are in stark contrast to the claims of the National Democratic Alliance, which often highlights the formalization of the economy as one of its achievements. In Bihar, however, the labor market remains overwhelmingly informal, insecure and poorly remunerated.

## MIGRATION AND THE MISSING NUMBERS

A caveat must be kept in mind while interpreting Bihar's employment indicators. The PLFS counts only those individuals residing in the State during the reference period. The employment picture could have been better had the PLFS been capturing migration as well.

The grim labor market outcomes cannot be separated from Bihar's governance record. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's government has failed to improve literacy and human capital formation. The same PLFS (annual) shows Bihar's literacy rate at only 73.2% for the 5-plus age group, which is far below the national average. Without significant improvements in education and skills, the State cannot hope to generate meaningful employment opportunities.

Despite frequent announcements, investment summits and promises of industrial revival, little has materialized on the ground. Mr. Kumar's political maneuvers and shifting alliances have yielded little tangible benefits for Bihar's economy. The State has underperformed be it education, job creation, industrialization and formalization.

The employment crisis in Bihar is not a matter of perception but one of hard evidence. PLFS data consistently reveal that Bihar lags in all key labor market indicators. Mr. Kumar's tenure of nearly two decades as the Chief Minister has failed to address these structural weaknesses. For a State with such a young population, this represents not just a missed opportunity but a potential social crisis in the making.

Bihar urgently needs a comprehensive strategy to revive education, create formal jobs, and stem the outmigration of its workforce. Anything short of this risks perpetuating the cycle of poverty, migration, and underdevelopment that has long haunted the State.

(Jignesh Mevani is a Member of the Legislative Assembly in Gujarat and Convener at the Rashtriya Dalit Adhikar Manch)



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# Trade thaw likely as Indian team heads to US after Gor's Delhi talks

Analysts estimate that the tariffs could shave 0.5 per cent off India's GDP

OCTOBER 15, 2025

**NEW DELHI / WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** Signaling a potential thaw in trade relations, a team of senior Indian officials will visit the US this week to hold talks with the Trump administration on the proposed bilateral trade agreement, an official said in New Delhi.

"The Indian team will visit the US this week," the official said, adding that the trade talks are progressing well. The development follows meetings between US Ambassador-designate to India Sergio Gor and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

The trade pact was announced in February by PM Modi and President Donald Trump during Modi's visit to the US, with the objective of doubling bilateral trade between the two countries to \$500 billion.

India and the US had agreed to conclude the first tranche of the proposed trade pact by the fall (October-November) of this year. The official said both sides remain hopeful of meeting that target. So far, five rounds of negotiations have been completed.

In September, Goyal led an official delegation to the US, where he met with United States Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and Gor. The Commerce and Industry Ministry said the delegation held constructive discussions with the US government



US Ambassador-designate Sergio Gor with PM Narendra Modi. -File

on various aspects of the agreement. Both sides exchanged views on the possible contours of the deal and agreed to continue engagements to achieve an early, mutually beneficial conclusion.

According to reports, India has offered concessions to the US, including easing some restrictions on the import of genetically modified corn and increasing purchases of American defense and energy products.

These discussions have taken place amid heightened tensions following Washington's imposition of a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff and an additional 25 per cent penalty on Indian goods in response to India's purchase of Russian crude oil - resulting in a total 50 per cent import duty on Indian exports to the US.

Analysts estimate that the tariffs could shave 0.5 per cent off India's GDP. Bilateral ties hit a low in late August after a planned US delegation visit to New Delhi for the sixth round of talks (scheduled for August 25-29) was abruptly postponed amid escalating tensions.

India's exports to the US fell to \$6.86 billion in August from \$8.01 billion in July, according to Commerce Ministry data.

Exporters said the higher tariffs would start biting now, as the extra 25 per cent duties came into force only at the end of August. September trade data is expected later this week. (Source: TNS)

## India-origin Former US Diplomat Ashley Tellis Arrested on Charges of Illegally Retaining Classified Documents



The U.S. Department of Justice announced on Tuesday, October 14, the arrest of Ashley J. Tellis on federal charges of unlawfully retaining classified national defense information

OCTOBER 15, 2025

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP) :** The U.S. Department of Justice announced on Tuesday, October 14, the arrest of Ashley J. Tellis, a prominent foreign policy expert of Indian origin and former U.S. diplomat, on federal charges of unlawfully retaining classified national defense information. Tellis, 64, was taken into custody in Vienna, Virginia, where he resides, and now faces prosecution under the Espionage Act, specifically Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 793(e).

According to a statement issued by the Justice Department, Tellis "unlawfully retained numerous documents containing national defense information, including documents marked as Top Secret and Secret." Prosecutors allege that more than 1,000 pages of classified documents were found at his residence during an FBI search, including sensitive information about U.S. Air Force tactics and aircraft capabilities.

Tellis, widely regarded as one of Washington's leading "India hands," has

advised multiple U.S. administrations on South Asia policy. He served as a senior official on the National Security Coagreement and the George W. Bush administration, played a key role in shaping the U.S.-India civil nuclear agreement, and was a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Court filings claim that Tellis, who maintained high-level security clearances during his government service, continued to access and print classified documents from government buildings even after his tenure ended. Some of these documents were allegedly removed from secure facilities and taken home in a briefcase.

The affidavit further notes that Tellis had met with Chinese government officials on several occasions in recent years. During one such meeting in 2022, investigators say, he was seen carrying a manila folder into the meeting and leaving without it. However, prosecutors have not accused Tellis of sharing classified information with any foreign government, and there is no public allegation of espionage beyond the unauthorized retention charge.

If convicted, Tellis faces up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. A detention hearing is expected later this week.

The case falls under the Espionage Act's Section 793(e), which criminalizes the unauthorized possession and retention of national defense information. While the statute does not require proof of intent to aid foreign power, it does require prosecutors to demonstrate that the defendant knowingly kept such documents without

## Ex-Trump adviser John Bolton indicted on charges of mishandling classified information

EIGHTEEN-COUNT INDICTMENT HANDED DOWN BY FEDERAL GRAND JURY IN MARYLAND AS US PRESIDENT CALLS FORMER ALLY A 'BAD GUY'

OCTOBER 16, 2025

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** The justice department filed federal charges against John Bolton, the former national security adviser to Donald Trump who turned into one of his biggest critics, accusing him of transmitting and retaining highly classified information under the Espionage Act.

The 18-count indictment was handed up by a grand jury in federal district court in Maryland on Thursday. Bolton has been charged with sending diary entries to two unnamed individuals about his day-to-day activities when he was national security adviser, many of which contained highly classified information.

The indictment marked the third time in recent weeks the justice department has secured criminal charges against one of Trump's critics.

In response to a question about the charges, Trump told reporters on Thursday that he was not aware of them but that Bolton was a "bad guy".

While Bolton parted on sour terms from the White House, the criminal investigation gained momentum during the Biden administration over disclosures that troubled the US intelligence community.

The justice department pursues Espionage Act cases in the event of so-called "aggregating factors": willful mishandling of classified information, vast quantities of classified information to support an inference of misconduct, disloyalty to the US and obstruction.

"BOLTON took detailed notes documenting his day-to-day meetings, activities, and briefings. Frequently, BOLTON handwrote these notes on



The justice department filed federal charges against John Bolton, the former national security adviser to Donald Trump

yellow notepads throughout his day at the White House complex or in other secure locations, and then later re-wrote his notes in a word processing document," the indictment said.

"The notes that BOLTON sent to Individuals 1 and 2 using his non-governmental personal email accounts and messaging account described in detail BOLTON's daily activities as the National Security Advisor. Often, BOLTON's notes described the secure setting or environment in which he learned the national defense and classified information that he was memorializing in his notes."

In a statement, Bolton said, "I look forward to the fight to defend my lawful conduct and to expose his abuse of power."

Bolton's lawyer Abbe Lowell said his client had not engaged in wrongdoing.

"These charges stem from portions of Ambassador Bolton's personal diaries over his 45-year career - records that are unclassified, shared only with his immediate family, and known to the FBI as far back as 2021," Lowell said in a statement.

CONTD ON PAGE 60

# Historic Diwali Celebration at Kings Supreme Court Highlights the Story Behind the Diwali Stamp



Ranju Batra, Chair, Diwali Foundation USA, Inc., giving her Keynote Address



L to R: Ravi Batra, Angela Batra, Neal Batra, Ranju Batra, James Blain, Jay Sharma, Craig Schatzman, Lisa Mangal

**CONTD FROM PAGE 1**

A major highlight of the address was the inspiring personal account of the seven-year-long journey to secure the issuance of the U.S. Postal Service's Diwali Stamp in 2016 - a historic achievement that gave America's multicultural identity a new symbol of inclusivity.



Lisa Mangal, Administrator, presenting a Memento to the Guest Speaker, Ranju Batra, Chair, Diwali Foundation USA, Inc.



L to R: Attorney Ravi Batra, Justice Quinones, Appellate Division Associate Justice Deborah A. Dowling, Angela Batra, Justice Robin Sheares, Keynote Speaker Ranju Batra



L to R: Uma Devi, Lisa Mangal, Ranju Batra, Justice Quinones

The initiative began in 2010 when Ranju Batra realized that while American schools widely celebrated Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Eid, there was no national recognition for Diwali. Determined to change that, she launched a grassroots movement to have Diwali represented through a U.S. postage stamp. After learning that the USPS valued paper petitions over online ones, she painstakingly designed and circulated physical petitions across the country, collecting tens of thousands of signatures over seven years.

Despite multiple setbacks, she persisted - attending meetings with USPS officials, organizing press conferences, and securing congressional support. Her relentless efforts paid off when, on October 5, 2016, the USPS officially issued the Diwali Stamp.

Her dedication didn't stop there - within ten days of its release, she personally sold over 170,000 Diwali stamps, making it the best-selling stamp in the history of the U.S. Postal Service.

The success story quickly gained international



Attorney Ravi Batra, Justice Joanne D. Quinones, Ranju Batra

attention. Soon after, a United Nations event was organized to honor her achievement, attended by 24 nations. From this recognition was born the idea of the "Power of One Awards" - an initiative by the Diwali Foundation USA, which she chairs, to honor exceptional diplomats whose work advances peace and global cooperation in the spirit of Diwali's ideals.

She emphasized that the Diwali Stamp is not merely ink on paper but a powerful emblem of belonging and acceptance. "Every time someone places that stamp on a letter," she said, "it carries a message of light, truth, justice, and unity. It tells generations of immigrants that their stories matter - that their light belongs here too."

Closing her remarks, she connected the ideals of Diwali with those of the judiciary: "The Supreme Court, like Diwali, is a beacon reminding us that truth and justice must always be protected and shared."

As diyas were lit in the courthouse, she urged all to "light the flame of understanding" and continue spreading the light of justice, compassion, and inclusion - the true essence of Diwali.

# Canada-India for renewing momentum towards a stronger partnership

OCTOBER 14, 2025

**NEW DELHI / OTTAWA (TIP):** The first official visit by any Canadian Minister under Mark Carney's government to India appears to have accelerated the dialogue for renewing bilateral relations between two time-tested trade partners.

A joint communique issued by Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and India's Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, has painted a rosy picture of the future of bilateral relations that remains mired in controversies for the past couple of years.

**The joint communique said:**

"At the invitation of the Minister for External Affairs, Dr. S. Jaishankar, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Ms. Anita Anand, undertook, an official visit to India from October 12 to 14, 2025.

"The meeting in New Delhi is a follow up to the guidance provided by the Prime Ministers of the 2 countries during their meeting on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada, to take calibrated measures to restore stability in the relationship and to pursue a constructive and balanced partnership grounded in respect for each other's concerns and sensitivities, strong people-to-people ties, and growing economic complementarities.

"Pursuant to this guidance, both sides initiated several steps, including the joint announcement of reinstatement of High Commissioners on August 28, 2025, meeting between the National Security Advisers of the 2 countries on advancing India-Canada security cooperation in New Delhi on September 18, 2025, and the agreement to continue senior official-level discussions on security and law enforcement cooperation, pre-Foreign Office Consultations between Secretary (East) and Canada's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in New Delhi on September 19, 2025, and a meeting between the 2 Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly high-level week in New York on September 29, 2025.

"In keeping with the priorities that the Prime Ministers of India and Canada had set out for bringing momentum to the relationship, both sides, based on mutual respect for shared democratic values, the rule of law, and a commitment to upholding the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, reached consensus on a New Roadmap for India-Canada relations.

"The Ministers recognized that in the context of ongoing global economic uncertainty and rising geopolitical tensions, a strong and resilient India-Canada bilateral relationship is essential. Reviving this partnership will not only create opportunities for enhanced economic cooperation but also help mitigate vulnerabilities arising from shifting global alliances, ensure more reliable supply chains, and reinforce strategic stability in an increasingly complex international environment.

"The Ministers noted with satisfaction the substantial increase in bilateral trade, which reached \$23.66 billion in 2024; and the expanding presence of Indian and Canadian enterprises in each other's



Anita Anand (left) with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi. -Photo / PTI

markets, generating jobs with significant potential for future growth. They also acknowledged the important role played by Canadian provinces, six of which maintain representation in India, and by Indian states in advancing mutually beneficial economic cooperation. The Ministers agreed to work closely together and instructed their respective teams to initiate necessary steps to implement the agreed roadmap.

"Affirming trade as a cornerstone of bilateral economic growth and resilience, and acknowledging the growing opportunities in goods, services, and investment, both sides agreed that early initiatives in trade cooperation will include:

Commencing, at an early date, ministerial-level discussions on bilateral trade and investment informed by today's economic realities and each country's strategic priorities.

**R**esuming the Canada-India CEO Forum, which will bring together leading business executives from both countries to identify concrete, actionable recommendations for both governments to facilitate increased bilateral trade and investment, with a focus on priority sectors such as clean technology, infrastructure, agri-food, and digital innovation. The Forum will convene on the margins of a senior-level trade mission in early 2026.

"Recognizing their shared vision of a sustainable future and underscoring the importance of collective action in addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, both sides agreed to:

- Increase bilateral cooperation on climate action, environmental protection and conservation.
- Collaborate, exchange information and expertise and support respective climate ambitions in a wide range of areas, including renewable energy capacity, decarbonizing heavy industries, reducing plastic pollution, supporting the sound management of chemicals, and ensuring sustainable consumption.
- Support joint climate and environmental goals by finding effective, long-term solutions that will also provide opportunities to advance economic growth and job creation.

Acknowledging the pivotal role of energy transformation in meeting climate goals, enhancing energy security, and supporting sustainable economic development, the 2 sides reaffirmed their intention to support sector activities and deepen cooperation in advancing clean, secure, and equitable energy collaboration through the following activities:

- Re-establish the Canada-India Ministerial Energy Dialogue, including the related Action Plan at the earliest.
- Promote two-way trade for LNG & LPG and investment in oil and gas Exploration & Production sector, including clean technologies.
- Collaborate on sustainable low-carbon fuels and technologies, such as green hydrogen, biofuels, Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage and electric mobility-as well as strengthen supply chains, policy frameworks, and market access.
- Exchange best practices on electricity system management to enhance grid safety, stability, and renewable integration.
- Work together on emission reduction, environmental management, power sector digitalization, and disaster resilience.
- Advance global energy efficiency process, including through multilateral fora such as the G20.
- Promote dialogue among government, industry, and thinktanks to identify how Canada's mining expertise can provide India with critical minerals needed for energy security.
- Welcome and appreciate ongoing discussions in civil nuclear cooperation in support of clean energy transitions.
- Welcome discussions between India's Department of Atomic Energy and Canadian uranium suppliers, from the standpoint of existing and proposed new mines.
- Hold the first Critical Minerals Annual Dialogue on the margins of the Prospectors and Developers Association Conference in Toronto in March 2026.

Appreciating the role of innovation and technology in driving inclusive growth



--->By Prabhjot Singh

and global competitiveness, both sides agreed to deepen collaboration to unlock new frontiers in S&T including AI and digital infrastructure. Early initiatives will include:

- Relaunch the Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee.
- Foster mutually beneficial partnerships to expand access to AI for everyone.
- Encourage Canadian AI companies and researchers to participate in India's forthcoming AI Impact Summit from February 19 to 20, 2026.
- Explore opportunities for cooperation in digital public infrastructure.

Recognizing the importance of deepening collaboration in the agricultural sector to promote food security, enhance trade and productivity, increase farmers' incomes, and support the long-term sustainability of the sector, both sides agreed to focus on:

Developing stable and sustainable supply chains, improving agri-value chains through the exchange of best practices and technological cooperation, enhancing nutritional security, promoting recycling of agri-waste into energy and organic fertilizers, and advancing innovation in climate-resilient agriculture and food systems

"Noting with satisfaction that people-to-people linkages are central to fostering mutual understanding and building long-term collaboration, both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in education, tourism, cultural exchange, and professional mobility. Early initiatives in this regard will include:

- Refreshed collaboration in higher education and research to reflect the increasingly deep talent pools and cutting-edge research in each country.
- Emphasis on research partnerships in emerging technologies (such as AI, cybersecurity, and fintech), and to expand Canadian academic presence in India through overseas campuses.

Revitalized Joint Working Group on Higher Education as a means to further expand Canada-India academic networks and institutional ties.

"To this end, the Ministers agreed that their High Commissions and Consulates will strengthen institutional capacity by progressively deploying expertise in the economic, political, defense, and technology domains to deliver on the shared ambitious agenda. These efforts will contribute to rebuilding trust and deepening cooperation between the 2 countries.

"As the bilateral relationship intensifies and deepens, both Ministers pledged to expand collaboration on global issues, including working to ensure more effective, and inclusive ways.

(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.)

## 'Frightened': Rahul Gandhi slams PM Modi over Trump's Russian oil claim

Following US president Donald Trump's claim of India's assurance to not purchase Russian oil, Lok Sabha leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Taking to X on Thursday, Oct 16, the Congress MP accused the prime minister of being afraid of Trump and the US.

Following US president Donald Trump's claim of India's assurance to not purchase Russian oil, Lok Sabha leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Taking to X on Thursday, the Congress MP accused the prime minister of being afraid of Trump and the US.

Gandhi's post on X comes after Donald Trump claimed PM Modi had given him "assurance" that India will no longer purchase Russian oil.

"I was not happy that India was buying oil. And he (Modi) assured me today that they will not be buying oil from Russia. That's a big stop," Trump told reporters at the Oval Office, adding that he shares a "great relationship" with PM Modi.

The US President added that after India, he would now "get China to do the same thing."

India's purchase of Russian oil has been the headlines since August, after Trump announced an additional 25 percent tariff on New Delhi as a penalty. With this additional amount, Trump's tariffs on India went up to a total of 50 percent.

In response to the additional levies, PM Modi stated that he would not compromise on the livelihood of farmers, even if it meant "paying a heavy price".

Furthermore, the prime minister also renewed his push for "Make in India" and "self-reliance."

# Let it die a natural death: SC on CJI shoe-hurling episode

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Supreme Court on Thursday, Oct 16, said that the incident involving an advocate's attempt to hurl a shoe at Chief Justice of India (CJI) Bhushan R Gavai earlier this month should be allowed to die a "natural death" rather than being kept alive on social media or by "publicity hungry" individuals, even as it agreed to examine whether contempt proceedings should be initiated against the 71-year-old lawyer, Rakesh Kishore, after the Diwali break.

A bench of justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi made the observation while hearing a mentioning by senior advocate Vikas Singh, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), who urged the top court to take suo motu cognisance and initiate contempt proceedings against Kishore for his act and for remaining unapologetic about it. Singh pointed out that social media platforms were repeatedly circulating the episode, giving it unnecessary traction.

"We are not against freedom of speech, but when such rights are exercised at the cost of the institution's integrity and dignity, it assumes a different dimension," the bench observed.

It added: "Our request to everyone is also to consider whether raking up the issue will help in reviving and giving fillip to publicity-hungry individuals...Let it die a natural death. Let it meet its fate with the contempt it deserves."

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta informed the court that Attorney General R Venkataramani had already granted his consent for initiating contempt proceedings, saying the incident had affected the institutional integrity of the court. "Social media platforms are popularising and even supporting such acts. It is a matter of institutional integrity," said Mehta, backing Singh's request.



The bench, however, noted that CJI Gavai himself had shown "magnanimity" by ignoring the episode and asking others to do the same.

The bench cautioned that reviving the issue might serve only to amplify it. "Allow it to have a natural death. One of the ways is to make it face the same contempt and die on its own," remarked the bench, warning that contempt proceedings could end up creating "another episode" and feed the social media cycle.

"Unfortunately, many of these portals have become money-spinning ventures. Algorithms are programmed to exploit our basal instincts and to monetise outrage. The moment we initiate proceedings, it will be monetised again," observed the bench, urging lawyers not to "cooperate in monetising it."

The bench also reflected on the need to preserve institutional dignity through conduct rather than punitive measures. "It is for us and our behaviour in court that we survive and get the respect of the people. That is the spirit the honourable CJI exhibited when he brushed it aside as an action of an irresponsible citizen," the bench underscored.

As Singh and Mehta insisted that the matter requires consideration, Justice Kant agreed to consider the issue later,

saying it would wait for a week and see if the matter still persisted in public discourse before taking a call. "Let us wait for a week and see if it still persists. We will hear it in the week after the Diwali break," Justice Kant said. The top court will reopen on October 27 after a week-long Diwali break beginning on October 20.

Later in the day, SCBA filed its petition in the court, seeking initiation of contempt proceedings against Kishore. The plea, drawn by advocate Meenesh Kumar Dubey, also demanded "robust guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the security within the courtrooms, and to establish a protocol for dealing with such disruptive and contemptuous acts swiftly, to ensure that such an untoward incident is not repeated in the future."

The incident took place on October 6 when Kishore, an advocate who has since been suspended, suddenly approached the dais during court proceedings before the CJI's bench and attempted to remove his shoe before being restrained by security personnel. As he was escorted out, he was heard shouting, "Sanatan ka apmaan nahi sahenge (We will not tolerate any insult to Sanatan)."

Unfazed, CJI Gavai had calmly resumed proceedings, telling lawyers, "Don't get distracted by all this. These things do not affect me." He later told the court, "For us, it is a forgotten chapter," and refused to press any charges against Kishore, asking officials to "just ignore" the episode.

However, several members of the Bar had called the act an affront to the dignity of the institution. On October 8, a Supreme Court lawyer had written to the attorney general seeking consent to initiate contempt proceedings, calling the act one that "diminishes the majesty and authority of the Supreme Court."

## Omar delivers on key promise, revives Darbar Move ended by L-G in 2021

SRINAGAR (TIP)

Fulfilling a key electoral promise, the Jammu and Kashmir Government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday, Oct 16, announced the restoration of the Darbar Move -- the biannual shifting of the civil secretariat between Srinagar and Jammu--which had been discontinued by Lt Governor Manoj Sinha during the Central rule in 2021.

The announcement comes on a day the National Conference completed one year in office. It is expected to give the ruling party a boost in Jammu, where there has been strong demand for reviving the old practice.

Speaking at a press conference in Jammu, Omar confirmed that the J&K Cabinet had approved the decision and forwarded it to Lt Governor Sinha, who had signed and returned the file. "I too have signed the file for the full Darbar Move. We are restoring the age-old tradition," he said. The government later issued a formal order on the restoration.

The practice, introduced by the Dogra rulers nearly 150 years ago, was stopped by Lt Governor Sinha in



June 2021 citing the administration's transition to an e-office system, which was projected to save around Rs 200 crore annually. Under the Darbar Move, the civil secretariat and other government offices functioned for

six months each in Srinagar and Jammu during summer and winter, respectively.

The discontinuation, however, drew sharp criticism, particularly from Jammu's business community and politicians, who described the tradition as a vital link between the two regions. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry had also urged the government to restore the practice, citing its economic benefits for the region.

Questioning the earlier decision to end the tradition, Omar said, "It was a practice even before 1947. The people taunt us that we don't understand the history of J&K and don't respect its great personalities. In fact, it was the BJP which destroyed their legacy. But we had promised the people that we would restore the Darbar Move."

Expressing hope that the move would help the economy of Jammu, the Chief Minister said the decision would help counter the propaganda that his party only represented one region, "We are a party of Jammu and Kashmir, not a party of any one particular province," he added.

## 170 Maoists, including commander, surrender In Chhattisgarh; 258 in two days

In what was one of the largest Maoist surrenders in recent years, as many as 170 Maoists surrendered in Chhattisgarh today. Among them was Rupesh, the North-Western Sub-Zonal In-Charge and intelligence chief of the Maoist military wing.

"A landmark day in our battle against Naxalism. Today, 170 Naxalites have surrendered in Chhattisgarh. Yesterday 27 had laid down their arms in the state. In Maharashtra, 61 returned to the mainstream, yesterday. In total, 258 battle-hardened left-wing extremists have abjured violence in the last two days," the Home Minister posted on X. According to intelligence sources, Rupesh and his associates moved towards Bhairamgarh after crossing the Indravati River through the treacherous Uspari Ghat. Once they reached Bijapur, an official surrender was announced in Jagdalpur.

"Our policy is clear: those who want to surrender are welcome, and those who continue to wield the gun will meet the wrath of our forces. I appeal again to those who are still on the path of Naxalism to lay down their weapons and join the mainstream. We are committed to uprooting Naxalism before 31st March 2026," the Home Minister added.

# Create special jails for fugitives as per International norms: Shah to states

NEW DELHI (TIP)

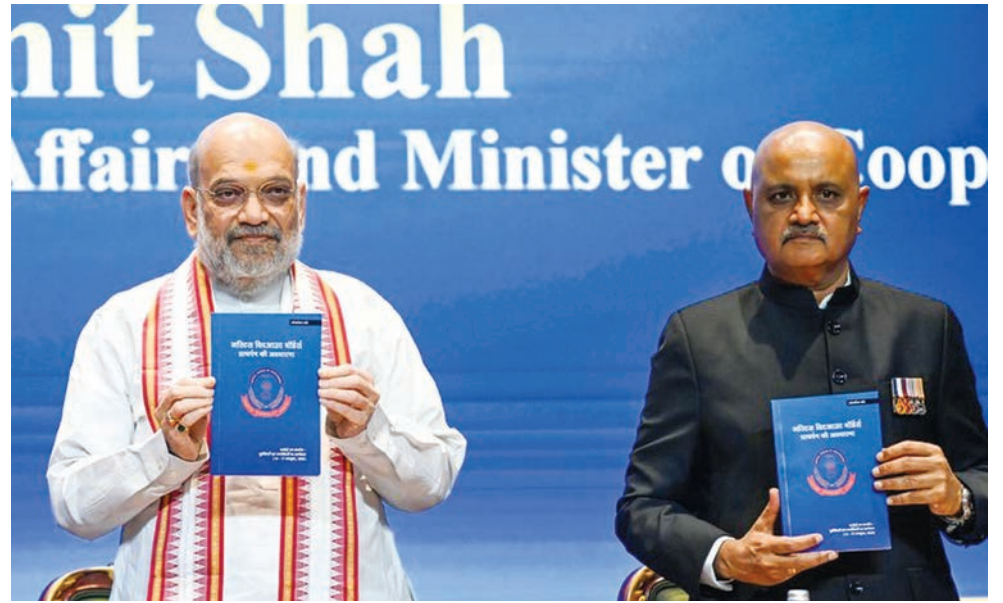
Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday, Oct 16, asked all states to create a special prison for fugitives that meets international standards, and cancel the passports of those facing Interpol red notices to nullify their claims of mistreatment upon extradition and stop their free movement across borders.

He said this while addressing a CBI conference titled "Extradition of Fugitives-Challenges and Strategies".

Shah's comments came amid past instances where several fugitives like Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi, have raised the issue of "poor conditions" of Indian prisons to counter their extradition in foreign courts.

"This is needed because fugitives argue in foreign courts that prisons in India are not up to the standards, that their human rights will not be protected. While I do not agree with that, if it is an excuse, why give them that chance? Every state capital should have a cell which conforms to international standards in its entirety," Shah said.

"Until we instil fear of the Indian legal system in the minds of fugitives who harm the nation's economy, sovereignty and security from abroad, we cannot ensure the country's safety," Shah added.



Home Minister Amit Shah attends conference on 'Extradition of Fugitives: Challenges and Strategies' along with CBI Director Praveen Sood in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

India has 338 extradition requests pending with various countries to bring back fugitives wanted for financial crimes, terrorism and narcotics smuggling, among others.

He said the passports of fugitives could be red-flagged upon the issuance of an Interpol Red Notice against them.

"It is not a difficult thing to do with the present technologies. When a red notice is issued, the passport should be cancelled to block the fugitive's international travel. If we can build

this provision into the system, it will help bring back the fugitives," he said.

Giving his suggestions on the actionable outputs to be deliberated during the two-day conference being attended by all state police chiefs, the home minister said a scientific database on fugitives should be developed and shared with all states, which should include the type of crime committed by the offenders, present location, network in the country and the status of repatriation attempts.

## Prashant Kishor says won't contest Bihar polls, predicts NDA's defeat

PATNA (TIP)

Poll strategist-turned-politician Prashant Kishor, whose Jan Suraj Party is making a poll debut in the upcoming Bihar elections, will not be contesting the polls. Putting all speculation to rest, Kishor told news agency PTI that he would not contest the polls, and would instead focus on organisational work.

That Kishor won't fight the elections was clear last night when Jan Suraj announced Chanchal Singh as its candidate for the Raghapur Assembly seat. Kishor had earlier said that if he contests the polls, he would do so from Kargahar, his home constituency, or Raghapur, an RJD stronghold. In its first list, Jan Suraj announced Ritesh Ranjan (Pandey) as its candidate from Kargahar. Chanchal Singh's choice for Raghapur confirmed that Kishor has decided not to fight the polls. Raghapur is an RJD bastion represented by Tejashwi Yadav and Kishor would have faced an uphill battle if he chose to contest. Contesting the polls would also tie down the Jan Suraj founder to one constituency and hit the party's campaign because he is its most prominent face.

"Jan Suraj decided I should concentrate on organisational work and not contest," Kishor told PTI this morning. Setting a big target for Jan Suraj, he said that "anything less than 150 seats" for the party would be a "defeat".

Kishor predicted a certain defeat for the ruling NDA in Bihar, and added that the Nitish Kumar-led JD(U) will struggle to win even 25 seats. "The NDA is definitely on its way out and Nitish Kumar will not return as Chief



Minister," he said. "You do not need to be a psephologist to fathom what is in store for the JD(U). In the last assembly polls, Chirag Paswan staged a revolt just a few days ahead of the announcement of elections and fielded candidates, many of whom were inconsequential, against nominees of Kumar's party, causing its tally to crash to 43," recalled Kishor.

"The situation is no better in the INDIA bloc either. There is a never-ending tiff between RJD and the Congress. And nobody knows if former state minister Mukesh Sahani's Vikasheel Insaan Party is still by their side," Kishor said.

