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The INDIAN PANORAMA

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# West Asia on edge as fears of Iran's retaliation loom

## THE U.S. EMBASSY IN JERUSALEM TOLD AMERICAN CITIZENS IN ISRAEL THAT THE "SECURITY ENVIRONMENT REMAINS COMPLEX" IN ISRAEL



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran  
Photo : official website of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

APRIL 12, 2024

NEW YORK (TIP): West Asia continued to stay on edge on April 12 amid fears of an imminent attack by Iran targeting Israel in retaliation against the April 1 air strike on Iran's consular annex in Damascus, Syria, with several countries, including India, the U.S. Russia and France issuing travel and security alerts to their citizens, The Hindu's reporter Stanly Johny reported from Jerusalem.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has vowed to punish the "evil regime" of Israel after the attack on the consular building in which Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a high-ranking commander of the Quds Force, the elite foreign operational wing of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps,

contd on page 42

## India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra Reviews with US Officials the India-US Global Strategic partnership



Foreign Secretary Kwatra with US officials in Washington, D.C.  
Photo : X (formerly Twitter)

APRIL 12, 2024 WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):

India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra visited Washington DC, United States from 10-12 April 2024. During his visit, Foreign Secretary Kwatra undertook a detailed review of the progress made towards further consolidating the India-US

contd on page 42

## India advises citizens against travel to Israel and Iran amid rising tensions between the two countries

APRIL 12, 2024 NEW DELHI (TIP):

India on Friday, April 12, asked its citizens not to travel to Iran or Israel amid escalating tensions between the two countries following a strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria 11 days ago.

Iran blamed Israel for the strike and there have been fears that Tehran may launch an attack on Israel soon.

In an advisory, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also urged the Indians residing in Iran and Israel to exercise utmost



"In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indians are advised not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice", a Ministry of External Affairs advisory said.

Photo for representation only.

contd on page 42



## India among 12 nations responsible for 60 per cent of world's mismanaged plastic waste: Report

NEW DELHI (TIP): India is among the twelve countries responsible for 60 per cent of the planet's mismanaged plastic waste though the fast-developing South Asian nation's per capita plastic waste production is among the lowest in the world, according to a new report.

contd on page 42

India is among 12 nations responsible for 60 per cent of world's mismanaged plastic waste

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## COMMENT

BJP's Strategic Blueprint: Disabling the  
Opposition for Political DominanceBY  
INDRAJIT SALUJA

Since its rise to power, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India has pursued a systematic and calculated strategy to dismantle opposition forces, particularly targeting the Congress party, its principal adversary. Through a combination of divisive tactics, engineered defections, and financial strangulation, the BJP has sought to weaken and incapacitate the Congress party, thereby consolidating its own political dominance.

From the outset, the BJP recognized the Congress party as its primary obstacle to hegemonic control. To undermine its adversary, the BJP employed a multi-pronged approach aimed at discrediting and dismembering the Congress party. One of the key strategies was to sow seeds of division within the Congress ranks, exploiting existing fault lines and internal dissent to weaken the party from within. By exacerbating intra-party conflicts and encouraging factionalism, the BJP created an environment of mistrust and discord, thereby undermining the cohesion and effectiveness of the Congress leadership.

Simultaneously, the BJP engaged in a concerted effort to engineer defections within the Congress party, particularly in states where it held power. Leveraging its political clout and

resources, the BJP enticed disgruntled Congress members to defect, offering inducements and promises of power and patronage in exchange for their allegiance. Through these orchestrated defections, the BJP not only depleted the Congress party's ranks but also destabilized its governments in various states, strategically weakening its foothold at the regional level.

When conventional tactics failed to completely incapacitate the Congress party, the BJP resorted to more extreme measures, including financial strangulation. Recognizing the pivotal role of financial resources in sustaining political campaigns and organizational infrastructure, the BJP orchestrated a campaign to starve the Congress party of funds. Under the guise of legal compliance, the Modi government misused government agencies to target the Congress party's financial assets, effectively sealing its bank accounts and crippling its financial operations.

The repercussions of this financial crackdown have been severe, particularly in the run-up to general elections. With its coffers emptied and its access to funds severely restricted, the Congress party finds itself severely handicapped in mounting an effective electoral campaign. Unable to finance rallies, advertisements, and other campaign activities, the Congress party faces an uphill battle in competing against the well-funded machinery of the BJP and its allies.

The consequences of the BJP's systematic assault on the opposition extend beyond the immediate electoral arena. By neutralizing the Congress

party and other opposition forces, the BJP undermines the very essence of democracy, stifling dissent and monopolizing political power. Without a viable opposition to hold the ruling party accountable, democratic norms and institutions are weakened, paving the way for unchecked authoritarianism and executive overreach.

The BJP's strategy of disabling the opposition not only undermines the democratic fabric of Indian society but also erodes public trust in the political process. When opposition parties are systematically targeted and marginalized, citizens lose faith in the fairness and integrity of the electoral system, leading to disenchantment and apathy. This erosion of trust poses a grave threat to the legitimacy of democratic governance and the stability of the political order.

The BJP's game plan to demolish the opposition represents a calculated assault on the foundations of democracy in India. Through a combination of divisive tactics, engineered defections, and financial strangulation, the BJP seeks to consolidate its political dominance by neutralizing its adversaries. However, the consequences of such a strategy extend far beyond partisan politics, posing a grave threat to democratic values and principles. As guardians of democracy, it is incumbent upon citizens and civil society to resist and challenge attempts to undermine the democratic process and ensure the preservation of pluralism, dissent, and political accountability.

## GUEST COMMENT

## Indian students in peril

America must  
prioritize their safety

The spike in the deaths of Indian or Indian-origin students in the US this year indicates that the Joe Biden administration is not doing enough to halt the alarming attacks. Earlier this week, Mohammed Abdul Arfath, a 25-year-old student from Hyderabad, was found dead in Cleveland; he had been missing since last month. His family had received a ransom call on March 17. It is unfortunate that the student could not be rescued, even though the Indian consulate had claimed that it was working with local law enforcement agencies to find him. The

death of an Indian student, Uma Satya Sai Gadde, was reported in Ohio last week, while a trained classical dancer, Amarnath Ghosh, was shot dead in St Louis, Missouri, in March.

A succession of unnatural deaths in January-February had prompted White House communications officer John Kirby to assert that there was no excuse for violence based on race, gender, religion or any other factor. In a bid to reassure the Indian diaspora, he had said that the Biden administration was working 'very, very hard' to try to thwart the attacks. US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti had said that his government was 'very committed' to making Indians realize that America was a safe and wonderful place to study. However, the situation on the ground seems to be

worsening.

The US-based Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies has identified the main causes of these incidents, which include violent crimes, suspicious accidents and mental issues triggering suicide. It has urged the authorities to raise awareness about various risks and provide mental health support. There is speculation that negative propaganda against the community is fueling hate crime. With Indians accounting for about 25 per cent of the foreign students in the US, it is imperative for America to prioritize their safety and crack down on the hate-mongers. The prevailing laxity can damage America's reputation as a popular destination for Indian students.

(Tribune, India)

# SUOZZI ON THE GROUND IN UKRAINE, POLAND AND MOLDOVA

**Gets Private Briefing from President Zelenskyy**



Tom Suozzi is received by President Zelensky

APRIL 10, 2024

**WASHINGTON, DC (TIP) :** Congressman Tom Suozzi (D-NY), joined by a bipartisan group of congressional members, met with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and top-ranking Ukrainian, Polish, Moldovan, and US military and civilian officials during his trip last week to war-weary Eastern Europe. The delegation included Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) and Congress Members Chuck Edwards (R-NC), Ashley Hinson (R-IA), Wiley Nickel (D-NC), and Mike Quigley (D-IL)

The trip began on Monday, April 1, 2024, and for security reasons, details were not released or publicized until the Congress members left for home. This is the only Congressional Delegation that stayed overnight and for multiple days in Ukraine since the war started.

The delegation stayed in Kyiv for two days and visited Odessa and multiple other sites throughout the country, as well as neighboring Poland and Moldova.

"It is vital that the United States act quickly to support Ukraine in every way we can," Suozzi said.

"Putin is stepping up his attacks and he must be stopped. The Ukrainians are running out of time, and we must act within the next two weeks. Helping Ukraine is not only a moral imperative but also in America's strategic and financial interests," Suozzi explained.

"My week-long meetings with the Ukrainian President, his military advisors, journalists, prosecutors, farmers, local leaders, and civilians on the ground convinced me more than ever of how courageous the Ukrainians are amidst so much pain, suffering and terror Russia's Putin has rained down upon Ukraine," he added.

"100,000 soldiers and civilians have been killed, 10 million people forced to leave their homes, 20,000 children kidnapped and sent to Russia," Suozzi emphasized.

On Saturday, April 6th, in Kyiv, Suozzi was awoken by the searing sound of air-raid sirens in the middle of the night. Three Russian missiles and 28 bomb-carrying drones targeted the city. Anti-aircraft defenses were deployed, and they were successfully shot down, but Ukraine is running out of ammunition.

Zelenskyy met with Suozzi and the delegation in the Chernihiv region in Northern Ukraine, liberated from the Russians exactly two years ago on Friday, April 5, 2022.

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

# Minority Leader DeRiggi-Whitton criticizes Blakeman Decision to Sue State Over Even-Year Local Elections

APRIL 8, 2024

MINEOLA, N.Y.

**(TIP):** On Friday, April 5, Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman announced a lawsuit against New York State seeking to overturn recently-enacted legislation that moves many elections for local offices in Nassau County to even years.



"We are confident this frivolous litigation will be swiftly thrown out of court," Nassau County Legislature Minority Leader Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D - Glen Cove) said.

**FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT, NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE MINORITY LEADER DELIA DERIGGI-WHITTON (D - GLEN COVE) ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:**

*"Here we go again with the Blakeman administration's latest wasteful lawsuit-of-the-week, paid for by Nassau taxpayers. The Democratic Minority Caucus voted against retaining special counsel to pursue this politically motivated action, and we are confident this frivolous litigation will be swiftly thrown out of court," Nassau County Legislature Minority Leader Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D - Glen Cove) said.*

# Nayan Parikh, Founder and President, Ashnu International, among 2024 Construction Power 100

APRIL 10, 2024

**NEW YORK (TIP):**

New York is constantly evolving, and the construction industry stands at the forefront of evolution. New York City's airports are undergoing a transformation, taking them from being a dreaded pit stop to becoming among the best in the country.

The city's transit system is getting a new bus terminal, new subway cars, subway infrastructure improvements and a subway expansion up Second Avenue - much of it to be funded by a pioneering congestion pricing system. The real estate sector continues to plan new developments, remaking the city's iconic skyline. New York's clean energy transformation is working to address climate change and right environmental wrongs. All of this is creating hundreds of thousands of new construction jobs. Among this



Nayan Parikh

year's Construction Power 100 - the leaders who are making the plans, wielding the jackhammers, driving the change and keeping the construction industry buzzing across New York, is an Indian American Nayan Parikh.

The owner of general contracting and construction

management company, Ashnu International, Nayan Parikh's civil construction firm caters to various federal and state agencies and private clients. Parikh, who was a civil engineer in India until he immigrated to the United States and later founded Ashnu International in 1998, is executive vice president of the National Association of Minority Contractors. He was also a member of New York City Mayor Eric Adams' Capital Process Reform Task Force.

(Source: City & State)

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## INDIAN AMERICAN GOLFER AKSHAY BHATIA EARNS MASTERS SPOT WITH TEXAS OPEN WIN



Indian-American Akshay Bhatia claims dramatic win, books Augusta Masters spot

Credit: PTI

APRIL 8, 2024

**SAN ANTONIO, TX (TIP) :** Indian American golfer Akshay Bhatia scripted a dramatic playoff victory at the Valero Texas Open in San Antonio, Texas to earn a coveted spot at the Augusta Masters in his first-ever Major appearance.

In a wild finish, 22-year-old Bhatia, who turned pro five years ago, edged past Denny McCarthy, sealing his triumph with a birdie on the first extra hole, Sunday, according to media reports.

McCarthy was 6 shots behind going to the back nine at the TPC San Antonio when he birdied eight of the nine holes - including the last seven - making a 12-foot birdie for a 9-under 63. Bhatia had to make his birdie putt from the same range to have a chance.

He made it for a 67, raising his arms to shake them in his clutch moment. And that's when he felt his shoulder - which he says has given him trouble before - pop out of its socket. Bhatia hit his tee shot and laid up with a 5-iron on the par-5 18th in the playoffs.

He will be the first Drive, Chip and Putt finalist to play in the Masters. He also qualifies for the US Open with his second PGA Tour victory and moves to No. 34 in the world.

It was Bhatia's first in a 72-hole stroke-play start. He won the 2023 Barracuda Championship, an event with a Modified Stableford scoring format held as an Additional Event during The Open Championship, according to [pgatour.com](http://pgatour.com).

"It was just incredible to be able to be in this position," Bhatia said. He reminded himself of his good fortune on the cart ride to the tee for the playoffs. Four swings later, he won 500 FedEx Cup points and an invitation to Augusta National, where a decade ago he played in the first Drive, Chip & Putt National Finals. "My mom's birthday was on April 1, and her wish was to get into the Masters," Bhatia said. "So, I hope I make her proud." It wasn't just her. Bhatia's fiancé, Presleigh Schultz, met him on the green for a long, tight embrace, [pgatour.com](http://pgatour.com) reported.

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

# Indian-origin Tarun Bajaj appointed chair of US-India tax forum

APRIL 10, 2024

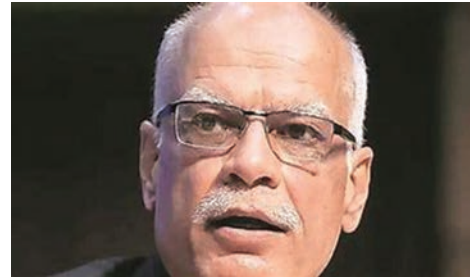
**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** The US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) has announced the appointment of Tarun Bajaj, former Revenue Secretary and former Secretary of Economic Affairs to the Government of India, as the head of US-India Tax Forum.

Officially launched on Feb 25, 2020, US-India Tax Forum is USISPF's dedicated Tax Policy Forum which enables focused discussion on important advocacy areas across tax regimes in India.

It has around 350 member companies and is the leading tax platform bringing Government of India policymakers, global tax experts, and the business community at large to advocate for better tax policy.

Bajaj, a 1988 batch, Haryana Cadre Indian Administrative Service officer, joined USISPF as an Advisor to the Board of Directors in January 2024.

He served as Revenue Secretary, Government of India before he superannuated in November 2022. Bajaj brings with him a wealth of experience and expertise in economic affairs and taxation matters, according to a USISPF



"I am honored to lead the US-India Tax Forum under the auspices of USISPF. It's a pleasure to have joined USISPF as Advisor to the Board", said Tarun Bajaj

press release.

During his tenure with the Government of India, he played a pivotal role in shaping fiscal policies and promoting economic growth. Bajaj managed both the direct and indirect tax revenues for the Government and was instrumental in stabilizing the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Bajaj also played a critical role in formulating the Government of India's economic response to the pandemic, including the rollout of various relief measures and economic stimulus packages.