Polling for the 243-member Bihar Assembly will be held on November 6 and 11. Results will be declared on November 14.

### NDA FINALISES CANDIDATES FOR ALL 243 BIHAR ASSEMBLY SEATS

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) released the list of candidates for all 243 constituencies ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections. The JD(U) announced its second and final list of 44 candidates while the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) and Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) also announced nominees for their remaining seats.

The JD(U) and the BJP will be contesting from 101 seats each with Chirag Paswan's LJP(RV) contesting from 29 seats. Other allies in the alliance including the RLM and Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) will be contesting from six seats each.

The RLM's latest list named former Member of Legislative Council (MLC) Rameshwar Kumar Mahto as its candidate from the Bajpatti constituency, while Madan Chaudhary will contest from Paru. The party had earlier released its first list with Snehlata, the wife of RLM chief Upendra Kushwaha, contesting from Sasaram, Madhav Anand from Madhubani, Prashant Kumar Pankaj from Ujiarpur and Alok Kumar Singh from Dinara.

The LJP(RV) had released its first list of 14 candidates with the second list coming out on Thursday (16/10/2025). The party's state unit chief, Raju Tiwary, will contest from Govindganj in East Champaran, while senior leader Hulas Pandey has been fielded from Brahampur in Buxar district.

# India in history this Week

OCTOBER 17 TO OCTOBER 23

## 17 OCTOBER

- 1979 Mother Teresa was given the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1605 Mughal ruler Akbar died.
- 1817 Syed Ahmed Khan, founder of Aligarh Muslim University, was born in Delhi.
- 1870 The Port of Calcutta was brought under the management of a constitutional body.
- 1940 Mahatma Gandhi declared private Satyagraha.

## 18 OCTOBER

- 1980 The first Himalaya Car Rally was flagged off from Brabourne Stadium in Bombay (now Mumbai).



- 2004 The notorious Chandan smuggler Veerappan was killed.
- 1998 India and Pakistan agree to stop nuclear risk.
- 2008 Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati returned 189.25 crore acres of land to the Railway Ministry for the railway coach factory in Rae Bareilly.
- 1950 Famous actor of Hindi films Om Puri was born.
- 1972 Trial of the first multipurpose chopper SA315 in Bangalore.

## 19 OCTOBER

- 1950 Mother Teresa founded the Missionary of Charities in Kolkata. Mother Teresa was a Roman Catholic nun who held Indian citizenship.



- 1970 The first MiG-21 aircraft manufactured in India was inducted into the Indian Air Force. It is a super sonic fighter jet which was built by the Soviet Union.
- 1910 Astronomer and Nobel Prize winner Subramanian Chandrasekhar was born.
- 1920 Pandurang Shastri Athalve, the founder of the Swadhyay family, was born in Maharashtra.

## 20 OCTOBER

- 1568 The Mughal emperor Akbar attacked Chittorgarh.
- 1774 Calcutta (now Kolkata) was made the capital of India.
- 1961 Birja Sankar Guha, physical anthropologist and first director of the Anthropological Survey of India, died in Ghatshila Bihar.

1978 India's aggressive batsman Virender Sehwag was born. He scored 8,586 runs in 104 Tests and 8,273 runs in 251 ODIs in his career.

1947 The first war took place between India and Pakistan.

1962 China attacked India and attempted to sneak into the Indian border via Arunachal Pradesh.

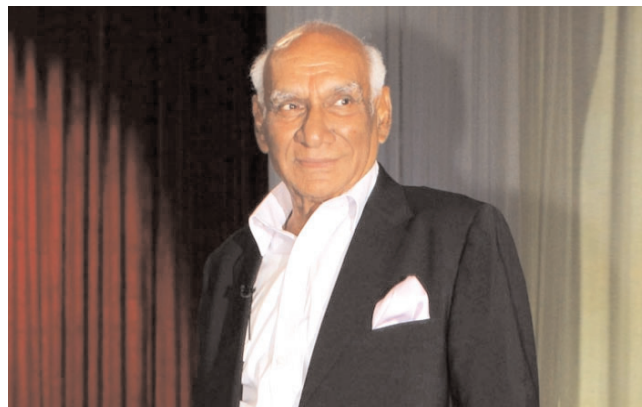
1964 One of the revolutionaries of India, HC Dasappa died.



1991 A 6.8 magnitude earthquake in Uttarkashi, India killed more than 1000 people.

## 21 OCTOBER

- 1296 Alauddin Khilji took the throne of Delhi.
- 1934 Jayaprakash Narayan formed the Congress Socialist Party.
- 1951 Bharatiya Jana Sangh was established.
- 2012 Yash Chopra, who is called the romance king of Bollywood, passed away.



1931 Famous Hindi film actor Shammi Kapoor was born.



- 1934 Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose founded Azad Hind Fauj in Singapore.
- 1939 Famous Hindi films actress Helen was born.
- 1954 India and France signed an agreement to include Pondicherry, Karaikal, and Mahe in the Indian Republic. The agreement entered into force from 1 November.
- 2007 Indian-American Bobby Jindal won the post of

Governor of the Louisiana Province of America.

2008 Karwan-e-Tijas started after 61 years between India and Pakistan.

1830 Nain Singh Rawat was the first Indian to discover the Himalayan region.

1887 Krishna Singh the first Chief Minister of Bihar.

1680 Rana Raj Singh of Mewar passed away.

## 22 OCTOBER

- 1680 Rana Raj Singh of Mewar passed away.
- 1796 Death of Rana Raj Singh of Mewar.
- 1962 India's largest multipurpose river valley project 'Bhakra Nangal' dedicated to the nation



2008 Chandrayaan-1 was successfully launched from Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota.

1879 The first sedition case under British rule was against the great revolutionary Basudev Balwani Phadke.

2008 ISRO launched India's first moon mission Chandrayaan-1. This mission revealed the presence of water on the moon.

2016 India won the Kabaddi World Cup.

1933 The elder brother of Sardar Patel and the famous freedom fighter Vitthalbhai Patel died.

1893 Dalip Singh, the youngest son of Maharaj Ranjit Singh of Punjab, died.

## 23 OCTOBER

- 1623 The famous poet Tulsidas died.
- 1764 Mir Qasim was defeated in the battle of Buxar.
- 1934 Mahatma Gandhi resigned as the leader of the Indian National Congress.
- 1943 Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose founded the 'Rani Brigade of Jhansi' of Azad Hind Fauj in Singapore.



2003 India and Bulgaria signed the Extradition Treaty.

1883 Mirza Ismail, Assistant Secretary to the Maharaja of Mysore was born.

1957 Sunil Mittal, an Indian industrialist, social worker and chairman of India's largest telecom company Airtel was born.

# Five days of Diwali: A journey from darkness to light

Diwali, often called the Festival of Lights, is not merely a single day of celebration but a grand five-day festival that encapsulates the essence of Indian culture-victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. Each day of Diwali has its unique significance, rituals, and stories, weaving together a magnificent tapestry of faith, tradition, and festivity. From the quiet preparation of Dhanteras to the jubilant Govardhan Puja and the tender bonds celebrated on Bhai Dooj, Diwali is a journey through gratitude, devotion, renewal, and love. Let's explore the five auspicious days that make this festival so radiant and spiritually fulfilling.

## DHANTERAS - THE DAY OF PROSPERITY AND PREPARATION

As autumn's golden dusk deepens and homes across India begin to gleam with the flicker of oil lamps, a special anticipation fills the air. The sound of new utensils being unwrapped, the sparkle of freshly purchased ornaments, and the fragrance of incense herald the arrival of Dhanteras-the first and perhaps most symbolic day of the five-day Diwali festival. Dhanteras, which literally translates to 'wealth on the thirteenth day' (Dhan meaning wealth and Teras referring to the thirteenth lunar day of Krishna Paksha in the month of Kartik), sets the tone for the grand festivities that follow. But beyond its association with gold and silver shopping, Dhanteras is deeply rooted in ancient mythology, spiritual symbolism, and timeless Indian customs that celebrate health, prosperity, and divine grace.

### Mythological Origins: The Descent of Dhanvantari and the Ocean of Immortality

The origins of Dhanteras go back to one of the most magnificent legends in Hindu mythology-the Samudra Manthan, or the Churning of the Cosmic Ocean. According to the Puranas, the Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons) churned the ocean in search of Amrit, the nectar of immortality. During this celestial event, several divine treasures emerged from the ocean-among them was Lord Dhanvantari, the celestial physician and the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, holding in his hands a golden pot filled with the elixir of life.

His emergence symbolized the dawn of Ayurveda, the ancient science of holistic healing and longevity. Hence, Dhanteras became a day associated not only with material wealth but also with Arogya-good health and well-being. In many homes, prayers are offered to Lord Dhanvantari, seeking freedom from ailments and the blessings of vitality.

The day, therefore, beautifully unites two fundamental desires of human life-wealth and health, material prosperity and physical well-being-echoing the Vedic ideal that true prosperity is incomplete without wellness.

### The Legend of King Hima and the Origin of the 'Diya' Ritual

Another popular legend associated with Dhanteras tells of Prince Hima, the sixteen-year-old son of King Hima, who was fated to die on the fourth day of his marriage due to a snake bite. However, his clever and devoted wife refused to surrender to destiny. On the night foretold for his death, she placed all her ornaments and heaps of gold and silver coins at the entrance of their chamber and lit countless lamps around the palace. When Yama, the god of death, arrived in the form of a serpent, his eyes were dazzled by the



brilliance of the lights and the precious metals. The serpent, blinded and enchanted, could not enter the chamber and spent the night listening to the princess singing devotional songs. By dawn, the danger had passed, and the prince's life was spared.

From this tale was born the custom of lighting earthen lamps (diyas) on Dhanteras night, not just as a gesture of welcome for prosperity but also as a symbolic act of warding off death and negativity. Even today, Hindus light a Yamadeep-a small diya placed outside the home, facing south (the direction associated with Yama)-as an offering for longevity and protection.

### Rituals and Traditions: The Auspicious Call of Wealth

Dhanteras marks the beginning of Diwali preparations in earnest. In the days leading up to it, homes are cleaned, repainted, and decorated-symbolizing the removal of stagnation and negativity. On the evening of Dhanteras, people decorate their thresholds with colorful rangolis,

adorn their entrances with marigold garlands and mango leaves, and place lamps in every corner to invite auspicious energies.

### Buying Gold, Silver, and Utensils

The act of purchasing precious metals is not mere extravagance; it is deeply symbolic. Gold and silver are considered forms of Goddess Lakshmi herself, embodiments of abundance and purity. It is believed that whatever new possession one brings home on this day multiplies manifold.

Utensils, too, are favored purchases-representing nourishment, family togetherness, and the promise of good meals to come. In modern times, people also buy new clothes, appliances, vehicles, and even digital assets, adapting the spirit of Dhanteras to contemporary life while retaining its sacred essence.

### The Dhanteras Puja

As dusk falls, families gather for Lakshmi and Dhanvantari Puja. Devotees light 13 diyas (symbolizing the date of

Trayodashi) and place them at the entrance, windows, and sacred altars. Offerings include flowers, sweets, puffed rice, coriander seeds, and coins placed before idols of Goddess Lakshmi, Lord Ganesha, and Lord Kubera-the treasurer of the gods.

The mantra "Om Dhan Dhanvantaraye Namah" is chanted to invoke Lord Dhanvantari's blessings, while Lakshmi Aarti fills the home with devotional fervor. In business communities, especially in Gujarat and Maharashtra, Chopda Puja is performed-new account books are opened and sanctified, marking the beginning of a new financial year under divine auspices.

### The Spiritual Essence: Cleansing, Renewal, and Abundance

At its heart, Dhanteras is about purification and preparation-the mental, spiritual, and physical readiness to welcome the goddess of fortune into one's home. Just as we clean and beautify our surroundings, this day invites us to cleanse our inner world-our thoughts, intentions, and energies.

Lighting lamps is not only an act of devotion but a spiritual metaphor: it is the illumination of wisdom, the triumph of light over darkness, and hope over despair. Buying something new is a token gesture that honors life's constant renewal and reminds us that prosperity, like light, must circulate freely.

### Regional Variations and Local Customs

Across India, Dhanteras is celebrated with diverse hues and customs:

- In North India, especially in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Delhi, people perform Yamadeepdaan and decorate their homes with marigolds and diyas. Markets brim with shoppers buying utensils and jewelry, and goldsmiths witness their busiest day of the year.
- In Gujarat, the day holds special importance for traders who conduct Chopda Puja, offering prayers to Lord Ganesha and Goddess Lakshmi for success in the coming financial year.
- In Maharashtra, families decorate the floor with intricate rangolis, and women purchase new metal utensils, believing it attracts household prosperity.
- In South India, the day is linked more closely to Dhanvantari Puja, with devotees performing rituals to ensure good health and longevity.
- In rural India, farmers and craftsmen polish their tools and machinery, seeking blessings for productivity and protection in the coming season.



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# Chhoti Diwali: Cleansing the self, welcoming the divine

The soft glow of oil lamps, the fragrance of freshly applied ubtan, and the gentle hum of festive anticipation fill the air—this is Chhoti Diwali, also known as Naraka Chaturdashi, the second day of the five-day Diwali festival. Often overshadowed by the grandeur of the main Diwali night, Chhoti Diwali holds its own quiet significance—a day that marks not just preparation for celebration, but purification before illumination.

While Diwali is the festival of lights, Chhoti Diwali is the dawn before the light, a symbolic victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance. Its rituals and legends remind us that true celebration begins only when the inner shadows are dispelled.

## The Legend of Narakasura

The roots of Chhoti Diwali lie deep in Hindu mythology, in the dramatic tale of Narakasura, the demon king of Pragjyotishpur (present-day Assam). Narakasura, the son of Bhudevi (Mother Earth) and Varaha, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, was a powerful ruler. But with time, arrogance overtook righteousness. He became cruel and tyrannical, imprisoning celestial maidens and seizing the precious earrings of Aditi, the mother of the gods.

Unable to bear his atrocities, the gods turned to Lord Krishna for help. In response, Krishna mounted his celestial vehicle Garuda, with his consort Satyabhama, and attacked Narakasura's fortress. A fierce battle ensued, and in the end, it was Satyabhama—an incarnation of Bhudevi herself—who killed Narakasura, thus redeeming her son from his sins.

Before dying, Narakasura repented and requested that his death be celebrated with joy and lights, symbolizing the end of evil and the triumph of virtue. His wish was granted, and ever since, Naraka Chaturdashi has been observed as a day of victory, renewal, and cleansing—a precursor to Diwali's light.

## The Day of Cleansing and Renewal

Unlike the opulent celebrations of the following day, Chhoti Diwali is marked by quiet rituals of purification. It is believed that Lord Krishna took a bath after slaying Narakasura, washing away the dirt and blood from battle. Emulating this divine act, devotees perform the Abhyang Snan, an early-morning ritual bath believed to purify body and soul.

## The Abhyang Snan Ritual

Before dawn, people apply fragrant oils such as sesame or coconut infused with herbs, followed by a cleansing ubtan made of gram flour, turmeric, and sandalwood. This ritual is said to remove fatigue, impurities, and negative energies accumulated over the year. Bathing before sunrise on this day is believed to bring health, protection, and prosperity.

After the bath, homes are decorated with rangolis, marigold garlands, and diyas. The soft radiance of lamps fills every corner, symbolizing the illumination of wisdom after cleansing. In many families, traditional sweets are prepared, and the mood is one of gentle joy rather than grandeur.

## Yamadeepdaan: Lamps for Longevity



Another beautiful custom observed on Chhoti Diwali is Yamadeepdaan—the lighting of lamps dedicated to Yamraj, the god of death. According to a popular legend, the sixteen-year-old son of King Hima was destined to die by a snake bite on the fourth day of his marriage. His clever wife, determined to save him, placed shining gold ornaments and lamps at the doorway and kept her husband awake through the night with stories and songs. When Yama arrived in the form of a serpent, he was dazzled by the brilliance of the lamps and spent the night listening to her songs instead of taking the boy's life.

Since then, small diyas are placed outside homes facing south (the direction associated with Yama) on Chhoti Diwali night to ward off untimely death and invite longevity and well-being. Symbolically, it teaches that the light of love and devotion can overpower even the shadow of death.

## Regional Celebrations Across India

Though commonly known as Chhoti Diwali in North India, this day carries different names and practices across regions, each reflecting a unique cultural tone.

- North India: The day is celebrated with small-scale fireworks, oil baths, and lighting of lamps. Markets are lively, homes glow with early diyas, and preparations for the main Diwali night intensify.
- Maharashtra: People rise early for Abhyang Snan, offer prayers to Krishna, and enjoy traditional delicacies like poha, laddoo, chakli,

and karanji. It is a time for relaxation before the grandeur of Lakshmi Puja the next evening.

- South India: In Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, Naraka Chaturdashi is celebrated with great fervor. Temples are adorned, conch shells resound at dawn, and devotees burst crackers in remembrance of Krishna's victory. In many households, it is regarded as even more sacred than the main Diwali night.
- Gujarat: The day marks the second phase of Diwali celebrations, where lamps are lit and prayers are offered to Goddess Lakshmi. The festive atmosphere begins to peak as the New Year approaches.

In essence, no matter the region, the theme of Chhoti Diwali remains constant—cleansing, protection, and the awakening of light.

On a spiritual level, the demon Narakasura represents the darker instincts within human nature—ego, greed, lust, and ignorance. His defeat by Lord Krishna symbolizes the triumph of divine consciousness over the lower self.

Chhoti Diwali thus becomes a day of introspection and purification. Lighting lamps signifies illuminating the mind; taking the oil bath reflects washing away inner impurities; and discarding old clutter symbolizes letting go of mental and emotional baggage.

Before celebrating Diwali—the festival of light—Chhoti Diwali reminds us to first conquer the darkness within. It teaches that to welcome Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, one

must first cleanse the heart of negativity.

## Modern Relevance: Reclaiming the Forgotten Day

In modern urban life, Chhoti Diwali is often treated merely as a day for early fireworks or Diwali preparation. Yet, its spiritual message feels more urgent than ever. Amidst the stress of daily living, this day invites people to pause—to detox not only their homes but their minds.

Eco-friendly rituals like using natural oils, clay lamps, and herbal ubtans have revived the day's original essence of harmony with nature. Yoga practitioners often dedicate the morning to surya namaskar (sun salutations) after the ritual bath, aligning with the festival's theme of renewal.

Chhoti Diwali can be reimagined as a festival of mindfulness—a reminder to disconnect from chaos and reconnect with the self.

As dusk descends and lamps begin to flicker along verandahs and courtyards, Chhoti Diwali ushers in an air of peace and quiet preparation. It is the calm before the storm of celebration—the moment when darkness yields to light, and silence gives way to joy.

More than a festival, Chhoti Diwali is a state of mind—a reminder that before we seek external prosperity, we must first achieve inner purity. Before we light the world, we must light ourselves.

It whispers a timeless truth from the heart of Indian tradition:

The greatest victory is not over others, but over the darkness within.



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# Lakshmi Puja: The radiant heart of Diwali

## WELCOMING THE GODDESS OF WEALTH, WISDOM, AND INNER ILLUMINATION

Diwali, the grand Festival of Lights, reaches its spiritual and emotional crescendo on Lakshmi Puja, the main day of the celebration. It is the evening when homes shimmer with a thousand diyas, the air hums with prayers and laughter, and hearts glow with a shared sense of abundance and gratitude. Dedicated to Goddess Lakshmi, the divine embodiment of wealth, prosperity, and fortune, this day symbolizes not only material well-being but also the inner light that dispels the darkness of ignorance and negativity.

### The Sacred Essence of Lakshmi Puja

Lakshmi Puja, celebrated on the Amavasya (new moon) night of the Hindu month of Kartika, is the most significant and auspicious day of Diwali. It marks the triumph of light over darkness, virtue over vice, and hope over despair. According to tradition, Goddess Lakshmi roams the Earth on this night, visiting clean, beautifully decorated homes to bless them with prosperity and happiness for the coming year.

The puja holds a deep philosophical meaning. The dark night of Amavasya symbolizes the human mind shrouded in ignorance. Lighting diyas represents invoking the divine light of knowledge and wisdom to guide one's life. Inviting Goddess Lakshmi is, thus, not merely about attracting wealth, but also about invoking clarity, contentment, and purity of intention.

### The Legend and Mythological Significance

The roots of Lakshmi Puja are intertwined with ancient Hindu legends. One of the most celebrated stories connects it to Lord Vishnu's Vamana avatar and the defeat of King Bali, symbolizing the restoration of dharma and balance. Another legend tells that on this very night, Goddess Lakshmi emerged from the cosmic ocean during the great churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan), bringing along with her the gifts of prosperity, beauty, and abundance to bless the world.

For devotees of Lord Rama, Diwali also commemorates his triumphant return to Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile and his victory over Ravana. The people of Ayodhya welcomed him by lighting rows of oil lamps, symbolizing the return of light, righteousness, and divine grace. Thus, the worship of Goddess Lakshmi became inseparably linked with the celebration of Diwali night.

### Rituals and Ceremonies of Lakshmi Puja

- Preparation for Lakshmi Puja begins days in advance. Homes are cleaned, repaired, and decorated—believed to attract the Goddess, who abhors disorder and impurity. Doorsteps are adorned with rangoli designs and tiny footprints of Goddess Lakshmi drawn with rice flour or vermilion to symbolize her



entry into the home.

- On the evening of the Puja, devotees create an altar decorated with flowers, candles, and lamps. Idols or images of Goddess Lakshmi, Lord Ganesha (the remover of obstacles), and Lord Kubera (the treasurer of the gods) are placed together, representing the harmony of prosperity and wisdom.

### The rituals typically include:

- Sankalpa (invocation) - A vow to perform the puja with devotion and sincerity.
- Kalasha Sthapana - Setting up a sacred pot representing abundance and fertility.
- Lakshmi Aarti and Bhajans - Hymns and prayers sung in praise of the Goddess, invoking her grace.
- Offering of sweets, fruits, and gold/silver coins - Symbolizing gratitude for blessings received and faith in future prosperity.

After the puja, diyas are placed in every corner of the house, balconies, and courtyards—illuminating not only the physical space but also symbolically driving away the shadows of greed, ego, and ignorance.

### Cultural and Regional Expressions

While the essence of Lakshmi Puja remains universal across India, regional customs add beautiful diversity to the celebration. In North India, it is the main Diwali night when families perform elaborate pujas, exchange sweets, and burst fireworks. In Gujarat, the day marks the beginning of the new financial year, with business communities performing Chopda Pujan—worshipping their account books and ledgers to seek blessings for prosperity.

In West Bengal, Odisha, and Assam, the day coincides with Kali Puja, where the fierce Goddess Kali is worshipped as



the destroyer of darkness and evil. In Maharashtra and South India, the rituals are often performed alongside the worship of Lord Ganesha and Kubera, focusing on invoking both material and spiritual wealth.

### Symbolism: Wealth Beyond Gold

True wealth, in Hindu philosophy, extends far beyond material riches. Lakshmi represents eight forms of prosperity, collectively known as Ashta Lakshmi—spanning areas like knowledge, courage, fertility, patience, and victory. The lighting of diyas and the chanting of mantras symbolize the aspiration to awaken these virtues within.

Lakshmi Puja reminds devotees that prosperity attained through honesty, effort, and righteousness leads to enduring happiness. The festival teaches that wealth should circulate—benefiting family, society, and the greater good—just as the Goddess blesses those who share their abundance selflessly.

### The Night of Inner Illumination

As diyas flicker gently in every window and the air fills with the scent of incense and sweets, Lakshmi Puja becomes an occasion for introspection and gratitude. It invites one to cleanse not only the home but also the heart—to let go of greed, ego, and resentment, and make space for love, compassion, and contentment.

Lakshmi Puja, therefore, is not merely an act of worship but a spiritual reaffirmation. It is a reminder that true prosperity lies in harmony—between wealth and wisdom, success and humility, outer beauty and inner light.

On the sacred night of Lakshmi Puja, as families gather around glowing lamps and offer prayers, they participate in a timeless ritual that unites generations, regions, and faiths in a shared celebration of light, love, and life itself. Amidst the sparkle of diyas and the echoes of aartis, one realizes that Diwali is not only about inviting Goddess Lakshmi into our homes but also about awakening her divine grace within our hearts.



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# Govardhan Puja, Annakut, Padwa: A celebration of faith, gratitude and renewal

## HONORING LORD KRISHNA, NATURE'S BOUNTY, AND THE BONDS OF PROSPERITY AND LOVE

The fourth day of Diwali, following the radiant night of Lakshmi Puja, holds a profound blend of devotion, gratitude, and renewal. Known by various names across India-Govardhan Puja, Annakut, and Padwa (Bali Pratipada)-this day represents different yet harmoniously connected aspects of the human experience: faith in the divine, thankfulness to nature, and celebration of relationships and new beginnings.

### The Legend of Govardhan Puja: When Krishna Lifted the Mountain

The most celebrated story associated with this day comes from the Bhagavata Purana and centers on Lord Krishna's miraculous lifting of the Govardhan Hill. In the idyllic village of Vrindavan, the people once worshipped Lord Indra, the rain god, offering him rituals and feasts to ensure abundant rains and rich harvests. Young Krishna, seeing this practice, asked the villagers to instead worship Govardhan Hill, which provided them with fertile pastures, food, and shelter. He taught that nature itself is divine and should be revered with sincerity and gratitude.

Convinced by Krishna's wisdom, the villagers offered their prayers and food to the Govardhan Hill instead of Indra. Enraged by this defiance, Indra unleashed torrential rains and storms over Vrindavan. To protect the people and animals, Krishna lifted the Govardhan Hill on his little finger, holding it like a vast umbrella for seven days and nights.

Defeated, Indra realized Krishna's supreme divinity and humbly sought forgiveness. From that day, the people of Braj began celebrating Govardhan Puja, honoring Krishna's protection and the nurturing power of nature.

### Spiritual Meaning: Worshipping the Sustainer of Life

Govardhan Puja is not merely a celebration of a mythological event-it is a spiritual lesson in humility, ecology, and gratitude. Lord Krishna's act symbolizes the victory of devotion over arrogance, faith over fear, and nature's grace over human pride.

The Govardhan Hill represents Mother Earth, the ultimate giver of sustenance. Worshipping the hill is an acknowledgment that every grain of food, drop of water, and blade of grass is a divine blessing. Krishna's message remains timeless: true worship lies not in hollow rituals but in reverence for the living world and in acts of service,



protection, and compassion.

### Annakut - The Mountain of Food

The day is also celebrated as Annakut, meaning "mountain of food." This ritual is one of the most visually delightful and spiritually fulfilling parts of the festival. Devotees prepare an enormous array of vegetarian dishes-sweets, fruits, snacks, rice, pulses, and milk products-and arrange them in the form of a hill, symbolizing Govardhan Mountain.

The offering, known as Chhappan Bhog (56 dishes), is made to Lord Krishna to express gratitude for the year's harvest and the abundance bestowed by nature. In many temples, especially in Mathura, Vrindavan, Nathdwara, and ISKCON centers, the food is beautifully displayed before the deity and then distributed as prasadam to devotees, representing the sharing of divine blessings and communal joy.

The Annakut feast also carries the message of charity and community sharing-reminding that wealth and food gain true sanctity only when distributed selflessly.

### Padwa or Bali Pratipada: Renewal and Relationships

In many parts of India, especially in Maharashtra, Gujarat, and South India, the same day is celebrated as Padwa or Bali Pratipada, each with its own cultural significance.

- In Maharashtra, Padwa is observed as Gudi Padwa of the Diwali cycle (not to be confused with the spring New Year festival). It celebrates the bond between husband and wife. Wives perform rituals and apply tilak on their husbands' foreheads, praying for their long life and prosperity, while husbands present gifts as tokens of love and respect. This exchange reinforces marital harmony and gratitude within family life.
- In Gujarat, the day marks the beginning of the new financial year, known as Bestu Varas. Business communities perform Chopda Pujan, worshipping their account books and ledgers before Lord Ganesha and Goddess Lakshmi. It

symbolizes a fresh start guided by honesty, diligence, and divine blessings for prosperity.

- In the Vaishnavite tradition, this day also honors King Bali, the generous demon ruler who was sent to the underworld by Lord Vishnu in his Vamana avatar, with a promise that he would return once a year. Bali Pratipada thus symbolizes selfless devotion and eternal faith.

### Regional and Cultural Diversity

Across India, the celebrations of this day take on varied hues:

- In Braj, Mathura, and Vrindavan, devotees perform Govardhan Parikrama-circumambulating the sacred Govardhan Hill, chanting Krishna's name, and offering food, incense, and flowers.
- In Gujarat and Rajasthan, people decorate cow dung models of the hill and worship cows, recognizing their sacred role in agrarian life.
- In South India, the day marks Bali Pratipada, symbolizing the return of righteousness and devotion through Lord Vishnu's blessing.

Despite the regional differences, the underlying message remains the same-gratitude to nature, reverence for divinity, and celebration of togetherness.

### Symbolism: Lessons for Modern Life

The story of Govardhan Puja holds a timeless message for today's world. As humanity faces ecological challenges, Krishna's act reminds us that nature is not to be exploited but revered. The hill he lifted is a symbol of environmental balance, while his protection of the villagers embodies compassion and responsibility toward all living beings.

The Annakut offering teaches the virtue of contentment and sharing, and Padwa highlights love, renewal, and integrity in relationships and enterprise. Together, they form a holistic message for modern living-anchored in faith, gratitude, and sustainability.

Govardhan Puja, Annakut, and Padwa together form a sacred triad of spiritual, material, and emotional renewal within the Diwali cycle. They remind us to bow not only before gods but also before the gifts of the Earth-to live with humility, to share what we receive, and to begin each new year with integrity and love.

As the fragrance of fresh food mingles with the sound of prayers and the glow of diyas, this day celebrates the essence of life itself-gratitude for what sustains us, devotion to what guides us, and love for those who walk beside us.

In honoring Govardhan, we honor the Earth; in celebrating Annakut, we honor abundance; and in observing Padwa, we honor relationships. Together, they illuminate a path where faith, prosperity, and compassion coexist in divine harmony.

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# Bhai Dooj - The festival of sibling love

FROM THE SACRED BOND OF YAMUNA AND YAMA TO THE ETERNAL AFFECTION BETWEEN BROTHERS AND SISTERS

As the lamps of Diwali slowly fade and the fragrance of sweets still lingers in the air, India celebrates one of its most tender and heartfelt festivals-Bhai Dooj, the Festival of Sibling Love. Marking the fifth and final day of the Diwali celebrations, Bhai Dooj (also known as Bhaiya Dooj, Bhau Beej, or Yama Dwitiya) honors the timeless bond of affection, trust, and protection between brothers and sisters.