Bajaj's financial perspicacity was key

in the formulation of Central Government budgets for the years 2021-22 and 2022-23, according to the release.

Speaking on Bajaj's appointment, USISPF President and CEO, Dr. Mukesh Aghi said, "I am thrilled to welcome Tarun to lead our US-India Tax Forum. With his extensive experience and profound expertise in finance and taxation, Tarun stands as an ideal candidate to steer our efforts forward.

"His adept leadership in shaping fiscal and tax policies and navigating intricate economic terrains will fortify our mission of nurturing strong economic bonds between the United States and India. I am confident that under his guidance, we will continue to advance an environment conducive to bilateral trade and investment."

Bajaj said, "I am honored to lead the US-India Tax Forum under the auspices of USISPF. It's a pleasure to have joined USISPF as Advisor to the Board this year, and in my new role, I look forward to making my contribution to make the US-India Tax Forum a robust and effective institution that companies can rely on and an institution that can engage effectively with all the stakeholders."

## Indian-origin builder dies after being shot multiple times at construction site in Canada's Edmonton



The Consulate General of India in New York has confirmed the death of Arfath who had relocated to the US in 2023 to study at Cleveland University.

APRIL 9, 2024

**EDMONTON, CANADA (TIP):** Buta Singh Gill—a prominent Punjabi-origin builder and head of a gurudwara in Canada's Edmonton—died on Monday, April 8, after being shot multiple times at a construction site.

Buta Singh was the owner of Gill Built Homes, a luxury home building company in Edmonton.

The Edmonton Police Service confirmed a 49-year-old and a 57-year-old man had died, and a 51-year-old man was taken to hospital with serious, life-threatening injuries.

The injured has been identified as Sarabjeet Singh, a civil engineer, who is currently battling for his life.

EPS said, "There were no immediate concerns for public safety".

"Police are asking citizens to avoid the area of Cavanagh Blvd SW and 30 Avenue SW while police investigate a shooting that occurred in the residential area around noon," it said in a post on X shortly after the shooting which also injured a 51-year-old man, who is in hospital with serious life-threatening injuries.

"There are no immediate concerns for public safety at this time and responding officers have secured the scene. EPS homicide investigators will be leading this investigation. No further details are available," it added.

Autopsies were done on April 9 and 10.

As per reports, an altercation occurred at the construction site, leading to the fatal shooting of Gill and another man by an Indian-origin construction worker who later took his own life.

Gill had previously reported receiving extortion calls and threats, prompting a police investigation, says a report.

## Indian American student missing for three weeks found dead

APRIL 9, 2024

**CLEVELAND, OH (TIP) :** Mohammad Abdul Arfath, an Indian student hailing from Hyderabad, was found dead in Cleveland, Ohio, after going missing for three weeks. The Indian consulate general in New York has confirmed the death of Arfath who had relocated to the US in 2023 to study at Cleveland University. "Anguished to learn that Mohammed Abdul Arfath, for whom search operation was underway, was found dead in Cleveland, Ohio. Our deepest condolences to Mohammed Arfath's family.

"@IndiainNewYork is in touch with local agencies to ensure a thorough investigation into Mr Mohammed Abdul Arfath's death. We are extending all possible assistance to the bereaved family to transport his mortal remains to India," the mission posted on X. Arfath's death comes less than a week after the Indian mission reported the demise of another Indian student, Uma Satya Sai Gadde, in Cleveland, Ohio.

"Deeply saddened by the unfortunate demise of Mr. Uma Satya Sai Gadde, an Indian student in Cleveland, Ohio", India in New York posted on X. "Police investigation is underway. @IndiainNewYork continues to remain in touch with the family in India."

"All possible assistance is being extended including transporting Mr. Uma Gadde's mortal remains to India at the earliest," it added. Following a series of attacks on Indians and people of Indian origin, officials from the Indian Embassy in Washington and its consulates in various locations held a virtual interaction with Indian students from across the United States, discussing various aspects of student well-being and ways to stay connected with the larger diaspora.

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



The Consulate General of India in New York has confirmed the death of Arfath who had relocated to the US in 2023 to study at Cleveland University.

# Indian-origin neurologist Dr Ashvini Keshavan's UK study to revolutionize dementia diagnosis

APRIL 6, 2024

**LONDON (TIP):** An Indian-origin neurologist is part of a world-class research team in the UK that has been awarded a major grant this week to build on recent breakthroughs in potential dementia blood tests and generate the evidence needed for them to be used more widely in the next five years.

Dr Ashvini Keshavan, Senior Clinical Research and Honorary Consultant Neurologist Fellow at University College London (UCL) is part of the team that will focus on the most promising biomarker for Alzheimer's disease called p-tau217. A second team made up of researchers from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge will test various proteins to detect a variety of dementia-causing diseases.

Both teams will recruit participants from sites spread across the UK with the hope of its cost-effective rollout on the National Health Service (NHS) over time.

"Proteins that underpin various dementia-causing diseases, and particularly Alzheimer's disease, which is the commonest cause of dementia worldwide, are now detectable in blood," said Dr Keshavan.

"The two studies that have been awarded funding by the Blood Biomarker



Dr Ashvini Keshavan has been awarded a major grant to build on recent breakthroughs in potential dementia blood tests

Challenge grant are both seeking to implement blood tests in real world settings in the UK, to see if blood tests will prove useful in confirming the presence or absence of these diseases in people who have early dementia or mild but progressive cognitive problems. We want to ensure that our research will reflect the UK's ethnic and socioeconomic diversity and are aiming to broaden access to these tests, as the current gold standard tests to confirm the presence of these diseases are currently not

accessible to most UK patients because they are either expensive or invasive," she explains.

The Blood Biomarker Challenge is a multi-million-pound award given by Alzheimer's Society, Alzheimer's Research UK, the UK's National Institute for Health and Research and Gates Ventures and includes funds raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

The UCL-led study is called ADAPT and will focus on plasma p-tau217 - a blood marker of Alzheimer's disease - and will answer the question of whether knowledge of this test result can improve rates of Alzheimer's diagnosis in conjunction with standard memory clinic assessments. The second study is called READ-OUT, which aims to test various proteins, including novel or less well-established ones, to detect a variety of dementia-causing diseases.

"If our research shows that these tests are clinically useful, and cost-effective, we would be able to contribute to the case for them becoming a part of the standard of care offered in the UK. This would have the potential for individuals to receive earlier diagnoses of their specific dementia-causing disease," said Dr Keshavan.

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

## INDIAN AMERICAN TEXAS HOTELIER MIRAJ S. PATEL BECOMES YOUNGEST CHAIRMAN OF AAHOA



Miraj S. Patel has become the youngest chairman of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) board of directors in its 35-year history

APRIL 8, 2024

**HOUSTON, TX (TIP):** Indian American Texas hotelier Miraj S. Patel has become the youngest chairman of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) board of directors in its 35-year history.

Patel became chairman for 2024-25 at the April 5 conclusion of the 2024 AAHOA Convention & Trade Show in Orlando, Florida, which set a record level of exhibiting vendors and welcomed nearly 6,500 attendees for the industry's leading event for hotel owners, according to a media release.

"It is an honor to serve America's hotel owners as the newest AAHOA Chairman," Patel said. "I am committed to helping solve some of the industry's toughest challenges with simple and straightforward solutions and to putting our members at the center of every decision we make."

Patel is a second-generation hotelier who began his career in hospitality at a young age, growing up in his family's first 30-room independent property.

He got his start in volunteer service at AAHOA by serving as a committee member for several years and joining the AAHOA Board of Directors in 2019 after being elected as Young Professional Director Western Division.

"Serving as the youngest chair in the association's history further demonstrates AAHOA's commitment to fostering the growth and success of the next generation," Patel said.

"I'm always encouraging young professionals not to let age determine success. Many times, people may say you're too young, but that is absolutely not true. There are so many folks who are young but still do whatever it takes to find success. If you never try, you'll never know what you're capable of achieving."

Today, Patel is President of Wayside Investment Group, a Texas-based company that specializes in making opportunistic investments in the lodging and hospitality real estate sector.

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

## INDIAN-ORIGIN PUNJAB YOUTH FROM GARHSHANKAR DIES IN NEW ZEALAND



Mandeep Singh residing in New Zealand, has died after a brief illness

APRIL 8, 2024

**NEW YORK (TIP):** A resident of Rampur Bildon village in Garhshankar, currently residing in New Zealand, has died after a brief illness. The deceased has been identified as Mandeep Singh.

Rajinder Singh, father of the deceased, said his son went to New Zealand as a student in 2013. He started working there and later got citizenship.

He said a few days ago, Mandeep suffered a head injury after he slipped at home. As his condition started deteriorating, he was admitted to a hospital in Wellington, New Zealand.

According to family members, doctors there said a blood clot had formed in his head due to the injury. He breathed his last on April 4.

Village sarpanch Harmesh Singh said the family was shocked by the sudden death of Mandeep. He sought help from the administration in bringing back his mortal remains to the village.

## NASA names Indian American student Aadya Karthik as "Power to Explore" finalist

APRIL 10, 2024

**HOUSTON, TX (TIP):** Aadya Karthik, an Indian American student from Redmond, Washington, is one of nine finalists selected by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the 'Power to Explore Challenge.'

The national competition for K-12 students featuring the enabling power of radioisotopes offers students the opportunity to learn more about these reliable power systems, celebrate their own strengths, and interact with NASA's diverse workforce.

In an essay titled "Destiny: A Journey of Resilience," Karthik explored the legacy left behind by Cassini, a spacecraft that focused on exploring Saturn's moons. "In September 2017, after making many fascinating discoveries, the Cassini spacecraft plunged into Saturn's atmosphere, never to be heard from again," she wrote. "However, Cassini's legacy lives on, as its discoveries are still studied by the scientific community, particularly the research it conducted on Saturn's many moons."

"Saturn's fifth largest moon, Tethys, is composed largely of water-ice. During a Cassini flyby in 2015, mysterious red arcs were spotted on the moon's surface, their origin unknown. Similar features have been observed on Jupiter's moon Europa, which could potentially host life, hinting at some connection between the two moons," Karthik noted. "To investigate this mystery," she proposed, "my flyby spacecraft, named Destiny, will attempt to understand the origin and composition of these arcs using a spectrometer and camera system operating in the visible to infrared ranges."

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



Aadya Karthik is one of nine finalists selected by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the 'Power to Explore Challenge.' Credit: NASA/Dave Lam

# Nassau Lawmakers, Advocates and Former Law Enforcement Demand C.E. Blakeman Abandon Controversial Citizen Militia Plan

APRIL 10, 2024

**MINEOLA, N.Y. (TIP):** More than 100 concerned residents - including a diverse coalition of community advocates and retired law enforcement personnel - assembled at the Theodore Roosevelt Executive & Legislative Building in Mineola on Monday, April 8 with a single demand of Nassau County Executive Bruce A. Blakeman - abandon your plans for a makeshift militia of private citizens with gun permits.

The Blakeman administration solicited applications for the "provisional sheriff" program in a March 17 Newsday legal notice. Those armed citizens, who would not be part of any type of professional law enforcement agency, could be mobilized to guard public spaces during vaguely defined "states of emergency." Few concrete details have been shared by the administration as to how these individuals would be vetted or trained before being deputized.

"The idea of any County Executive having a private, armed group of people to deploy at their sole discretion is risky, unnecessary, and has created tremendous anxiety in people across Nassau County," said Nassau County Legislature Minority Leader Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D - Glen Cove). "During the last several weeks, my office has been flooded with calls, and the consensus is clear - we don't want it, and we don't need it because we have one of the best police forces in the nation. The Minority Caucus will not relent in its efforts to reverse this profoundly misguided idea."

The proposal has roiled Nassau County and the region since news of its existence first emerged in media reports. A change.org petition demanding that County Executive Blakeman abandon the plan has garnered more than 1,400 signatures in less than a week.

During Monday's rally, New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) Nassau County Chapter Director Susan Gottehrer, Rockville Centre resident Laura Burns from Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, National Organization for Women (NOW) Nassau Chapter President Patty Pastor, leaders of the Hempstead NAACP and Elmont resident and retired New York City Corrections Officer Angel Joyner, joined Minority Leader DeRiggi-Whitton and the full Democratic caucus in denouncing the plan.

"Deputizing armed citizens - with no training, no experience, and no knowledge of how to handle what he or any County Executive deems a state of emergency - will most assuredly foster and promote lawlessness during an emergency and may in fact endanger the lives



Nassau County Legislature Minority Leader Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D - Glen Cove) addresses the gathering  
Photo : Peter M. Budraitis

of our law enforcement as well as other residents," said Nassau County Legislature Deputy Minority Leader Arnold W. Drucker (D - Plainview). "This is yet another disturbing example of our County Executive veering so far out of his lane and devoting his attention to issues that don't exist or aren't likely to ever exist. The authorization of an armed militia in these scenarios is downright dangerous."

"Nassau County residents and visitors benefit from our highly trained and capable law enforcement and Office of Emergency Management personnel. We need highly trained individuals - trained in de-escalation; trained in mental health; trained to use technology we equip them with like body cameras; and trained to work with the mental health professionals we imbed in their response to mentally aided calls," said Nassau County Legislature Alternate Deputy Minority Leader Siela A. Bynoe (D - Westbury). "As a body, we have invested wisely and collaboratively with our police unions and prior administrations to build greater trust between police and our communities. One bad act by one bad actor of this militia could erode all the trust that we have worked to get. No militia - no way. Not on our watch."

Nassau County Legislator Seth I. Koslow (D - Merrick) echoed the sentiments of the crowd as he stressed that "only police officers who are trained should be doing police work," adding that Nassau's thousands of officers often receive training exceeding State requirements.

"Are these deputies going to be trained? How much training are they going to get? Will they be re-trained? We

don't know any of this because Bruce Blakeman is making it up as he goes along," Legislator Koslow said. "What about chain of command issues? What about the state and federal resources we have in times of emergency? All of this begs the question - does County Executive Bruce Blakeman not trust our law enforcement to protect us in times of emergency? Well, I do. I'm here today - we're here today to tell Bruce Blakeman to stop this charade, stop terrifying citizens of Nassau County, and do away with this militia."

Nassau County Legislator Carrié Solages (D - Valley Stream) recounted his experiences as a father to relay concerns that other parents have expressed to him about the County's proposal.

"As the father of a young Black man who sometimes wants to wear a hood - God forbid a young man wearing a hood is out and about, minding his business during this so-called 'state of emergency,' which is not defined under the law, and God forbid an overzealous George Zimmerman-type of person chooses to think that young man is a danger," Legislator Solages said. "Our County Executive is trying to take us back in time. This is dangerous, and we cannot allow this to stand."

Nassau County Legislator Debra Mulé (D - Freeport) recalled her experiences as a Freeport resident during Superstorm Sandy to demonstrate how the provisional sheriff initiative is unnecessary and potentially hazardous.