If Raksha Bandhan is the thread that ties brothers and sisters together, Bhai Dooj is the reaffirmation of that bond through blessings, prayers, and gratitude. It is a day when sisters pray for the long and prosperous lives of their brothers, while brothers, in turn, promise to protect and cherish them forever.

## The Mythological Origins: The Tale of Yamuna and Yama

The origins of Bhai Dooj lie in a deeply symbolic and touching legend from Hindu mythology involving Yamuna, the sacred river, and her brother Yama, the god of death and justice.

According to ancient texts, Yama had been away for a long time, carrying out his divine duties in the underworld. His sister Yamuna missed him dearly and often invited him to visit her home. After many years, Yama finally accepted her invitation and came to see her on the second day of the Shukla Paksha in the Hindu month of Kartika.

Yamuna joyfully welcomed her brother with a grand feast, applied a tilak (vermilion mark) on his forehead, and performed aarti, praying for his happiness and immortality. Touched by her affection and devotion, Yama was moved and granted her a boon-that on this day, any brother who visits his sister and receives a tilak from her would be blessed with a long, prosperous, and fearless life.

From that day, the festival of Bhai Dooj or Yama Dwitiya came to be celebrated as a sacred occasion symbolizing the loving bond between brothers and sisters and the triumph of affection over separation.

## Symbolic Meaning of the Rituals

The essence of Bhai Dooj goes beyond the simple exchange of gifts and sweets-it is rooted in love, protection, and gratitude. The tilak ceremony symbolizes a sister's heartfelt prayers for her brother's well-being and the divine shield of her blessings. The brother's visit, in return, reflects his respect, affection, and protective duty toward his sister.

The five dots often drawn on the brother's forehead during the ritual represent Panchatatva-the five elements of life (earth, water, fire, air, and space)-invoking harmony and balance. The aarti performed by the sister signifies illumination and divine guidance in the

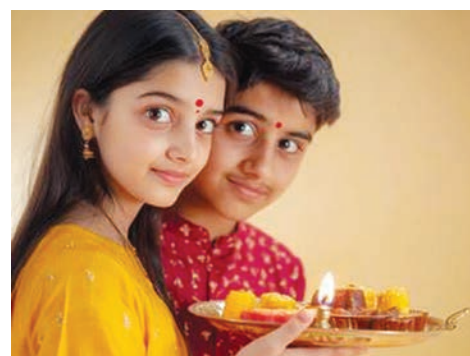


brother's life, while the exchange of sweets reflects the wish for sweetness and peace in their relationship.

## Celebrations Across India: Diverse names, Shared Emotions

While the sentiment of Bhai Dooj is universal, its name, customs, and flavors vary beautifully across India's regions.

- In North India, the festival is widely known as Bhai Dooj or Bhaiya Dooj. Sisters prepare festive dishes, apply tilak to their brothers' foreheads, and pray for their long lives. Brothers give gifts, clothes, or money as tokens of love.
- In Maharashtra, Goa, and Karnataka, it is called Bhau Beej. Sisters perform the ritual by drawing a square on the floor where the brother sits, symbolizing a sacred protective space. In some communities, brothers who cannot visit send symbolic gifts or even coconuts as a token of remembrance.
- In Bengal, it is known as Bhai Phonta, and the rituals are especially elaborate. Sisters observe a fast until they perform the phonta (tilak) ceremony, and brothers are treated to special Bengali delicacies like sandesh and mishti doi.
- In Nepal, the festival is celebrated as Bhai Tika, one of the most important festivals after Dashain. The sisters apply multi-colored tikas on their brothers' foreheads and place garlands of marigolds



around their necks, praying for their safety and longevity.

In every version, the essence remains the same-a reaffirmation of love and mutual respect between siblings, transcending distance and time.

## The Modern Meaning: Beyond Rituals

In today's times, as families become more dispersed and lifestyles more demanding, Bhai Dooj carries an even deeper significance. It is a day to pause, reconnect, and celebrate familial bonds that often get overshadowed by modern life's pace. Even if brothers and sisters are separated by distance, they mark the occasion virtually-exchanging video calls, gifts, and heartfelt messages, proving that love transcends physical presence.

Beyond blood relations, the festival also celebrates chosen family-many people now extend the spirit of Bhai Dooj to cousins, friends, or even colleagues who share sibling-like affection and trust.

It's not just a festival-it's a reminder of the emotional and spiritual balance that

the relationship between a brother and sister brings into one's life: the nurturing care of the sister and the reassuring protection of the brother.

## Spiritual and Social Symbolism

Bhai Dooj carries a universal spiritual symbolism that mirrors the larger philosophy of Diwali itself-the victory of light over darkness, love over isolation, and connection over indifference. The brother, representing strength and duty, and the sister, representing compassion and nurturing, together symbolize the harmony of masculine and feminine energies that sustain family and society.

The festival also conveys a moral message: that no matter how powerful one becomes (like Yama, the god of death), the bonds of affection, respect, and humility must always guide one's heart.

As the Diwali festivities draw to a close, Bhai Dooj serves as the perfect emotional epilogue-an intimate reminder that beneath the glitter of lamps and sweets lies the enduring light of human relationships. It is a celebration of love that protects, and protection that loves.

From the mythic meeting of Yama and Yamuna to the laughter shared between modern-day siblings, Bhai Dooj continues to weave hearts together across generations. Whether through a simple tilak, a heartfelt blessing, or a cherished memory, the message remains timeless-that the bond of a brother and sister is among life's purest and most enduring gifts.



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Every autumn, as the monsoon retreats and a crisp brightness fills the air, India transforms into a spectacle of radiance. Lamps flicker in courtyards, fireworks paint the skies, and the fragrance of sweets mingles with the sound of laughter. It is Diwali—the festival of lights, of joy, and of renewal. Yet, behind its glittering façade lies a rich and layered history that stretches across millennia, faiths, and philosophies. From the epic of Ramayana to the age of industrial India, Diwali has continuously evolved—its lights adapting to the changing contours of civilization while retaining their ancient glow of hope and righteousness.

### Mythological Origins: The Triumph of Light over Darkness

At its heart, Diwali celebrates Deepa (light) as a symbol of dispelling Avidya (ignorance) and Adharma (evil). Its most widely known origin lies in the Ramayana. After fourteen years of exile and the epic battle in Lanka, Lord Rama, accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, returned to Ayodhya. The citizens lit rows of clay lamps to illuminate the path of their beloved king. The flickering flames symbolized the victory of virtue over vice, of dharma over arrogance. Thus, Deepavali—literally "a row of lights"—became an eternal metaphor for human aspiration to overcome darkness within and without.

### Krishna and the Slaying of Narakasura: Joy after Darkness

In South India, Diwali is deeply associated with Lord Krishna's triumph over the demon king Narakasura. According to legend, Narakasura, swollen with power, had imprisoned 16,000 celestial maidens and tormented the world. With Satyabhama's assistance, Krishna slew the tyrant, liberating his captives. The day of Narakasura's death—Naraka Chaturdashi—came to be celebrated with cleansing baths at dawn, symbolic of purification, and the lighting of lamps to commemorate the restoration of righteousness. This tale embodies the same spiritual victory that Diwali across India represents, but through Krishna's divine compassion and valor.

### Mahavira's Nirvana: The Jain Light of Liberation

For the Jain community, Diwali holds a profoundly different but equally luminous significance. It marks the Nirvana or final liberation of Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, in 527 BCE at Pawapuri, Bihar. On that moonless night of Kartika, Mahavira attained moksha, and the cosmos was said to glow with a divine radiance. His disciples, led by Gautam Swami, lit lamps to symbolize the light of wisdom that would continue to guide humanity in his absence. Even today, Jains observe Diwali with meditation, charity, and recitation of scriptures, emphasizing the inner illumination of the soul over external festivity.

### Goddess Lakshmi: The Radiant Mother of Prosperity

In the Vaishnava tradition and much of northern India, Diwali is primarily

# The many lights of Diwali: From Ramayana to the modern world



devoted to Mahalakshmi, the goddess of wealth and fortune. The night of the new moon in the month of Kartika is considered her chosen time to bless homes that are clean, pure, and illuminated. The story intertwines with the Samudra Manthan—the churning of the cosmic ocean—when Lakshmi emerged resplendent, seated on a lotus, symbolizing the birth of abundance through divine effort. Thus, Diwali became a festival of renewal, of new beginnings in trade and life. Business ledgers are opened afresh, coins are worshipped, and prayers are offered for prosperity in the year ahead.

### Sikh Light: Bandi Chhor Divas and Guru Hargobind's Return

Among Sikhs, Diwali resonates as Bandi Chhor Divas—the Day of Liberation. In 1619, Guru Hargobind Sahib, the sixth Sikh Guru, was released from imprisonment in Gwalior Fort by Emperor Jahangir. Refusing to leave without freeing 52 detained kings, the Guru ensured their liberation too. As he returned to Amritsar, the Golden Temple was illuminated in celebration. Since then, the festival's spiritual meaning for Sikhs has been one of freedom from bondage, compassion, and divine justice. The illuminated Harmandir Sahib on Diwali night continues to be one of India's most breathtaking spiritual sights.

### Regional Legends and Rituals: Unity in Diversity

Diwali's beauty lies in its plurality—it is not a single-day event but a pan-Indian festival spanning five days, each carrying its own symbolism. In Gujarat and

Maharashtra, it begins with Vasu Baras and Dhanteras, days for honoring cattle and wealth. In the north, Govardhan Puja commemorates Krishna lifting the mountain to protect the villagers of Gokul from Indra's wrath, teaching the value of humility and faith. In Bengal, Kali Puja coincides with Diwali night, where Goddess Kali—the fierce mother who annihilates ignorance—is worshipped with tantric rituals and devotion. In the south, homes glow with Deepams, bursting crackers symbolize the destruction of evil, and sweets embody life's sweetness renewed.

### Evolution through the Centuries: From Lamps to Lanterns

The Diwali of ancient times was intimate—a family and village affair where lamps made of clay and ghee lit up dark rural nights. As trade flourished under the Mauryas and Guptas, Diwali also became an occasion for merchants to close their accounting year and start anew, linking religion with commerce. During the Mughal era, even emperors like Akbar and Shah Jahan are said to have participated in Diwali festivities, appreciating its cultural inclusiveness. Colonial India saw Diwali evolve further, with fireworks, electric lights, and printed greeting cards becoming symbols of modern celebration. Today, in the age of LEDs and social media, Diwali has become both local and global—a festival celebrated in Times Square as much as in Ayodhya, uniting the diaspora with ancestral light.

### The Spiritual Core: Lighting the Inner Lamp

Beyond rituals, gifts, and grandeur, Diwali's essence remains profoundly

spiritual. The lamp represents the human soul—the flame of consciousness that must remain unwavering amidst life's winds. The cleaning of homes signifies purging negativity, while the exchange of sweets symbolizes sharing goodwill. Every diya lit is a prayer for enlightenment—not only for oneself but for society at large. In the words of the Upanishads, "Tamaso m? jyotir gamaya"—from darkness, lead us to light.

### Diwali in the Modern World: Sustainability and Social Spirit

In recent years, awareness around environmental impact has reshaped the way Diwali is celebrated. Eco-friendly lamps, organic colors, and community feasts have replaced excessive fireworks and waste. Many now use the occasion to light not just their homes but lives—through charity drives, education funds, and acts of kindness. Urban India's Diwali is increasingly about illumination that uplifts both the spirit and society.

### The Eternal Flame

Whether one sees it as Rama's homecoming, Krishna's victory, Mahavira's liberation, or Lakshmi's grace, Diwali's enduring message is clear—the human yearning for light, harmony, and goodness transcends time and creed. Its many lamps may burn differently in each region, but together they weave a luminous tapestry of faith and festivity. As long as there is darkness to overcome, ignorance to dispel, and hope to renew, the lamps of Diwali will continue to burn—reminding us that light, in all its forms, is humanity's truest heritage.

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# Diwali: The festival of renewal

**A time for inner cleansing, forgiveness, and spiritual awakening**

As the monsoon clouds recede and the air grows crisp, India awakens to the luminous embrace of Diwali-the festival of lights. Streets glow with rows of diyas, homes are adorned with fresh paint and fragrant flowers, and hearts, too, prepare for renewal. While Diwali is often seen as a celebration of prosperity and joy, its deeper essence lies in the renewal of the human spirit-a sacred opportunity to cleanse the mind, forgive the past, and awaken the inner light of consciousness.

## The Light Within: Beyond Lamps and Fireworks

The outward spectacle of Diwali-its fireworks, sweets, and glittering lamps-symbolizes a greater inner illumination. According to ancient Hindu philosophy, the Deepa or lamp represents the Atman, the inner self. Lighting a diya is not merely a ritual but a meditation-a reminder that every human being carries a divine spark within, a flame that can dispel the darkness of ignorance and ego.

The Katha Upanishad declares, "The Self is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest, hidden in the hearts of all beings." Diwali, then, becomes a sacred moment to rekindle that awareness-to let the light of understanding and compassion burn brightly against the shadows of anger, greed, and fear.

## Cleansing the Home, Cleansing the Soul

Every year, as Diwali approaches, homes across India undergo a massive transformation. Dust is swept away, old clutter is discarded, and every corner is scrubbed until it shines. Traditionally, this act of physical cleaning was never just about beautification-it was symbolic of an inward purification.

To prepare for Diwali is to prepare for Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and well-being. But Lakshmi's blessings flow only to spaces-and hearts-that are pure. The cleaning of one's home mirrors the cleansing of one's thoughts, attitudes, and memories. It is an invitation to let go of emotional residues-the grudges, regrets, and resentments that dim our spiritual light.

Forgiveness, therefore, becomes a sacred act of Diwali. To forgive is to sweep the cobwebs from the soul, to make space for peace to dwell.

## The Renewal of Relationships

In ancient times, Diwali was also the beginning of a new financial year for traders and artisans. Accounts were balanced, debts settled, and old transactions closed with blessings. This practical renewal carried a profound moral lesson: just as one clears financial accounts, one must also clear emotional accounts.

Diwali invites us to start anew-with our loved ones, friends, and even ourselves. Lighting a lamp together, exchanging sweets, or simply wishing peace upon someone you've wronged-all become acts of renewal. In the words of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, "Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark." Diwali encourages that faith-to rebuild bonds



and trust even when life feels uncertain.

## Silence Amidst the Celebration

While Diwali is marked by joyous noise-the crackle of fireworks, the laughter of families-its true spirit is found in silence. In many traditional households, the night of Amavasya (new moon) is spent in quiet meditation or Lakshmi Puja, invoking not only material wealth but inner prosperity.

In spiritual traditions, the dark night of Diwali represents the mind shrouded by ignorance. Lighting a lamp within signifies the awakening of wisdom. Saints and sages have long taught that the real Diwali happens when the soul kindles awareness, when compassion replaces judgment, and when humility illuminates pride.

## The Five Lamps of Renewal

Diwali's spiritual renewal can be understood through five metaphorical lamps that we light within ourselves:

- The Lamp of Gratitude - For all that life has given, and for the lessons hidden in what it has taken away.
- The Lamp of Forgiveness - To release the heavy burden of resentment and restore the heart's peace.
- The Lamp of Faith - To trust in the divine order, even in times of darkness and change.
- The Lamp of Compassion - To extend kindness toward others, seeing the divine spark in every being.
- The Lamp of Self-Knowledge - To seek the truth of who we are, beyond titles, possessions, and fears.

When these five lamps are lit, Diwali's radiance transcends the physical and becomes a living experience of awakening.

## The Inner Lakshmi: Awakening Abundance

In Hindu philosophy, Goddess Lakshmi



is not merely the goddess of material wealth but of Sri-the subtle beauty and grace of life itself. She represents abundance in thought, purity in action, and harmony in the environment. To invoke Lakshmi during Diwali, therefore, is to awaken these qualities within.

A mind that is generous, a heart that forgives, and a spirit that serves-all these are forms of Lakshmi. True wealth is not measured in gold or possessions but in the lightness of being that comes from a peaceful heart.

## From Darkness to Light: The Eternal Message

The Upanishadic prayer-"Tamaso m? jyotir gamaya" (Lead me from darkness to light)-encapsulates the essence of Diwali. Darkness, in this context, is not merely the absence of light but the presence of ignorance, ego, and fear. Light is awareness, self-realization, and truth. Every diya we light is a promise-to walk the path of righteousness, to illuminate our surroundings with goodness, and to be bearers of peace in a fragmented world. The act of lighting lamps on the darkest night of the year reminds us that no darkness is ever too deep for light to overcome.

## Diwali for the Modern Soul

In today's fast-paced world, Diwali's message of inner renewal is more relevant than ever. Amid consumerism and digital overload, it offers a pause-a moment to reflect on what truly matters. Whether one spends the evening meditating, volunteering, or simply sitting quietly with family, the essence remains the same: to reconnect with one's higher self.

More than a festival, Diwali is a philosophy-a call to awaken, to forgive, to transform. It asks us to light a lamp not only on our doorstep but in our conscience.

## The Light That Never Dies

When the last firecracker fades and the final lamp flickers out, what remains is the stillness of night-the silence in which the soul can finally listen. That is where Diwali's true magic lies.

For the festival of lights is, ultimately, a festival of awakening. A reminder that renewal is not something we seek once a year-it is a continual process of cleansing, forgiving, and becoming. As the lamp burns steadily through the darkness, it whispers an eternal truth: the real Diwali happens not outside, but within.

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*Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC), established in 1997, is an international non-profit organization with global affiliates and membership in 21 countries with the objective to embrace, engage, and enhance the shared heritage, aspirations, and interests of persons of Indian origin with optimum inclusivity. Website: <https://indiandiasporacouncil.org/>*

For more information, contact: IDC President, Ashook Ramsaran at [AshookRamsaran@gmail.com](mailto:AshookRamsaran@gmail.com)

# How India celebrates Diwali from North to South

As the new moon of Kartika approaches, India begins to shimmer. From the ghats of Varanasi to the temples of Madurai, from the palaces of Jaipur to the beaches of Goa, the subcontinent bursts into a symphony of light, color, and devotion. Diwali-known variously as Deepavali, Dipotsav, or the Festival of Lights-is perhaps the only festival that truly unites India's vast cultural mosaic, even as every region celebrates it in its own distinctive way. Each lamp lit tells a local legend, each ritual reflects a unique ethos, yet the underlying message remains the same: light conquers darkness, good triumphs over evil, and hope renews the human spirit.

## Northern India: The Return of Rama and the Kingdom of Light

In the northern plains, Diwali is inseparable from the epic tale of Lord Rama. After 14 years of exile and the defeat of Ravana, Rama returned to Ayodhya with Sita and Lakshmana. To welcome their king, the people illuminated the entire city with oil lamps, symbolizing the triumph of virtue.

Ayodhya's Deepotsav today is a breathtaking reenactment of that ancient homecoming. Millions of earthen lamps-over 24 lakh in 2024-are lit along the Sarayu River and throughout the city, creating a sea of flickering gold visible from the skies. Temples resound with chants of "Jai Shri Ram," while tableaux and processions recreate episodes from the Ramayana. The event has earned a Guinness World Record for the largest display of lamps, but beyond its scale, it remains a devotional spectacle of light reclaiming darkness.

In Varanasi, the spiritual capital of India, Diwali blends seamlessly into Ganga Mahotsav-a five-day cultural and devotional celebration on the ghats. Thousands of diyas are floated on the sacred Ganges, turning the river into a shimmering ribbon of light. The Ganga Aarti on this night is a sight to behold-priests in saffron robes performing synchronized rituals with giant brass lamps as conch shells echo across the twilight. Fireworks, classical music, and handicraft fairs add to the city's festive pulse, where spirituality and artistry flow together like the river itself.

Further north in Punjab, Diwali coincides with Bandi Chhor Divas, marking Guru Hargobind Sahib's release from Gwalior Fort. The Golden Temple in Amritsar glows with thousands of lamps reflected in its serene waters. Sikhs commemorate the day with kirtan, charity, and fireworks, symbolizing liberation from both physical and spiritual bondage.

In Delhi, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, families celebrate with traditional Lakshmi Puja, lighting rows of diyas at doorsteps, exchanging sweets, and bursting firecrackers. New clothes, rangolis, and community feasts complete the night of joy and togetherness.

## Western India: Prosperity, Worship, and Community

In Gujarat, Diwali marks the end of the financial year for traders and business families. It is primarily a festival dedicated to Goddess Lakshmi, the divine mother of wealth and abundance. On Chopda Pujan



day, new account books (bahi-khatas) are opened, and prayers are offered for prosperity and ethical success in the year ahead. Homes are decorated with torans of mango leaves, intricate rangolis, and lamps at every entrance to invite Lakshmi's grace.

In Maharashtra, Diwali extends over five days, each with a distinct meaning. It begins with Vasu Baras-honoring cows for their nurturing role-followed by Dhanteras and Naraka Chaturdashi (Chhoti Diwali). On this day, people take oil baths before sunrise, a tradition symbolizing purification after Narakasura's slaying by Krishna. The main Lakshmi Puja follows, and then Bali Pratipada or Padwa celebrates the bond between husbands and wives, recalling the victory of King Bali's devotion over Indra's pride. The festival concludes with Bhau Beej, a day of sibling affection.

Rajasthan's cities, especially Jaipur and Udaipur, are transformed into wonderlands of illumination. Every market, haveli, and palace glows in colorful lights. The Johari Bazaar in Jaipur is famed for its dazzling decorations and vibrant trade, while Udaipur's City Palace hosts grand fireworks over Lake Pichola, reflecting the opulent beauty of Rajputana tradition.

In Goa, Diwali takes on a unique and fiery character. Here, the night before the festival is marked by the burning of massive effigies of Narkasura, the demon slain by Krishna. These effigies, crafted weeks in advance and paraded through villages, represent the destruction of arrogance and evil. With shouts of "Narakasura Mardini ki Jai!" (Victory to the Destroyer of Narakasura), locals greet

dawn with oil baths, sweets, and joy.

## Eastern India: The Night of Kali

In West Bengal, Diwali is celebrated as Kali Puja, dedicated to the fierce and compassionate Goddess Kali. The night sky fills with incense and devotion as temples and homes are transformed into shrines of divine energy. Idols of Kali, adorned with hibiscus flowers and skull garlands, are worshipped with offerings of rice, sweets, and symbolic rituals that signify the destruction of ego and ignorance. The air vibrates with the rhythm of drums and chants of "Jai Maa Kali!" While northern India's Diwali is about prosperity and Rama's return, Bengal's version is about inner liberation and the triumph of the divine feminine.

In Odisha, lamps are lit not only for Lakshmi but also to guide the souls of ancestors back to heaven-a tradition known as Badabadua Daka. People stand in front of their homes with torches made of jute sticks, chanting, "Badabadua ho andhaara e asa, alua e jaa"-a prayer inviting ancestral blessings.

Assam celebrates Diwali with Shakti Puja and lighting of earthen lamps in shrines dedicated to Kamakhya Devi. The festival also coincides with the harvest season, blending devotion with gratitude for nature's bounty.

## Southern India: Dawn of Light

In the south, Deepavali (as it is locally called) is a celebration that begins at dawn rather than dusk. It commemorates Lord Krishna's victory over the demon Narakasura and the restoration of righteousness.

In Tamil Nadu, people wake before sunrise, anoint themselves with fragrant oil, and bathe before lighting lamps and bursting crackers-a ritual symbolizing the destruction of negativity. Elders bless the young with new clothes, sweets, and tokens of love. The day is marked by offerings of Deepavali marundhu-a special herbal concoction believed to cleanse the body and protect against seasonal ailments.

In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Deepavali spans several days. The first day is Naraka Chaturdashi, followed by Amavasya Lakshmi Puja, and then Balipadyami, honoring King Bali's devotion. In rural areas, cattle are washed, adorned with garlands, and worshipped, reflecting gratitude to animals that sustain livelihood.

In Kerala, Deepavali is a quieter affair compared to Onam, yet homes still sparkle with small lamps and sweets are shared. The emphasis is on family togetherness and purity of thought, echoing the festival's pan-Indian message of inner light.

## The Himalayan and Island Diwalis

Even in the mountains, Diwali finds its glow. In Himachal Pradesh, it marks not just the worship of Lakshmi but also the return of deities to their shrines after autumnal processions. Kullu Dussehra flows into Diwali celebrations, creating a seamless blend of devotion and festivity.

In Nepal, the festival is called Tihar and spans five days-each devoted to animals, wealth, and family. Crows, dogs, cows, and oxen are honored for their roles in human life.



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# The changing face of Diwali: From earthen diyas to LED glitz

As twilight descends and the first lamps of Diwali flicker to life, India transforms into a glowing mosaic of radiance. Yet, if one looks closely, the light that fills today's homes and streets carries a new hue. Once, Diwali's charm was rooted in the soft, trembling glow of clay diyas filled with mustard oil, their flicker a prayer whispered to the heavens. Today, it dances in the steady, electric pulse of LED strips, fairy lights, and digital fireworks. The festival of lights has evolved—from sacred simplicity to modern spectacle—reflecting the changing face of India itself.

## From Earth and Oil: The timeless Glow of the Diya

For centuries, the humble earthen diya has been the heart of Diwali. Made by village potters, dried in the sun, and filled with oil and cotton wicks, it symbolized purity, devotion, and connection to the earth. Lighting a diya was an act of faith—a ritual of awakening the soul, dispelling darkness within, and invoking prosperity.

Every flicker of that handmade lamp carried meaning. It embodied the five elements—earth (clay), water (used to mold it), fire (the flame), air (that sustains the flame), and ether (the space in which light spreads). When families lit hundreds of such diyas, their homes glowed with a golden warmth, the same light said to have welcomed Lord Rama to Ayodhya, heralding the triumph of dharma over evil.

The diya was not merely an object; it was a living symbol of India's agrarian roots, of handmade artistry, and of spirituality grounded in simplicity.

## The Arrival of Modern Light

The 20th century brought electricity into Indian homes—and with it, a new era of Diwali celebration. The first recorded use of electric illumination for Diwali dates back to early 1900s Bombay, when wealthy traders began stringing incandescent bulbs along their balconies. What began as novelty soon became aspiration.

By the 1970s and 80s, electric bulbs had become a common sight—multicolored garlands decorating markets, temples, and public buildings. Cities gleamed with neon signs proclaiming "Shubh Deepavali," and electricity replaced oil as the dominant source of festival light.

The symbolism shifted subtly but significantly. The electric bulb, steady and powerful, contrasted with the organic fragility of the diya. The festival's aesthetic grew brighter, grander, and more urban.

## LEDs, Lasers, and the Era of Glitz

The 21st century has taken Diwali into a new visual age. With the LED revolution, energy-efficient lighting has made it possible to illuminate entire cities with minimal cost. Streets, malls, and temples now blaze in synchronized color displays, often choreographed to music or animations.

Homes no longer rely solely on traditional lamps. Instead, LED curtains cascade from balconies, sensor-lit diyas glow automatically at dusk, and



programmable lights mimic the dancing of flames. Urban skylines twinkle not just with fireworks, but with digital light shows and drone spectacles.

In metropolitan India, the festival has merged with technology-driven aesthetics: eco-friendly laser shows replacing noisy crackers, 3D projection mapping on heritage buildings, and "smart diyas" powered by solar cells. The modern Diwali is as much about design and innovation as devotion.

## A Shift in Mood and Meaning

With these transformations, Diwali's sensory palette has changed. The rustic fragrance of clay lamps mingled with mustard oil has given way to the faint hum of circuitry and the sterile glow of LEDs. The festival, once deeply rooted in ritual and simplicity, now often mirrors urban consumerism—defined by shopping festivals, gadget launches, and social media sparkle.

Yet, this change is not merely about aesthetics—it also reflects a larger shift in India's rhythm. The traditional Diwali was intimate, family-centered, and inward-looking. Today's Diwali, while still joyous, is expansive, outward, and

performative. Neighborhood competitions for the brightest house, Instagram-perfect rangolis, and influencer-led Diwali décor trends speak of a celebration that has adapted to a hyperconnected world.

Still, amid the glitter and technology, the essence remains—every lamp, whether clay or LED, still symbolizes hope. The medium has changed; the message endures.

## The Environmental Awakening

One positive outcome of modernization has been an awakening toward sustainability. As awareness grows about pollution and waste, many urban households have begun to embrace eco-friendly celebrations. LEDs,

despite their commercial glitz, are more energy-efficient and safer than traditional bulbs. Similarly, clay diyas have made a comeback in green-conscious homes that seek to support local artisans and reduce plastic waste.

The modern Diwali is thus evolving into a fusion—where tradition and technology coexist. Solar-powered diyas and biodegradable decorations embody this new balance, proving that innovation need not erase heritage, only illuminate it differently.

## Artisans in Transition: The Potters' Plight

However, the changing face of Diwali has not been without consequence. For generations, potters (kumhars) across India earned their living by crafting earthen diyas. But with the rise of mass-produced plastic and electric lamps, their livelihoods have been threatened.

In towns like Khurja (Uttar Pradesh) and Molela (Rajasthan), artisans now struggle to sell their handcrafted wares against the flood of imported LED decorations. Some have adapted, creating designer diyas, painted lamps, and eco-friendly terracotta products for urban markets. Others, sadly, have faded into economic obscurity.

The diya's decline, therefore, is not just about changing aesthetics—it's about the silent dimming of traditional craftsmanship.

## Balancing Tradition and Modernity

India's Diwali today straddles two worlds—the ancient and the futuristic. In many homes, grandmothers still insist on lighting the first oil diya before switching on the fairy lights. The old and the new coexist, often on the same threshold: clay lamps glowing softly beneath LED garlands, firecrackers replaced by laser shows, paper lanterns alongside digital décor.

This hybrid Diwali is perhaps India's truest reflection—a civilization constantly reinventing itself without losing its soul. The festival's transformation mirrors the nation's journey from rural simplicity to technological sophistication, from handmade to high-tech.

## The Light That Endures

Whether cast by an earthen diya or an LED bulb, Diwali's light continues to embody humanity's eternal yearning—to overcome darkness, to celebrate life, and to renew faith. The mediums may change, but the meaning endures.

In the end, the most radiant Diwali is not the one that dazzles with brightness, but the one that kindles warmth—the glow of togetherness, compassion, and hope.

So, as India lights up once again—some with clay lamps, others with neon brilliance—what truly matters is not how we illuminate our homes, but how we illuminate our hearts.

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# Lakshmi: The divine feminine power of prosperity

On the moonless night of Diwali, when darkness seems most complete, millions of homes across India come alive with shimmering lamps. Amidst the radiance, devotees welcome the presence of Goddess Lakshmi—the eternal embodiment of prosperity, abundance, and grace. As bells ring and prayers rise, her golden form, seated upon a blooming lotus, symbolizes the triumph of purity over greed, effort over chance, and wisdom over material illusion. Lakshmi is not merely the goddess of wealth—she is the divine feminine principle that sustains life's harmony, balance, and beauty.