"The County Executive mentioned - well, we might need additional people to protect us during an emergency such as Sandy. I lived through it. In my area of Freeport, we had no power, no gas for five days, and things could have gone terribly wrong," Legislator Mulé said. "But you know what happened? The National Guard was brought in - people who are trained to deal with situations such as this. They made sure that life and property were secured. We do not need this extremely misguided idea."

"There's one more very practical and real reason that everyone in this County should be opposed to this proposal - it's your pocketbook," Nassau County Legislator Scott M. Davis (D - Rockville Centre) said. "According to the administrative code of Nassau County, implementing this policy would create tremendous liability, and that liability would fall on the shoulders of all the residents of Nassau County. You're talking about putting people in a highly stressful situation where you can only imagine, in a densely populated area, the likelihood of something going wrong. This is not a burden that we need to bear, nor should we bear."

## 43 SOCIAL WORKERS HONORED FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO THEIR PATIENTS

- **Social workers are an integral part of NYC Health + Hospitals**
- **There are more than 1,000 social workers employed throughout the health system**
- **The honorees were nominated by their colleagues and were chosen by their facility's individual social work recognition committee**

APRIL 12, 2024

**NEW YORK (TIP):** NYC Health + Hospitals, on April 12, announced 43 social workers from across health system who were honored for their commitment and dedication to their patients. There are more 1,000 social workers employed at the health system performing a



NYC Health + Hospitals, on April 12, announced 43 social workers from across health system who were honored for their commitment and dedication to their patients.

variety of roles, including managers, therapists, researchers, discharge planners, and policymakers. In these positions they work closely with family caregivers, friends, neighbors and community-based agencies to help patients resume their life within the community. This year over 400 nominations were submitted from across the system, and the 43 honorees were selected from this pool by their facility's individual social work recognition committee. The honorees were recognized for their dedication to their patients and their passion for the mission of NYC Health + Hospitals.

contd on page 47

# Cooperation, Competence Essential for NUMC's Survival



BY SIELA A. BYNOE

The finances of Nassau Health Care Corporation - the public benefit corporation that operates Nassau University Medical Center and the A. Holly Patterson Extended Care Facility - are in desperate need of emergency resuscitation.

We reached this fiscal cliff after years of funding infusions from the state. These resources were never intended to be a permanent source of revenue, but to serve as a temporary bridge to facilitate the rightsizing of the hospital's operations. Unfortunately, year after year, this money has not met its intended goals.

Seeking answers about growing operational losses and a clear, on-the-record plan for NUMC's long-term stability, I called for public hearings on March 31 and June 7, 2023. On July 24, I joined a meeting called by CSEA Local 830, which was attended by other elected officials and some members of the former NUMC Forward task force, for discussions that included my proposal for creating a more symbiotic Nassau Health Care Corporation.

Components of my plan entail transferring A. Holly Patterson to the NUMC campus and developing the surrounding property to integrate rehabilitation and assisted living

communities, thereby connecting residents to the Hospital's crucial clinical practices and addressing the under-utilization of NUMC's campus. Former CEO and Medical Director Dr. Anthony Boutin said the plan had merit and could play a role in sustaining the hospital into the future. Thereafter, I reiterated my request for a hearing on Dec. 18 in the interest of obtaining an update on the hospital's financial status and its short- and long-term viability plans.

In late February 2024, a report by the accounting firm Alvarez & Marshal projected that NuHealth could be out of cash by the end of April. This dire posture marks the culmination of years of staggering - and growing - operating losses that reached \$164 million in 2022, climbed to \$180 million in the following year, and continue to fuel the threat of NuHealth's closure.

Despite these annual losses, the Chairman is holding board meetings only quarterly, which violates the Nassau County Charter's requirement for six meetings per year. Leadership did not adequately plan for the scheduled conclusion of the State's Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) program, and last year failed to apply for their share of millions in state aid for distressed hospitals. Cronyism and political patronage continue unabated - a fact made evident by the recent hiring of an embattled former Sheriff at \$275,000/year.

In recent weeks, New York State has once

again taken action to sustain this hospital by offering \$83 million in additional resources, but this time, the money comes with a series of conditions to address a "lack of strong leadership, transparency, communication, and fiscal strategy." These include submission of a five-year transformation plan, a quality improvement plan, and breakdowns of salary and lobbying costs; an immediate search for a new CEO; outside oversight of management hires and appointments; and outside approval for contracts and payments over \$10 million.

As a former deputy director and executive director of public corporations whose career has involved turning around housing authorities considered to be troubled, I have interacted with oversight agencies to improve performance and implement best practices like those being proposed. The requirements are eminently reasonable for an institution that has received numerous tranches of short-term funding from the state. If they are going to be bailed out yet again, such resources should be tied to certain benchmarks.

The Chairman's refusal of the offer was shortsighted, and his response further illustrates how his leadership has been a central problem. Cognizant of the far-reaching repercussions, I hope County Executive Blakeman will take this as an opportunity to evolve on this issue.

Should conditions further worsen, the State would be empowered to install a

receiver to operate the hospital - an outcome that would not be optimal for County residents. The best path forward is one in which a turnaround plan is implemented by an effective leadership team formed of local community leaders who are directly accountable to those they serve.

Bold, collaborative action - including the complete and full funding of Medicaid reimbursement rates for hospitals and nursing homes by the State - is needed to rescue these safety-net facilities and sustain them for the long-term benefit of our region. We owe this to the families who rely upon them for essential care and the more than 3,500 employees who work so diligently at these facilities to deliver top-level care.

These healthcare heroes were here for us during the tremendously uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, as the survival of Nassau University Medical Center, a level 1 trauma that treats over 80,000 emergency patients, handles over 178,000 patient visits annually, and features a state-of-the-art burn center, hangs in the balance, stakeholders must alleviate their uncertainty by accepting the State's reasonable requirements and working collaboratively toward the hospital's long-term sustainability and success.

(Siela A. Bynoe, of Westbury, the Nassau County Legislature's Alternate Deputy Minority Leader, has represented the Legislature's Second District since 2014)



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# Prioritize humanitarian concerns

**INDIA, PAKISTAN MUST STRIVE TO ENSURE THAT THE TWO JUVENILES' CASE IS NOT REPEATED**



BY VIVEK KATJU

**"The entire gamut of the India-Pakistan bilateral ties covers issues relating to (i) cooperation, such as in trade and commerce; (ii) addressing contentious matters such as Sir Creek, terrorism and J&K; and (iii) humanitarian concerns. When the bilateral relations were revived in early 1997 after a hiatus of over four years, the Pakistanis insisted that all issues should be addressed in an integrated manner. At that stage, Pakistan thought that India was interested in focusing on commercial and economic cooperation instead of resolving outstanding issues because if a strong pro-bilateral trade lobby developed in Pakistan, it would exert pressure on the establishment to put contentious issues, including J&K, on the back burner. Amidst this dichotomy, the political and diplomatic authorities did not give the attention to humanitarian issues that they deserved. Consequently, delays in releasing fishermen and civilian prisoners were overlooked. Sometimes, though, the courts in both countries have acted positively to help the victims."**

A report in The Tribune (March 30) gave an account of two Pakistani boys who are languishing in the Faridkot Observation Home for convicted juveniles and undertrials. The boys had 'strayed' into Indian territory in the Tarn Taran area on August 31, 2022. They were acquitted by the Juvenile Justice Board on

July 18, 2023. There was no indication of the action taken by the board or the Punjab authorities to ensure their early repatriation to their home country.

The NHRCs of both countries would be able to give this category of humanitarian matters higher priority than the diplomatic establishment.

According to the report, Justice NS Shekhawat of the Punjab and Haryana High Court inspected the observation home in January this year. He found the boys' presence unwarranted and asked the authorities to make arrangements to send them back to Pakistan. They were taken to the Attari border on March 29, but Pakistani immigration officials declined to accept them because they did not have any directions from their authorities. The report stated that the Faridkot District and Sessions Judge had taken up the matter with the Ministry of External Affairs so that the juveniles could be sent home.

I have given a detailed account of this report as it vividly illustrates the fate of Indians and Pakistanis who inadvertently enter the other country's territory. There were times, especially when the bilateral relationship was going through a less hostile phase, when the Border Security Force and Pakistani Rangers, after ascertaining that the persons concerned had mistakenly strayed, informally handed them over to the other side. The officials on the 'other side' questioned them, and if they were satisfied with their bona fides, they allowed them to cross over and go to their homes.

Once the border crossers are handed over to the police, the immigration laws are invoked and they are prosecuted and sentenced to imprisonment. This results in their spending many years in jail. That is sad for inadvertent border crossers. What is worse, they are compelled to spend time in custody even after they have served their sentences, or, as in this case, the Juvenile Justice Board has ordered that they be repatriated. Their cases are not given priority by the respective foreign ministries or other authorities. They simply become victims of the India-Pakistan relationship, which in such cases follows the time-honored tradition of organizing collective exchanges from time to time.

The fate of fishermen, civilian prisoners and inadvertent border



Issues relating to fishermen, civilian prisoners and inadvertent border crossers should be seen through the prism of human rights. -Photo: ANI

crossers is part of what in the India-Pakistan diplomatic lexicon is considered to be a humanitarian issue. Other matters within this rubric pertain to Indians and Pakistanis who wish to visit the other country for religious reasons or to meet relatives. Another issue is the intention of some Pakistanis to travel to India for medical treatment. The absence of effective diplomatic ties between the two countries since Pakistan's irrational response to the constitutional changes in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019 has adversely impacted these humanitarian issues. The only partial exception has been the visit of Sikh jathas to Pakistan on religious occasions.

The entire gamut of the India-Pakistan bilateral ties covers issues relating to (i) cooperation, such as in trade and commerce; (ii) addressing contentious matters such as Sir Creek, terrorism and J&K; and (iii) humanitarian concerns. When the bilateral relations were revived in early 1997 after a hiatus of over four years, the Pakistanis insisted that all issues should be addressed in an integrated manner. At that stage, Pakistan thought that India was interested in focusing on commercial and economic cooperation instead of resolving outstanding issues because if a strong pro-bilateral trade lobby developed in Pakistan, it would exert pressure on the establishment to put contentious issues, including J&K, on the back burner. Amidst this dichotomy, the political and diplomatic authorities did not give the attention to humanitarian issues that they deserved. Consequently, delays in releasing fishermen and civilian prisoners were overlooked. Sometimes, though, the courts in both countries have acted positively to help the victims.

This writer has had experience of

dealing with India-Pakistan matters during his diplomatic career. I had advocated that humanitarian issues relating to fishermen, civilian prisoners and inadvertent border crossers should be seen through the prism of human rights and that the National Human Rights Commissions (NHRCs) of the two countries should be given the responsibility to handle them. This may require that Pakistan enact legislation to create an official body for this purpose, with its remit limited only to these matters.

The two bodies can decide, with the approval of other ministries and agencies concerned, on matters concerning consular access to confirm the national identity of fishermen and civilian prisoners. They can, thereafter, focus on how they would monitor cases of these categories of persons so that they can return very early after serving their sentences. This would naturally be in cases where citizens of the other country have been convicted.

The NHRCs of both countries would be able to give this category of humanitarian matters higher priority than the diplomatic establishment. This would also insulate these issues from the status of the bilateral relationship. Beginning with these issues, they may also generate confidence to offer suggestions on matters relating to visas for relatives and other categories too. Naturally, those accused of or convicted of espionage or terrorism would not be within the remit of the suggested mechanism.

The two countries must strive to ensure that a case such as that of the two Pakistani juveniles in Faridkot is not repeated. And Pakistan should take them back immediately so as to reunite them with their families

(The author is a former Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India)



# The Bhima Koregaon case and what it tells us about democracy

**DISSENT HAS A HUGE PRICE IN INDIA, SAY WRITERS, WHO PIECE TOGETHER THE STORY OF THE IMPRISONMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS INCLUDING PROFESSORS, LAWYERS, JOURNALISTS AND POETS, WITHOUT CREDIBLE EVIDENCE AND WITHOUT TRIAL, AFTER BEING LABELLED AS MAOIST TERRORISTS OR 'URBAN NAXALS'**



BY ZIYA US SALAM



Members of the Society of Jesuits and faculty of Andhra Loyola College stage protests seeking the release of Fr. Stan Swamy and other rights activists apprehended in the Bhima Koregaon case, in Vijayawada on October 20, 2020. | Photo Credit: RAJU V

At a raid on Bagaicha, the training center and home of Jesuit priest and activist Father Stan Swamy in Ranchi, in August, 2018, the Pune police told him that he was a suspect in the Bhima Koregaon case. This shocked him, recalls Prakash Louis who has put together details of Swamy's subsequent arrest and death in custody in a book, *Fr Stan Swamy: A Maoist or A Martyr?*. Swamy had never been to Bhima Koregaon nor did he have anything to do with the violence that happened on January 1, 2018, when Dalits had gathered to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Bhima Koregaon.

"They seized my laptop, mobile and sim card, some CDs and some documents lying on my table," he recalled. The raid was to change the octogenarian's life. Arrested in October 2020, he was to die in judicial custody on July 5, 2021. He faced multiple accusations of involvement in the Bhima Koregaon incident besides alleged Maoist links. There were reports that Swamy was being denied basic human rights in jail, including the use of a sipper - he was suffering from Parkinson's disease.

Louis's book, which is being translated into many Indian languages, asks questions not just about the Bhima Koregaon arrests but the larger issue of how and why a man, whose death in judicial custody is considered by many to be an institutional murder, came to be called a Maoist in some government circles. In 2021, after his passing, The Indian Social Institute, Bengaluru, where Swamy had worked for years, published *I am not a Silent Spectator*, an autobiographical fragment by Stan



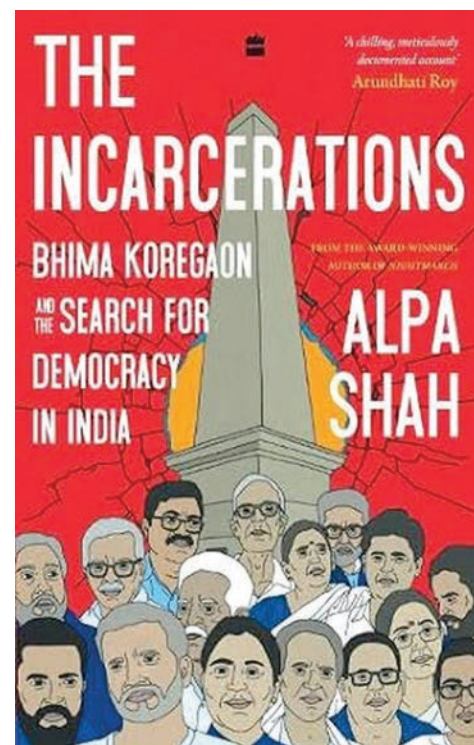
Fr Stan Swamy: A Maoist or A Martyr

Swamy, where he reflects on his life and work, and also his time in prison.

## ARRESTS, AND AFTER

In her new book, *Alpa Shah*, professor of anthropology at the London School of Economics, provides details of arrests of activists, from Rony Wilson, Sudhir Dhawale and Surendra Gadling to Shoma Sen - who has just got bail after six years in jail without trial - and Mahesh Raut. Then came the arrests of Sudha Bharadwaj, Arun Ferreira and Vernon Gonsalves followed by those of Gautam Navlakha, Anand Teltumbde, Hany Babu and Swamy etc. In *The Incarcerations: Bhima Koregaon and the Search for Democracy in India*, Shah outlines how 16 human rights defenders,

whom she calls the BK 16, including academics, activists, lawyers and poets, were imprisoned for years without credible evidence, and dubbed Maoist terrorists/'urban Naxals'. She goes on to write about the role of the police in hacking into the computers of at least three of the accused - Swamy, Wilson and Gadling.



Patiently, Shah unravels how these alleged terrorists were charged with inciting violence at a commemoration in January 2018, accused of waging a war against the Indian state and plotting to kill the Prime Minister. "The BK case is a bellwether for the collapse of democracy because, for the first time in Indian history, there is a multi-pronged coordinated nationwide persecution of these custodians of democracy. This goes well beyond the routine forms of anti-journalistic, anti-activist action taken by the state in the past. The BK case shows that the ritual of elections hides the rise of authoritarianism. It exposes the brutal state-sponsored abuse of democratic rights taking place across India with complete impunity."

Indeed, when the arrests of noted human rights defenders took place, civil society was alarmed, and some took recourse to the judiciary. The Booker Prize-winning novelist Arundhati Roy drew attention to the Emergency-like condition, stating, "In the India of today, to belong to a minority is a crime. To be murdered is a crime. To be lynched is a crime. To be poor is a crime. To defend the poor is to plot to overthrow the

government." Historian Romila Thapar went to court, stating, "Our intention was to draw the attention of the judiciary to what we see is a case of a gross misuse of the state's power under the draconian law of the UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act)."

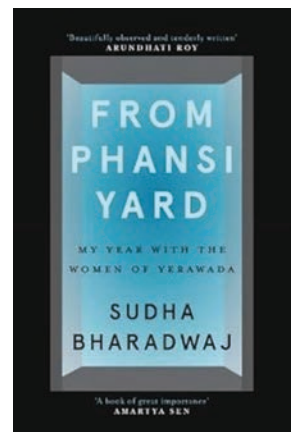
Two of the three Supreme Court judges rejected Prof Thapar's petition, with a dissenting note by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud. He wrote in his judgment, "Circumstances have been drawn to our notice to cast a cloud on whether the Maharashtra Police has in the present case acted as a fair and impartial investigating agency...Liberty cannot be sacrificed at the altar of conjectures...Voices of opposition cannot be muzzled because it's a dissent. Dissent is the safety valve of democracy. If dissent is not allowed, then the pressure cooker may burst."

## PRISON DIARIES

The BK 16 case is bleak, but there are some moments of light in the darkness. The arrests of accomplished academics and lawyers give us an insight into the conditions of prisons besides the heart-warming ground reality of common people building bonds beyond social barriers. Recalling her days in prison, Sudha Bharadwaj penned *From Phansi Yard*, which brings many human stories together. The book has sketches and notes about 76 prisoners or groups of prisoners with whom Bharadwaj interacted during her time at Yerwada and Byculla jails. Through the stories of prisoners unconnected with the BK case, Bharadwaj threw light on how women helped women in prisons, that even in times of acute distress, they looked out for those in more dire circumstances.

The BK 16 case is a warning to the dangers facing Indian democracy. As Christophe Jaffrelot writes in his endorsement for Shah's book, "A poignant biography of the Bhima Koregaon accused, Shah's book uses this entry point to make us understand what post-democracy India is fast becoming, and how those who resist suffer - be they in jail or out."

(Ziya Us Salam is an Indian Author, critic, journalist, social commentator)



# "ON THIS MARTYRS' DAY WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT FURTHER SACRIFICES ARE NOT NEEDED"



BY VK RAJU



Martyrs are willing to pay a personal price for their cause, whereas terrorists intend to extract their price from others

Though I was giving a positive message to readers of The Indian Panorama on January 1, 2024, we cannot ignore that over 30 live global conflicts are going on. Millions are displaced; International law is disregarded with impunity as criminal networks profit from division and violence. Terrorists and tyrants are increasing by the day.

## ADDED TO THIS STATE OF WORLD AFFAIRS, THERE ARE FIVE SIGNIFICANT AND HUGE PROBLEMS THE WORLD IS FACING.

1. Climate change and biodiversity loss
2. Poverty,
3. Water scarcity
4. Poor support of health and education,
5. Eroding international peace and security.

## UNITED NATIONS (UN) IS ONLY TRULY UNIVERSAL GLOBAL ORGANIZATION IN SPITE OF MANY CRITICS

Today, global issues transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting on its own. In addition to its initial goals of safeguarding peace, protecting human rights, establishing the framework for international justice and promoting economic and social progress, in the 8 decades since its



Climate Change

creation, the United Nations had added on new challenges, such as AIDS, big data, and climate change.

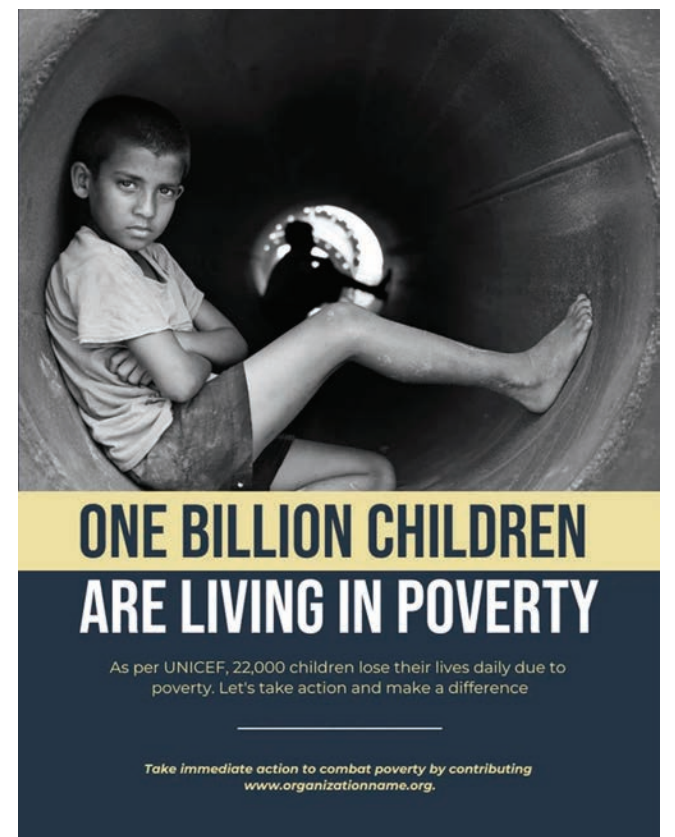
While conflict resolution and peace keeping continue to be among its most visible efforts, the UN is also engaged in a wide array of activities with an objective to improve people's lives around the world.

**CLIMATE CHANGE:** This is one of the major challenges of our times from shifting with weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, The impact of climate change is global in scope and unprecedented in scale.

**POVERTY:** At the current rate of progress, the world is unlikely to meet the global goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030, and estimates suggest that nearly 600,000,000 people will still be living in extreme poverty by the end of the decade.

**HEALTH and EDUCATION:** A lack of access to education is a large pillar of gender inequality across the world. People with more education are more likely to learn about health and health risks. People with more education live longer, healthier lives than those with fewer years of schooling. Horace Mann (1848) succinctly stated" education, then beyond all other divides of human origin, is a great equalizer of conditions of men - the balance wheel of a social machinery." This goes double for women who often make up more than half of the work force in many developing countries.

**WATER:** Freshwater sustains human life and is vital for human health. It is important to note that there is enough freshwater on the planet for everyone. However, due to bad economics and poor infrastructure, millions of people, (mostly children) die from diseases associated



Poverty

with inadequate access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Yet 2.1 trillion gallons (30%) of global water is wasted every year, due to leaks or inefficient usage. Israel reuses 85% of its water ranking as the number one country to do so across the globe.

**INTERNATIONAL PEACE and SECURITY:** Saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war was the main motivation for creating the United Nations, whose founders lived through the devastation of two world wars. There were 110 million people forcibly displaced worldwide at the end of June 2023.

### Are we losing?

We could say humanity is winning more than losing - BUT WHERE WE ARE LOSING IS VERY SERIOUS.

### Do we have a solution?

Yes.

It will require collaborative efforts among governments, international organizations, universities, NGOs, and creative individuals. World affairs sometimes are depressing but collectively we can overcome them.

**What we need is political will, professional will, and people's will.**

We need real collaboration with trust.

I would like to end this brief article on enormous problems of the world, with a quote from Dr. Arnold Toynbee.

*"It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a western beginning will have to have an Indian ending, if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race... at this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way-emperor Ashoka's and Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence, and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions. Here we have an attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family- and in the atomic age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves."*

(VK Raju is an eminent Ophthalmologist and author. He is founder and President of the Eye Foundation of America which is working for a world without childhood blindness)



Conflicts



We request all to come and enjoy this color full evening of laughter and delicious food.

# RANA Holi Hasya Kavi Sammellan 2024



**Gaurav Sharma**

**Ankita Singh**

**Padma Shri Dr Sunil Jogi**

**Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**05:00pm - 06:30pm :- Dinner**  
(with the traditional rajasthani food)

**07:00 pm - 11:00 Pm :- Kavi Sammellan**  
With Interval of 15 Min In Between.  
at

**Hindu Temple Society of North America, Community Center,  
143-09 Holy Avenue, Flushing, ny 11355.**

**Registration Fee : \$50 per person**

Buy tickets on RANA website. [Ranausa.org](http://Ranausa.org)

**Prem Bhandari**  
516-589-0961

**Dr. Sharad Kothari**  
718-509-7626

**Dr. Raj Modi**  
516-987-0048

**Ravi Jargad**  
718-564-9352

**Neelam Modi**  
516-987-0053

**Arvind Bhandari**  
646-416-1410

**Ashok Sancheti**  
201-927-3151

**Ajay K Jain**  
516-852-5692

**Ashok Pandey**  
646-246-4942

**Atul Kothari**  
646-667-9997

**Beena Kothari**  
631-988-1280

**Chandra P. Sukhwal**  
631-245-1117

**Dashrath Dugar**  
917-680-1839

**Dulichand Baid**  
917-821-8418

**Deep Chopra**  
646-245-1666

**Kanak Golia**  
347-386-7112

**Madhu Pareek**  
917-535-9903

**Nitin Dhariwal**  
929-257-9807

**Sharad Agarwal**  
718-473-6281

**Dr. Vijay Arya**  
516-946-1749

**Kushal Sacheti**  
646-351-2629

INDIA ELECTIONS 2024: 19 APRIL 2024 TO 1 JUNE 2024

# 252 candidates in 1st phase have criminal cases against them; 332 have assets worth over Rs 2 crore

**FIRST PHASE OF POLLING ON APRIL 19: DATA SHOWS 161 HAVE DECLARED CASES OF SERIOUS CRIMES, 18 HAVE CHARGES OF CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN, AND 35 HAVE CASES RELATED TO HATE SPEECH; 15 OUT OF 1,618 CANDIDATES HAVE DECLARED CASES WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN CONVICTED**

Out of 1618 candidates who are contesting in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls, 252 have declared criminal cases against themselves and 15 said they have been convicted, according to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms and National Election Watch. The ADR came out with the report after analysing the self-sworn affidavits of 1618 out of 1625 candidates who are contesting in the first phase in 21 states.

As per the report, 161 candidates out of the 1618 have declared serious criminal cases against themselves and seven said they are involved in cases related to murder. Further, 19 candidates declared cases related to attempts to murder against themselves.

Out of the 1618 candidates, 18 candidates are involved in cases related to crime against women and one among them is involved in a rape case. Further, 35 candidates have declared cases related to hate speech against themselves.

The ADR also analysed the share of wealth among the candidates and learnt that 332 have declared that their assets are Rs 2 crore and above. Of these, 193 candidates have assets worth Rs 5 crore and above.

Out of the 1618 candidates, 277 have declared that their assets are valued from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 2 crore and another 436 have declared assets worth Rs 10 lakh to Rs 50 lakh.

Five hundred seventy-three candidates have assets worth less than Rs 10 lakh.

### PARTY WISE ANALYSIS

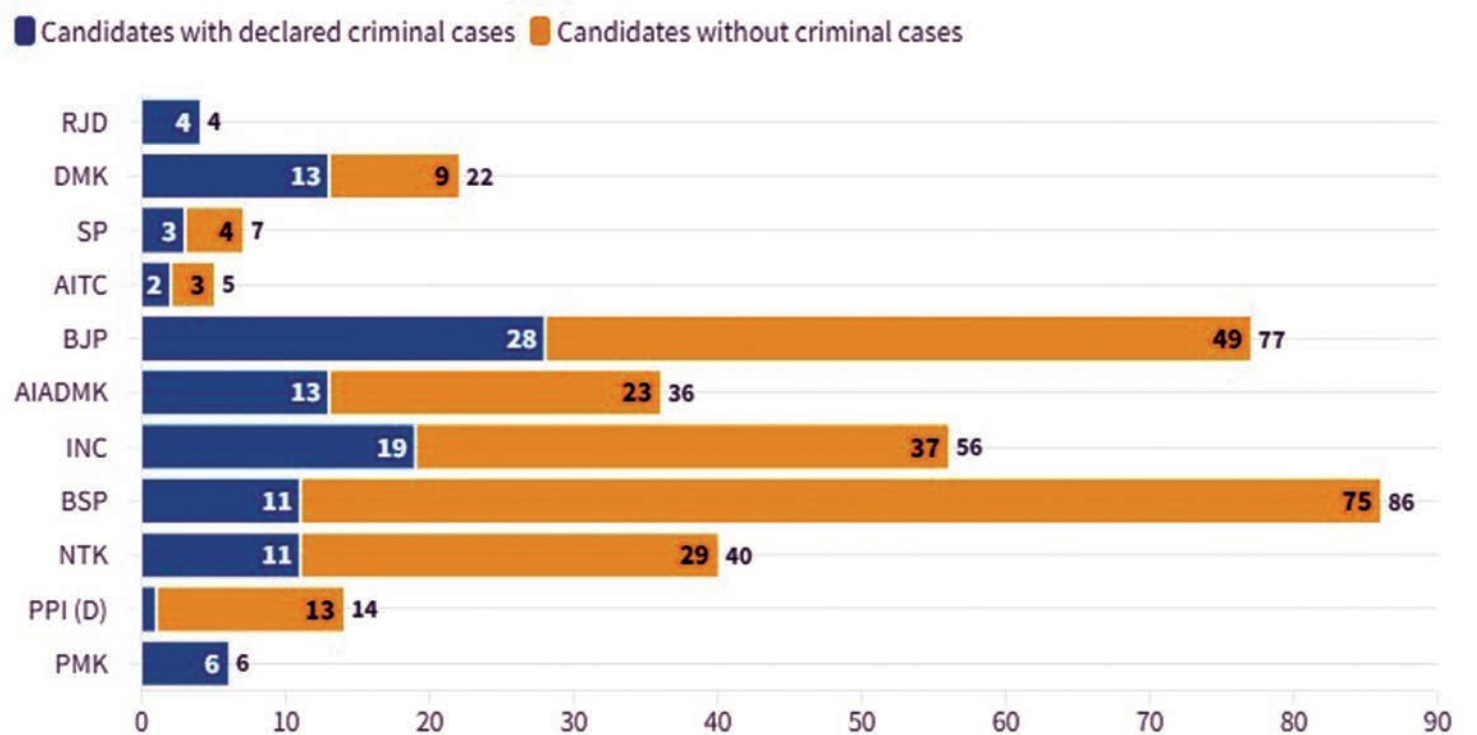
As per the report, 28 out of 77 candidates from BJP, 19 out of 56 candidates from Congress, two out of five candidates from the Trinamool Congress have declared criminal cases against themselves.