## The Radiant Origin of Lakshmi

The story of Lakshmi's birth is as luminous as the goddess herself. According to the Puranas, during the Samudra Manthan—the cosmic churning of the ocean by gods and demons in search of amrita (nectar of immortality)—Lakshmi emerged from the depths of the ocean, radiant and resplendent, seated on a lotus and holding a lotus in her hand. Her appearance was the manifestation of divine equilibrium, born of effort, faith, and cooperation between opposing forces.

Her emergence signified that wealth and prosperity—spiritual and material—arise only when there is harmony, diligence, and alignment with cosmic law. In that moment, the universe revealed that beauty, abundance, and fortune are not accidental gifts but the fruits of balance and devotion.

The Vishnu Purana describes her as the eternal consort of Lord Vishnu, the Preserver in the Hindu Trinity, symbolizing that prosperity (Lakshmi) can only endure where preservation, order, and righteousness (Vishnu's dharma) prevail.

## The Symbolism of Lakshmi

Every aspect of Lakshmi's iconography speaks in layers of symbolism.

- **Lotus Seat:** Lakshmi is always depicted seated or standing upon a lotus—symbolizing purity that blooms even in the muddiest waters. It represents spiritual detachment, reminding devotees that true wealth flourishes when the soul remains unstained by greed or ego.
- **Four Hands:** Her four arms denote the four aims of human life (Purusharthas): Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), and Moksha (liberation). Together, they teach that material prosperity must harmonize with virtue, pleasure with discipline, and abundance with enlightenment.
- **Gold Coins:** Flowing from her palm are golden coins, the symbols of endless generosity and the divine cycle of giving and receiving. They remind us that wealth is not meant to stagnate, but to circulate—to



nurture, to serve, and to uplift.

- **Elephants Showering Water:** Often depicted beside her are elephants pouring water from their trunks, symbolizing royal power, wisdom, and the ceaseless flow of auspicious energy. They represent spiritual strength that sustains prosperity.
- **Owl (Ulooka):** Her vehicle, the owl, signifies vigilance and wisdom, teaching that wealth without awareness can lead to downfall. The owl sees through darkness—just as one must remain awake amidst the illusions of material life.

## Lakshmi and the Feminine Principle

Lakshmi is more than a goddess—she is Shakti, the vital energy that animates creation. As the consort of Vishnu, she complements the principle of preservation with the power of sustenance. Without her, the universe would lack beauty, nourishment, and order. In philosophical terms, Lakshmi represents Sri, the subtle cosmic force that pervades everything—from the rhythm of the cosmos to the flow of prosperity in a household. Her presence in mythology and life signifies the divine feminine's indispensable role in maintaining balance between spirit and matter.

She is both gentle and powerful—Saumya in form, yet Mahashakti in essence. In her, tenderness meets

resilience, grace meets purpose, and compassion meets discipline.

## Lakshmi in the Scriptures

The Rig Veda, one of the oldest known scriptures, extols her as Sri—the radiant goddess of abundance, light, and auspiciousness. The Sri Sukta, a hymn of 15 verses, venerates her as the giver of both material prosperity and spiritual illumination. In these verses, she is invoked not just for wealth, but for health, strength, fame, and purity of mind.

Later texts such as the Padma Purana and Devi Bhagavata Purana expand her stories, linking her with the cyclical nature of existence—ever manifest, ever renewing. In the Vishnu Sahasranama, Vishnu is called Lakshmiapati, emphasizing that divine wealth belongs to those aligned with truth and righteousness.

## The Lakshmi of Diwali Night

Among the five days of Diwali, Lakshmi Puja on the third day is the most auspicious. It falls on the new moon night of Kartika Amavasya—a time when the absence of natural light calls forth the need for inner and outer illumination.

As dusk falls, homes are cleaned, purified, and adorned with lamps, flowers, and rangolis. The act of sweeping and decorating symbolizes the

clearing of negative energies and inviting the divine into one's space. Doors are kept open to welcome the goddess, while lamps are placed on thresholds and windowsills so that no corner remains in darkness.

In business households, ledgers and accounts (bahi-khatas) are ritually opened and offered to the goddess, marking the start of a new financial year. Families chant Lakshmi Ashtottara Shatanamavali—the 108 names of the goddess—and offer sweets, fruits, and coins. The belief is that on this night, Lakshmi visits the earth and blesses homes that are clean, peaceful, and full of devotion.

The quiet reverence of Lakshmi Puja contrasts beautifully with the noise of fireworks outside—it is a reminder that true abundance arises from calmness, gratitude, and integrity.

## Stories and Myths of Lakshmi's Grace

Lakshmi's myths reflect the human relationship with wealth—its promise, peril, and potential. One legend tells how she once left the gods due to their arrogance, plunging heaven into darkness and despair. Only when humility and cooperation were restored did she return, bringing abundance with her. Another story describes her test of King Bali. When Vishnu, in his Vamana avatar, asked the demon king for three paces of land, Bali gave away everything he possessed. Moved by his sacrifice, Lakshmi declared that wherever humility and generosity dwell, there she would reside eternally.

These stories underline a timeless truth: prosperity follows righteousness, not the other way around.

## Lakshmi and the Human Spirit

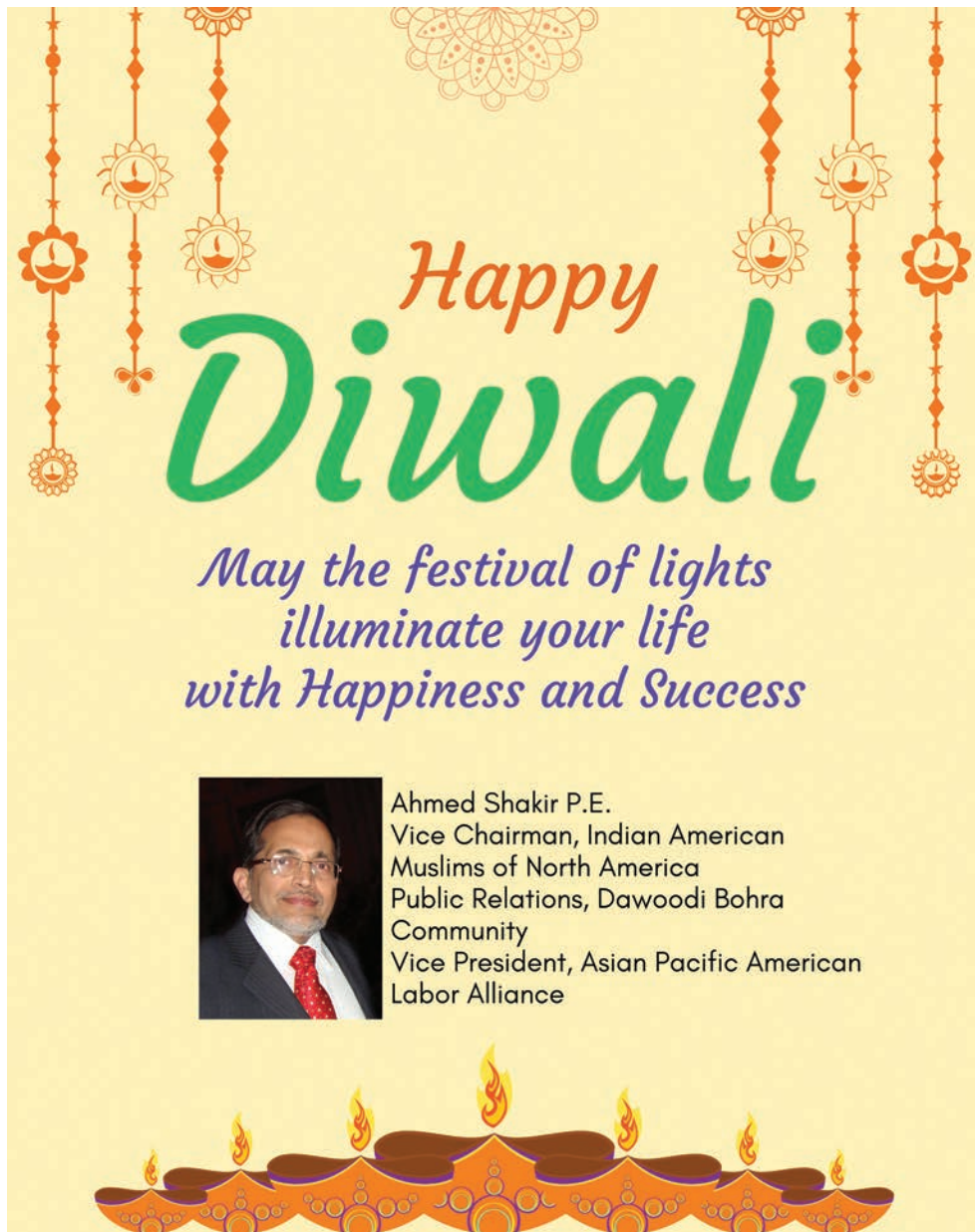
Lakshmi's worship is not merely about the accumulation of wealth but about cultivating the right relationship with it. She embodies the idea that prosperity must be earned through effort, maintained through ethics, and shared through compassion.

The lotus she stands upon teaches spiritual detachment—live amidst abundance, but remain rooted in purity. Her calm demeanor amidst opulence reminds us that true wealth is inner peace. Her ever-smiling face reflects that joy flows not from possession but from gratitude.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says, "Wherever there is wealth, glory, or power, know it to be a manifestation of my divine Lakshmi." Thus, Lakshmi is not confined to rituals; she dwells wherever there is harmony, charity, and beauty of thought.


## Lakshmi in Today's World

In today's fast-paced, material-driven world, Lakshmi's message feels more relevant than ever. Her ancient wisdom challenges modern excess, reminding us that prosperity is not merely a number in a bank account but a state of balance—between giving and receiving, work and rest, ambition and peace.



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# The spiritual science of lighting a diya

Exploring the symbolism of light over darkness, energy, and consciousness in Hindu philosophy

When a small clay lamp flickers to life at dusk, its flame seems fragile against the vastness of night. Yet, within that delicate glow lies an ancient truth—a reminder that even the tiniest light dispels the deepest darkness. In Hindu philosophy, lighting a diya (lamp) is not merely an act of devotion or decoration; it is a spiritual science, a profound ritual symbolizing the victory of knowledge over ignorance, purity over negativity, and consciousness over inertia.

Across temples, homes, and sacred festivals like Diwali, the diya becomes both a physical source of light and a metaphysical symbol of awakening. To understand why this humble lamp holds such immense importance, one must delve into its roots within Hindu thought, Vedic symbolism, and yogic energy dynamics.

## The Flame as a Symbol of the Soul

In the Upanishads, the human soul (Atman) is often compared to a flame. The Katha Upanishad beautifully declares: "There is a light that shines beyond all things on earth, beyond us all, beyond the heavens, beyond the highest—this is the light that shines in our hearts."

This flame represents Chaitanya—pure consciousness, the divine spark that animates all beings. When one lights a diya, it is an outward expression of this inner truth: that the divine resides within, luminous and eternal. The steady flame signifies clarity, awareness, and steadfastness—the essential qualities needed for spiritual evolution.

Just as a lamp cannot burn without oil, the soul cannot shine without devotion, self-discipline, and knowledge. Lighting a diya is thus a meditative reminder to nurture our inner flame through virtuous living and mindful awareness.

## Light as the Essence of Divinity

In Hinduism, *Jyoti* (light) is synonymous with divinity itself. Gods and goddesses are invoked through the medium of flame—whether in a temple's aarti, a Vedic fire ritual (*yajna*), or a simple household lamp placed before a deity. Light represents the formless Brahman—the infinite consciousness that pervades all creation. The Rig Veda calls Agni (fire) "the messenger of the gods," a divine bridge between the mortal and the celestial realms. When one lights a diya, it is believed that the flame carries prayers to the divine, transforming material elements into subtle vibrations of devotion. The Gayatri Mantra—one of the most sacred chants—also invokes light: "*Om Bhur Bhuvah Svah, Tat Savitur Varenyam...*", a prayer to the solar radiance that illuminates the mind and awakens inner wisdom. Thus, to kindle a flame is to awaken the same cosmic light within oneself.

## The Five Elements and the Diya

A diya embodies the harmony of the Panchamahabhutas—the five fundamental elements of existence:

- Earth (Prithvi): The clay base of the

lamp represents stability and grounding.

- Water (Jala): The oil or ghee signifies sustenance and flow.
- Fire (Agni): The flame embodies transformation and energy.
- Air (Vayu): The oxygen that sustains the flame symbolizes the breath of life.
- Ether (Akasha): The space around the flame signifies consciousness—the field in which all experiences occur.

When these five elements unite in balance, the diya becomes a microcosm of the universe itself—a living symbol of creation, preservation, and dissolution. Lighting it is an act of cosmic alignment, invoking harmony between the external world and the inner self.

## The Science of Energy and Vibration

Ancient seers viewed fire not only as a sacred element but also as a conductor of energy. Modern science now supports this intuitive understanding: a burning flame releases photons—particles of light energy—that influence the electromagnetic field around it.

In yogic terms, the flame is associated with the Manipura Chakra (solar plexus), the energy center of willpower and transformation. Watching a steady flame during meditation (a practice known as *Trataka*) is said to increase concentration, purify the mind, and awaken inner energy.

When a diya is lit in a temple or home altar, it radiates subtle vibrations of positivity. The golden glow purifies the space, while the rhythmic flicker creates a soothing effect on the nervous system. The fragrance of the oil or ghee further enhances this atmosphere of serenity, making the environment conducive to meditation and prayer.



## The Symbolism of Light Over Darkness

The act of lighting a lamp carries profound spiritual metaphors. Darkness represents ignorance (*Avidya*), fear, and attachment, while light symbolizes wisdom (*Vidya*), courage, and liberation. The simple gesture of striking a match and bringing flame to wick mirrors the awakening of consciousness—the moment when self-awareness dispels illusion.

This symbolism is central to Hindu festivals. During Diwali, the night of *Amavasya* (new moon), darkness reigns supreme. Yet it is on this very night that millions of lamps are lit, signifying that spiritual light is most powerful when the world is at its darkest. Similarly, in the *Ramayana*, the people of Ayodhya illuminated their city to welcome Rama's return—symbolizing the restoration of dharma and truth after a long exile of ignorance and injustice.

The deeper message is timeless: no matter how pervasive darkness seems, it can never withstand even a single spark of truth.

## Different diyas and their meanings

Each diya has its own symbolic and energetic significance:

- Single-Wick Diya: Represents the focus of the mind—unity of purpose and devotion.
- Two-Wick Diya: Symbolizes harmony between knowledge and action, or love and duty.
- Four-Wick Diya: Denotes prosperity from all four directions and the fullness of life.
- Five-Wick Diya: Represents the Panchabhutas, balance of the cosmic elements.

Traditionally, ghee lamps are considered the purest, representing selfless devotion. Oil lamps symbolize steady effort and endurance. The

direction also matters: lamps facing east invoke enlightenment, while those facing north attract prosperity.

## Lighting the Lamp of Inner Awareness

In spiritual psychology, lighting a diya is akin to awakening the *Agni* within—the fire of awareness that burns away inertia and illusion. Just as the flame consumes oil to sustain itself, the inner fire consumes ego and ignorance to sustain consciousness.

The Bhagavad Gita (10.11) says: "*Out of compassion for them, I dwell in their hearts and destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the luminous lamp of knowledge.*" This "lamp of knowledge" (*jnana-dipika*) is what every ritual diya seeks to symbolize—the illumination of the soul through self-realization.

When we light a diya, we are not merely illuminating a space; we are lighting the path of our own awakening.

## Daily and Ritual Significance

Traditionally, lighting a lamp at dawn and dusk marks the transition between day and night—the *Sandhya Kala*—times considered spiritually potent. It represents the continuity of divine presence, protection from negativity, and gratitude for the cycle of life.

In temples, lamps are lit before deities as an offering of light back to the Source of all light. During *Aarti*, the circular motion of lamps before the divine image symbolizes the cosmic cycles of creation and dissolution, while devotees absorb the energy through sight (*Darshan*).

At home, keeping a lamp burning in the puja room or near the entrance is believed to attract prosperity, peace, and divine protection. In philosophical terms, it keeps the mind's lamp awake—ever alert, ever radiant.

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# Rituals of purity: Why we clean our homes before Diwali

The hidden Vedic and psychological meanings behind cleansing, renewal, and invoking positivity



Every year, as the festival of Diwali approaches, a familiar rhythm begins across India: the sound of sweeping, scrubbing, dusting, and polishing fills the air. From city apartments to village homes, every corner is cleared, repaired, and renewed. Cupboards are emptied, walls are repainted, old things are discarded, and the home takes on a new brightness-ready to welcome Goddess Lakshmi, the harbinger of fortune and auspiciousness.

But beneath this cultural routine lies a profound spiritual and psychological tradition. The act of cleaning one's home before Diwali is not merely about physical tidiness—it is a sacred ritual of purification, deeply rooted in the Vedas and Hindu philosophy. It reflects an ancient understanding: that outer order influences inner harmony, and a pure environment invites divine energies.

## The Vedic Roots of Cleansing

In the Vedic worldview, *shaucham* (cleanliness) is one of the fundamental virtues of spiritual life. The Bhagavad Gita (16.3) lists it among the divine qualities: "Purity, steadiness, self-control, and humility are the marks of one who walks the path of light." Cleanliness, therefore, is not just about hygiene—it is a spiritual discipline, an expression of reverence toward life itself. In the Atharva Veda, purity is described as the condition that enables the flow of positive *prana* (vital energy). A cluttered or dusty space, according to ancient seers, traps stagnant energies (*tamasic vibrations*), leading to lethargy, confusion, and emotional heaviness. By purifying the physical surroundings, one invites the *sattva guna*—the quality of light, harmony, and clarity—essential for invoking divine blessings.

Diwali, being the festival of light, therefore begins with cleansing—because light cannot dwell in darkness, and purity cannot coexist with disorder.

## Symbolism of Cleansing:

### Removing the Inner Dust

The act of sweeping and scrubbing, when done mindfully, carries a symbolic meaning that transcends the physical. Each stroke of the broom represents the removal of inner impurities—anger, greed, jealousy, and ego—that accumulate in the mind just as dust settles in a neglected room.

In many traditional households, cleaning begins days or even weeks before Diwali, marking a gradual purification process. As old belongings are sorted through and unnecessary items discarded, there is a simultaneous psychological release—a letting go of memories, attachments, and emotional residues.

This aligns beautifully with the Vedic principle of *aparigraha*—non-hoarding and non-attachment. To cling to clutter, physical or emotional, is to block the flow of new energy. By clearing our surroundings, we symbolically create space for new beginnings, for the light of insight to enter.

## Invoking Lakshmi: The Goddess of Cleanliness and Order

Goddess Lakshmi, the central deity of Diwali, is not only the bestower of wealth

but also the embodiment of *saundarya* (beauty), *shri* (auspiciousness), and order. The scriptures say that she resides only in places that are clean, serene, and harmonious. Her very presence is said to flee from environments of chaos, neglect, or impurity. The Padma Purana narrates that when cleanliness and discipline prevail, Lakshmi's radiance naturally manifests. Thus, in preparing the home, devotees are not merely doing housework—they are creating a sacred atmosphere that magnetizes divine grace.

This is why, on the night of Lakshmi Puja, doors and windows are kept open, lamps are placed at thresholds, and homes are fragrant with incense and flowers. The belief is that Lakshmi will enter only those homes that radiate purity, joy, and readiness.

## Psychological Science Behind the Ritual

Modern psychology now affirms what ancient wisdom long knew: our surroundings directly influence our mental and emotional states. Cluttered spaces tend to generate stress, distraction, and fatigue, while orderly and well-lit environments promote calmness, clarity, and optimism. Cleaning, therefore, is a therapeutic ritual—a form of active meditation. As one organizes, sweeps, and beautifies, the mind experiences release and renewal. Researchers describe this as "embodied mindfulness"—a physical act that cultivates mental stillness and focus. The timing of this ritual is also significant. Diwali arrives at the end of the monsoon, when homes often accumulate dampness and decay. Cleaning restores vitality not only to the space but to the psyche, symbolizing a fresh start as the new year dawns on the Hindu lunar calendar.

## The Metaphysics of Space and Energy

In Vedic cosmology, every object and

space vibrates with pranic energy. Dust, disorder, and unused objects create energetic stagnation—what in Sanskrit is known as *tamasic bhava*, the quality of inertia. The act of cleansing, in contrast, raises the vibration of the environment. Water, when sprinkled with mantras, purifies energy fields; the sound of a broom or a cloth wiping surfaces carries a rhythmic cleansing frequency; and the lighting of incense or camphor completes the ritual by replacing dense vibrations with luminous energy.

This is not mere superstition—it mirrors principles of energy flow found in yogic and Ayurvedic sciences. A clean, organized space allows the *prana* (life force) to circulate freely, enhancing vitality and mental well-being.

## Discarding the Old: A Lesson in Detachment

Another key aspect of Diwali cleaning is the discarding of the old—broken utensils, worn-out clothes, unused objects. This practice is rooted in the philosophical idea that material accumulation binds the consciousness.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad teaches: "As is one's attachment, so is one's bondage." To hold on to the past—through objects, emotions, or regrets—is to remain stagnant. The pre-Diwali cleansing thus becomes a symbolic ritual of renunciation: by letting go of the unnecessary, we make room for the divine to enter. In many regions, this is accompanied by *Nav Varsh Shuddhi*—the purification for the new year—where accounts are balanced, debts settled, and relationships reconciled. Forgiveness, gratitude, and closure are part of this spiritual renewal, aligning the outer cleaning with inner cleansing.

## Rituals of Purity Across India

The tradition of pre-Diwali cleansing

takes unique forms across India:

- In North India, families begin the *Badi Diwali Safai* weeks in advance. Walls are repainted, silverware polished, and the courtyard decorated with *rangoli*. Women often chant mantras while cleaning, invoking the goddess of prosperity.
- In Gujarat and Rajasthan, merchants close their ledgers and open new account books (*Chopda Pujan*), symbolizing a fresh financial beginning in a purified environment.
- In South India, *Deepavali* cleaning is accompanied by oil baths and home decoration with mango leaves and turmeric water, signifying ritual purification.
- In Bengal, homes are cleaned for *Kali Puja*, which coincides with Diwali, symbolizing the removal of fear and ignorance from the heart.

Across all regions, the underlying principle remains the same: purity precedes prosperity.


## From Outer Cleaning to Inner Illumination

Ultimately, the pre-Diwali cleansing ritual is not about perfection but about preparation—for the light of Diwali, and for the light of consciousness within. Just as a lamp burns brighter in a clean vessel, the soul shines clearer in a purified mind.

The Sanskrit word *Diwali* itself stems from *Deepavali*—"a row of lamps." But before one can light lamps in the outer world, the inner lamps must be rekindled. Cleaning, then, becomes a meditation—a way to prepare body, home, and heart for illumination.


When one polishes brass lamps, arranges flowers, and wipes away dust, there is a subtle parallel process within: the clearing of confusion, the softening of the heart, and the reawakening of joy.

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# Mantras, mudras and meditation for Diwali

Diwali, the festival of lights, is not merely a celebration of material prosperity but a sacred opportunity to awaken the inner luminosity that dispels ignorance and darkness within. Beyond the fireworks, sweets, and festivities lies a deeper spiritual science - one that connects sound, gesture, and silence through the ancient triad of Mantra, Mudra, and Meditation. Together, these practices channel divine energy, purify the mind, and align the human soul with cosmic harmony.

## Mantras: The Vibrations of Light

In Hindu philosophy, mantras are not just words but living vibrations - frequencies that connect the devotee to divine consciousness. During Diwali, the chanting of sacred sounds becomes especially potent, as the environment is charged with collective devotion and the spiritual energy of renewal.

The Mahalakshmi Mantra - "Om Shreem Mahalakshmyai Namah" - is one of the most powerful invocations chanted during Diwali. It aligns one's inner energy with the vibration of abundance, grace, and spiritual wealth. Repeating it with sincerity purifies not only the aura of the individual but also the home, drawing in the subtle presence of the goddess.

Similarly, the Gayatri Mantra, recited at dawn and dusk, invokes the supreme light of consciousness:

"Om Bhur Bhuvah Swah, Tat Savitur Varenyam, Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi, Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat."

This mantra cleanses the intellect and reminds the seeker that true illumination is not external but the radiance of an awakened soul.

For those who seek inner calm amidst Diwali's joyous commotion, the Om Namah Shivaya or Om Mani Padme Hum chants offer grounding vibrations, harmonizing the mind and balancing energy centers within.

## Mudras: The Gestures of Energy Flow

While mantras are sound vibrations, mudras are physical gestures that channel pranic energy through specific nerve pathways, influencing both the body and mind. In yogic traditions, mudras are considered a form of silent prayer - a dialogue between the self and the divine.

During Diwali, certain mudras can be practiced during puja or meditation to amplify spiritual energy:

Anjali Mudra (Gesture of Reverence): Joining the palms before the heart, this mudra symbolizes unity - the merging of individual and universal consciousness. It invokes humility and gratitude, setting the perfect tone for Diwali worship.

Chin Mudra (Gesture of Consciousness): Touching the tip of the index finger to the thumb, while extending the other fingers, represents the unity of the self (jivatma) with the supreme (paramatma). Practicing Chin Mudra while meditating on the light of a



diya deepens one's awareness and serenity.

Kubera Mudra (Gesture of Prosperity): Associated with Lord Kubera, the deity of wealth, this mudra combines the thumb, index, and middle fingers together. It is believed to attract abundance, clarity, and successful endeavors - a fitting gesture for invoking prosperity during the festival.

These subtle hand movements, when combined with mindful breathing and mantra recitation, create a synergy of body, sound, and spirit that harmonizes the inner and outer worlds.

## Meditation: The Flame Within

The most profound ritual of Diwali is not external - it is the lighting of the inner lamp. In yogic philosophy, this is symbolized by the jyoti or divine flame within the heart, which represents pure consciousness. Meditation during Diwali thus becomes a sacred act of self-discovery - a return to one's true nature of light and bliss.

### A simple Diwali meditation practice:

- Sit comfortably before a lit diya.
- Gaze softly at the flame while breathing deeply.
- With each inhalation, visualize divine light entering your being; with each exhalation, release darkness, doubt, and negativity.
- Silently chant Om Shreem Mahalakshmyai Namah or Om Deepajyotaye Namah.
- Gradually close your eyes and imagine the flame glowing within your heart - steady, radiant, eternal.

This meditative act symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, not just in myth but within the human soul.

### The Inner Diwali: From Ritual to Realization

While the outer world celebrates with fireworks and festivity, the inner world calls for quiet illumination. The true Diwali sadhana (spiritual practice) is to



purify the mind, light the lamp of awareness, and fill every thought with compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude.

When one chants mantras with devotion, performs mudras with awareness, and meditates upon the flame within, the festival transforms into an inner pilgrimage. The lights outside mirror the awakening within - a reminder that divine wealth is not gold or jewels, but the radiance of an awakened heart.

As the ancient scriptures say, "Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya" - "Lead me from darkness to light." This is the essence of Diwali - and the purpose of every mantra, mudra, and meditation that graces the festival of lights.

Diwali is not confined to a religion or a region; it is a state of consciousness - a reminder that the light of truth and love exists in all. Whether one prays in a temple, mosque, church, or simply in silence, the purpose remains the same: to rise from darkness into light.

### A Global Festival of Hope

Today, Diwali's luminous spirit is embraced around the world - from

New York's Times Square to London's Trafalgar Square, from the temples of Bali to the streets of Durban. People of every faith come together to celebrate light, community, and gratitude. The festival has evolved into a symbol of inclusivity, joy, and the shared human desire for peace.

### The Eternal Message

Diwali teaches us that the light of the soul is stronger than any shadow of despair. It invites every individual - regardless of religion or culture - to become a bearer of light, spreading kindness, empathy, and awareness wherever they go.

As the diyas shimmer in countless homes and hearts across the world, they remind us of a simple truth: light has no religion. It shines equally on all, guiding humanity toward unity, understanding, and eternal hope.

In every lamp that burns this Diwali, there glows a universal message - that when we choose light, we choose love, and when we share it, the whole world shines brighter.

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, may have originated in India, but its glow now illuminates homes and streets across continents. For the Indian diaspora, Diwali is an affirmation of identity, culture, and continuity; for people of other cultures, it symbolizes universal values of hope, renewal, and the triumph of good over evil. Today, from Asia to the Americas, Africa to Europe, Diwali has become a global celebration of light and humanity.

## Asia: Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia

In Singapore, Deepavali is a public holiday, and Little India becomes a glittering spectacle. Streets are decorated with arches of colorful lights, and cultural programs, rangoli workshops, and traditional music fill the city. Temples like Sri Veeramakaliamman host special pujas, while families perform Lakshmi Puja at home.

Malaysia celebrates Deepavali with equal fervor, especially in Kuala Lumpur and Penang. Public spaces are decorated with lights, and temples like Sri Mahamariamman attract devotees from across the region. Families exchange sweets, light diyas, and host open houses, reflecting both devotion and multicultural hospitality.

In Bali, Indonesia, where a Hindu minority thrives, Diwali is celebrated as Hari Raya Deepavali, with private home rituals, temple offerings, and community gatherings. Though smaller in scale, the celebrations focus on inner purification, lighting diyas, and cultural continuity.

## Europe: United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the Netherlands

In the UK, Diwali is a major cultural event, particularly in Leicester, London, and Birmingham. Trafalgar Square hosts large public celebrations with fireworks, food stalls, and dance performances. Leicester's Belgrave Road becomes a hub for the Indian diaspora, with rangoli competitions and traditional sweets.

In France, especially in Paris and Lyon, Diwali is celebrated in temples and community halls. Indian cultural associations organize music, dance, and food festivals, often open to the public to share Indian traditions with the French community.

In Germany, cities like Berlin and Frankfurt host Diwali events in temples and cultural centers. The celebrations focus on cultural exchange, with storytelling, arts workshops, and performances introducing non-Indian communities to Diwali's symbolism.

The Netherlands, particularly in Amsterdam, observes Diwali through Indian cultural associations. Public performances, workshops on rangoli and diya decoration, and communal meals allow both Indian expatriates and locals to experience the festival's vibrancy.

## North America: United States and Canada

In the United States, Diwali has grown into a major multicultural celebration. Cities like New York, Houston, San Francisco, and Chicago host large community gatherings, combining rituals, cultural performances, and educational activities. Public parks, temples, and community centers light up with diyas

# Diwali across the world: Celebrating light, heritage and humanity



and lanterns, and eco-friendly fireworks are increasingly used to align with sustainability. Schools incorporate Diwali storytelling and crafts to teach children about its legends and universal lessons.

In Canada, cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal see expansive celebrations. The Vaisakhi Nagar and local temples organize fairs, cultural programs, and charity drives. In Toronto, public spaces feature Diwali-themed lighting installations, reflecting both Indian heritage and multicultural inclusion.

## Africa: South Africa, Kenya, and Mauritius

South Africa has a rich tradition of Diwali among its Indian community. Durban, Johannesburg, and Pretoria host elaborate celebrations, with homes and temples illuminated by thousands of diyas. Cultural performances, charity drives, and family feasts highlight both traditional rituals and community cohesion.

In Kenya, the Indian community in Nairobi and Mombasa celebrates Diwali with temple rituals, family gatherings, and communal meals. Light decorations and fireworks mark the festival, while schools and cultural centers introduce local communities to its significance.

Mauritius celebrates Diwali as a



national holiday, with streets, temples, and homes adorned with oil lamps and rangolis. Public displays, fireworks, and cultural events make it a festival of national pride, blending Indian traditions with Mauritian identity.

## Caribbean: Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname

In Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname, Diwali is a national holiday, reflecting centuries of Indian heritage in the Caribbean. Homes are decorated with diyas and candles, temples host pujas, and community celebrations include music, dance, and fairs. Local flavors often merge with traditional Indian sweets and foods, creating a unique fusion that celebrates both ancestry and the local culture.

## Oceania: Australia and New Zealand

In Australia, cities like Sydney,

Melbourne, and Brisbane celebrate Diwali with public events at temples, cultural centers, and community parks. Street fairs, performances, and workshops engage both the Indian diaspora and the wider Australian community. Families light diyas, perform Lakshmi Puja, and organize charitable events, emphasizing the festival's themes of generosity and renewal.

In New Zealand, Auckland and Wellington see celebrations in temples and community halls. Diwali events here combine rituals, cultural performances, and educational programs to share Indian traditions with non-Indian residents.

## The Global Message of Diwali

What unites Diwali celebrations worldwide is the festival's universal message: light conquers darkness, knowledge triumphs over ignorance, and goodness overcomes adversity. Beyond ritual and religion, Diwali fosters community, generosity, and mindfulness. Charity drives, interfaith gatherings, and public cultural programs emphasize shared human values, allowing Diwali to transcend borders and cultures.

Modern adaptations - LED lamps, eco-friendly fireworks, and sustainable rangoli - ensure that Diwali remains relevant and environmentally conscious, without losing the essence of the festival.

While Diwali is widely celebrated across India as the festival of lights, in Sikhism, the same period holds a distinct and profoundly meaningful significance: Bandi Chhor Divas, literally the "Day of Liberation." The festival commemorates a defining moment in Sikh history - the release of Guru Hargobind Sahib, the sixth Sikh Guru, along with 52 other rulers from Mughal captivity. It is a celebration of freedom, justice, courage, and divine grace, observed with devotion, illumination, and communal spirit.

### The Story Behind Bandi Chhor Divas

The story of Bandi Chhor Divas is one of courage, wisdom, and selflessness. Guru Hargobind Sahib, the sixth Sikh Guru, assumed leadership after the martyrdom of his father, Guru Arjan Dev Ji, who was executed by the Mughal emperor Jahangir in 1606. Determined to protect the Sikh community and uphold justice, Guru Hargobind combined spiritual authority with temporal power, embodying the principle of Miri-Piri - the harmony of spiritual and worldly responsibility.

In 1619, political tensions led to the Guru being summoned to Delhi and subsequently imprisoned in the formidable Gwalior Fort, a Mughal stronghold. Inside the fort, Guru Hargobind discovered that 52 Hindu kings were also held captive, accused of defying Mughal authority.

Rather than seeking his own freedom alone, Guru Hargobind made a remarkable request: he would leave the fort only if the 52 kings were released alongside him. Emperor Jahangir, impressed by the Guru's courage, wisdom, and moral integrity, agreed to the Guru's condition. Guru Hargobind emerged from prison not just free himself, but leading 52 liberated rulers, demonstrating the Sikh ideals of selflessness, justice, and protection of the oppressed.

This moment gave birth to the festival's name: Bandi Chhor Divas - the Day of Liberation. The Guru's release coincided with Diwali, linking the historical event to the symbolic theme of light triumphing over darkness.

### Historical Context: Sikh-Mughal Relations

Understanding Bandi Chhor Divas requires a glance at the turbulent period of early 17th-century India. The Sikh Gurus had increasingly become influential figures in both spiritual and political spheres, which drew suspicion from the Mughal rulers. Guru Hargobind Sahib, unlike his predecessors, recognized the necessity of balancing spiritual teachings with social and political protection. He strengthened the Sikh community by organizing a disciplined, armed force, not for conquest, but for defense and justice.

The Guru's imprisonment was part of Jahangir's strategy to curb his influence. However, Guru Hargobind's wisdom, diplomacy, and moral authority transformed what could have been a period of suppression into a moment of liberation for many - an enduring testament to courage, faith, and leadership.

# Bandi Chhor Divas: The Sikh festival of freedom and light



### Spiritual Significance

Bandi Chhor Divas carries profound lessons for the Sikh community and humanity:

- **Freedom and Justice:** True liberation encompasses selflessness, extending protection and justice to others, as Guru Hargobind demonstrated.
- **Faith in Divine Grace:** The Guru's release exemplifies how courage, righteousness, and devotion align with divine will to overcome adversity.
- **Light Over Darkness:** Just as Diwali symbolizes the victory of good over evil, Bandi Chhor Divas represents triumph over oppression and the illumination of righteousness.

Guru Hargobind's philosophy of Miri-Piri also reminds us that spiritual and worldly responsibilities are inseparable - one must cultivate inner virtue while taking action in the world to uphold justice and protect the vulnerable.

### Celebrations and Traditions

Bandi Chhor Divas is marked with devotion, illumination, and community service:

- **Illumination of Gurdwaras:** Sikh temples, especially the Golden Temple in Amritsar, are decorated with thousands of diyas, candles, and lights, creating a breathtaking reflection on the sacred waters.
- **Kirtan and Ardas:** Devotional singing of hymns and prayers focuses on freedom, justice, and the welfare of all beings.
- **Langar (Community Kitchen):** Free meals are served to everyone, emphasizing equality, service, and generosity.
- **Nagar Kirtans:** Public processions with hymns, martial arts displays (Gatka), and community



participation celebrate Sikh courage and unity.

justice, and moral courage.

### Bandi Chhor Divas and Diwali: Shared Symbolism

Although distinct, Bandi Chhor Divas coincides with Diwali, and both festivals share themes of light, hope, and victory over darkness. Both inspire inner reflection, gratitude, and community service - whether through lighting diyas or serving langar. Together, they create a period of moral, spiritual, and communal rejuvenation.

### Global Observance

Sikhs worldwide observe Bandi Chhor Divas with reverence:

- **Canada, the UK, USA, Malaysia, and Australia:** Gurdwaras host special prayers, illuminate their premises, and organize community meals and cultural programs.
- The festival also educates local communities about Sikh history and values, emphasizing freedom,

### Lessons for the Modern World

Bandi Chhor Divas teaches timeless values:

- Advocate for justice and freedom, not only for oneself but for all.
- Uphold moral courage in the face of oppression.
- Balance spiritual growth with worldly responsibilities.

The Guru's example offers a model for ethical leadership, social responsibility, and the enduring power of faith and selflessness. Bandi Chhor Divas is more than a historical remembrance; it is a festival of liberation, light, and courage. By commemorating Guru Hargobind Sahib's release and the liberation of 52 kings, Sikhs celebrate the triumph of righteousness, the power of compassion, and the eternal light of justice. As diyas illuminate homes and gurdwaras, the festival reminds humanity that courage, selflessness, and moral integrity are the true lights that dispel darkness in every era.

## WITNESS THE MARRIAGE OF MUSIC WITH ANIMATION AT DISNEY'S 'FANTASIA' IN CONCERT

BY MABEL PAIS

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



Scene from Disney's 'Fantasia.'

Credit: njsymphony.org.

This October, experience a wide variety of events with the New Jersey Symphony. A program for everyone!

Experience Disney's groundbreaking marriage of symphonic music and animation. Enjoy iconic moments and childhood favorites like never before!

The whole family will love Disney's 'Fantasia in Concert' (October 23–26), with repertoire from the original 1940 version and 'Fantasia 2000' being

performed by the New Jersey Symphony while Disney's stunning footage is shown on the big screen at Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown, Count Basie Performing Arts Center in Red Bank, and State Theatre New Jersey in New Brunswick.

### PROGRAM

#### New Jersey Symphony at the Movies Disney's 'Fantasia' in Concert

**Morristown** -Thursday, October 23, 7 pm, Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown

**Red Bank** - Saturday, October 25, 2 pm, Count Basie Center for the Arts

**New Brunswick** - Sunday, October 26, 2 pm, State Theatre New Jersey

**Constantine Kitsopoulos** conductor  
**New Jersey Symphony**

Estimated concert duration: 2 hours and 20 minutes

### TICKETS

For tickets to the film concert, visit [njsymphony.org](http://njsymphony.org).

### CONSTANTINE KITSOPOULOS

Constantine Kitsopoulos has established himself as a dynamic conductor known for his ability to work in many different genres and settings. Equally at home with opera, symphonic repertoire, film with live orchestra, music theater, and composition, his engagements have led him to conduct worldwide, appearing with major orchestras in North America as well as the Hong Kong and Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestras. Learn more at [maestro.com](http://maestro.com).

## EXPERIENCE THE FUSION OF POP'S QUEEN WITH CLASSICAL MUSIC'S KING

BY MABEL PAIS

The newest fusion production by Steve Hackman combines pop's Queen with classical music's King!

Experience the thrill of Steve Hackman's fusion of Beethoven X Beyoncé at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark, its northeast premiere on October 24, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

The newest fusion production by Steve Hackman celebrates and elevates all things woman by combining pop's Queen with classical music's King: Beethoven and Beyoncé.

Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, the symphonic repertoire's most joyful and exuberant celebration of dance, is the canvas onto which fifteen of Beyoncé's most popular songs across her entire catalog are interwoven, including "Girls," "Crazy in Love," "Sorry," "Cuff It," "Single Ladies," and "Texas Hold 'Em." The production's emotional peak is when two of the most recognizable melodies from each composer are intertwined: 'Halo' and the hauntingly beautiful second movement of Beethoven.

Three powerhouse female soloists, as well as a guest drummer, guitarist/keyboardist, and bassist, join the orchestra for a night of musical magic.

Watch/listen to the music - [youtu.be/h0r0KvdhKDg](https://youtu.be/h0r0KvdhKDg)

### PROGRAM

#### Northeast Premiere of Steve Hackman's Beethoven X Beyoncé

**Newark** - Friday, October 24, 7:30 pm, NJPAC

**Steve Hackman** conductor & creator

**Malia Civetz** vocalist

**Brayla Cook** vocalist

**Brooke Simpson** vocalist

**TaRon Lockett** drums

**Justin Goldner** guitar & keyboard

**Dmitry Gorodetsky** bass

**New Jersey Symphony**



Steve Hackman with singers applauding.

Credit: [njsymphony.org](http://njsymphony.org).

### TICKETS

Tickets are available at [njsymphony.org](http://njsymphony.org).

Please note: This performance contains adult language and themes. Discretion is advised. Beyoncé does not appear.

### NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

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

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

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

### CONNECT WITH NJ SYMPHONY

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

## CELEBRATE THE LEGACY OF 50 YEARS OF 'AIR SUPPLY'

BY MABEL PAIS

### Celebrate the love. Celebrate the legacy. Celebrate 50 years of AIR SUPPLY!

Enjoy an unforgettable evening of timeless hits and heartfelt memories welcoming AIR SUPPLY for a special 50th anniversary concert at **The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) on Sunday, October 26 at 7:00 p.m.**

Since 1975, **Graham Russell and Russell Hitchcock** have captured hearts around the world with their soaring harmonies and romantic anthems, such as 'Lost in Love,' 'All Out of Love,' 'Every Woman in the World,' and 'The One That You Love.'

A pedestrian on 57th Street sees a musician getting out of a cab and asks, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" Without pause, the artist replies, "Practice!" In fact, Air Supply celebrated their 50th Anniversary with

a performance at Carnegie Hall on May, 13, 2025.

If it's true that practice makes perfect, then Graham Russell and Russell Hitchcock – beloved by their millions of fans across the planet as Air Supply – have had nearly half a century to hone their skills, harness their passion and unleash the beautifully intimate yet rockin' romantic energy of those instantly identifiable 80s hits that made them global superstars.

As they close in on 50 years (exact date, May 12, 1975) since they met in the chorus of the Australian touring company of 'Jesus Christ Superstar,' the duo is ever-present on the road in North America and overseas to the tune of 130 dates a year. This run includes being the first Western group to tour China and several other countries who prior to their breakthrough would not allow pop music across their borders, as well as

performing for a record 175,000 people in Cuba in 2005.

Five decades later, Air Supply is still going strong — and they're bringing their legendary sound to NJPAC for one incredible night.

Learn more about the duo at [airsupplymusic.com](http://airsupplymusic.com).

### TICKETS

For tickets to experience Air Supply's all-time hits, visit [NJPAC.org](http://NJPAC.org) or the NJPAC Box Office at 1 Center Street, Newark, New Jersey or call 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

### THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

Follow NJPAC Online:

Website: [njpac.org](http://njpac.org)

Twitter: [@NJPAC](https://twitter.com/NJPAC)

Instagram: [@NJPAC](https://www.instagram.com/NJPAC)

Hashtag: #NJPAC

Facebook: [facebook.com/NJPAC](https://facebook.com/NJPAC)

YouTube: [NJPACTv](https://www.youtube.com/NJPACTv)



Graham Russell and Russell Hitchcock.

Credit: [airsupplymusic.com](http://airsupplymusic.com).

### FOLLOW NJPAC'S STANDING IN SOLIDARITY SERIES ONLINE:

Website: [njpac.org/takeastand](http://njpac.org/takeastand)

Hashtag: #NJPACTakeAStand

Youtube: Standing in Solidarity playlist

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

# EXPERIENCE A THEATRICAL PRESENTATION: FROM CREATION TO FORMATION OF THE EARLY CHURCH



The Passion of Jesus. -Credit: njpac.org.

BY MABEL PAIS

'THE THORN,' a powerful and popular live theatrical event that will bring the passion of Jesus to life this Fall at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) for two performances, Wednesday, October 29 and Thursday, October 30, each at 8:00 p.m.

'The Thorn,' an epic story of God's love for the world, has been seen live by over one million people, with over 30 performances spanning the country from New York to Alabama and now NJPAC. Following a highly successful Spring 2025 tour with 20 sold-out shows and 100,000 attendees. Over the past 12 months, 'The Thorn' has completed 30 sold-out shows captivating over 160,000 fans.

'The Thorn' offers audiences a unique theatrical experience in a show that has been hailed as "Cirque meets 'The Passion'" thanks to its compelling mix of drama, music, dance, martial arts, aerial acrobatics, emotionally evocative performances, and timeless spiritual perspectives. The story spans from creation to the formation of the early church.

Watch the trailer - [youtu.be/0zDwhVjvXRg](https://youtu.be/0zDwhVjvXRg).

For more information, visit [thethorn.com](https://thethorn.com).

## TICKETS

For tickets to the performance, visit

[njpac.org](https://njpac.org) or the NJPAC Box Office or call 888. GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

Live performance details and tickets are available at [thethorn.com/the-thorn-live](https://thethorn.com/the-thorn-live).

The feature film version of the show is available to stream and purchase at [shop.thethorn.com](https://shop.thethorn.com).

Director Andrew Harmon explains the film - [youtu.be/ZZ-GmoKrASc](https://youtu.be/ZZ-GmoKrASc).

## AUTHOR JOHN BOLIN

Author John Bolin created the show over 25 years ago to convey the meaning of Christ's sacrificial death to a group of young people who knew little about the story of Jesus' suffering but were familiar with pain through their own practice of cutting and self-harm.

The show has evolved ever since, with the current live version returning to the original format featuring St. John, "the beloved disciple," recalling his many amazing encounters with Jesus.

"It's a story full of love, sacrifice, spiritual warfare, and redemption," said Bolin.

Watch the video - [youtu.be/gpHlqQytqTE](https://youtu.be/gpHlqQytqTE).

## MEET "THE THORN" CREATORS:

'The Thorn' creator John Bolin, says God called him: "to tell stories on the page, stage, and screen," an assignment he has now completed with the film version of 'The Thorn.' His books include novels ('The Eden Project') and

Christian growth guides ('So Loved,' 'The Two Doors of Heaven,' and 'Life Unlimited').

John's wife, Sarah Bolin helped create the show and is the Executive Producer, managing the show's national touring troupes. When asked about why she tours and has participated in 'The Thorn' for so long, Sarah said, "God asked us to trust him and open our hands, and he promised to make something beautiful happen." Over the years, Sarah has been witness to seeing God move in tangible ways across audience and cast members alike.

## JESUS TRENDING

Although polls show that U.S. church attendance is declining, interest in Jesus is growing. 'The Chosen,' the popular streaming series about Jesus, has racked up over 400 million episode views.

"As I first saw with my students 25 years ago, people who may have jaundiced views of Christians or churches are more open to learning about who the real Jesus was, how he lived, and what he taught," said Bolin.

While previous incarnations of 'The Thorn' live show have been performed mostly at churches, the new touring model makes the show available to everyone at mainstream performing arts venues and arenas.

"Jesus believes in accessibility," said Bolin. "He wants everyone to have

access to the ultimate story of love and hope. That's why he came to earth in the first place."

## OUTBACK PRESENTS

Outback Presents is the leading independent, full-service promoter of live entertainment in North America. Specializing in producing comedy, festivals, and music, with an emphasis on providing award-winning, best-in-class service to their diverse roster of clients.

Since 1996, Outback Presents has promoted and produced thousands of concerts, events, and festivals, ranging from clubs and theaters to arenas and stadiums. Founded in Nashville by Mike and Kathy Smardak, the company is driven by a shared love of comedy, music, and the transformative power of live entertainment.

Their mission is a dedication to excellence in service. Efficiency, adaptability, and collaboration are the keys to their success, and they work closely with artists, venues, sponsors, and partners to foster meaningful relationships to bring creative visions to life.

For more information, visit [outbackpresents.com](https://outbackpresents.com).

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



The INDIAN PANORAMA  
EVER TRUTHFUL

WE WISH READERS  
HAPPY DIWALI AND  
BANDI CHHOD DIVAS

# ARTIS-NAPLES INTERNATIONAL FILM FEST RETURNS FOR SEVENTEENTH YEAR

BY MABEL PAIS

## Screening

**KARTHIK SWAMINATHAN's World Premiere Short Film 'HOLY COW' And many more**

Artis—Naples, Florida has the film lineup for the 17th annual Naples International Film Festival (NIFF), October 23-26, 2025. Screenings and other film festival events will take place across the Artis—Naples Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus — Hayes Hall, Daniels Pavilion and Norris Garden—and at Alamo Drafthouse Cinema at Mercato.

This year's festival includes 60 films, selected from among nearly 1,000 submitted films: 10 narrative features, 12 documentary features and 38 short films, representing 17 countries and including 47 premieres (five world, one U.S., five east coast and 36 Florida premieres). Select filmmakers will participate in post-screening Q&A conversations as well as panel discussions during the festival.

"Each year, the Naples International Film Festival affirms the role of film as a vital art form within our multidisciplinary mission," said Artis—Naples CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen. "This year's lineup offers stories and perspectives that cross cultures and experiences, reminding us of the many ways the arts can deepen our understanding of ourselves and each other. NIFF continues to be a place for filmmakers and film lovers to come together in meaningful dialogue, sparking conversations that continue long after the festival ends."

"Our team has spent the past several months shaping a lineup that reflects the rich and varied spirit of independent cinema," said David Filner, executive vice president, artistic operations. "From powerful documentaries to inventive narrative features and short films, these selections invite audiences into an experience that is as engaging as it is diverse. NIFF remains a space where filmmakers and film lovers share in the discovery and excitement that only cinema can inspire."

"NIFF is more than a festival," added Festival Producer Shannon Franklin. "It has earned a reputation as a welcoming destination for both emerging and established filmmakers who know their work will be embraced and celebrated here. The warmth of the Southwest Florida community makes the experience truly special for everyone, and we look forward to the energy and sense of celebration this year's festival will bring."

Themes for the Naples International Film Festival's curated short film programs include A Family Affair, Twists and Turns, The International Art of Animation, Florida Stories and the recurring Student Filmmaker Showcase.



The Princess Bride.

Credit: artisnaples.org/niff

For a complete lineup of films and events at the Festival, visit [artisnaples.org/niff](http://artisnaples.org/niff).

## TICKETS

For tickets for any of the films and events, visit [artisnaples.org/niff](http://artisnaples.org/niff).

## ARTIS-NAPLES

Artis—Naples, home of The Baker Museum and Naples Philharmonic, creates and presents world-class visual and performing arts. Through our multidisciplinary offerings, it inspires, educates and entertains to engage and enrich the growing and diversifying community.

## KIMBERLY K. QUERREY AND LOUIS A. SIMPSON CULTURAL CAMPUS

Led by CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen and Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley, Artis—Naples offers more than 800 performing and visual arts experiences annually across its 8.5-acre Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus and throughout the community.

Artis—Naples welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year for a broad array of artistic and educational opportunities perfect for audiences of all backgrounds and interests. The cultural campus is home to five buildings, including two performance halls (Frances Pew Hayes Hall and Myra J. Daniels Pavilion), The Baker Museum, the Toni Stabile Education Building and the Kohan

Administration Building.

## NAPLES PHILHARMONIC

The Naples Philharmonic has long been recognized as one of the cornerstones of Southwest Florida's arts community. As part of Artis—Naples, the Naples Philharmonic performs more than 140 orchestral and chamber music concerts, as well as opera and ballet, education, community and special event concerts annually between September and June in the 1,477-seat Hayes Hall, the 283-seat Daniels Pavilion and around Southwest Florida. The Naples Philharmonic has enjoyed a history of working with world-class music directors. Following a successful inaugural season in 2024-25, Alexander Shelley commences his second season as artistic and music director in 2025-26. Renowned violinist James Ehnes continues as artistic partner through the 2025-26 season, working with Naples Philharmonic musicians in a variety of settings with a focus on inspiring and embodying a high level of artistry. Podium leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly, celebrating 16 years in this role in the 2025-26 season and bringing pops performances that celebrate music across genres.

## THE BAKER MUSEUM

The Baker Museum is the foremost fine art museum in Southwest Florida, presenting an ambitious slate of exhibitions annually to complement installations of works from its

permanent collection. Comprising more than 3,000 objects, the museum's broad holdings of 20th- and 21st-century art reflect particular strengths in modern art of the United States and Mexico. The Baker Museum's collection demonstrates the generosity and commitment of area collectors, including significant gifts from the collection of the late Olga Hirshhorn.

In 2025, The Baker Museum was accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the highest national recognition for museums in the United States, affirming the museum's commitment to excellence, accountability and public service.

With more than two decades of collecting and exhibiting, the museum is committed to the stewardship and scholarship of its collections and to fostering inspiring and transformative experiences with the visual arts. At the same time, The Baker Museum partners with the world's leading arts institutions to make extraordinary exhibitions accessible to the Southwest Florida community—including recently the National Portrait Gallery, London and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. In 2020, Artis—Naples celebrated the renovation and expansion of The Baker Museum and adjoining Norris Garden, designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism, which created new spaces for multidisciplinary exploration and social interaction.

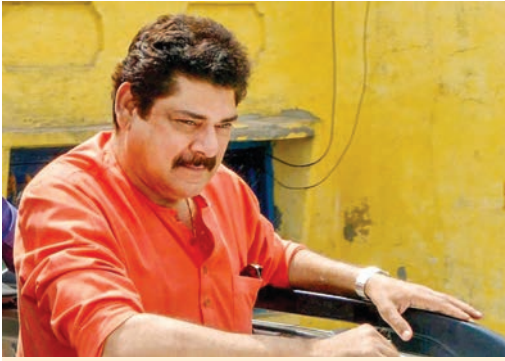
## EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

In addition to creating and presenting visual and performing arts, Artis—Naples provides robust education and community activities for students of all ages in Collier and Lee counties. Each season, thousands of Collier County Public School students interact with Artis—Naples education programming, both on our cultural campus and in their classrooms. Beyond our commitment to youth education, the Lifelong Learning program provides informative lectures and study opportunities for adults seeking to engage more deeply with the arts.

The Friends of Artis—Naples, comprised of more than 3,500 donor households, offers activities, travel experiences and events designed to foster a deeper relationship between patrons and the arts.

In 2017, Artis—Naples acquired the Naples International Film Festival (NIFF), expanding its film offerings and providing a platform for the festival's continued excellence and growth. In 2023, the festival's 15th anniversary year, NIFF was named one of MovieMaker Magazine's "20 Great Film Festivals in Vacation Destinations."

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



## Mahabharat actor Pankaj Dheer passes away

Television star Pankaj Dheer, known for playing Karna in B R Chopra's Mahabharat and king Shivdutt in fantasy drama Chandrakanta, has died at the age of 68 following a battle with cancer, on October 15.

"He passed away due to cancer this morning. He had been in and out of hospital in the past months," producer and friend Ashoke Pandit informed. Dheer, who hailed from Punjab, started out as an actor in the 1980s, featuring in minor roles in many movies.

His big break came in 1988 when he was cast as Karna in the small screen adaptation of Hindu epic Mahabharata. After that, his popularity peaked and he starred in many movies such as Sadak, Sanam Bewafa and Aashik Awara.

From 1994 to 1996, Dheer starred in TV series Chandrakanta, loosely based on author Devaki Nandan Khatri's 1888 novel of the same name. Some of his notable movies also include Bobby Deol's Soldier, Shah Rukh Khan's Baadshah, Akshay Kumar's Andaz and Ajay Devgn's Zameen and Tarzan. In the late 2000s, Dheer appeared in many daily soaps Teen Bahuraaniyaan, Raja Ki Aayegi Baraat and Sasural Simar Ka.

Dheer is survived by wife Anita Dheer and son Nikitin Dheer.

Oscar-winning composer A R Rahman has joined hands with Google Cloud for his new project Secret Mountain, a metahuman digital avatar band that blends artificial intelligence, music and storytelling to create a next-generation entertainment experience.

Under the collaboration, Google Cloud's advanced AI models and infrastructure will power Secret Mountain, enabling hyper-realistic avatars capable of performing and interacting with audiences in real time.

Conceived by Rahman, Secret Mountain combines AI-powered synthetic avatars with genre-bending music and immersive narratives.

It features six digital avatars, including such as Cara, an Irish singer-songwriter; Zen Tam, a Tamil rapper; and Blessing, an African percussionist and vocalist.

"Secret Mountain is about reimagining how music, storytelling, and technology come together to create new experiences for audiences all over the world," Rahman said in a statement.

"It is exciting and empowering to have

It's turning out to be the year of sequels for Ajay Devgn. Following the success of 'Raid 2', the trailer for his next sequel, 'De De Pyaar De 2', has just been released. The romantic comedy picks up exactly where the 2019 original ended, continuing the story of Aashish (Devgn) and his much younger girlfriend, Ayesha (Rakul Preet Singh), as they navigate family dynamics and societal expectations.

The trailer introduces Aashish meeting Ayesha's parents, played by R Madhavan and Gautami Kapoor. While they initially try to be progressive about the significant age gap, tensions arise when they realise that Aashish is almost as old as Ayesha's father. The trailer also shows Meezaan Jafri's character, planted by Ayesha's parents to win her over and end her relationship with Aashish.

In the first film, Aashish sought approval from his estranged family and, with the help of his ex-wife Manju (Tabu), reconciled with both his family and Ayesha. The sequel focuses on Aashish seeking blessings from Ayesha's side of the family.

While the original was directed by Akiv Ali, 'De De Pyaar De 2' is helmed by Anshul Sharma. Luv Ranjan, known for hits like 'Pyaar Ka Punchnama' and 'Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety', has written the story and co-produced the film with Bhushan Kumar under Luv Films and T-Series.

Ajay Devgn and Rakul Preet Singh reprise their roles, and Jaaved Jaaferi



returns as Aashish's comic confidant. daughter in the 'Drishyam' franchise. New additions include Ishita Dutta, Tabu, however, will not be part of the sequel. famously known for playing Devgn's

## AR Rahman partners with Google Cloud to create AI-powered metahuman band

a tech giant like Google as our partner. Together, we are building a bold new world of entertainment where human artistry and AI technology stand side by side to inspire audiences everywhere."

The project uses Google Cloud's Veo 3 for avatar embodiment and video generation, Imagen and Gemini Flash 2.5 Image for visual creation, and Gemini 2.5 Pro as the avatars' conversational "brain" to enable real-time fan engagement.

Thomas Kurian, CEO of Google Cloud, said the collaboration demonstrates how India is leading innovation in creative AI. "By building on Google Cloud's infrastructure and advanced AI models, Secret Mountain is not only delivering an awe-inspiring interactive digital experience, but also ensuring that security, scalability, and governance are built in," he said.



# Keira Knightley says she was 'not aware' of Harry Potter boycott before joining audiobook cast



Actor Keira Knightley has admitted that she is unaware of the heated discourse surrounding the Harry Potter franchise, despite many Hollywood stars having openly spoken out against it. The actor, who has been busy promoting her Netflix release *The Woman in Cabin 10*, told *Deadline* that she was not 'aware' that many have called for a boycott of the Harry Potter franchise in recent times over J.K. Rowling's anti-trans statements.

Upon asking about the boycott, Keira said, "I was not aware of that, no. I'm very sorry. You know, I think we're all living in a period of time right now where we're all going to have to figure out how to live together, aren't we? And we've all got very different opinions. I hope that we can all find respect."

Keira has been cast as Professor Umbridge in the *Harry Potter: The Full-Cast Audio Editions*. The new audiobook series also features a star-studded cast, including Hugh Laurie as Albus Dumbledore, Matthew Macfadyen as Lord Voldemort, Riz Ahmed as Professor Snape, and Michelle Gomez as Professor McGonagall. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is set to be the first title to be released on November 4 on Audible.

Meanwhile, the main controversy surrounding JK Rowling relates to her views on the transgender community. She has been accused of being transphobic for her views on gender identity from several fans and actors, including Emma Watson and Daniel Radcliffe.

Emma's recent comments on the podcast with Jay Shetty reignited the debate. She said that she could disagree with Rowling's views on the trans community while cherishing the memories of working with the *Harry Potter* writer. JK Rowling went on to criticise Emma as someone who lives a privileged life and is not qualified to speak on sensitive matters like the debate on trans identity.



## Hollywood icon Diane Keaton died from pneumonia: Family

Diane Keaton, the Oscar-winning actor best known for her performances in *'Annie Hall'* and *'The Godfather'*, died at the age of 79 on October 11, and her family has announced that the cause of death was pneumonia.