All four candidates from the Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD), three out of seven candidates from the Samajwadi Party, 11 out of 86 candidates from BSP, 13 out of 22 candidates from DMK and 13 out of 36 candidates from AIADMK also said they have criminal cases against them.

The candidates who have declared assets worth more than Rs 1 crore include all four RJD candidates, 69 from BJP, 49 from Congress, four from TMC, 18 from BSP, 35 AIADMK candidates and 22 from DMK.

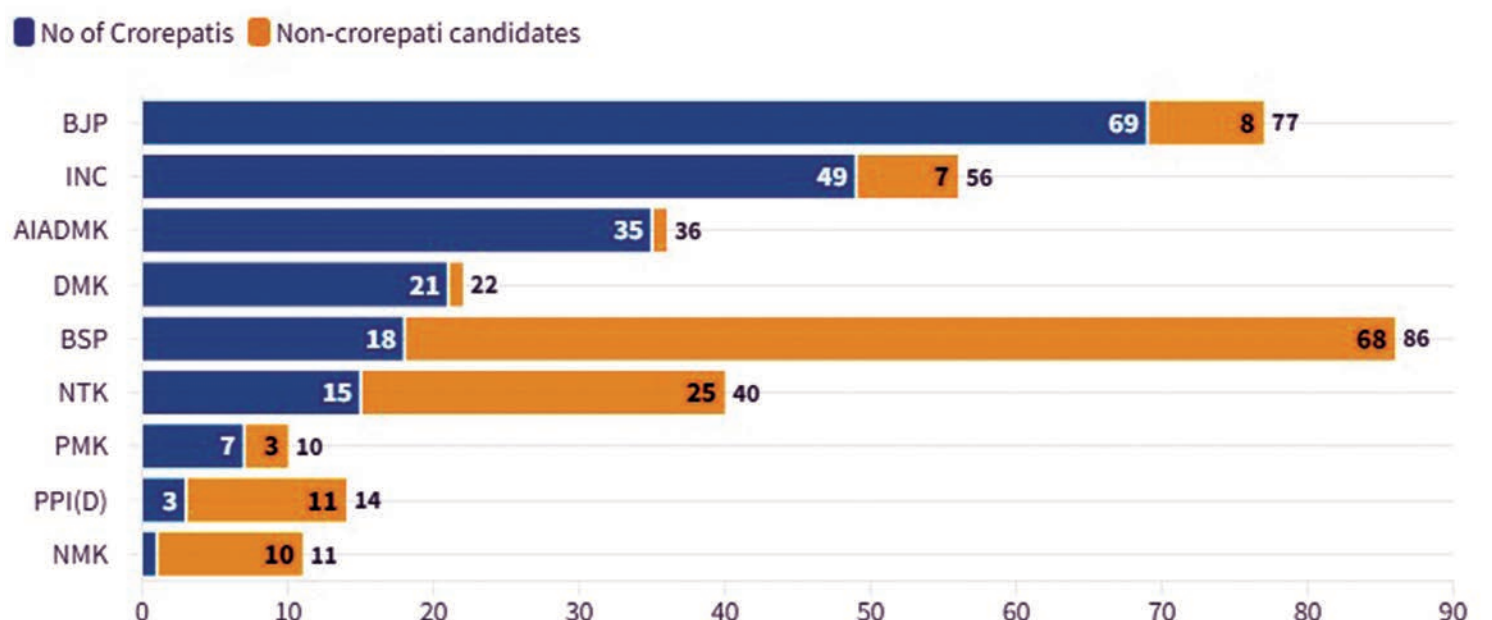
### Candidates with criminal cases

data for phase 1 candidates



### Crorepati candidates from parties

data for phase 1 candidates for parties from which at least 10 candidates are contesting



The average asset per candidate contesting in the first phase of the Lok Sabha election is Rs.4.51 crore, as per the

report.

The first phase of polling for the Lok Sabha elections will be held on April 19.

The phase I polls will be held in 102 parliamentary constituencies in a total of 21 states.

### 102 LS Seats Across 21 States, UTs To Go Polls On April 19 In Phase I

The first phase of Lok Sabha polls covering 21 states and Union Territories will kick off on April 19.

The Lok Sabha elections 2024 will be held in seven phases, with first on April 19, second on April 26, third on May 7, fourth on May 13, fifth on May 20, sixth on May 25 and seventh on June 1. The counting of votes will take place on June 4.

#### WHICH STATES ARE GOING TO POLLS IN FIRST PHASE?

The first phase of voting will be held in 102 constituencies across 21 states and Union Territories on April 19, 2024.

The following states and constituencies will go to polls on April 19

- Andaman and Nicobar Islands – Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- Arunachal Pradesh – Arunachal Pradesh East, Arunachal Pradesh West
- Assam – Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Kaziranga, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur
- Bihar – Aurangabad, Gaya, Jamui, Nawada
- Jammu and Kashmir – Udhampur
- Chhattisgarh – Bastar
- Lakshadweep – Lakshadweep
- Madhya Pradesh – Chhindwara, Balaghat, Jabalpur, Mandla, Sidhi, Shahdol
- Maharashtra – Chandrapur, Bhandara – Gondiya, Gadchiroli – Chimur, Ramtek, Nagpur
- Manipur – Inner Manipur, Outer Manipur
- Rajasthan – Ganganagar, Bikaner, Churu, Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Jaipur Rural, Jaipur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Karauli-Dholpur, Dausa, Nagaur
- Meghalaya – Shillong, Tura
- Mizoram – Mizoram
- Nagaland – Nagaland



- Puducherry – Puducherry
- Sikkim – Sikkim
- Tamil Nadu – Tiruvallur, Chennai North, Chennai South, Chennai Central, Sriperumbudur, Kancheepuram, Arakkonam, Vellore, Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Tiruvannamalai, Arani, Viluppuram, Kallakurichi, Salem, Namakkal, Erode, Tiruppur, Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Pollachi, Dindigul, Karur, Tiruchirappalli, Perambalur, Cuddalore, Chidambaram, Mayiladuthurai, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, Sivaganga, Madurai, Theni, Virudhunagar, Ramanathapuram, Thoothukkudi, Tenkasi, Tirunelveli, Kanniyakumari
- Tripura – Tripura West
- Uttarakhand – Tehri Garhwal, Garhwal, Almora, Nainital-Udhamsingh Nagar, Haridwar
- West Bengal – Coochbehar, Alipurduars, Jalpaiguri

- Uttar Pradesh – Saharanpur, Kairana, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Nagina, Moradabad, Rampur, Pilibhit

#### KEY LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCIES IN LOK SABHA POLLS PHASE-I

The key constituencies in the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections include

- Uttar Pradesh – Saharanpur, Rampur, Pilibhit, Muzaffarnagar
- Assam – Dibrugarh, Sonitpur
- Chhattisgarh – Bastar
- Bihar – Jamui, Gaya
- Jammu and Kashmir – Udhampur
- Madhya Pradesh – Chhindwara
- Tamil Nadu – Chennai North, Chennai South, Chennai Central, Coimbatore, Thoothukkudi, Tirunelveli, Kanniyakumari
- Manipur – Inner Manipur, Outer Manipur
- Rajasthan – Bikaner
- West Bengal – Coochbehar, Alipurduars

### KEY CANDIDATES IN LOK SABHA POLLS PHASE-1

All eyes will be on the following key candidates in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections –

- Chirag Paswan (Lok Janshakti Party chief) – Jamui
- Nakul Nath (son of Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath) – Chhindwara
- K Annamalai (Tamil Nadu BJP chief) – Coimbatore
- Tamilisai Soundararajan (former Governor of Telangana) – Chennai South
- Kanimozhi Karunanidhi – Thoothukkudi
- Jitin Prasada (He has been fielded by the BJP in place of Varun Gandhi) – Pilibhit
- Nisith Pramanik – Coochbehar

### In Phase 2, over 1,200 in fray from 12 states, UTs

More than 1,200 candidates are in fray for phase two of the Lok Sabha poll to be held on April 26, the Election Commission said. In phase two, Kerala has a maximum of 500 nominations from 20 parliamentary constituencies, followed by 491 nominations from 14 seats in Karnataka. The minimum of 14 nominations were received from one constituency in Tripura. Nanded in Maharashtra received a maximum of 92 nominations. A total of 2,633 nominations were filed for 88 parliamentary constituencies across 12 states and UTs by April 4 for the phase two. After the scrutiny, 1,428 nominations were found to be valid. But after some candidates withdrew nominations, 1,210 remain in race. As many as 15 Assembly segments in the Outer Manipur parliamentary constituency will go to the polls on April 19 in the first phase and 13 Assembly segments on April 26 in the phase two.

## SC: Candidates don't need to declare every movable asset

The voter's right to know about candidates cannot be stretched so far as to require the latter to lay their life out threadbare for examination as they too are entitled to privacy, the Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday. The court said such non-disclosure of each and every asset owned by poll candidates would not amount to a defect of a substantial character so as to invalidate their election.

A bench of Justices Aniruddha Bose and Sanjay Kumar reversed the July 7, 2023 decision of the High Court of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh invalidating the April 2019 poll victory of independent candidate Karikho Kri from the 44 Tezu (ST) Assembly constituency in Arunachal Pradesh.

"Though it has been strenuously contended before us that the voter's 'right to know' is absolute and a candidate contesting the election must be forthright about all his particulars, we are not inclined to accept the blanket proposition that a candidate is required to lay his life out threadbare for examination by the electorate. His 'right to privacy' would still survive as regards matters which are of no concern to the voter or are irrelevant to his candidature for public office," Justice Sanjay Kumar said writing for the bench.

The court said "in that respect, non-disclosure of each and every asset owned by a candidate would not amount to a defect, much less, a defect of a substantial character.



It is not necessary that a candidate declare every item of movable property that he or his dependent family members owns, such as, clothing, shoes, crockery, stationery and furniture, etc, unless the same is of such value as to constitute a sizeable asset in itself or reflect upon his candidature, in terms of his lifestyle, and require to be disclosed."

The bench added that "every case would have to turn on its own peculiarities and there can be no hard and fast or straitjacketed rule as to when the non-disclosure of a particular movable asset by a candidate would amount to a defect of a substantial character".

By way of illustration, it said, "For example, a

candidate and his family who own several high-priced watches, which would aggregate to a huge figure in terms of monetary value, would obviously have to disclose the same as they constitute an asset of high value and also reflect upon his lavish lifestyle. Suppression of the same would constitute 'undue influence' upon the voter as that relevant information about the candidate is being kept away from the voter. However, if a candidate and his family members each own a simple watch, which is not highly priced, suppression of the value of such watches may not amount to a defect at all. Each case would, therefore, have to be judged on its own facts."

#### Congress opposes plea against use of INDIA acronym

The Congress has opposed before the Delhi High Court a plea against the use of INDIA acronym, which stands for Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, for the alliance of opposition political parties.

The Congress in its affidavit has said that the allegations made in the plea is frivolous in nature and the plea is "politically motivated petition" filed under the garb of a public interest litigation. "What is starkly apparent from the contents of the petition, is that the absence of any examples or cases that substantiate the frivolous allegations levelled by the Petitioner against the Answering Respondent or its alliance Respondents," the affidavit states.

# New York City Mayor Proclaimed April 6 Thomas Abraham Day on the occasion of dedication of Dr. Thomas Abraham Library



Dr. Thomas Abraham Library Inauguration - Consul General Pradhan Cutting the Ribbon. Also seen are New York City Deputy Commissioner for International Affairs Dilip Chauhan, Rockland County Legislator Dr. Aney Paul, Kerala Center President Alex Esthappan and NY State Senator Kevin Thomas



Lighting of the lamp by notable ladies of the Kerala Center and Abraham Family. L to R: Dr. Nitya Abraham, Leela Moduthagam, Jessica Abraham, Prof. Teresa Antony, Chinnamma Stephen and Vilcy Esthappan; Photo right: Barnard College student Nandini Lal performing Saraswati Vandana in Kathak style.

APRIL 8, 2024

**NEW YORK (TIP) :** Dr. Thomas Abraham, Chairman of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) was honored for his contribution of 50 years of service to the Indian Diaspora community and India by dedication of Dr. Thomas Abraham Library at the Indian American Kerala Cultural and Civic Center in Elmont, New York. New York City Mayor Eric Adams proclaimed April 6th as Dr. Thomas Abraham Day in honor of the new library opening.

Indian Consul General Binaya Srikanta Pradhan inaugurated the library at a festive event at the Center, attended by cross section of the community on April 6. Apart from books, the library also contains historical documents depicting the growth of the Indian American community and history of Indian Diaspora community, especially from the collections of Dr. Abraham.

Dr. Abraham, whose community work spans a half century, is noted for founding several organizations which have become big institutions of the Indian American community and the global Indian Diaspora community. Dr. Abraham has been serving the NRI/PIO community for the last 51 years. He served as the founder president of the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) of New York in the 1970s which organizes the largest India Day Parade outside India and the National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIA) in the 1980s. Dr. Abraham currently serves as the Chairman of Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) which he founded in 1989 and as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Indian American Kerala Center in New York and was a Co-Founder of the Center. Dr. Abraham also served as the Co-Chairman of the fund-raising campaign to institute a chair for Indian studies at Columbia University. Two other groups

initiated by Dr. Abraham are National Indian American Association for Senior Citizens (NIAASC) and South Asian Council for Social Services (SACSS).

Library Committee Member Abraham Thomas started the program with a brief welcome and then introducing Kerala Center Vice President Daisy Stephen, who served as the MC. The program was started with rendering American and Indian National Anthems by Ms. Lauren



Kerala Center Officials and Members with Dr. Thomas Abraham

Vattakalam. Kerala Center President Alex Esthappan in his welcome speech noted that Dr. Abraham was the founder of most of the major Indian community organizations in the New York area including FIA New York, NFIA and GOPIO. These organizations have empowered the Indian community over the last 50 years.

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held at the library hall with Consul General Pradhan cutting the ribbon along with dignitaries. Kerala Center officials and immediate family members of Dr. Abraham. The program started with lamp lighting ceremony and a Kathak Dance Sarswati Vandana by Barnard College student Nandini Lal.

Kerala Center Board Chairman Nephrologist Dr. Madhu Bhaskaran introduced the Consul General and said, "It is a proud movement for the Kerala Center to have this library at it premises."

Addressing a packed audience, Consul General Pradhan said, "I don't see this as the inauguration of a library, but as a celebration of the work and

the brand India over half a century." Said Pradhan.

The Indian community is growing steadily here. We pay a high price for that. Now at least one lakh students from India come to study here every year. The community has now become a force to reckon with.

When he was ambassador to Tanzania, he tried to set up a branch of IIT there. The government of Tanzania came forward to set it up. The president of that country knew about the benefits achieved by India through IITs and wanted to have the same in his country. This was achieved during his term in Tanzania.

Pradhan asked the diaspora to pay attention to the Indian American community here as well, along with the services done for India. The community should come forward to help the Indian students coming here. That is very much needed.

He also praised the works of the Kerala Center. He suggested adding digital facilities at the library and the Consulate is willing to contribute to the same.

New York City Deputy Commissioner for International Affairs Dilip Chauhan presented a proclamation from New York City Mayor Eric Adams declaring April 6th as Dr. Thomas Abraham Day in honor of the new library opening. In his proclamation, Mayor Adams applauded Dr. Abraham for his continued effort to support and uplift people of Indian origin descent in New York and beyond.

New York State Senator Kevin Thomas, who was another honored guest, revealed at the event that his field of activity is going to change soon. He had announced that he would contest for Congress, but later called it off. He said he is also no longer running for the New York State Senate. There were earlier indications that he would get another important appointment. He did not reveal what that would be. *(Read full story at [www.theindianpanorama.news](http://www.theindianpanorama.news))*

achievements of Dr. Abraham and his contributions to the society."

Pradhan said that he was familiar with organizations like GOPIO (Global Organization of People of Indian Origin) which Abraham founded. When he joined the New York Consulate, he met Dr. Abraham on the first day and got a clear picture of the Indian American community from him.

"The gradual growth and changes in the Indian society can be seen through his life. This growth is exciting. People mentioned Dr. Abraham's name when he visited Ohio, a state within the jurisdiction of the consulate. It means his work isn't limited to the New York tristate area. It is amazing how he shaped

# Malabar Gold & Diamonds set aside USD 620,000 for ESG activities during Ramadan



APRIL 10, 2024

**DALLAS (TIP):** Emphasizing its commitment to being a socially conscious and responsible organization, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewelry retailer globally, announced the community welfare activities the brand carried out during the month of Ramadan. The brand committed USD 620,000 towards the distribution of Iftar meals amongst the needy during the Holy Month. These initiatives were planned in addition to the ESG initiatives conducted by the group throughout the year in the 13 countries of operation. The brand associated with embassies, authorities, NGOs, and like-minded organizations to carry out community welfare and empowerment acts throughout the Holy Month, including the distribution of Iftar meals and food provision kits to deserving families and individuals. These endeavors by Malabar Gold & Diamonds significantly benefited the underprivileged segments of our society.

As part of this year's Ramadan food distribution drive, over 180,000 Iftar meals were distributed across the UAE, KSA, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Malaysia, Singapore, the USA, the UK, Canada, and Australia. In Dallas, Malabar Gold & Diamonds distributed 500 Iftar meals to refugees from different countries. M.P. Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group, commented,



"Our dedication to championing social welfare initiatives has been a central component of our operations since our inception in 1993 and has remained steadfast over the years. With Ramadan reflecting the spirit of piousness and generosity, we reaffirmed our commitment to bringing about a positive impact in the community through our food kit distribution. This noble endeavor, spanning across all 13 countries we operate in, ties into our larger objective of creating a Hunger-Free World, which is one of the key tenets of Malabar Group's ESG objectives." Abdul Salam K P, Vice Chairman of Malabar Group, added, "The month-long welfare activities that we carried out every year during Ramadan were spearheaded by the goodwill of our entire team. Right from identifying communities that required our assistance to participating in the distribution of Iftar meals, our team members actively volunteered for every aspect of this initiative. This further reflects the fabric of social responsibility that is dominant amongst our organization. As this initiative commenced, we expressed our heartfelt appreciation to our esteemed customers whose patronage enabled us to initiate such noble endeavors." Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been more than a jewelry retailer. The community empowerment initiatives that we have undertaken over the years are reflective of our motto of ensuring the collective growth of all our stakeholders, with society being among the most crucial

"Our dedication to championing social welfare initiatives has been a central component of our operations since our inception in 1993 and has remained steadfast over the years. With Ramadan reflecting the spirit of piousness & generosity, we are reaffirming our commitment to bringing about a positive impact in the community through our food kit distribution. This noble endeavor, spanning across all 13 countries we operate in, ties into our larger objective of creating a Hunger Free World, which is one of the key tenets of Malabar Group's ESG objectives", commented Mr. M.P Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group.

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"Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been more than a jewelry retailer. The community empowerment initiatives that we have undertaken over the years are reflective of our motto of ensuring the collective growth of all our stakeholders, with society being among the most crucial. The Iftar meal distribution is carried out on a large scale by our organization every year and as always, we sincerely hope that our actions will leave a lasting impression and motivate other organizations to carry out similar activities", commented Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) initiatives have been the primary commitment of Malabar Group since its inception in 1993, with 5% of net profits set aside towards such initiatives in each country of operations. The key focus is in the areas of Health, Hunger Free World, Housing, Education, Women Empowerment & Environment. Integrating the principles of responsibility and sustainability into its core business, the ESG goals of Malabar Group are periodically strengthened to remain a socially conscious and responsible organization.

(Paid editorial)

## Special Saturday help available April 13 at 70 IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers nationwide; no appointment needed

APRIL 8, 2024

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):** As the April 15 federal tax filing deadline nears, the Internal Revenue Service, on April 8, announced it will open more than 70 Taxpayer Assistance Centers (TACs) around the country on Saturday, April 13, for face-to-face help. This special help is available from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. local time.

At TACs, people meet face-to-face with

IRS employees to get help with tax account issues, such as authenticating someone's identity, asking about account adjustments and making payments by check or money order. The IRS plans one additional special Saturday opening on May 18.

"IRS employees have been working hard throughout this tax season to help taxpayers, and the special Saturday



Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service

our services," said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. "With the help of additional funding through the Inflation Reduction Act, we've been able to serve more taxpayers and provide additional assistance. For these special Saturday sessions, we encourage taxpayers to plan ahead so they have the right information.

hours are one more way we've expanded

contd on page 47



## Bengaluru cafe blast mastermind, bomber arrested from Bengal

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested the prime accused behind the blast at Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru from West Bengal. The accused, who were absconding, were apprehended from their hideout in Kolkata.

The NIA said Mussavir Hussain Shazib had placed the IED at the cafe and Abdul Matheen Taha was the mastermind behind the planning and execution of the blast.

Both of them are already wanted in a 2020 terrorism case. The NIA said Abdul Matheen Taha was involved with the Bengaluru Module of ISIS — Al Hind.

The NIA said the accused were hiding under false identities. In a statement, the NIA said the accused were nabbed in a co-ordinated action between Central intelligence agencies and police personnel from West Bengal, Telengana, Karnataka, and Kerala.

On March 29, the anti-terror agency released the photographs and details of the two accused and announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh for information on each of them.

The agency had said that Shazib was using the name 'Mohammed Juned Sayed' to conceal his identity. Taha was using Hindu identity documents and a forged Aadhar card with the name Vignesh, the agency said.

# Lok Sabha elections a fight to save democracy: Rahul

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday, April 11, said the upcoming Lok Sabha elections were a contest between the “poor and 22-25 billionaires” in the country, and a battle to save the country’s democracy.

The former party chief, who addressed two rallies in Rajasthan, sharpened his attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for indulging in large-scale corruption through electoral bonds.

At his first rally in Anupgarh in Bikaner Lok Sabha constituency, Gandhi said, “It is an election of the backwards, Dalits, tribals and poor people in the general category.”

The biggest issue in the country today is unemployment, followed by inflation, Gandhi said. “Ask anyone. Unemployment is the biggest issue in the country. Inflation comes second. Ninety per cent people will say inflation but if you follow the media, it will seem that the most important issue is Ambani’s (son’s) wedding. (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi’s face will be seen in the media 24 hours a day. Sometimes he will go under the sea, sometimes he will be seen flying in a seaplane, sometimes he will be seen beating a thali, sometimes he will be seen asking people to show the flashlight of their mobile phones,” he said.

He said that the job of the media is to raise the voice of the public but it never speaks about the public’s issues and the “billionaire” owners who control them will not allow the media persons to speak “right” questions.

“Two-three percent people get employment in media, 15-20 people control the media and these people praise Modi 24 hours,” he said.

Later, at a rally in Phalodi in the Jodhpur constituency, he accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of indulging in corruption through electoral bonds.

“Extortion is going on and its name is electoral bonds,” Gandhi said as he campaigned in support of the Congress candidate Karan Singh Uchiyarda.

The Congress leader said industrialist Gautam Adani’s stock prices started rising after 2014, when the BJP came to power at the Centre, and continue to rise because India



The former party chief, who addressed two rallies in Rajasthan, sharpened his attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for indulging in large-scale corruption through electoral bonds.

knows that Adani and the prime minister have a very good relationship.

“Modi said ‘I want to eliminate corruption’ and brought the electoral bonds scheme. Industrialists gave thousands of crores of rupees to the BJP (through the electoral bonds). Modi said no one should know the name of the person who gives money under the scheme. A few days ago, the Supreme Court said the scheme is illegal and should be cancelled,” Gandhi said.

Rajasthan will go to the polls in two phases, on April 19 and April 26. Polling for 12 Lok Sabha seats will be held in the first phase on April 19, while the remaining 13 seats will be polled in the second phase on April 26. *Source: HT*

## Political parties can be prosecuted for money laundering, rules Delhi High Court

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Delhi High Court’s verdict upholding the legality of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s arrest in a money-laundering case linked to the excise policy scam has wider ramifications for political parties as it ruled that a political party can be prosecuted under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

While dismissing Kejriwal’s petition challenging his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate, Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma held that the definition of ‘political party’ under the Representation of Peoples Act and definition of ‘company’ under the PMLA were identical.

After examining the two definitions, Justice Sharma said, “This Court is of the opinion that the definition of ‘political party’ as per Section 2(f) of the Representation of Peoples Act is that a political party means an ‘association or



body of individuals’. As per Explanation-1 of Section 70 of PMLA, a ‘company’ also means an ‘association of individuals’.”

It upheld Kejriwal’s arrest as he was the National Convenor of AAP which has been accused of using proceeds of the crime in the 2022 Goa Assembly polls.

“Thus, at this stage, the material placed on record, the statement recorded under Section 50 of PMLA of Sh. N.D. Gupta and the reply of the petitioner Sh. Kejriwal dated 18.01.2024 to the summons issued by

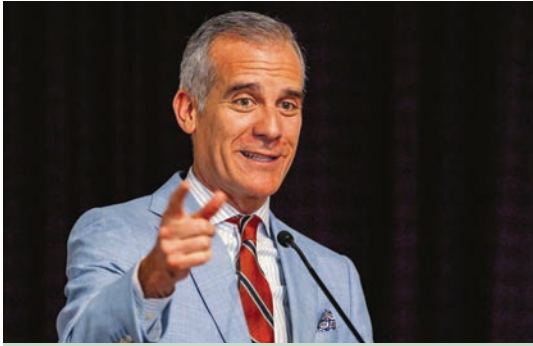
the Directorate of Enforcement prima-facie make it clear that Sh. Kejriwal is in charge of and responsible for the conduct of the business of Aam Aadmi Party, and prima-facie would be liable for affairs of the party so as to attract Section 70(1) of PMLA,” the High Court said in its April 9 judgment.

Justice Sharma, however, noted that “as per proviso of Section 70(1), the petitioner Sh. Kejriwal will have the right to prove, at the appropriate stage, that he did not have any knowledge of the contravention of provisions of PMLA committed by his party or that he had exercised due diligence to prevent the same. This right, however, is not available as in all other criminal cases at the stage of arrest or remand as per existing law of the country.” The HC accepted the ED’s arguments that by virtue of Section 70 of PMLA, a ‘company’ also included within its ambit an ‘association of individuals’ and a

political party was an association of individuals/citizens as per the RPA and thus, APP would be deemed to be a company for the purpose of Section 70 of PMLA. Kejriwal being its National Convenor would be in-charge of and responsible for its business, making him liable under Section 70(1) of PMLA.

It rejected senior counsel AM Singhvi’s arguments on behalf of Kejriwal that the ED’s argument was misplaced. “... in his capacity as the National Convenor of Aam Aadmi Party as per Section 70(1) of PMLA, for use of proceeds of crime of Rs 45 crore in the election campaign of Aam Aadmi Party in Goa Elections 2022, which are prima-facie apparent from the material relied upon by the respondent in this regard as well as the statement recorded on 08.03.2024 of one of the candidates of Aam Aadmi Party in Goa Elections 2022...,” the HC said. *Source: TNS*





US Ambassador Eric Garcetti, PTI

## China has no biz renaming sites: US backs India on Arunachal Pradesh

US Ambassador Eric Garcetti described Indo-US ties as “not an additive relationship but a multiplicative relationship” and criticised China for renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh.

Stating that China has no business renaming places that are part of India’s territory, Garcetti fully backed New Delhi and said its defence cooperation with Washington was reaching unprecedented levels so as to deter aggressive authoritarian rival countries. As two democracies, the US and India thought and felt alike about the threat posed by dictatorial regimes like that of China and that the convergence of values was the key factor driving Washington and New Delhi closer.

During an interactive session with students of the Sonapat-based OP Jindal University, Garcetti also took questions regarding comments made by US officials about internal developments in India. “The US is a unique democracy where every branch of government, the news media and civil society has its own views and opinions about different countries. These opinions are frequently aired publicly as part of the open American political system,” he explained.

Garcetti claimed that the US was ready to also take criticism from other countries as part of this liberal ethos.

## MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENTS

# ‘Deliberate violation’: SC rejects yoga guru Ramdev, Balkrishna’s apologies

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Supreme Court on April 10 lambasted yoga guru Ramdev and Patanjali Ayurved managing director Acharya Balkrishna, refusing to accept their unconditional apology for issuing misleading advertisements and saying the judges didn’t want to be “so generous” after the two were caught on the wrong foot with their “back to the wall”.

A bench of justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah also came down heavily on the Uttarakhand government, saying the authorities kept their “eyes shut” by not cracking down on the company for violating advertising rules by making false claims about curing diseases such as diabetes and asthma.

“We decline to accept your affidavit (of apology) or condone your conduct. We consider it wilful breach of our order (of November 21, 2023). We decline to accept this affidavit. This is deliberate violation of law for which you will have to suffer consequences,” the bench told Ramdev and Balkrishna. The court pointed out that the affidavit of unconditional apology was released to the media before being filed in court, and suggested that this implied it wasn’t genuine.