Keaton's family shared the news in a statement to *People*, adding that they are grateful for the widespread messages of support they have received in recent days.

Her family said, "The Keaton family are very grateful for the extraordinary messages of love and support they have received these past few days on behalf of their beloved Diane, who passed away from pneumonia on October 11."

Keaton was born in Los Angeles in 1946 and became known for her honesty and originality on screen. She was celebrated for her roles in films like *'The First Wives Club'*, *'Something's Gotta Give'*, and *'Baby Boom'*. Many admired her independence and authenticity, qualities that inspired audiences over the years.

Remembering her compassion, Keaton's family noted her dedication to animal welfare and to supporting the unhoused community. They said, "She loved her animals and she was steadfast in her support of the unhoused community, so any donations in her memory to a local food bank or an animal shelter would be a wonderful and much appreciated tribute to her."

# Want my DNA in a little person: Jennifer Aniston on infertility and not adopting

Actor Jennifer Aniston has opened up about her experience with infertility, her decision not to adopt, and the challenges she has faced in the public eye. In a recent episode of the 'Armchair Expert' podcast, Aniston, 56, discussed her thoughts on motherhood and addressed years of speculation regarding her family plans. She spoke candidly about trying various methods to start a family, including in vitro fertilisation (IVF), and responded to public commentary about her choices.

On the podcast, Aniston addressed suggestions about adoption, saying, "When people say, 'But you can adopt,' I don't want to adopt," *'The Morning Show'* star told cohosts Dax Shepard and Monica Padman, per *People*. She explained her desire for a biological connection: "I want my own DNA in a little person. That's the only way,

selfish or not, whatever that is, I've wanted it."

Aniston has been open about her efforts to conceive, recalling the lengths she went to during her fertility journey. She said, "All the years and years and years of speculation It was really hard. I was going through IVF, drinking Chinese teas, you name it. I was throwing everything at it." She added, "I would've given anything if someone had said to me, 'Freeze your eggs. Do yourself a favour.' You just don't think [about] it. So here I am today. The ship has sailed."

When Monica Padman asked about finding peace, Aniston responded, "It's so peaceful. But I will say there's a point where it's, like, out of my control. There's literally nothing I can do about it." She acknowledged the process of accepting her circumstances and the sense of calm she now feels.



## Planning under way for international force in Gaza, say US advisers

Planning has begun for an international force to go into Gaza to stabilize security in the Palestinian enclave, two senior U.S. advisers have said. One of the top requirements of President Donald Trump's 20-point Gaza plan was formation of a U.S.-backed stabilization force. The United States has agreed to provide up to 200 troops to support the force without being deployed in Gaza itself.

The two senior advisers, in a briefing for reporters, said tensions remain high between Israeli forces and Hamas militants in the enclave.

"Right now what we're looking to accomplish is just a basic stabilization of the situation. The international stabilization force is starting to be constructed," one adviser said.

Among the countries the U.S. is speaking to about contributing to the force are Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Qatar and Azerbaijan, said the adviser, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The advisers said there were up to two dozen U.S. troops in the region to help set up the operation, serving in a "coordination, oversight" role.

"The goal is to use all the different local partners who want to help and be involved," the adviser said.

After Hamas killed seven men in Gaza City it accused of collaborating with Israel, the advisers said there were discussions to establish safe zones for civilians to prevent such incidents.

The second adviser said that no Gazans would be forced to leave the battered Palestinian enclave. Officials are looking at rebuilding in areas that are free of Hamas militants.

# Israel, Hamas trade blame over truce violations, no date set for Rafah border reopening

CAIRO/TEL AVIV (TIP)

Israel said on Thursday, October 16, it was preparing for the reopening of Gaza's Rafah crossing with Egypt to let Palestinians in and out, but set no date as it traded blame with Hamas over violations of a U.S.-mediated ceasefire.

A dispute over the return of hostages' bodies held by Hamas threatens to derail the truce and other unresolved elements of the plan, including disarmament of militants and Gaza's future governance.

Israeli government spokesperson Shosh Bedrosian told reporters Israel remained committed to the agreement and continued to uphold its obligations, demanding Hamas return the bodies of the 19 deceased hostages it had not handed over.

The Islamist faction has handed over 10 bodies but Israel said one was not that of a hostage.

Hamas said it remained committed to the Gaza agreement and to handing over all the remaining bodies of hostages, but that returning the remains may take time as some were buried in tunnels destroyed by Israel and others were under the ruins of buildings that Israel had bombed.

The armed wing of Hamas said the handover of more bodies in Gaza, reduced to vast tracts of rubble by the war, would require the admission of heavy machinery and excavating equipment into the Israel-blockaded Palestinian enclave.

On Oct 16, a senior Hamas official accused Israel of flouting the ceasefire by killing at least 24 people in shootings since Friday, and said a list of such violations was handed over to mediators.

"The occupying state is working day and night to undermine the agreement through its violations on the ground," he said.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to the allegation of violating the ceasefire. It has previously said some Palestinians have ignored warnings not to approach Israeli ceasefire positions and troops "opened fire to remove the threat".

After local health authorities said an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis in southern Gaza killed two people, the Israeli military said its forces fired at several individuals who emerged from a tunnel shaft and approached troops, describing them as posing an immediate threat.



Egyptian volunteers rest and sit next to trucks loaded with humanitarian aid from Egypt's National Alliance For Civil Development Work (NACDW) as they are on their way to the Rafah border crossing to enter Gaza, after a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza went into effect, on the Cairo-Ismailia desert road, in Egypt, October 16, 2025. REUTERS

Palestinian local health authorities said at least seven people were killed by Israeli fire across the Gaza Strip on Thursday. People in Gaza reported seeing drones and warplanes in the skies over the southern Gaza Strip with sporadic gunfire heard from time to time.

### CALL TO DISARM

Israel has said the next phase of the 20-point plan to end the war, a blueprint engineered by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration, calls for Hamas to relinquish its weapons and cede power, which it has so far refused to do.

Hamas has instead launched a security crackdown in urban areas vacated by Israeli forces, demonstrating its power through public executions and clashes with local armed clans.

Trump repeated his threats against the militia group, saying in a post, "If Hamas continues to kill people in Gaza, which was not the Deal, we will have no choice but to go in and kill them."

Asked about his recent threats toward Hamas, Trump told reporters in an Oval Office event, "If they behave, good. If they don't behave, we'll take care of it."

## French PM survives no-confidence votes after making pension concession

PARIS (TIP)

French Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu survived two no-confidence votes in parliament on Thursday, Oct 16, winning crucial backing from the Socialist Party thanks to his pledge to suspend President Emmanuel Macron's contested pension reform.

The two motions presented by the hard-left France Unbowed and the far-right National Rally (RN) secured just 271 and 144 votes respectively – well short of the 289 votes needed to bring down Lecornu's days-old government.

Lecornu's offer to mothball the pension reform until after the 2027 presidential election helped sway the Socialists, giving the government a lifeline in the deeply fragmented National Assembly.

Despite the reprieve, the motions underscored the fragility of Macron's administration midway through his final term.

"A majority cobbled together through horse-trading managed today to save their positions, at the expense of the national interest," RN party president Jordan Bardella wrote on X.

The French bond market remained steady after the back-to-back votes, with the government victory widely



expected by investors.

By putting the pension reform on the chopping block, Lecornu threatens to kill off one of Macron's main economic legacies at a time when France's public finances are in a perilous state, leaving the president with little in the way of domestic achievements after eight years in office.

There are 265 lawmakers in parliament from parties

that said they would vote to topple Lecornu, and only a handful of rebels from other groups joined their cause.

If Lecornu had lost either vote, he and his ministers would have had to immediately resign, and Macron would have come under huge pressure to call a snap parliamentary election, plunging France deeper into crisis.

But despite the outcome of Thursday's votes, Lecornu still faces weeks of arduous negotiations in parliament over passing a slimmed-down 2026 budget during which he could be toppled at any point.

"The French need to know that we are doing all this work... to give them a budget, because it is fundamental for the future of our country," said Yael Braun-Pivet, the president of the National Assembly and an ally of Macron.

"I am pleased to see that today there is a majority in the National Assembly that is operating in this spirit: work, the search for compromise, the best possible effort," she added.

After winning the pension concession, the Socialists on Wednesday set their sights on including a tax on billionaires in the 2026 budget, underlining just how weak Lecornu's hand is in the negotiations.

## UN condemns military takeover in Madagascar as coup leader to be quickly sworn in as president

The United Nations chief on Thursday, Oct 16, condemned the military takeover in Madagascar as an army colonel who led the coup was set to be quickly sworn in as president just three days after announcing soldiers had taken charge.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres "condemns the unconstitutional change of government in Madagascar and calls for the return to constitutional order and the rule of law," his spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, said. Col. Michael Randrianirina is due to be sworn in as Madagascar's leader at a ceremony at the High Constitutional Court on Friday, according to a statement by the colonel, which he signed as the president of the "refounded" republic of Madagascar.

Ousted President Andry Rajoelina fled the Indian Ocean nation off the east coast of Africa following the military rebellion, claiming his life was in danger. His whereabouts are unknown.

Madagascar has been suspended from the African Union, which said it "totally rejects" the takeover.

Randrianirina announced Tuesday that the armed forces were taking control after three weeks of deadly anti-government protests led mainly by disaffected young people, who have railed against government service failures, poverty and a lack of opportunities while accusing the elite of corruption and nepotism.

### BRUSSELS (TIP)

European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has welcomed the agreement on European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP), which will see EUR1.5 billion towards strengthening European defence industry and supporting Ukraine.

The presidency of the Council and negotiators from the European Parliament (EP) reached a provisional agreement on the EDIP- which is a dedicated financing programme for defence worth EUR1.5 billion for the period 2025-2027, the official website of the Council of the EU and the European Council noted.

EDIP is set to boost the EU's defence readiness by enhancing the competitiveness and also aims to support defence industrial cooperation with Ukraine and Ukrainian companies via dedicated Ukraine Support Instrument, with a view to its future integration into the EDTIB.

In a post on X, Ursula von der Leyen said, "I welcome the agreement on the

# One dead, dozens injured in Peru anti-crime protests

LIMA (TIP)

At least one man was killed in violence at a rally in Peru's capital on Wednesday, said President Jose Jeri, whose accession days ago has failed to stamp out angry protests against the country's political class.

The Ombudsman's Office said 102 people were injured, including 24 civilians and 78 police, updating earlier tolls.

Youth-led demonstrations brought thousands of Peruvians, frustrated by the authorities' failure to resolve a worsening crime crisis, onto the streets in Lima and several other cities.

Some protesters tried to breach the security barrier around Congress as night fell, an AFP correspondent said. Others in the crowd also hurled stones and lit fireworks.

Police in riot gear responded with tear gas.

"I regret the death of 32-year-old citizen Eduardo Ruiz Sanz," Jeri said on social media platform X, without elaborating on the circumstances.

The National Human Rights Coordinator, an NGO, said the man may have been shot by a plainclothes police officer.

AFP images showed the blood-covered face of a police officer who had been hit by a stone.

Jeri also said the "peaceful demonstration" had been infiltrated by criminals seeking to "cause chaos."

The South American country has been rocked by protests for weeks, and lawmakers voted on Friday to impeach then-president Dina Boluarte, who critics blamed for a surge in crime and accused of corruption.

"I think there is general discontent



A demonstrator waves a Peruvian flag as a cardboard doll burns in front of Congress during a protest against new President Jose Jeri in Lima, Peru. (AP Photo)

because nothing has been done," 49-year-old freelancer Amanda Meza told AFP while marching toward Congress.

"There's no security from the state," she said, adding that cases of extortion and contract killings "have grown massively in Peru."

Jeri, a right-wing politician who had served as leader of Congress, became interim president until elections in April.

Oct 15 protests were called by a youth-led collective, artists' groups and labor unions.

Feminist groups also joined the calls to rally against the new president over sexual assault accusations.

A complaint was lodged against Jeri

last year, but prosecutors closed the case in August due to a lack of evidence.

Boluarte's impeachment last week followed protests by bus companies, merchants and students over shakedowns by criminal gangs and attacks on those who refuse to pay protection money.

Extortion and contract killings have been a feature of daily life across Peru.

Gangs such as Los Pulpos and Venezuela's Tren de Aragua, which operates across Latin America, hold people from all walks of life for ransom.

Jeri has vowed to "declare war" on organized crime in an attempt to take the heat out of the protests.

## EU chief welcomes agreement on EUR1.5 billion for European Defence Industry Programme

European Defence Industry Programme. EUR1.5 billion to strengthen Europe's defence industry. Support Ukraine. And ensure we are defence-ready by 2030, in line with our 'Preserving Peace' roadmap. Because when we invest in readiness, we invest in peace. Congratulations to @eu2025dk for seeing this crucial programme through."

Notably, of the total budget, the provisional agreement earmarks EUR300 million for the Ukraine Support Instrument.

The Council and the European Parliament agreed that the cost of components originating outside the EU and associated countries (EEA states) should not exceed 35 per cent of the estimated cost of the components of the end product, thereby striking a



balance between the European preference principle and cooperation with partner countries to the benefit of European industry.

Significantly, the provisional agreement becomes the first ever EU security of supply regime in the area of

defence, designed to ensure timely and reliable access to defence products and components during crises, the website noted.

Through the EDIP, the EU is establishing a European military sales mechanism that will offer, among several other features-- a centralised catalogue of defence products and will facilitate the delivery of defence products, amplifying demand at EU level and increasing the competitiveness of the European defence industry on the international market. It also provides the possibility to establish 'pools' of defence products to allow for a swift delivery of equipment.

The development comes on the heels of the proposal tabled in March 2024 for a regulation establishing the EDIP.

# Ceasefire halts deadly Af-Pakistan fighting

ISLAMABAD (TIP)

A ceasefire along the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan was holding on Thursday, Oct 16, officials on both sides said, after dozens of troops and civilians were killed in cross-border clashes.

In Spin Boldak, a focal point of recent clashes on the Afghan side, an AFP journalist saw shops reopening and residents returning to homes they had fled during the fighting.

The 48-hour ceasefire was aimed at allowing time to "find a positive solution... through constructive dialogue", according to Islamabad.

Pakistan is facing a resurgence of attacks against its security forces on its western border with Afghanistan, led by the Pakistani Taliban and its affiliates.

Around 20 civilians were killed and nearly 170 wounded on Wednesday, according to Spin Boldak's information department spokesman Mohammad Haqmal.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported at least 18 civilians killed and more than 350 wounded in the violence.

"Our houses were bombed, a child was wounded. I heard the plane myself," Abdul Zahir, a 46-year-old resident, told AFP. "It's terrifying."

Hundreds of residents and Taliban officials attended the funeral of seven members of the same family in Spin Boldak, an AFP journalist saw.

Islamabad accuses Kabul of offering safe haven to militants who plan their



Afghan Taliban fighters patrol near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in Spin Boldak, Kandahar Province, following exchanges of fire between Pakistani and Afghan forces in Afghanistan, Oct. 15, 2025. (REUTERS)

frequent assaults from Afghan soil -- a charge the Taliban government denies.

Pakistani officials on the northern and southern border with Afghanistan told AFP on Thursday that "no violence was reported overnight, and the ceasefire remains in effect."

A senior security official in Peshawar told AFP: "Additional paramilitary troops have been deployed to counter potential... militant activity that could jeopardise the ceasefire."

Shortly before the truce was announced, blasts were reported in the capital Kabul and the southern province of Kandahar province, where the Afghan Taliban's

shadowy supreme leader lives.

UN rights chief Volker Turk welcomed the ceasefire and appealed to "both parties to prevent any further harm to civilians & commit to a lasting ceasefire."

## Precision strikes

The first explosions that struck Afghanistan last week, which the Taliban blamed on Islamabad, hit while Afghanistan's top diplomat was on an unprecedented visit to India -- Pakistan's eastern neighbor and rival.

Taliban authorities then launched an offensive at the border, prompting Islamabad to vow a strong response of its

own.

Exchanges of fire from Saturday killed dozens of people, with renewed violence from Wednesday also causing civilian casualties, according to Kabul.

The Taliban government officially blamed Wednesday's blasts in the Afghan capital on an explosion of an oil tanker and a generator.

However, Pakistani security sources said the military targeted an armed group with "precision strikes" in Kabul, as well as hitting Afghan Taliban bases in Kandahar.

There were blackouts overnight and into Thursday, Oct 6, morning in some areas of Kabul, caused by electricity cables damaged in the explosions, AFP journalists in the city said.

AFP journalists saw municipal workers carrying out repairs in a Kabul neighbourhood on Thursday morning, where the road was charred and apartment windows had been blown out.

At least five people were killed and 35 wounded in Wednesday's explosions in Kabul, an Italian NGO that runs a hospital in the city said.

"We started receiving ambulances filled with wounded people, and we learned that there had been explosions a few kilometres away from our hospital," Dejan Panic, Emergency's country director in Afghanistan, said in a statement. The casualties suffered shrapnel wounds, blunt force trauma and burns, with 10 in critical condition, the NGO said.

## Afghan Taliban Authorities Publicly Execute Man For Double Murder

Taliban authorities publicly executed a man in western Afghanistan on Thursday, Oct 16, who had been convicted of two murders, the country's Supreme Court said.

The man was executed in front of crowds at a sports stadium in Qala-i-Naw, the capital of Badghis province, the Supreme Court said in a statement.

It was the 11 public execution since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, according to an AFP tally.

The man was shot three times by a relative of the victims in front of thousands of onlookers, witnesses told an AFP journalist in the city.

The man had been "sentenced to retaliatory punishment" for shooting a couple. "The murderer killed two people, a man and his wife, who was around eight months pregnant," Matiullah Muttaqi, the information chief for Badghis province, told AFP.

The execution followed a review by three courts and final approval from Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, he said.

## Bangladesh seeks death penalty for Sheikh Hasina over protest deaths

DHAKA (TIP)

A prosecutor in a special domestic tribunal in Bangladesh sought the death penalty Thursday, Oct 16, for ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a case involving charges of crimes against humanity in a mass uprising last year that forced her to leave the country.

During the protests in July and August 2024, hundreds of people, including students, security officials and political activists, were killed in the week-long violence.

Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam, in his closing arguments to the International Crimes Tribunal in the capital, Dhaka, also called for former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan to be sentenced to death because of the gravity of his crimes.

In his closing, the prosecutor left a decision on the sentence for former police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun up to the tribunal. Al-Mamun, who is in custody, became a state witness against Hasina and had earlier pleaded guilty.

Hasina has been in exile in India after



fleeing the country on Aug. 5 last year. Khan is also believed to be in India.

More proceedings are needed to complete the trial before a verdict is rendered.

Hasina did not appoint any lawyers to represent her, and she had earlier rejected the trial process as a "kangaroo court."

The next proceedings will be held on Monday. A state-appointed counsel for Hasina has sought a week to present his arguments.

Bangladeshi Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus took over as the head of an interim government three days after Hasina's fall. Yunus vowed to punish Hasina and banned the activities of her Awami League party.

Islam, in his argument, calls Hasina the "mastermind and principal architect" behind the crimes against humanity committed during the uprising.

The United Nations, in a February report, said up to 1,400 people may have been killed in the violence, while the country's health adviser under the interim government said more than 800 people were killed and about 14,000 were injured.

Hasina and her party have raised questions about the figures and demanded independent investigations.

Referring to the UN figures, Islam said Thursday that if each of the 1,400 deaths were to be punished separately, Hasina should get 1,400 death sentences.

He told the tribunal that Hasina "personally ordered the killings."

No immediate reaction from Hasina's party was available.

Thursday's development came as tensions mounted in Bangladeshi politics over the indictments of 25 former and serving military officials, including some former heads of a powerful military intelligence unit.

# Sikh History This Week

OCTOBER 17 TO OCTOBER 23

## 17th October

- 1605 Mughal emperor, Akbar, died in Agra.
- 1762 Sikhs pray at Akal Takhat before attacking and successfully defeating Ahmad Shah.
- 1973 Akali Dal Executive passed the Anandpur Sahib resolution asking for autonomy for the Sikh nation.



- 1977 The reconstruction work for "Guru-Kae-Mehal," Amritsar was initiated.

## 18th October

- 1982 All Sikhs arrested for Dharam Yudh morcha were released for lack of Jail space.
- 1982 Amritsar taken over by Border Security Force.



## 19th October

- 1711 Baba Gurbakhash Singh (Banda Bahadur) won over the landlords of Bhallu.

## 20th October

- 1759 Sikh Misl leaders gathered to face the Ahmad



Shah Durani's onslaught.

- 1783 Jassa Singh Ahluwalia passed away suddenly while enroute to Amritsar.

1920 Mahatma Gandhi remarked in his speech "India rose through Jallianwala Bagh" massacre.

1922 Leaflets are distributed by the Babbar Akalis in the "Parkarma" of the Golden Temple, ridiculing non-violence. The SGPC as well as the Mahants are severely criticized by Babbars through the "Babbar Akali Doaba" newspaper.



## 21st October

- 1989 Puna court imposes the death sentence (by hanging) upon Harjinder Singh and Sukhdev Singh for killing general Vaidya.

## 22nd October



- 1710 Baba Gurbakhash Singh (Banda Bahadur), escaped Bahadur Shah's forces.

1718 Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was born.



- 1893 Maharaja Dalip Singh, the last prince of Maharaja Ranjit Singh passed away in exile.

1909 The Anand Marriage Act was passed.

1983 Classes for Khalsa College started as a middle



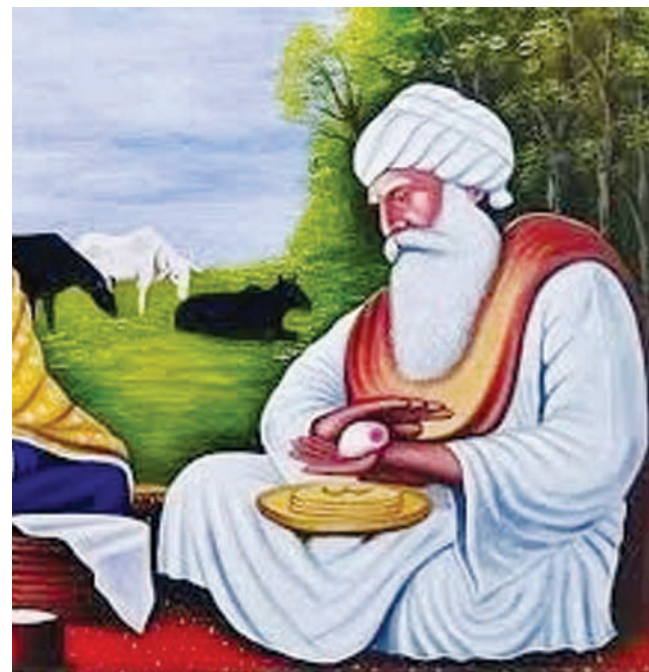
school in a house near Hall gate in the city of Amritsar.

- 1981 Akali leaders met Narsimha Rao, representing the Prime Minister.

1987 Sarbat Khalsa stopped by the Indian Government.

## 23rd October

1506 Janam Utsav, Baba Budha Ji. Baba Budha Ji was born at Kathunangal, Amritsar. BABA BUDHA JI: born on 7 katak sanmat 1563 at Kathunangal (Dist. Amritsar) to father Sudhae and mother Gora. Parents named the child as Budda. In sanmat 1574, Guru Nanak Dev Ji visited Kathunangal village. While grazing cattle, Budda met Guru Nanak and served milk in sewa.



It's Diwali - that magical time of the year when India lights up in joy, laughter, and shimmer. From dazzling diyas to glimmering outfits, everything seems to sparkle - and so do we. Amidst fireworks, family dinners, and festive parties, Indian women truly embody the radiance of the festival, dressing up in their finest silks and brightest smiles.

But to look and feel your best through the season, your skin and makeup need a little extra care. Here's how to prep, pamper, and perfect your festive glow this Diwali - without going overboard.

#### Start with Skin Care

The festive season may tempt you to try new products, but Diwali isn't the time for experiments. Stick to your trusted skincare routine - cleanse, tone, and moisturize twice a day to keep your skin fresh and hydrated.

Pro tip: Drink plenty of water throughout the day to flush out toxins and get that natural, healthy glow. Remember, good skin is your best foundation!

#### A Flawless Base: Foundation and Concealer

Go easy on the base. A heavy, cakey foundation can dull your natural charm under bright festive lights. Use your regular foundation and concealer, blending them well with your fingertips or a sponge for a smooth, even finish.

Set your base with a powder suited to your skin type -

- Loose powder for oily skin
- Compact powder for normal to dry skin

This will keep your makeup intact

# Glow like a diva this Diwali: Beauty tips for the season of lights



through long evenings of laughter and lights.

#### All Eyes on You

Indian women are blessed with expressive, captivating eyes - and Diwali is the perfect time to enhance them.

- For a classic festive look, go for golden eyelids with a soft smokey outer corner.
- If you love drama, play with ivory and gold shades, or add a hint of color with a blue or green eyeliner.
- A touch of shimmer on the edges

adds instant glamour.

Finish with long-lasting, waterproof mascara to open up your eyes and make them pop.

#### Brows That Define

Bold, well-shaped brows can transform your face. Fill them in lightly with brown or black eye shadow using an angled brush - avoid harsh pencils that make them look artificial.

The winged eyeliner is here to stay - timeless, elegant, and perfectly suited for festive looks. Choose the style that best suits

your eye shape, whether a subtle flick or a bold cat-eye.

#### A Rosy Glow

Nothing says "festive" like a healthy blush. Choose shades that complement your skin tone and give your cheeks a soft, radiant lift - peach, coral, or rose tones work beautifully.

#### Shine with a Highlighter

A little highlighter goes a long way. Dust it gently over your cheekbones, temples, and the bridge of your nose to add that dewy, candlelit glow.

#### Lips That Speak Festivity

Your lip color sets the mood.

- For a natural nude look, opt for gloss and a hint of sparkle.
- For a bold statement, go with reds, pinks, or corals - all perfect for festive evenings.

Keep your lip balm and lipstick handy for quick touch-ups through the night.

#### Final Touch: Confidence and a Smile

No beauty tip can outshine confidence. Whether you're lighting diyas, hosting friends, or dancing the night away, wear your smile like your brightest accessory.

This Diwali, let your inner radiance match the sparkle of the season - glowing skin, confident eyes, and a heart full of celebration.

## Green lights, happy hearts: Celebrating an eco-Friendly Diwali

Each year, pollution levels spike alarmingly after the celebrations. The air turns hazy, the streets littered, and the noise from firecrackers unsettles infants, the elderly, and animals alike. This Diwali, let's make a conscious shift - to celebrate joyfully, yet responsibly. Let's dedicate this festival of lights to nature by embracing an eco-friendly Diwali.

#### Burst the Myth, Not Crackers

The crackle of fireworks may seem synonymous with Diwali, but their aftereffects tell a different story - toxic smoke, respiratory issues, and noise pollution. The charm of Diwali lies in its light, not its loudness.

Say no to crackers or choose eco-friendly options that produce less smoke and sound. Encourage children to create paper lanterns or decorate diyas instead - their joy will be just as bright, and the skies clearer for everyone.

#### Light the Traditional Way

When it comes to illumination, nothing beats the charm of earthen



diyas. Their gentle flame carries a timeless beauty - warm, natural, and symbolic of purity.

Switch off those extra electric lights and decorate your home with rows of diyas. You can even get creative - make diyas out of wheat dough, orange peels, or coconut shells. These biodegradable alternatives save power and make your Diwali décor stand out with rustic elegance.

#### Gift with Thought and Heart

Move beyond plastic-wrapped hampers and mass-produced knick-knacks. A truly thoughtful gift is one that grows, lasts, or uplifts.

Gift your loved ones potted plants,

organic teas, jute products, or handwoven khadi garments. Wrap your presents in recycled paper or cloth instead of shiny plastic sheets. These little choices reflect both love for people and care for the planet.

#### Decorate with a Conscience

Who says sustainability can't be stylish? Recycled décor is in - and it's redefining festive aesthetics.

Reuse old glass bottles as lanterns, hang paper bunting made from magazine pages, or turn discarded bangles into tea-light holders. You'll not only reduce waste but also add a creative, handcrafted charm to your home that no store-bought item can match.

#### Go Natural with Rangoli

Traditionally, rangolis were made from grains, pulses, and flowers - a gesture to feed birds and small creatures. Bring back this beautiful idea by using natural colours, flower petals, rice flour, turmeric, or kumkum instead of chemical-based powders.

Your doorstep will look stunning - and safe for nature too.

## FOOD CORNER

### Malpua

#### INGREDIENTS

200 gm all purpose flour, 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, 1 teaspoon powdered green cardamom, 1 cup ghee, 250 ml water, 50 gm khoya, 100 gm semolina, 1/2 teaspoon baking powder, 500 ml milk, 250 gm sugar, 1 pinch saffron.

#### Method

For making the sugar syrup, place water in a pan over medium flame. Add sugar in it and stir until fully dissolved. Then add 2-3 tsp milk and stir again, after a few minutes remove the scum that rises to the top. Once the sugar syrup is thick, remove the pan from the flame and keep aside. Mix maida, rava, khoya, baking powder, fennel seeds, cardamom powder and milk. Ensure the mixture is of pouring consistency and not too thick. Once the batter is ready, keep it aside for few minutes so that the flavour of spices and herbs gets absorbed. Now heat ghee in a pan over low flame. Pour a ladleful of the mixture and spread evenly. Keep the flame low and cook till it is light brown on both sides. Remove the cooked malpua and drain the excess ghee. Drop the malpua in sugar syrup and allow it to soak for 10 minutes. Repeat the same with the remaining batter. Drain the malpua from the syrup, garnish with pistachios.



# How cardiovascular and cognitive health influence each other

The human body is a marvel of interconnectivity, and nowhere is this more evident than in the relationship between the heart and the brain. Traditionally, heart health and brain health have been treated as separate realms - cardiologists for the heart, neurologists for the brain. But modern science increasingly reveals that these two vital organs are deeply intertwined, influencing each other in ways that affect overall well-being, cognition, and longevity.



## The Brain Depends on the Heart

The brain, though weighing just about 2% of body mass, consumes nearly 20% of the body's oxygen and nutrients. It relies on the heart to pump oxygen-rich blood efficiently. Even short-term drops in blood flow can affect cognition, memory, and alertness.

When cardiovascular health is compromised - such as in high blood pressure, atherosclerosis, or heart failure - blood flow to the brain can be reduced. Over time, this can lead to cognitive decline, vascular dementia, or an increased risk of stroke.

Studies suggest that people with heart disease are more likely to

experience memory issues, difficulty concentrating, and slower cognitive processing. This is because plaque buildup in arteries (atherosclerosis) not only affects the heart but also limits blood supply to the brain.

## The Brain Influences the Heart

The brain doesn't just rely on the heart - it also regulates it. The autonomic nervous system, composed of the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches, controls heart rate, blood pressure, and cardiac rhythm. Stress, anxiety, or depression - brain-based conditions - can directly impact cardiovascular function.

Chronic stress, for instance,

triggers elevated cortisol levels, leading to high blood pressure, inflammation, and increased risk of heart attack. Similarly, conditions like stroke or neurodegenerative diseases can affect heart function by disrupting the nerve signals that regulate cardiac output.

## Shared Risk Factors

Several factors simultaneously affect both heart and brain health:

- Hypertension: High blood pressure increases the risk of stroke and cognitive decline.
- Diabetes: Poor glucose control damages blood vessels, impacting the heart and the brain.
- Obesity: Increases inflammation and contributes to cardiovascular disease and neurodegeneration.
- Smoking and alcohol: Both accelerate vascular damage, reducing blood flow to key organs.
- Sedentary lifestyle: Physical inactivity contributes to poor circulation and cognitive decline.

Addressing these shared risk factors benefits both organs, enhancing longevity and quality of life.



## Excess screen time, poor posture fuel surge in early onset spine problems, say doctors

Sedentary lifestyles, excessive screen time, and poor posture are contributing to a surge in spine health issues among people between 25 and 45, doctors say. Spinal concerns are also pronounced in new mothers, who experience back pain, posture issues and spinal discomfort, they said.

"Sedentary lifestyles, excessive screen time, and poor posture habits are causing a surge in spine issues among adults. Apart from this, many new mothers experience back pain, posture issues, and spinal discomfort due to the changes their bodies undergo during and after pregnancy," said Dr Vishwanathan Iyer, neurosurgeon with Zynova Shalby Hospital, Mumbai.

He said that during pregnancy, weight gain, hormonal shifts, and an altered posture put extra stress on the spine.

"After delivery, daily responsibilities such as lifting the baby, prolonged breastfeeding, and lack of adequate rest can worsen this discomfort and sometimes lead to conditions like lumbar strain, disc problems, or chronic lower back pain. Shockingly, there is a 60 per cent spike in spine problems when it comes to new mothers," Dr Iyer said.

"Every month, we see six out of 10 women, aged 25-35, suffering from back pain after pregnancy, which interferes with their daily routine," he said.

He said that preventive measures, such as maintaining a healthy weight, taking short breaks during childcare tasks, and ensuring adequate rest, can protect the spine.

"Timely consultation with a doctor is key because back pain should never be dismissed as 'normal' after pregnancy. Addressing it early helps mothers regain mobility, confidence, and a pain-free quality of life," Dr Iyer added.

Dr Siddharth Katkade, spine surgeon from Apollo Spectra Hospital, Mumbai, said, "Spine problems are not limited to older people anymore. There is a spike in cases of postural deformities and early-onset back pain among adults aged 25-45. Factors such as sitting for long hours, poor ergonomics, and lack of regular physical activity weaken the core and back muscles."

# Gut, heart, and beyond: Why almonds are the true OG superfood

Almonds, you can often spot these crunchy nuts in grocery stores or sprinkled on top of your desserts, but these are far more than just a garnish. Almonds are packed with prebiotics. They support gut health, aid digestion, boost overall well-being, and even support heart health, making it an underrated superfood.

## WHY ALMONDS ARE GUT-FRIENDLY

Your gut health plays a crucial role in everything from digestion to immunity and even mental well-being. Necessarily, Almonds may not change the types of bacteria in your gut, but they may help your gut bacteria work better.

Feeding beneficial bacteria: Compounds in almonds help "good" bacteria like Bifidobacterium, Lactobacillus, and Roseburia flourish. These probiotics support both digestion and immune function.

Boosting SCFA production: Short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), such as butyrate, are produced when gut bacteria feed on almond fibre and polyphenols. SCFAs strengthen the gut lining, reduce inflammation, and support metabolic health.

## A HEART HEALTHY HERO



Almonds are not only gut-friendly but heart-friendly too, and they protect the heart in several ways.

Consumption of these nuts can help lower LDL cholesterol while maintaining healthy HDL levels. People with high cholesterol who included almonds in their diet also experienced reductions in belly and leg fat.

And totally living up to its status as the OG superfood, almonds can help to reduce blood pressure, ease stress on the heart and vascular system. It also helps to relax the blood vessels and reduce arterial stiffness. These effects contribute to better metabolism, lower inflammation and reduce chronic diseases.

## PACKED WITH NUTRIENTS

Every ounce of almonds is filled with nutrients that help to improve gut health.

Protein: It provides around 6g of plant-based protein  
Healthy Fats: Contains 13g of unsaturated fats

Micronutrients: It also includes micronutrients like magnesium (18% DV), potassium (4% DV), and vitamin E (50% DV)

These nutrients make almonds an all-in-one snack for energy, wellness and immunity.

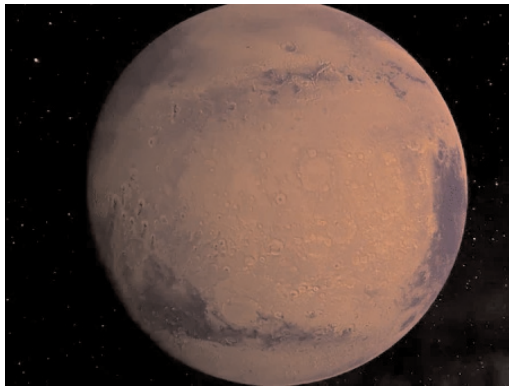
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## Dust devils on Mars: Raging winds can reach up to 160 kmph on the Red Planet

Powerful, swirling dust devils on Mars have stunned researchers by reaching speeds up to 160 km/h, far exceeding previous estimates and revealing the Red Planet's atmosphere is more dynamic than scientists once believed.

Despite being over 100 times thinner than Earth's, the Martian atmosphere is capable of generating these raging whirlwinds, which play a crucial role in shaping Martian climate and surface features.

### What Are Dust Devils?

Dust devils are rotating columns of dust and air that sweep across the Martian surface, visible in satellite imagery as moving streaks and plumes. Unlike the invisible winds themselves, dust devils act as natural indicators, letting scientists track powerful gusts otherwise hidden from view.

Their movement and visibility provide clues to the underlying wind speeds and directions.

A recent study led by Dr. Valentin Bickel of the University of Bern harnessed cutting-edge deep learning techniques to identify dust devils in more than 50,000 images from ESA's Mars orbiters, CaSSIS aboard the ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter, and HRSC onboard Mars Express.

By assembling stereo images, multiple photos of the same spot taken seconds apart, the team measured the velocity and trajectory of about 300 dust devils.

The analysis revealed that these dust devils, along with their surrounding winds, frequently reach speeds of 160 kmph, much higher than the previously assumed maximum of 100 kmph.

Such powerful winds are believed to drive most of the dust uplift on Mars, injecting vast quantities of dust into the atmosphere and influencing weather and climate across the planet. This has far-reaching consequences: dust storms can engulf large regions, affect temperatures, and even alter sunlight reaching the surface.

For future Mars missions, including robotic and human landings, understanding these wind dynamics is vital. Accurate models of Martian winds will help engineers design safer landers, rovers, and habitats and avoid risks posed by dust-laden gusts.

# OpenAI to let ChatGPT engage in sexually explicit conversations with verified users

OpenAI is looking to ease restrictions in order to allow ChatGPT users access to a broader range of content, including adult-themed and erotic content. The move is part of OpenAI's push to "treat adult users like adults," according to CEO Sam Altman. "We made ChatGPT pretty restrictive to make sure we were being careful with mental health issues. We realize this made it less useful/enjoyable to many users who had no mental health problems, but given the seriousness of the issue we wanted to get this right," Altman said in a post on X on Tuesday, October 14. The AI startup will also be issuing a new behavioural update to ChatGPT that would enable it to act in a more human-like way. The update is expected to be rolled out in the coming weeks.

"If you want your ChatGPT to respond in a very human-like way, or use a ton of emoji, or act like a friend, ChatGPT should do it (but only if you want it, not because we are usage-maxxing)," Altman said. The decision to permit erotic content generated by ChatGPT could help OpenAI attract more subscribers. Elon Musk's xAI followed a similar move and introduced two sexually explicit role-playing characters within its Grok chatbot.

However, the AI industry is also facing increasing scrutiny on ensuring the online safety of children.

Meta's AI policies allowed its chatbots to engage in provocative behaviour, including engaging in "conversations that are romantic or sensual" with underage users, according to a report by Reuters. Even ChatGPT accounts registered as minors were previously allowed to prompt and generate erotic content via the AI chatbot, as per TechCrunch. Concerns regarding the use of chatbots as therapists have also been raised.

Most recently, OpenAI was sued by a family in Colorado,



United States, who filed a lawsuit alleging that their 13-year-old daughter had died by suicide following a series of problematic and sexualised conversations with ChatGPT. One in five students reported that they or someone they know has had a romantic relationship with AI, according to a survey published by the nonprofit Centre for Democracy and Technology (CDT) earlier this month.

Tech companies have scrambled to implement safeguards designed to protect children over the past few months.

For instance, OpenAI has announced that it is creating a "different ChatGPT experience," specifically for teenagers, that will be rolled out later this year. The upcoming 'teen-friendly' version of ChatGPT will include stricter content filters that block flirtatious conversations and discussions of self-harm, regardless of whether they are in a fictional or creative-writing context.

Meta has said it is adding new teen safeguards to its AI products by training systems to avoid flirty conversations and discussions of self-harm or suicide with minors.

## Apple teases new MacBook with M5 chip, says something powerful is coming soon

Apple has dropped a fresh teaser that has set the tech world buzzing. In a post on X, Greg Joswiak, Apple's senior vice president of marketing, hinted at an imminent launch, writing, "something powerful is coming." The message was paired with an animation showing the sleek outline of a MacBook Pro, immediately sparking speculation about the company's long-rumoured M5-powered laptop.

The teaser itself seems to carry more meaning than it first appears. The MacBook's silhouette is styled in a "V" shape, a subtle nod to the Roman numeral for five, while Joswiak's caption included five consecutive "M"s, which many interpret as a wink at the upcoming M5 chip. The device shown in the animation also carries a hint of blue, raising questions about whether Apple could bring its new Sky Blue finish, first seen on the MacBook Air and iPhone Air, to the MacBook Pro lineup.

Rumors about Apple's fall hardware refresh have been swirling for weeks. Reports from Bloomberg and other outlets suggest that the company is readying several devices for launch, including a 14-inch MacBook Pro with the new M5 processor, an updated iPad Pro, and the Vision Pro headset powered by the same chip. Apple is expected to first introduce the standard M5 MacBook Pro model, while more advanced versions with M5 Pro and M5 Max processors may not arrive until next year.

For those hoping for a complete design overhaul, this MacBook Pro may look familiar. Current leaks indicate that aside from the new silicon, Apple is unlikely to make big changes to the chassis. The focus, at least for this round, appears to be all about performance and efficiency gains delivered by the M5 chip.

Apple's teasers often set the stage for bigger



announcements, and this one feels no different. With multiple new products in the pipeline — from laptops to tablets and possibly even refreshed Apple TV and HomePod mini models, the company seems ready to close out the year with a strong hardware lineup.

While Apple hasn't confirmed dates, Joswiak's words make it clear that the wait won't be long. For now, the promise of "something powerful" has left fans watching closely, especially those considering upgrading to Apple's next generation of MacBook Pro.

# UK targets Russian oil market in fresh sanctions

LONDON (TIP)

Britain is targeting Russia's largest oil companies and the country's "shadow fleet" of oil tankers in a bid to cut off Vladimir Putin's ability to fund the war in Ukraine.

The UK government is also pursuing a major Indian oil refinery and four Chinese oil terminals in a package of 90 new sanctions.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves said the move was expected to have a significant impact on Russia's economy and its ability to sustain military operations in Ukraine.

"We are sending a clear signal: Russian oil is off the market," she said ahead of a meeting in Washington DC with global counterparts to discuss Russian sanctions.

Reeves said the government was "significantly stepping up the pressure on Russia and Vladimir Putin's war effort."

Russia's two largest oil companies - Lukoil and Rosneft - will be hit with sanctions, Reeves said on the sidelines of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) annual meeting.

The IMF is an international organisation with 190 member countries. They work together to maintain global economic stability.

"At the same time, we are ramping up pressure on companies in third countries, including India and China, that continue to facilitate getting Russian oil onto global markets," Ms Reeves said.

"There is no place for Russian oil on global markets and we will take whatever actions are necessary to destroy the capability of the Russian government to continue this illegal war in Ukraine."

The government was also sanctioning 44 tankers that operate in Russia's "shadow fleet" transporting oil around the world, Reeves said in a joint statement with the Foreign Secretary



Rosneft, the target of new UK sanctions, is responsible for nearly half of all Russian oil production.

Yvette Cooper.

The two Russian oil firms export 3.1 million barrels of oil per day. Rosneft is responsible for nearly half of all Russian oil production, which makes up 6% of the global output, according to the government.

Also on the sanction list is India's Nayara Energy Limited, which the government said imported 100 million barrels of Russian crude oil worth more than \$5bn (£3.75bn) in 2024 alone.

Rosneft partly owns Nayara Energy Limited, which it acquired in 2017 in a deal with other partners.

Cooper said: "Today's action is another step towards a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, and towards a more secure United Kingdom."

The announcement comes as the G7, a grouping of some of the world's most advanced economies, prepares to consider a plan to effectively seize hundreds of billions from the proceeds of Russian investments, frozen since the invasion of Ukraine.

A vast bulk of Russia's assets are held as cash at the European Central Bank, after its underlying bond investments

matured.

The European Union (EU), where the bulk of funds are held, had been reluctant to pursue the wider plan, but appears to be developing a way round legal concerns. It will be considered at an EU summit next week.

Ukraine has significant funding needs as the war continues, both in arms and reconstruction.

Earlier this year, the UK joined the US in directly sanctioning energy companies Gazprom Neft and Surgutneftegas.

At the time the then Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, had said it would "drain Russia's war chest - and every ruble we take from Putin's hands helps save Ukrainian lives".

The US separately has discussed putting additional tariffs on goods from China, up to 500%, tied to Beijing's purchases of Russian oil.

But Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Wednesday that the US would not take that step unless Europe agreed to do something similar.

"We will respond if our European partners will join us," he said.

## Exports to US dip by 31.7% in Sept compared to July

India's exports to the US saw a dip of 31.7 per cent in September compared to July as 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods came into effect from August.

According to the data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, the exports to the US in September were \$5.4 billion, a contraction of 11.93 per cent compared to the same period last year and 20.3 per cent down from August. In July, India exported goods worth \$8 billion to the US while in shipments were \$6.87 billion in August. Despite the tariffs, the US remained the top export destination in September. September marked the first full month under US'50 per cent tariffs.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal said India was open to buying more crude oil and gas from the US, subject to it being at the right price. "Currently, we are at an average of \$12 to \$13 billion annually. There is a headroom for \$14 to \$15 billion," he said.

## China moves WTO against EV, battery subsidies in India

China has filed a complaint against India in the World Trade Organization (WTO) over New Delhi's subsidies for electric vehicles (EVs) and batteries.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that the ministry will look at the detailed submissions made by China.

Confirming the move, an official said that China has also filed similar applications against Turkiye, Canada and the EU. "They have sought consultations with India," the official said.

Seeking consultation is the first step of the dispute settlement process as per WTO rules.

If the consultations requested with India do not result in a satisfactory solution, the EU can request that the WTO set up a panel in the case to rule on the issue raised. China is the second-largest trading partner of India.

In the last fiscal, India's exports to China contracted 14.5 per cent to USD 14.25 billion against USD 16.66 billion in 2023-24. The imports, however, rose by 11.52 per cent in 2024-25 to USD 113.45 billion against USD 101.73 billion in 2023-24. India's trade deficit with China has widened to USD 99.2 billion during 2024-25.

# India's wholesale inflation eases to 0.13% in Sept

NEW DELHI (TIP)

India's wholesale inflation eased in September after a sharp rise in the previous month, helped by a decline in food and fuel prices, provisional data from the commerce and industry ministry showed. The wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation fell to 0.13% in September, from 0.52% in August, after staying in negative territory in July -0.58% and June -0.19%. Economists polled by Reuters had projected the wholesale price index to rise 0.50% year-on-year in September.

A year earlier, WPI inflation stood at 1.91%. Food inflation, a key driver of the index, turned negative at -1.99% in September, compared with 0.21% in August, -2.15% in July, and -0.26% in June. The fall in September was led by



lower prices of vegetables, wheat, pulses, and oilseeds. Prices of cereals and paddy also declined from the previous month.

Overall, food articles saw prices fall 5.22% in September, compared with a 3.06% decline in August.

Non-food articles rose 3.14%, down

from 5.56% growth a month earlier. Fuel and power prices slipped 2.58% in September, compared with a 3.17% drop in August, while prices of manufactured products increased 2.33%, compared with a rise of 2.55% in the prior month.

"A sharp decline in food prices, down 2% year-over-year in September 2025, was a significant factor in pulling down wholesale inflation. Vegetable prices saw the steepest drop within the food segment, plummeting 24.4% year-over-year in September 2025 (August 2025: up 0.2% year-over-year). The fuel and power segment also recorded deflation of 2.6% in September 2025, marking the sixth consecutive month of decline," said Paras Jasrai, associate director at India Ratings and Research.

## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - OCT 20, 2025 TO OCT 26, 2025

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



Aries

## ARIES

Ganesha says the situation will be very positive this week. You will feel energy around you, and new possibilities will come to your mind. This is the time for you to increase social contacts. Spending time with your friends and family will improve your mood. This week, your natural leadership ability will be even stronger, which will enable you to create stability and trust in your relationships. Expressing your thoughts and feelings openly will help you build a deeper bond with your loved ones. Your reaction to news or events that disappoint you will be positive, which will strengthen your relationships. Make small plans with friends and close ones. During this time, this is a great time to make new friends or reconnect with old friends. Overall, this week will bring good progress in your life, and you will experience happiness and excitement in every relationship.

## TAURUS



Taurus

Ganesha says this week is going to be a particularly pleasant experience. Your human relationships will deepen, and you will be happy to spend time with your loved ones. This is a time of sharing love and affection, and you are in a good position to share your feelings with those close to you. Your sensitivity and stability will make your relationships stronger. If you want to start a new relationship with someone special, this week is good for you. This is also a great time to resolve old differences and reconcile. You will have positive interactions with your loved ones, which will deepen your feelings. Do not hesitate to express your thoughts and feelings openly this week, as the power of your words will strengthen your relationships even more. With exploration and understanding, you can take your relationships to new heights. So, be prepared and enjoy this beautiful time to the fullest.

## GEMINI



Gemini

Ganesha says this week may prove to be somewhat challenging. Small problems may come in your life, which may disappoint you. This may be a time of mental pressure, which will affect your concentration. Some worries may also affect relationships, due to which you may feel distant from your loved ones. However, do not let this negativity lower your self-esteem. Stay away from artificial stress this week and try to control your emotions. Express your feelings openly; this will improve your relationships.



Cancer

## CANCER

Ganesha says this week's prediction focuses on the overall aspect of your life. This week, you may face some difficulties. Your emotions will be somewhat unstable, which may make you frustrated. You need to maintain sensitivity while communicating with people around you, as small misunderstandings can become big. You may also face unusual situations in relationships, which may cause you anxiety and difficulty expressing. This is the time to spend more time with loved ones and share your feelings. This is likely to improve your relationships. Your creativity will also be somewhat weak, due to which you will not be able to express your ideas properly. Although these challenges are difficult, you can face these problems by having faith in yourself and moving forward with a positive attitude. This week is the right time for introspection and going deeper.

## LEO



Leo

Ganesha says this week, there will be an influx of enthusiasm and positivity in your life. Your energy and confidence will be at their peak, which will enable you to face every challenge. Sweetness will increase in relationships, and communication with loved ones will improve. This is the time when you can enjoy spending time with your loved ones. This flow of communication will deepen your relationship. Your understanding and loving words will strengthen your partner's feelings. If there is any difference of opinion between you, then this is the right time to resolve it. This time can prove to be a milestone for you when your thinking ability and sensitivity will take you in the right direction. Participating in all kinds of social events will not only increase your reputation, but your relationships will also be more energetic and emotionally rich. So, listen to your heart and move forward with positivity. This week will bring happiness and prosperity in relationships for you.

## VIRGO



Virgo

Ganesha says this week has been very wonderful. Your stability and confidence will increase at this time, which will help in positively affecting all aspects of your life. You will feel more connected to the people around you, and there will be an atmosphere of love and harmony in your relationships. This week is a great time to make new relationships and

strengthen existing ones. You will also get a chance to meet an old friend or spend time with family. Your sweetness and understanding will attract others, which will deepen your relationships. Your inspiring energy and creativity will enhance your personality this week. Your contribution to society will be inspiring to others, and you will be able to express your thoughts and feelings openly. Thus, this week provides an opportunity to touch new heights in your social and personal life. Just embrace this positivity and move forward.



Libra

## LIBRA

Ganesha says people may face many challenges this week. There may be a little imbalance in the circumstances around you, which may cause you mental stress. It will be important to maintain harmony in relationships. Small things may create tension between you and your loved ones, so it is important to be patient and communicate. You should express your thoughts clearly so that misunderstandings can be avoided. Your performance will be average at this time, but you have to maintain your confidence. Relationships require patience and cooperation so that the distance between you and your partner can be reduced. If you want to bring positivity into your relationship, understand this instability and support each other. Over time, this week will give you a new understanding and a better perspective of relationships. Take this challenging time as an opportunity for your growth.

## SCORPIO



Scorpio

Ganesha says this week will be a very favorable experience. You will be fully able to understand your emotions and make deep connections with others. There will be a flow of positivity and energy in your inner self, which will help you create an attractive personality. Chances are that you will be able to live the time spent with your loved ones more sensitively and fully. There will be depth and clarity in your conversations, which will strengthen relationships. This time is also suitable for increasing your confidence, so you will be able to express your thoughts openly. This week, your ability to connect with others can lead you to new experiences and relationships. Try to deepen your emotional relationships, as this is the time when you can lay the foundation for new relationships. Overall, this week will bring pleasant and satisfying experiences for you.

## SAGITTARIUS



Sagittarius

Ganesha says this week, there are some challenges in every matter. You may feel that your confidence has decreased, and due to this, you may hesitate to express your feelings. This is the time to make decisions thoughtfully.

You may have to talk openly about some issues with your friends and family, but it is also important to understand your feelings and stay balanced. There may be some restlessness in your relationships, but problems will definitely be resolved through conversation. Put your thoughts forward clearly and try to understand the point of view of others. Be careful in relationships this week and have honest conversations so that problems can be resolved. Avoid any kind of negativity and try to maintain a true and positive relationship with your partner. This week will be full of challenges for you, but it is also an opportunity to improve yourself. Take care of your emotional health and give priority to positivity.

## CAPRICORN



Capricorn

Ganesha says this week will be very good. There will be a flow of positive energy in your life. You will be able to build better relationships with people around you. This time is favorable for resolving any kind of differences, and your personal relationships will become even stronger. The atmosphere at home will be happy and loving, which will give you mental peace. Try to spend time with your friends and family this week. Your cooperative spirit will make your relationships even deeper. If you share your thoughts and feelings honestly, you can lay the foundation of deep understanding and mutual respect. Relationships built with your generous heart and empathy will bring you closer to more people. Enjoy small joys with your loved ones this week and make them feel that you are with them. Overall, this week will provide you with a positive and golden opportunity in terms of relationships.

## AQUARIUS



Aquarius

Ganesha says this week, some challenges may come in life. There may be obstacles in your social and personal relationships, which will cause mental pressure. It is important to maintain restraint at such times, as small things can create dissatisfaction in your mind. This week, your sensitivity may increase, which may increase your anxiety on some subjects. Be careful while communicating with friends and family. However, there is scope for some positive aspects even amidst the worries. With the support of friends and family, you can make this time a little easier. Your creativity may be affected at this time, due to which will prevent you from expressing your thoughts properly. Use this time to focus on meditation and positive thinking. In short, it will be very important for you to maintain restraint and patience this week. Have faith in yourself and remember that this is also a passing phase.

## BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : OCTOBER 20 TO OCTOBER 26 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

### OCTOBER 20

Ganesha says you strike the ideal balance between religion and logic. You may spend a lot of time traveling in the coming year. You can be fascinated by both music and literature, and listening to music can bring you peace. You love to support those who are oppressed. May you have many opportunities to help those less fortunate in the coming year. A subject of your choice may be available to study, and you may be able to delve deeper into it. As a result of this, you can be successful in your study. You are obsessed with maintaining law and order.

### OCTOBER 21

Ganesha says Your character and an optimistic outlook toward life can enable you to surround yourself with a large number of friends. You can benefit financially in the coming year. Try to get a job in a city or town near a river or sea. Those of you who are single can guess when to get married. You have a strong sense of independence and self-assurance. In the coming year, you may roam among intelligent people. This can benefit you in every way. After your marriage, you will be prosperous.

### OCTOBER 22

Ganesha says your friends can notice

your humility and humility and can come to you for help and guidance. However, you sometimes get restless and make hasty decisions as a result. It only gets worse as a result. You do not enjoy exercising your authority because you are submissive and meek by nature. However, you also hate people interfering in your affairs. You value privacy and like to be alone. Your passion for reading and thirst for information can be your assets in the coming year. You can be able to harness this strong power of observation, which can enable you to notice small movements around you.

### OCTOBER 23

Ganesha says you may experience many events in the coming year, but it is best not to exaggerate unimportant issues. White, blue, purple, and cream are auspicious colors for you. You are naturally a studious person, and you are happy when you are surrounded by literature. You may be willing to defy tradition and decide what suits you best when it comes to matters of love. Those who can get married this year should expect a happy and prosperous life in marriage. Your dedication and hard work can be noticed by your managers, and you can be rewarded for your efforts. You are naturally good at teaching. You enjoy doing it professionally and find

fulfillment in it.

### OCTOBER 24

Ganesha says in the coming year, you can expect changes both on the professional and domestic front. Some of you may suffer financial loss by betting. You should lend money only when you are sure that you can get it back. In the coming year, you may be able to make your own decisions because of your independence. You are serious by nature, and you value some level of solitude in your life. You like to spend time alone working on your projects. The suffering of physically handicapped persons is unbearable. You can spend a lot of time in the coming year working as a social worker for hospitals and non-profit organizations.

### OCTOBER 25

Ganesha says that although you tend to have a practical approach and take your obligations seriously, you need to rein in your tendency to act stubborn and jealous at times. Your spouse gives you love and affection, and your children excel and make you proud. If there is a sudden deterioration in the health of an elderly relative, there may be a concern. Be extra careful while driving at night. You have the potential to invest extensively in the coming year, not only



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA**

in speculative industries but also in real estate.

### OCTOBER 26

Ganesha says in the coming year, your self-assurance can help you become popular and successful. Families can come to you for guidance and support. The domestic front, especially for your children, can be filled with lots of happiness and love. Shades like yellow, violet, and green are considered lucky for you. Some of you are likely to inherit property in the coming year, especially from your father's side. Your career may involve a lot of travel in the coming year. You enjoy developing your spiritual abilities and using them to help oppressed groups of people.

Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at [www.bejandaruwala.com](http://www.bejandaruwala.com) info@bejandaruwala.com | +91 81412 34275

### CONTD FROM PAGE 58

#### PISCES



Ganesha says this week may bring some difficulties in the overall experience for people. During this time, you will need to keep your thoughts and emotions balanced. Some situations may arise that may put you under stress and anxiety. You have to be careful while communicating with people around you, as you can easily fall prey to misunderstandings. There may also be instability in your personal relationships. At this time, you should try to understand your partner's feelings and respond more patiently. Keep in mind that disputes and tensions can increase troubles. Trust your inner strength this week and try to maintain your emotional balance. Instead of expressing your feelings openly, maintain some

distance so that you can think better. Try to overcome this difficulty by

maintaining a positive attitude. This time is also suitable for your

introspection and inner growth.

#### 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](http://chiragdaruwalla.com). He is available for consultations on WhatsApp number +91 8141566266 or by email: info@chiragdaruwalla.com

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CONTD FROM PAGE 1

## Conflicting Claims by US and India on India's Russian oil imports

Now we're going to get China to do the same thing." On Thursday, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs slammed the U.S. for "unilateral bullying" over its "legitimate" imports from Russia.

Going on to praise Mr. Modi as a "great man" who "loves Trump", Mr. Trump said he did not want to "destroy [Mr. Modi's] political career". "I've watched India for years. It's an incredible country, and every single year you'd have a new leader," Mr. Trump said, adding: "My friend has been there now for a long time."

It was unclear from Mr. Trump's words how exactly he believed Mr. Modi had relayed this commitment on oil. The two leaders last spoke, according to official statements, on October 9. Mr. Gor met with Mr. Modi, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on October 11, and then flew back to Washington on October 14, meeting with Mr. Trump on October 15, the day Mr. Trump made his statement.

The MEA declined to comment on whether Mr. Gor had discussed the issue with Mr. Modi. In a statement issued on Thursday, October 16, 2025, a few hours after Mr. Trump's controversial comments, the MEA sought to clarify its position. While it did not specifically mention Russian oil, it said it was seeking to "expand" energy procurement from the U.S.

"It has been [India's] consistent priority to safeguard the interests of the Indian consumer in a volatile energy scenario," the statement said, referring to stable prices and secure supplies as "twin goals". "This includes broad-basing our energy sourcing and diversifying as appropriate to meet market conditions."