The court pulled up Uttarakhand officials for acting “in cahoots” with the contemnors and failing to register cases against Patanjali for issuing advertisements promising cures for lifestyle and other specified ailments



prohibited under the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act 1954, Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Rules 1955, and Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945. The court directed the state licensing officers and district ayurvedic officers posted in the state since 2018 (since when complaints against Patanjali are pending) to explain their inaction within two weeks.

“We will rip you apart... Why should we not think that you were in cahoots with the contemnor respondents and you were keeping your eyes shut deliberately?” the bench asked.

The court, which fixed April 16 as the next date of hearing, directed Ramdev and Balkrishna to remain present for the third time, reminding the two that they were taking things “too lightly” when there was a “wilful and deliberate breach of law” in a contempt case, for which consequences will follow.

On April 2, the court had refused to accept the affidavit filed by Ramdev and Balkrishna, giving them an opportunity to file a fresh affidavit. The bench indicated that it might initiate perjury proceedings after noting a wrong fact in an application that sought exemption from personal appearance for the two men.

In that document sworn on March 30, they attached a copy of the travel ticket of March 31, which infuriated the bench. “The fact remains that when the affidavit was sworn, no such ticket was there and an attempt was made to wriggle out of the proceedings before court,” the bench remarked.

“The apologies that are on record are on paper. Since you have been caught on the wrong foot and their back is already against the wall, having gone to town saying all kinds of things the very next day of our order passed (on November 21) where your counsel had given undertaking... we are wondering why should we not treat your affidavit with the same disdain that you showed to your undertaking. We won’t accept your affidavit,” the court said.

“Patanjali, Baba Ramdev did not find it fit to send us the fresh apology affidavits. Till matter hit the news, this court did not have the benefit of getting the affidavits. They sent it to media first. They clearly wanted to publicise it by putting it into public domain. Till 7.30pm yesterday it was not uploaded for us,” the court added.

# PM Narendra Modi may attend Swiss peace meet on Ukraine

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Switzerland will host a high-level conference on peace in Ukraine, which may be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as it is being held back to back with the G7 summit in Italy to which leaders of most major Global South countries, including India, have been invited.

The June 15-16 meeting in Switzerland will be held a day after the two-day G7 summit concludes on June 14 in south-eastern Italy. All seven leaders of G7, including US President Joe Biden, are expected to travel to a resort above Lake Lucerne in central Switzerland for talks on Ukraine. The Italian government has indicated it will invite major leaders of the Global South, including India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and South Africa. Their participation will blunt criticism of the G7 being a club of the ultra-rich and



also make it difficult for the Global South Presidents and Prime Ministers to wriggle out of the invite for the Swiss meet.

The Swiss government has said it has discussed participation with leaders and envoys of Brazil, China, Ethiopia, India, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will attend the meeting.

However, the participation of Russia, the other protagonist in the conflict, is unlikely but the Swiss government hopes Moscow may join in the peace process one day.

China’s participation is also a big question mark. While Beijing had attended a similar peace meeting in Jeddah last year, for the NSAs’ meeting in Copenhagen in January this year it sent its Special Envoy for Eurasian Affairs Li Hui.

Russia is sceptical about the peace meet gaining traction. “First we need to understand what they are talking about there, what kind of a peace formula they have in mind. Second, we have repeatedly said the negotiation process without Russia is pointless,” said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has also dismissed the meet as a Western ruse to rally broader international support for

Kyiv. “A conference to launch such a process is currently receiving sufficient international approval, it aims to establish a common understanding of the framework conducive to this goal, as well as a concrete roadmap for the peace process,” said a Swiss government statement.

### Russia, China likely to opt out

The Switzerland peace meet will take place on June 15 & 16, a day after G7 summit concludes in Italy. Swiss govt has discussed participation with leaders and envoys of India, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, S Arabia & South Africa. While Ukrainian President will attend talks, there is a question mark on participation of Russia & China. Russia is sceptical about meet gaining traction; Foreign Minister has called it a Western ruse to rally global support for Kyiv.

# India in history this Week

## APRIL 12 TO APRIL 18

### 12 APRIL

1885 Birth of famous historian Rakhaldas Banerjee who discovered Mohenjodaro.

2007 Pakistan approves India on Iran Gas Pipeline.

1621 Birth of Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1621.

1955 The polio vaccine developed by Dr. Jones Sak was declared safe and effective.

1978 The country's first double-decker train Sinhagad Express was run from the Victoria Terminal of Bombay (now Mumbai) to Pune to mark 125 years of Indian Railways.

2008 Three people, including two Indian engineers, were killed in a suicide attack on a convoy of Indians in Afghanistan in 2008.



in India and Dhaka in Bangladesh for the first time since 1965.

1659 Aurangzeb defeated Dara in 1659 at the Battle of Delhi.

1563 Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, was born

1944 A ship loaded with weapons exploded in the port of Mumbai, killing more than 1200.



1962 Renowned Indian engineer M. Visvesvaraya, who was awarded Bharatharatna, died in 1962.

1995 India became the Asia Cup cricket champion for the fourth time in 1995.



2005 India and the US entered into an agreement to open their own flight areas to each other's airlines.

### 15 APRIL

1469 Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in 1469.

1976 India announces sending its envoy to Beijing for the first time in 15 years.

1980 Six non-government banks were nationalized. Earlier also some banks were nationalized in the same way.

2010 Launch of the first cryogenic rocket GSLV-D3 built in India failed.



1948 The state of Himachal Pradesh was established on this day in 1948.

1994 Acceptance of 'Get' agreement in 1994 by 109 countries including India.

2004 LTTE militant V. Muralitharan, linked to the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, was killed in 2004 in Colombo.

### 16 APRIL

1853 In India, the first train ran from Mumbai to Thane in 1853.

1919 Gandhiji declared a fast on this day in 1919 to pay tribute to those who died in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.



2008 The statue of Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled in 2008 in London.

2004 India defeated Pakistan 2-1 in the series by winning the Rawalpindi Test.

### 17 APRIL

1952 The first Lok Sabha of the country was formed on this day in 1952.

1977 On this day in 1977, the Independence Party merged with the Janata Party and emerged as a big party.

1996 On this day in 1996, the Indian Railways had interrupted AIDS patients from traveling.

1983 India launched the SLV-3 rocket in 1983.

2003 The Indo-British Parliamentary Forum was formed in 2003 after 55 years.

2008 Four important agreements were signed between India and Brazil in 2008.

1975 India's first Vice President and second President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan died on 17 April 1975.

### 18 APRIL

1859 Tanya Tope, who had created a reputation for independence in the country, was hanged for playing a decisive role in the first revolution of independence of 1857.

1917 Gandhiji selected Champaran in Bihar to start his Satyagraha movement.



1950 Vinoba Bhave started the Bhoodan movement with 80 acres of land in Panchampalli village in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh.

1971 India's first jumbo jet Boeing 747 arrives in Bombay. It was named Emperor Ashoka.

1978 Sobha Singh, who built modern New Delhi, died.

1991 Kerala was declared the first fully literate state in the country.

1991 Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee lost the confidence vote in the Lok Sabha by one vote.

2001 16 soldiers of India martyred due to the firing of Bangladesh army into Indian border.

2008 India and Mexico enter into new agreements in the field of civil aviation and energy.

### 13 APRIL

1699 The tenth Sikh Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa Panth. The festival of Baisakhi is made on this day every year.

1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre, indicative of the culmination of the atrocities of the British, was carried out.

1984 The Indian Army started a campaign of armed forces to occupy the Siachen Glacier in Kashmir.

1947 Diplomatic relations established between India and Pakistan.

1984 Indian cricket team won the Asia Cup for the first time by defeating Pakistan by 58 runs in Sharjah.

1648 Construction of the Red Fort was completed.

1939 The Hindustani Red Army (Indian Red Army) was formed in India in 1939 for an armed struggle with the British.

1978 The first flag carrier of the country "INS" was demoted to Delhi in 1978.

2000 Lara Dutta was elected Miss Universe in 2000.



2005 Vishwanathan Anand became 'World Chess Champion' for the fourth time in 2005.

### 14 APRIL

1891 Birth of father of Indian Constitution BR Ambedkar

2008 Start of passenger rail service between Kolkata

SPECIAL REPORT FROM STATE OF KERALA

Kerala is a State in the Southern part of India. The State had a population of 34.63 million in 2018.

The majority of the population follows Hinduism (54.9%).

The second largest group of population (26.56%) follows Islam. Christians account for 18.38% of population. These

are 2018 figures.

There are 20 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State.

The 2024 general election in Kerala will be held on 26 April, 2024 to elect 20 members of the 18th Lok Sabha.

The result of the election will come on 4 June 2024.

# Elections 2024: Tight race in Thiruvananthapuram, Tharoor is expected to prevail



BY GEORGE ABRAHAM

**KERALITES ARE A COMPETENT ELECTORATE WHO CAN DISTINGUISH THE WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING. ULTIMATELY, COMMON SENSE WILL REIGN, AND THAROOR IS EXPECTED TO PREVAIL.**



Tharoor's 'Paryadanam' motorcade

Following Tharoor behind his constituency 'Paryadanam' motorcade this time around evoked some earlier memories in me when he first ran for Parliament in 2009. At that point in time, there was novelty and simple curiosity about his candidature, always with a throng of people eagerly waiting to see him at every junction. Mothers with a child on their shoulders used to run up to the side of the road from their nearby houses to have a glimpse of him. Hence, times have changed, and Tharoor is now a familiar face and known quantity in the Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha constituency. Therefore, it has its pluses and minuses.

On the plus side, he can boast about his accomplishments on behalf of the constituents and his staunch defense of the Constitution and pluralistic principles; however, on the negative side, he is put on the radar for how his efforts have borne fruition for the people who have voted for him. That has always been a haunting dilemma for any incumbent. Tharoor has exemplified himself in Parliament and championed himself as a great critic of Modi's policies and a powerful advocate for democracy and inclusiveness.

However, when I survey the ground realities at play,

one thing becomes quite clear: the Kerala electorate is no longer satisfied with simple explanations from the politicians but rather ready to take on politicians on complex issues for honest answers. A good example is the Vizhinjam port development and related issues. When Tharoor campaigned for the first time, one of the popular demands from influential circles was to get involved and make that a reality. He has succeeded in just doing that. He also publicly stated that when there was no bidder for the port development, he appealed personally to Adani to submit his bid. However, what that development entailed, or its aftermath and consequences, still needed to be fully grasped. Today, the coastal community is up in arms not only on the coastal erosions due to the development but also on the failures to rehabilitate those who were displaced because of it. Therefore, Vizhinjam is a two-edged sword that could come back and haunt Tharoor as he seeks another mandate.

The ongoing war between Israelis and Palestinians evokes strong reactions from the Muslim community in Kerala. In Kerala's political landscape today, the party in power and the Muslim community in particular are more vocal about what happened in Gaza, though justified, than what happened in Manipur, India. Many would dismiss Manipur as a fight between two tribes. Is it so? If that argument holds true, why, then, in a battle between Meiteis (mostly Hindus) and Kukis (mostly Christians), 249 Churches belonging to Meiteis Christians were destroyed in the first few days of fighting? In an era of sound bites, nobody seems to pay that much attention to those details!

However, the world knows about Tharoor's work with the Palestinians and where he stands firm behind the cause of a two-state solution. Yet, his statement critical of terrorist acts by Hamas that initiated the current fight is viewed unfavorably by a segment of the Muslim community. The CPM in Kerala, which is busy courting even the extreme elements to stay in power, suddenly found a weapon against Tharoor and that he is against the Palestinian cause. One has to wait and see whether that strategy will peel away some votes in that community. There is little doubt that a more significant vote share for CPI will only benefit the BJP candidate.

The third most common complaint I have heard from the party workers is accessibility. Undoubtedly, his staff could have done a better job as Tharoor is one of the busiest souls in the country, and there is great demand for his appearances and speeches in addition to his practical work in Parliament. One of the coastal area's social activists told me that Mr. Tharoor failed to talk about rehabilitating the displaced people from the Oki Disaster. Upon my query to verify the complaint, the Tharoor office has sent me several documents with his



Author (extreme left) with Shashi Tharoor and others on campaign trail

statements raising his concerns, especially in Parliament. The media did not properly carry his statements in Lok Sabha. His office should have correctly translated or propagated many of these exchanges in English.

However, more than anything else, the elephant in the room is the CPM and their role in this fight. To those astute observers of Kerala politics, the reason for BJP's perennial failure to get a foothold in Kerala is apparent. In any election cycle, when a BJP candidate closes in on either UDF or LDF ones, many voters will switch their votes to deny the BJP the victory. The question is, will it happen this time around? Although UDF and LDF may want to state that the fight is between them, the reality in Thiruvananthapuram is quite different. Armed with tons of money, Rajiv Chandrasekhar, the BJP candidate, is said to be ready to buy anything and everything. There are even allegations that some of the resources might have been diverted to activists from various parties and even minority religious leaders. However, the real worry for the Tharoor campaign must be whether there is any behind-the-scenes understanding between BJP and CPM.

CONTD ON PAGE 46

## SPECIAL REPORT FROM STATE OF RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan is a state in Northern India. According to 2011 Census, the total population of the State is 68,548,437.

The majority of the population follows Hinduism (88.49%). The second largest group of population ( 9.01%) follows Islam.

1.27% follow Sikhism. There are followers of other faiths, too.

Each of them is below 1% of the population.

There are 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State.

The 2024 Indian general election in Rajasthan will be held on 19 April 2024, and 26 April 2024, during the first and second phases respectively, to elect 25 members of the upcoming 18th Lok Sabha.

Bye-poll for Bagidora Assembly constituency is to be held with this election. The result of the election will come on 4 June 2024.

# Challenging task ahead for BJP to get hat trick in Rajasthan Lok Sabha election



BY DR YASH GOYAL

There is going to be a real challenging task for the BJP to get the repeat in the 2024-Lok Sabha polls in Rajasthan as it had full majority in 2014 and 2019 on all 25 seats.

Banswara LS seat as its candidate Arvind Damor did not withdraw his nomination papers in support of INDIA bloc's Bharatiya Adivasi Party (BAP) candidate Raj Kumar Roat (sitting MLA in Rajasthan). Both the Congress and the BAP are in utter confusion whether to follow the INDIA alliance norms or contest independently. Congress and BAP are in a triangular contest with Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya who quit his Congress MLA seat and joined the

last year and was not considered as a candidate for this seat will have a major decisive role on this very seat.

Nagaur LS seat is another key constituency where BJP's former alliance partner of Rashtriya Loktantrik Party Hanuman Beniwal, who is become now the INDIA bloc partner is giving a hard poll campaign to BJP's Jyoti Mirdha, who moved from the Congress to BJP, on the basis to get the Mirdha community (Jat) open support on which

the Jodhpur LS seat by a huge margin of 4 lakh votes against the BJP's Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who is now the Union Minister.