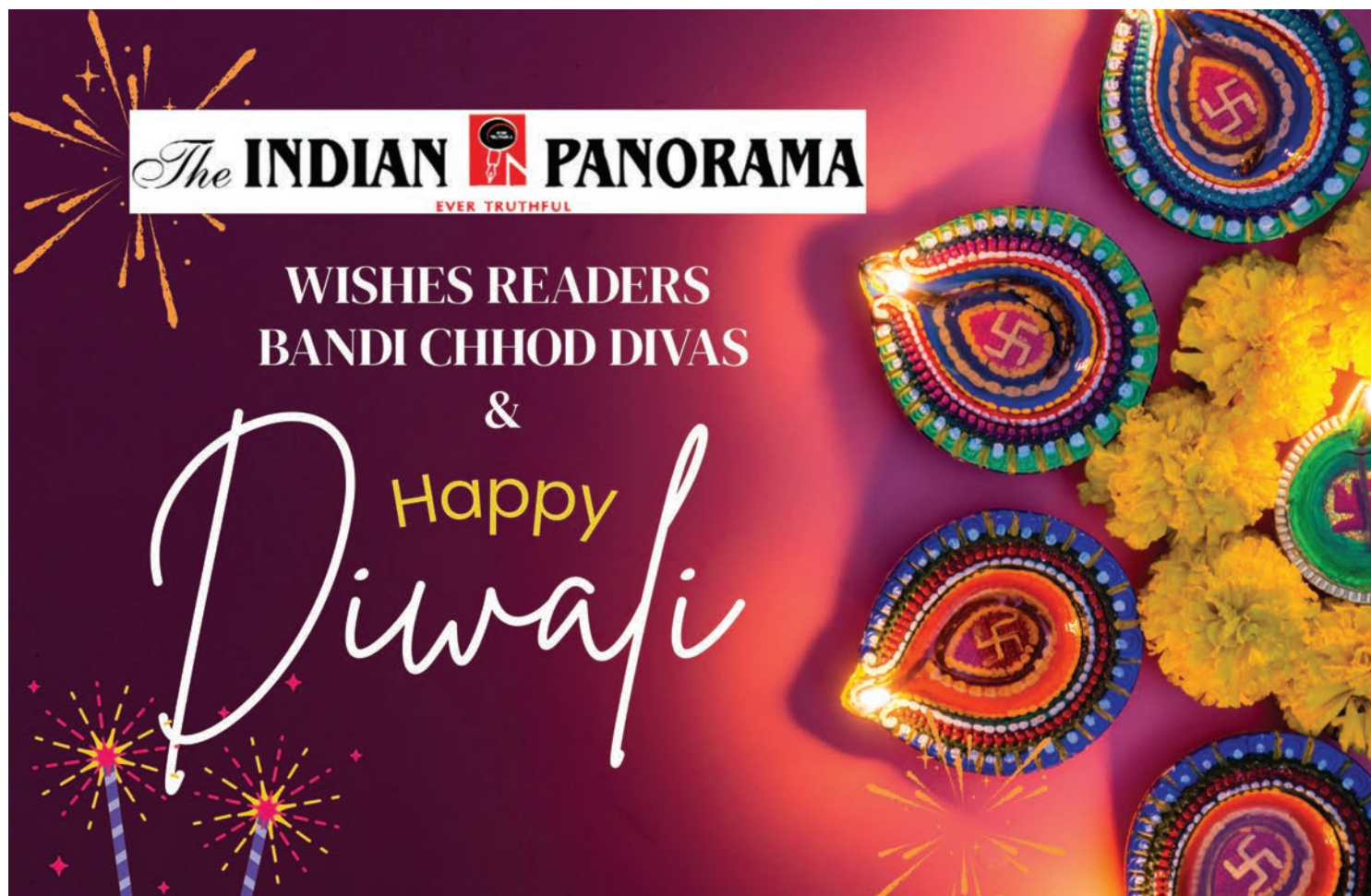
## H-1B fee visa hike: US chamber sues Trump administration

The exorbitant fee, up from the current level of around USD 3,600, would make it "cost-prohibitive for US employers, especially start-ups and small and midsize businesses to utilize the H-1B programme, which was created by Congress expressly to ensure that American businesses of all sizes can access the global talent they need to grow their operations here", said Neil Bradley, Executive Vice President and Chief Policy Officer at the US Chamber.

In its complaint, the business body said the proclamation is "not only misguided policy; it is plainly unlawful".

The president, it said, has significant authority over the entry of noncitizens into the US, but that authority is bounded by statute and cannot directly contradict laws passed by Congress.

"The proclamation does precisely that: It blatantly contravenes the fees Congress has set for the H-1B programme and countermands Congress's judgment that the programme should provide a pathway for up to 85,000 people annually to contribute their talents to the United States for the betterment of American



society," it stated.

The proclamation exceeds the president's lawful authority, the complaint underlined.

Bradley said the Chamber has actively backed Trump's proposals to attract more investment in America, but to support this growth, the US economy will "require more workers, not fewer".

Tens of thousands of highly skilled people in specialized fields boost the American economy each year after obtaining H-1B status. These workers allow businesses of all sizes, in industries across the economy, to innovate and grow. The resulting innovations lead to more American jobs, higher wages, and new products and services that improve the quality of life for all Americans.

The Chamber's complaint contends that the new proclamation "upends" a carefully balanced statutory framework.

"If implemented, that fee would inflict significant harm on American businesses, which would be forced to either dramatically increase their labor costs or hire fewer highly skilled employees for whom domestic replacements are not readily available," it said.

According to the Chamber, such restrictions would also hand an economic advantage to America's rivals, "who will surely welcome the talent no longer able to accept work in the United States. That is a competitive edge that foreign employers might never cede back".

In September, President Donald Trump signed the proclamation, raising the fee for H-1B visas to a staggering USD 100,000 (approx INR 88 lakhs) annually, in a move that could adversely impact Indian professionals on visas in the US.

Indians make up an estimated 71 per cent of all approved H-1B applications in recent years, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Companies pay to sponsor H-1B applicants.

While the US tightens its visa regime, China has recently announced a new work permit called the K-Visa under which qualified professionals from across the world can come to the country and explore work opportunities. The K-Visa is aimed at attracting young science and technology talent and does not require a domestic employer or entity to issue an invitation.

The K-Visa category is in addition to its existing 12 ordinary visa types, available to eligible science and technology professionals. Compared to the existing visa types, K visas will offer more convenience to holders in terms of the number of permitted entries, validity period, and duration of stay. (Source: PTI)

CONTD FROM PAGE 12

## Ex-Trump adviser John Bolton indicted on charges of mishandling classified information

"Like many public officials throughout history, Ambassador Bolton kept diaries - that is not a crime."

The indictment said Bolton used personal email accounts and a group chat that existed during and after his time as national security adviser to share notes and diary entries that contained classified information to two people who did not have security clearances.

"On or about September 24, 2019, fourteen days after he was no longer employed as the National Security Advisor, BOLTON left the messaging chat group with Individuals 1 and 2 that he had used to send them more than a thousand pages of notes memorializing his time as National Security Advisor," the indictment said.

In August, FBI agents searched Bolton's home in Maryland and his office in Washington. They retrieved boxes of

papers, computer files and other materials. Court filings related to the case later showed some of those materials with low-level classification markings.

The emails and notes were sent by Bolton in order to produce a compendium of his time as national security adviser for his 2020 memoir, *The Room Where It Happened*, which angered Trump officials because of his critical behind-the-scenes look into the administration.

Trump has dispensed with decades-long norms designed to insulate federal law enforcement from political pressures. In recent months, he has actively pushed attorney general Pam Bondi's justice department to bring charges against his perceived adversaries including former FBI director James Comey and New York attorney general Letitia James, even driving out a prosecutor he deemed to be moving too slowly in doing so.

Shortly before Bolton's book was published, the previous Trump administration sued to delay its release citing a classification review. The justice department also opened a criminal investigation into whether Bolton mishandled classified information by disclosing certain details in the book.

The Biden justice department initially dropped the lawsuit and grand jury investigation in 2021. They later reopened the investigation as the US intelligence community learned more about Bolton's emails through a foreign spy service, according to people familiar with the matter.

Earlier this year, John Ratcliffe, the CIA director, conferred with Kash Patel, the FBI director, about Bolton's emails and how they appeared to have been transcriptions of classified material. The briefing appeared to spur renewed interest in investigating Bolton, the people said.

# When Lakshmi adopted Ganesha: The divine bond behind Diwali's twin worship

On the night of Diwali, homes across India shimmer with lamps, prayers, and devotion. Amid the joyous sparkle, one sacred ritual unites every household—the worship of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha together.

Goddess Lakshmi, the divine embodiment of wealth, fortune, luxury, and prosperity—both material and spiritual—is invoked to bring abundance into the home. Lord Ganesha, revered as the remover of obstacles, the patron of arts and sciences, and the 'Deva' of intellect and wisdom, is invoked for guidance and success.

The belief is clear: wealth without wisdom can lead to downfall, while intelligence without resources limits progress. Therefore, the two deities are worshipped together to welcome prosperity tempered by prudence.

No Hindu celebration is considered complete without invoking Lord Ganesha first, and Diwali is no exception. His presence ensures that obstacles are removed and the path ahead remains auspicious. Following Him, the forms of Goddess Mahalakshmi are worshipped with reverence, for it is said that on Diwali night, the Goddess visits every home that is clean, bright, and filled with faith to bless its inhabitants with wealth and happiness.

But beyond ritual lies a beautiful mythological story—one that reveals the deep spiritual and symbolic connection between the two divine beings.

## The Mythological Tale: When Lakshmi Yearned for Completeness

According to ancient scriptures, there came a time when Goddess Lakshmi grew proud of her powers and riches. She often praised herself in front of her consort, Lord Vishnu, saying that she alone was worthy of worship, for it was by her grace that people attained happiness, luxury, and prosperity.

Lord Vishnu, smiling at her words, decided to teach her a gentle lesson about humility. He said, "Devi, you indeed possess every divine quality. Yet, despite your splendor, you remain incomplete—you have not experienced the joy of motherhood, which is considered the highest fulfillment for a woman."

The words struck Goddess Lakshmi deeply. Though she was the source of all abundance, she felt a void in her heart. Seeking to experience the bliss of motherhood, she turned to her divine friend, Goddess Parvati, the mother of two sons—Kartikeya and Ganesha.

## Lakshmi's Request to Parvati

Lakshmi approached Parvati and confided her sorrow. "Devi," she said, "you are blessed with two sons, while I have none. Kindly allow me to adopt one of your sons so that I too may experience the joy of being a mother."

Parvati, though compassionate, was hesitant. She replied, "I have two sons—



Kartikeya, who is ever hungry because of his six faces, and Ganesha, who is mischievous and playful. You, dear Lakshmi, never stay in one place for long. How will you care for a child who needs constant attention?"

Lakshmi, moved by longing, assured her, "I will take care of him with all my love and devotion. The attendants of heaven will serve him day and night. Please grant me this blessing."

Touched by Lakshmi's sincerity, Parvati agreed to let her adopt Lord Ganesha.

## A Divine Adoption and a Sacred Vow

Overjoyed, Goddess Lakshmi embraced Ganesha as her own son and promised to bestow upon him all her riches and virtues. She declared,

- "From this day forth, all my accomplishments, luxury, and prosperity shall belong to my son Ganesha.
- Whoever wishes to seek my blessings must first worship him.
- Those who do not honor Ganesha before me shall never receive my grace."

Hearing these words, Goddess Parvati was deeply moved. She gladly entrusted her beloved Ganesha to Lakshmi's care.

Thus began the eternal association between wealth and wisdom, prosperity and intellect—represented by Goddess

Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha respectively. From that moment, it was ordained that Lakshmi Puja would always include Ganesha Puja, for one without the other would be incomplete.

## The Spiritual Meaning Behind the Union

Beyond the charm of the legend lies a profound spiritual truth. Wealth, when guided by wisdom, leads to growth and harmony, but wealth without discernment can bring arrogance and downfall. Lakshmi symbolizes material abundance and divine grace, while Ganesha represents intelligence, clarity, and the ability to overcome challenges.

Together, they embody a perfect balance—a reminder that prosperity should always be managed with humility and insight. Their joint worship on Diwali signifies this unity of fortune and foresight.

On a deeper level, the story also reflects the ideal of divine motherhood—Lakshmi's desire for completeness through love and care rather than mere power. It transforms Diwali from a festival of material gain into a celebration of spiritual fulfillment and gratitude.

## The Tradition That Shines Bright

This is why, during Diwali night, after the lamps are lit and prayers are offered, the first invocation is made to Lord

Ganesha—to remove all hindrances and open the way for success. Then, the household welcomes Goddess Lakshmi in her three forms—Mahalakshmi (wealth), Mahasaraswati (knowledge), and Mahakali (strength). Together, they bring prosperity, learning, and power to the devotees' lives.

Images and idols of Lakshmi and Ganesha are always placed side by side, signifying that material success and mental clarity must coexist. The ritual is completed with offerings of sweets, flowers, diyas, and prayers for a future illuminated by both abundance and wisdom.

## The Eternal Message

The story of Lakshmi and Ganesha reminds us that life's true prosperity lies not merely in accumulating wealth but in using it wisely, compassionately, and ethically. Ganesha teaches us to remove the inner obstacles of ego and ignorance, while Lakshmi inspires us to cultivate generosity and gratitude.

Thus, on the radiant night of Diwali, as lamps flicker across thresholds and prayers fill the air, the divine union of Lakshmi and Ganesha reminds us of a timeless truth—

that wealth finds meaning only when guided by wisdom, and wisdom flourishes best when supported by prosperity.

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Hills on all sides, the sun rising and setting behind a serene valley, and a glimmering lake right in the heart of the city - this picturesque town is what I proudly call home. Ajmer, nestled amid the ancient Aravalli hills, is one of Rajasthan's most soulful destinations. Known to the world for the Dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, this city beautifully blends spirituality, history, and hospitality. But beyond its famous shrine, Ajmer opens up a world of hidden charms - lakes, forts, ghats, and desert trails that whisper stories of centuries gone by.

### Pushkar: The Sacred Oasis

Just 11 km from Ajmer, separated by the serpentine Nag Pahar (Snake Mountain), lies Pushkar - a town where myth and mysticism blend effortlessly. Believed to be among the oldest cities in India, legend has it that Lord Brahma, the Creator, himself founded it.

Pushkar sits on the edge of the Thar Desert, and its spiritual skyline is dotted with over 500 temples, the most iconic being the Brahma Temple. Though the current structure dates back to the 14th century, locals believe it is over 2,000 years old. The temple's simple yet powerful aura, coupled with the rhythmic chants and fragrance of incense, creates an atmosphere of divine calm. For those who love panoramic views, the Savitri Temple, perched atop a hill, is a must-visit. You can trek the steep route - an hour-long climb that tests your endurance - or take the ropeway for a breezy six-minute ride. Once at the top, the view of the Pushkar valley at sunrise or sunset is breathtaking.

Surrounded by 52 ghats, the Pushkar lake is believed to have sprung from a lotus dropped by Lord Brahma. Devotees believe that taking a dip here on Kartika Purnima washes away all sins and grants salvation. At dusk, the lake shimmers like molten gold. Head to the Sunset Café nearby, sip on a cup of tea, and listen to local musicians play the ravanahatha, a traditional string instrument, as the sun melts into the horizon.

For a more rustic experience, drive to Budha (Old) Pushkar, around 5 km away. Though urbanization has crept in, you can still spot camels, sand patches, and village folk that give you a glimpse of desert life.

Being a sacred town, Pushkar offers only vegetarian fare and no alcohol. But foodies need not worry - Pink Floyd Café, Doctor Alone Café, and La Pizzeria serve delicious meals with stunning views and bohemian charm.

### Ajmer Sharif Dargah

Back in Ajmer, the heart of the city beats inside the Ajmer Sharif Dargah, one of India's holiest Islamic pilgrimage centres. The shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, the revered Sufi saint who brought the Chishti order to India, draws millions of devotees each year - Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and people of all faiths.

The complex is a stunning display of Indo-Islamic architecture: gleaming white marble domes, intricately carved arches, a massive gate gifted by the

# Ajmer and beyond: The soul of Rajasthan wrapped in heritage



Nizam of Hyderabad, and the Akbari Mosque built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. Inside, the air is filled with qawwalis, rose petals, and the hum of devotion.

A few practical tips: avoid carrying valuables, as the area is always crowded. Public transport is a smarter choice, as parking can be difficult. And ladies, do carry a scarf to cover your head before entering the sanctum.

### Anasagar Lake: The City's Heartbeat

Right in the middle of Ajmer lies the shimmering Anasagar Lake, an artificial lake built in the 12th century by Anaji Chauhan. In the evenings, locals and tourists flock here for a stroll, a boat ride, or simply to watch the sunset. The lake's banks come alive with vendors selling spicy chaat and cold drinks, while children chase pigeons along the promenade.

Adjacent to the lake is Daulat Bagh, a garden laid out by Emperor Jahangir. Its shady trees and marble pavilions offer a peaceful escape from the bustle of the city.

### Taragarh Fort: Echoes from the Hills

Overlooking the entire city, Taragarh Fort stands as a sentinel of Ajmer's regal past. Built in 1345, it is considered one of the world's oldest hill forts. A steep two-hour trek takes you to its gates, rewarding you with panoramic views of Ajmer's rooftops, lakes, and the rolling Aravallis.

Once the seat of the Chauhan rulers, the fort has seen countless battles and has stories carved into its crumbling walls. While it's often deserted, it makes for a perfect early-morning adventure - just don't go alone.

### Other Must-Visits Around Town

To experience Ajmer like a traveller



rather than a tourist, make sure to explore:

- Lake Foy Sagar, a serene picnic spot
- Mayo College, one of India's most prestigious schools
- Adhai Din Ka Jhonpda, an ancient Indo-Islamic marvel
- Soniji Ki Nasiyan, the intricately carved Jain temple
- Nareli Jain Temple, a modern architectural gem

If you have time to venture a little farther, visit Kishangarh for its marble artistry and the famed Kishangarh-style miniature paintings; Tilonia for the Barefoot College that champions sustainable rural innovation; and Merta City, the birthplace of the mystic poet-saint Meera Bai, Lord Krishna's eternal devotee.

### Food and Finds

No trip to Ajmer is complete without its flavours. Begin your day in Purani Mandi with spicy kachoris, crisp jalebis, and a glass of creamy lassi. For

lunch or dinner, head to Mango Masala or Ambrosia, two local favourites. And when in Pushkar, indulge in the melt-in-the-mouth maalpua - a heavenly dessert-pancake best enjoyed hot.

Shopping here is an experience in itself - pick up marble artefacts and paintings from Kishangarh, handmade garments from Tilonia, vibrant kurtis, sundresses, and jewellery from Pushkar, or camel trinkets, bangles, and antiques from Ajmer's bustling bazaars.

### The Spirit of Ajmer

Ajmer isn't just a place - it's a feeling. It's the call of the qawwals from the dargah mixing with temple bells across the hills; it's the golden sunset over the Anasagar Lake; it's the warmth of people who open their hearts and homes to every traveller. Whether you seek spirituality, adventure, art, or simply peace, Ajmer and its surroundings promise a journey that lingers long after you've left.

# History This Week OCT 17 - OCT 23

**OCTOBER 17**



October 17, 1777 - During the American Revolutionary War, British General John Burgoyne and his entire army of 5,700 men surrendered to American General Horatio Gates after the Battle of Saratoga, the first big American victory.

October 17-25, 1944 - The Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in history, took place off the Philippine Islands, during World War II in the Pacific. The battle involved 216 U.S. warships and 64 Japanese ships and resulted in the destruction of the Japanese Battleship Musashi, one of the largest ever built.

Birthdays - Pope John Paul I (1912-1978) was born in Forno di Canale, Italy (as Albino Luciani). He was elected the 263rd Pope of the Roman Catholic Church on September 28, 1978, but died in Rome just 34 days later.

**OCTOBER 18**



October 18, 1685 - The Edict of Nantes was revoked by King Louis XIV of France thus depriving Huguenots of all religious and civil liberties previously granted to them by Henry IV in 1598.

October 18, 1945 - The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial began with indictments against 24 former Nazi leaders including Hermann Göring and Albert Speer. The trial lasted 10 months, with delivery of the judgment completed on October 1, 1946. Twelve Nazis were sentenced to death by hanging, three to life imprisonment, four to lesser prison terms, and three were acquitted.

**OCTOBER 19**

October 19, 1781 - As their band played The World Turned Upside Down, the British Army marched out in formation and surrendered to the Americans at Yorktown. More than 7,000 British and Hessian troops, led by British General

Lord Cornwallis, surrendered to General George Washington. The war between Britain and its American colonies was effectively ended. The final peace treaty was signed in Paris on September 3, 1783.

October 19, 1960 - The U.S. embargo of Cuba began as the State Department prohibited shipment of all goods except medicine and food.

October 19, 1987 - "Black Monday" occurred on Wall Street as stocks plunged a record 508 points or 22.6 per cent, the largest one-day drop in stock market history.



October 19, 1990 - Beset by a seriously eroding economy, Soviet Russia's President Mikhail Gorbachev won parliamentary approval to switch to a market economy.

**OCTOBER 20**

October 20, 1818 - The U.S. and Britain agreed to set the U.S.- Canadian border at the 49th parallel.

October 20, 1935 - Mao Zedong's 6,000 mile "Long March" ended as his Communist forces arrived at Yanan, in northwest China, almost a year after fleeing Chiang Kai-shek's armies in the south.



October 20, 1944 - During World War II in the Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur set foot on Philippine soil for the first time since his escape in 1942, fulfilling his promise, "I shall return."

October 20, 1968 - Jacqueline Kennedy married multi-millionaire Greek businessman Aristotle Onassis, ending nearly five years of widowhood following the assassination of her first husband, President John F. Kennedy.

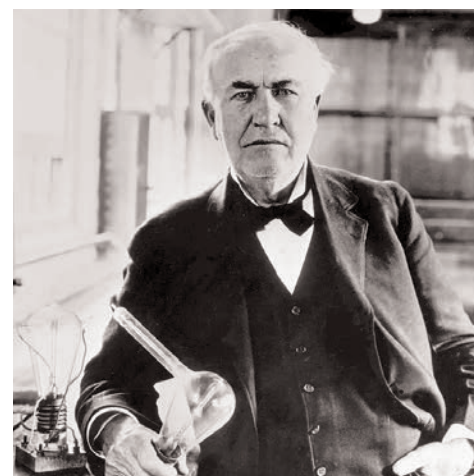
October 20, 1973 - The 'Saturday Night Massacre' occurred during the Watergate scandal as President Richard M. Nixon fired Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox and Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus. Attorney General Elliot Richardson resigned. A firestorm of

political protest erupted over the firings leading to widespread demands for Nixon's impeachment.

Birthdays - British architect Christopher Wren (1632-1723) was born in Wiltshire, in southwestern England. Considered one of the greatest minds of his time, he designed St. Paul's Cathedral and 52 churches for the City of London. His secular buildings included the "new" wing of Hampton Court near London and Greenwich Hospital, now the Royal Naval College.

**OCTOBER 21**

October 21, 1805 - The Battle of Trafalgar took place between the British Royal Navy and the combined French and Spanish fleets. The victorious British ended the threat of Napoleon's invasion of England. British naval hero Admiral Horatio Nelson was mortally wounded aboard his ship Victory.



October 21, 1879 - Thomas Edison successfully tested an electric incandescent lamp with a carbonized filament at his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey, keeping it lit for over 13 hours.

October 21, 1915 - The first transatlantic radio voice message was made by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company from Virginia to Paris.

October 21, 1944 - During World War II in Europe, American troops captured Aachen in western Germany after a week of hard fighting. It was the first large German city taken by the Allies.

October 21, 1967 - Thousands of anti-war protesters stormed the Pentagon during a rally against the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C. About 250 were arrested. No shots were fired, but demonstrators were struck with nightsticks and rifle butts.

Birthdays - Jazz great Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993) was born in Cheraw, South Carolina (as John Birks Gillespie). He was a trumpet player, composer, band leader and one of the founding fathers of modern jazz, known for his trademark puffed cheeks and bent trumpet.

**OCTOBER 22**

October 22, 1962 - President John F. Kennedy appeared on television to inform Americans of the existence of Russian missiles in Cuba. The President demanded their removal and announced a naval "quarantine" of Cuba. Six days later, the Russians announced they would remove the weapons. In return, the U.S. later removed missiles from Turkey.

October 22, 1979 - The exiled Shah of Iran arrived in the United States for medical treatment. A few weeks later,

Iranian militants seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took 66 Americans hostage. They demanded the return of the Shah for trial. The U.S. refused. The Shah died of cancer in July of 1980. The hostages were freed in January of 1981.



Birthdays - Hungarian composer Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was born in Raiding, Hungary. He was a brilliant pianist best known for Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, Liebestraum No. 3, and his Faust and Dante symphonies.

**OCTOBER 23**

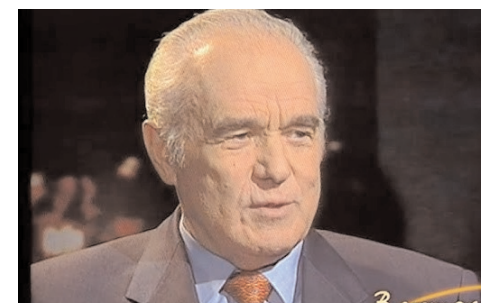


October 23, 1942 - British General Bernard Montgomery launched a major offensive against German forces under Erwin Rommel at El Alamein, Egypt.

October 23, 1956 - A Hungarian uprising against Communist rule began with students and workers demonstrating in Budapest. Soviet Russians responded by sending in tanks and put down the revolt after several days of bitter fighting.

October 23, 1983 - Terrorists drove a truck loaded with TNT into the U.S. and French headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, exploding it and killing 241 U.S. Marines and 58 French paratroopers.

October 23, 1989 - Hungary declared itself a republic 33 years after Soviet Russian troops crushed a popular revolt against Communist rule.



October 23, 1990 - Ukrainian Prime Minister Vitaly Masol resigned after mass protests by students, becoming the first Soviet official of that rank to quit under public pressure.

# 2030 CWG set for Ahmedabad after crucial nod from games' top exec panel

MUMBAI (TIP)

Ahmedabad will likely host the Commonwealth Games (CWG) in 2030, as the competition's executive board on Wednesday recommended the Gujarat city for the centenary edition of the event. Now, only a final greenlight during the organisation's general assembly next month, a process expected to be a formality, remains before the CWG's return to India is ratified.

Nigeria's capital Abuja was the only other contender in fray.

The proposal will be before the general assembly of the Commonwealth Sport, the event's governing body, in Glasgow on November 26.

This will not only bring CWG back to India after two decades – New Delhi hosted the 2010 edition – but may also be a significant boost in the country's bid to host the 2036 Olympics, for which Ahmedabad has been put through a significant sporting infrastructure transformation.

Union home minister Amit Shah said it was a "day of immense joy and pride for India".

"... It is a grand endorsement of PM Shri @narendramodi Ji's relentless efforts to place India on the world sports map," he said on X.

Sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya termed it "a huge moment for Indian sports". "Grateful to Commonwealth Sport's Executive Board for recommending Ahmedabad as the proposed host city for the Centenary Commonwealth Games in 2030, a proud



File picture of Indian flag projected onto a balloon during the Commonwealth Games closing ceremony at the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium in New Delhi. File | Photo Credit: Reuters

milestone for our nation," he added on X. Backed by the Union cabinet, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) had launched the bid to bring CWG to the country earlier this year. Officials of the Commonwealth Sport also visited Ahmedabad a few times to inspect the infrastructure. Once India entered the race, it was always going to be the frontrunner to host an event that has, in the recent past, found few takers.

In a statement, Commonwealth Sport said Ahmedabad had been recommended after "a detailed process overseen by the Commonwealth Sport Evaluation Committee, which assessed candidate cities against a wide range of criteria including technical delivery, athlete experience, infrastructure, governance, and alignment with Commonwealth Sport values".

Even before India's ambitions of hosting the 2030 CWG and 2036 Olympics were made public, Ahmedabad was being ramped up with multi-sport infrastructure. The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave, which includes the gigantic Narendra Modi Cricket Stadium that hosted the ODI World Cup final in 2023, is being looked at as the central venue for the CWG, apart from the newly completed Veer Savarkar Sports Complex in Naranpura.

"Ahmedabad will be ready to host the Commonwealth Games," ID Nanavati, secretary of the Gujarat State Olympic Association, said. "Almost all the stadiums that are being newly built are either ready or will be soon. The state government is fully behind this project."

## Team India arrives in Perth for ODI series against Australia

Prominent members of the Indian ODI team, including star batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma and new captain Shubman Gill, arrived here early on Thursday, October 16, for a three-match series against Australia starting on October 19.

Apart from Kohli, Rohit and Gill, the others to land here after a delayed flight were K L Rahul, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, and Nitish Kumar Reddy, along with some members of the support staff.

Head coach Gautam Gambhir and the rest of the coaching staff will join the squad later in the day as they had boarded an evening flight from Delhi on October 15.

The series will begin here on Sunday before moving to Adelaide (October 23), and Sydney (October 25). It will be followed by a five-match T20 International series starting October 29. The one-dayers have generated a buzz as it is Rohit and Kohli's first international outing after India's Champions Trophy triumph in March earlier this year. The future of the two stalwarts has become a subject of intense speculation especially after Gill's elevation to ODI captaincy.



# Alcaraz defends playing exhibitions amid criticism over gruelling schedule

RIYADH (TIP)

World number one Carlos Alcaraz has defended his participation in exhibition tournaments, insisting that players are often misunderstood when they choose to play alongside the demanding professional tennis calendar.

Alcaraz, 22, is currently in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for this year's edition of the Six Kings Slam, a lucrative exhibition event that began in 2024. The Spaniard has previously voiced concerns about the intense workload in Asia, where several players struggled physically, and said he would consider skipping mandatory events to prioritise his health.

The Six Kings Slam, scheduled from 15 to 18 October, features six top players: Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, Novak Djokovic, Alexander Zverev, Taylor Fritz, and Stefanos Tsitsipas. The event offers a reported \$4.5 million (£3.4 million) in prize money, with some players reportedly receiving seven-figure sums simply to appear. Reports suggest the winner could take home as much as \$6



million (£4.5 million).

Despite the high stakes, Alcaraz believes that shorter-format exhibitions like the Six Kings Slam are far less demanding than official tour competitions.

He said: "A lot of players are talking about the calendar, how tight it is with a

lot of tournaments, tournaments of two weeks, and then making excuses with exhibitions. It's a different format, different situation playing exhibitions than the official tournaments, 15, 16 days in a row, having such a high focus and demanding physically. We're just having fun for one or two days and playing some

tennis, and that's great, and why we choose the exhibitions. I understand [the criticism], but sometimes people don't understand us, our opinions. It's not really demanding mentally [compared with] when we're having such long events like two weeks or two and a half weeks."

Alcaraz claimed his eighth title of the season in Tokyo last month, despite an ankle injury in his opening match that forced him to withdraw from the Shanghai Masters. He will compete in Saudi Arabia despite the injury not being fully healed. "Everything's OK," he said. "I've been recovering the ankle as much as I can. I don't feel 100% - the doubts are there when I'm moving on court, but it improved a lot and I'm going to compete and perform well in the Six Kings Slam."

Alcaraz has a bye to the semi-finals, which will be broadcast on Netflix, and is set to face Fritz on Thursday after the American defeated Zverev 6-3, 6-4 in the quarter-finals. In the other quarter-final, world number two Sinner beat Tsitsipas 6-2, 6-3 and will face Djokovic in the semi-finals.

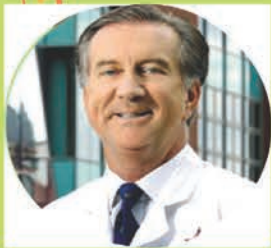
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Best Wishes, Peter



Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



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