Young Congress leader Sachin Pilot's blue-eyed candidate Murarli Lal Meena (former minister) on Dausa and Harish Meena (sitting MLA) on Tonk-Sawai Madhopur LS seats are vying against BJP's Kanhaiya Lal Meena, a new face, and Sukhbir Singh Jaunpuria (sitting MP) respectively.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Jyoti Mirdha, a Jat dominated candidate of BJP who crossed over from Congress, Vaibhav Gehlot, son of former CM Ashok Gehlot  
-Photos / social media platforms

On one hand, the BJP is trying its best to make a hat trick in the state but on the electoral field, the reputation of four BJP ministers and the Speaker is at stake. One-on-one election contest on twelve out of 25 Lok Sabha seats is getting neck and neck as the voting for the first phase on 12 seats is due on April 19, and the second phase on 13 seats on April 26.

The BJP's star campaigners are focusing their main goals on four Union Ministers Bhupendra Yadav in Alwar; Kailash Choudhary in Barmer; Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in Jodhpur; Arjun Ram Meghwal in Bikaner, and Speaker Om Birla in Kota-Bundi LS constituencies.

Besides, the prestige of the top leaders of the BJP and the Congress is precarious in 12 out of 25 seats. These seats are Banswara, Jhunjhunu, Tonk-Sawai Madhopur, Barmer, Nagaur, Kota-Bundi, Jalore, Sikar, Dausa, Churu, Alwar, and Jaipur.

Congress is in doldrum on the

BJP.

BJP is on a sticky wicket in Barmer, Jhunjhunu, Churu, Nagaur, and Kota LS constituencies where the saffron is facing neck and neck contests against their party rivals.

It is not going to be a cake walk for LS Speaker Om Birla to get a hat trick on Kota-Bundi seat, as BJP's senior leader Prahalad Gunjal, who recently joined the Congress party, with the majority of Gurjar, Meena, Minority votes, and enjoying BJP workers' internal support giving sleepless nights to the Speaker who is canvassing door to door with his family and supporters in Hadoti region.

Similarly, the BJP is on rough roads of poll battle in Churu as BJP's MP Rahul Kanswa, who was denied the party ticket and joined the Congress party, is challenging Para-Olympian Devendra Jhajharia. Former BJP Minister Rajendra Rathore who belonged to Churu district and lost the assembly poll

the Modi government has a strong reliance.

An Independent candidate Ravindra Singh Bhati, who was expecting a Congress ticket, has made the Barmer LS seat a triangular contest with the Union Minister Kailash Choudhary (BJP) and Congress' Umedaram Beniwal.

BJP's prominent saint Sumedhanand Sarswati is having a tough poll trail campaign in the Sikar constituency against INDIA block partner of CPI-M Amraram, a farmer leader having the open support of Congress and comrades from adjoining districts of Srigananagar and Haunumangar.

Former Congress Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has been camping and electioneering in western districts of Rajasthan for the last one month for his son Vaibhav Gehlot who is contesting against the BJP's newcomer of RSS Lumba Ram Choudhary on the Jalore seat. In the 2019 LS poll Vaibhav had lost

BJP's Jaipur-City seat is not going to be a walk over for Manju Sharma, a daughter of former BJP Minister Bhanwar Lal Sharma, as the former Congress Minister and strong young leader Pratap Singh Khachariawas is daily walking on roads and walled city's narrow lanes and holding poll campaign meeting with folded hands before the voters.

Bhupendra Yadav, the Union Minister and RS MP, who replaced the sitting MP Balak Nath, is in a one-to-one contest with the Congress' sitting MLA Lalit Yadav who belongs to the Matsya region of Alwar district and open support of Yadav community, Congress' traditional voter banks.

Despite all pros and cons of election complications, the BJP contestants are hoping to win their seats either on Modi face or Lotus symbol.

(Dr. Yash Goyal is The Indian Panorama Special Correspondent, based in Jaipur)

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# REEL STORIES. REAL CHANGE: 'ONE EARTH' FILM FEST THEME INSPIRES CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH STORYTELLING

BY MABEL PAIS

The ONE EARTH FILM FESTIVAL returns April 17 to 23, 2024, in partnership with the City of Chicago's Department of Environment for its 13th festival season. Five days of in-person screenings at over 14 locations across the greater Chicago area will be followed by two days of virtual screenings. The 2024 festival opens with its annual opening night launch party at the LEED Certified B-Corp Radio Flyer headquarters on April 17, offering both in-person and virtual participation.

In observance of Earth Day 2024, One Earth will co-host an annual park clean-up at Columbus Park in Chicago's Austin community on April 20 at 9:00 a.m. with BUILD Chicago, Chicago Park District, the Field Museum, NCH2, Columbus Park Naturalists/Stewards, and Interfaith Green Network.

The annual Earth Day action fair and indoor market at the Chicago Cultural Center will precede the acclaimed film, "Common Ground," and offer opportunities for community activism on April 21.

The Festival chose the theme "Reel Stories. Real Change." to encapsulate the power of storytelling to effect meaningful shifts in attitudes and behaviors towards climate change and the fight for environmental justice. By sharing authentic human experiences and truths about climate change, these stories hold the power to catalyze real change across all spheres.

This year's films highlight revolutionary climate action on topics ranging from water and energy



One Earth Film Fest

conservation; to the fights against environmental racism in the U.S., Central America, and Africa; and sustainable food and regenerative agriculture. Post-screening panel discussions with distinguished experts feature diverse voices, including leading climate scientists, passionate grassroots community activists, inspiring film subjects, and visionary filmmakers. These conversations shed light on pressing environmental issues and empower audiences with action steps to confront climate change and champion environmental justice in their communities.

"Since its inception, and in this crucial election year, One Earth has stressed the importance of taking collective action," said Ana Garcia

Credit: oneearthfilmfest.org

Doyle, Executive Director of One Earth Collective. "Film is a powerful way to spur us toward social change and collective action. Much environmental communication heavily depends on data, but that's not going to change hearts. The stories told through film invoke our empathy and spur our will to act. We must pull together to make a real impact. The urgency is now."

## OFFICIAL SELECTION AND SCHEDULE

New screenings are being added. Schedule subject to change. Most events are free. Please see [oneearthfilmfest.org/films-by-date](http://oneearthfilmfest.org/films-by-date) for trailers, tickets, and the most updated information. Check the website for early opening times, with the chance to enjoy refreshments and tabling with

action partner organizations.

## OPENING LAUNCH PARTY

April 17, 6 p.m. CDT | Radio Flyer

## UPSTREAM DOWNRIVER + WINGS OF DUST

April 18, 5 p.m. CDT | Epiphany Center

April 18, 5:15 p.m. CDT | Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

## EARTHBOUND: NZAMBI MATEE + A GOOD NEIGHBOR

April 19, 6 p.m. CDT | Unity Temple, Triton College and "View & Brew" at Kehrein Center

## YOUNG FILMMAKER VOICES

For Families with Kids Age 7 to 12+ | April 20, 1:30 p.m. CDT | Oak Park Public Library

## RAZING LIBERTY SQUARE

April 20, 6 p.m. CDT | Bethel New Life

## COMMON GROUND

April 21, 1:30 p.m. CDT | Chicago Cultural Center, Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Illinois Institute of Technology, Three Brothers Theater, and Oak Park Public Library

## PATROL

April 22, 6 p.m. CDT | Virtual

## CARBON: THE UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY

April 23, 6 p.m. CDT | Virtual

## APRIL EARTH DAY CELEBRATION APR 21, 2024

Website | Instagram | Facebook | Twitter

# A ONE-STOP SHOP AT THE WELLNESS FAIR CAN BE FUN!

BY MABEL PAIS

Who knew that being healthy could be so much fun? The NJPAC Wellness Fair is your one-stop-shop for FREE and creative health resources.

Hop on a stationary bike attached to a blender and pedal your way to a yummy smoothie treat. Or experience a reiki circle and get moving at a soul line dancing class. The annual NJPAC Wellness Fair offers health screenings, mental health resources and heaping doses of fun.

New for 2024: A "Passport to Health" bingo card! Collect stamps at the Wellness Fair and get entered into a raffle to win fabulous prizes including two round trip tickets on United Airlines and two tickets to a performance of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

## SCHEDULE

### Find your zen with I'm So Yoga:

11:00 AM: Soundbath

12:00 PM: Restorative Yoga



Wellness Fair

Credit: njpac.org

1:00 PM: Meditation

## GET YOUR GROOVE ON DURING OUR THREE DANCE BREAKS:

11:30 AM: Traditional African Dance with Karen Miles

12:30 PM: Jersey Club with Anthony Harris

1:30 PM: Soul Line Dance with Najah Riker

## OTHER WELLNESS FAIR HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

Vision screenings from Eyes Like Mine Inc.

Mental health resources from Horizon,

including coverage information

LGBTQ+ health resources from NJCRI  
Chair massage from A Friend in Knead

Aphasia quiz with Adler Aphasia Center

Arts activity with Newark School of the Arts

Craft activity with The Newark Museum of Art

Newark history quiz with New Community Corporation

Financial tips from Valley Bank

Hand mandala with RU-N Health Promotion Division

## MAMMOGRAM SCREENING

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Note: Accepts both insured and uninsured individuals, must be over 40 and register in advance.

## REGISTRATION

Registration is required to attend the Wellness Fair.

Register at [njpac.org/event/2024-wellness-fair/#register](http://njpac.org/event/2024-wellness-fair/#register)

## THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

Learn more at [NJPAC.org](http://NJPAC.org).

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

# REVEL IN AN EXCITING SPRING EVENING AT THE NJ SYMPHONY GALA & AUCTION

BY MABEL PAIS

Join the esteemed New Jersey Symphony, alongside a gathering of cultural luminaries, social influencers, enterprising minds and civic dignitaries, as it revels in an enchanting evening of exquisite dining and enthralling entertainment at the Bridgerton-inspired gala.

Guests will enjoy a cocktail reception filled with delicious food, fabulous auction items, live music and a few dazzling surprises. Then, enjoy a gala dinner and be treated to a private performance from members of the New Jersey Symphony and students of the New Jersey Symphony Youth Orchestra.

The NJ Symphony's Bridgerton-inspired concert and gala dinner are the perfect way to celebrate the arrival of spring in Regency-era splendor while providing critical funding to the Symphony's expansive artistic and educational offerings.

Get ready for an evening of delights!

## PROGRAM

Thu, Apr 18 6:00 pm  
@ Pleasantdale  
Chateau, 757 Eagle  
Rock Avenue in West  
Orange

6 pm | Cocktail  
Reception & Silent  
Auction

7:30 pm | Private  
Concert & Dinner

## HONORING

The NJ Symphony is excited to honor the Newark Alliance and its President & CEO Evan Weiss at this event! The Newark Alliance is New Jersey's premier private sector-led inclusive economic, community, and workforce development organization. It is dedicated to fostering inclusive economic and community development in Newark.

**The Newark Alliance and its President & CEO  
Evan Weiss**

**Gala Co-Chairs**

**Kate Ransom-Silliman & Laura C. Garrett**

## EVENT DETAILS, RESERVATION, ADVERTISING

For Event Details, Reservation Form and Advertising information, visit [njsymphony.org/assets/doc/NJ-Symphony-Spring-Gala-Sponsorship-Brochure-030124-8015274a15.pdf](https://www.njsymphony.org/assets/doc/NJ-Symphony-Spring-Gala-Sponsorship-Brochure-030124-8015274a15.pdf).

## AUCTION

Online Auction Open!

The New Jersey Symphony's Spring into Music

auction is open through April 18 at 9:30 PM. This is open to everyone, and includes spectacular getaways, VIP experiences, musical performances, artwork and more!

Not attending the Spring into Music Gala? No problem! Online bidders can participate in real time up until the auction closes. You'll receive notices about your bid status to make sure you stay competitive.

classical music will be a new experience; and incorporating the broadest possible representation in all aspects of our organization-all to better reflect and serve our vibrant communities. Since 2021, Music Director Xian Zhang has worked together with composer, violinist, educator and social-justice advocate Daniel Bernard Roumain, the orchestra's

Resident Artistic Catalyst, to offer programming that connects with diverse communities in Newark and throughout New Jersey.

Internationally renowned Chinese American conductor Xian Zhang began her tenure as the New Jersey Symphony's current Music Director in 2016. Since her arrival at the New Jersey Symphony, Zhang has revitalized programming with an industry-leading commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in mainstage concerts. In its second century of bringing concerts to the people of New Jersey, the Symphony will present audience favorites in 2023-24 including Dvorak's "New World" Symphony, Orff's Carmina Burana, Vivaldi's The Four Seasons, violinist Joshua Bell leading the orchestra in Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto and pianist Daniil Trifonov playing Gershwin's Concerto in F. New Jersey Symphony co-commissions include works by

internationally-renowned living composers: Anna Clyne's ATLAS and Jessie Montgomery's Snapshots. Composers Rob Kapilow and Daniel Bernard Roumain will present world premieres.

**For more information about the New Jersey Symphony, visit [www.njsymphony.org](https://www.njsymphony.org) or email [information@njsymphony.org](mailto:information@njsymphony.org). Tickets are available for purchase by phone 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or on the Orchestra's website.**

## CONNECT WITH THE NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY:

[njsymphony.org](https://www.njsymphony.org)

@NJSymphony on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X, formerly known as Twitter @ NewJerseySymphony on YouTube

Email: [information@njsymphony.org](mailto:information@njsymphony.org)

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



## TICKETS

**For Individual & Sponsor Tickets, visit [one.bidpal.net/springintomusic/ticketing\(details:ticketing-summary\)](https://one.bidpal.net/springintomusic/ticketing(details:ticketing-summary))**

Discount Ticket Opportunities for Young Professionals (ages 21-40) to attend are also available.

For more information, contact Jesse Goodale, Manager of Special Events, at 973.735.1729 or [events@njsymphony.org](mailto:events@njsymphony.org). Please reference 'Spring into Music.'

## THE NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

The Emmy and Grammy Award-winning New Jersey Symphony is redefining what it means to be a nationally leading, relevant orchestra in the 21st century. The Symphony is renewing its deeply rooted commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by championing new, and often local, artists; engaging audiences for whom the inspiring depth and breadth of

# EXAMINING STRUCTURAL & SOCIAL BARRIERS TO HEALTHY AGING IN LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY



Healthy Aging

Credit: njpac.org

**BY MABEL PAIS**

Our LGBTQ+ elders were trailblazers for equal rights and now they're forging a difficult road through aging. A lifetime of discrimination combined with a lack of legal and financial protections in their younger years push many seniors into living their golden years in isolation, poverty and poor health.

Join NJPAC's in its virtual 'Standing in Solidarity' conversation series on structural and societal barriers to healthy aging. This PSEG True Diversity Film is Gen Silent (Stu Maddux, 2010), a documentary about the difficult decisions LGBTQ+ elders are forced to make when navigating long-term care.

**PARTICIPATION**

**How to participate:**

Register at [njpac.org/event/aging-with-pride-challenges-for-the-lgbtq-community-pseg-true-diversity-film-series/#register](http://njpac.org/event/aging-with-pride-challenges-for-the-lgbtq-community-pseg-true-diversity-film-series/#register).

Watch Gen Silent for free at home.

Join the panel for a virtual panel discussion on Mon, Apr 15, at 7PM.

**PANELISTS**

**PETER OATES**

Peter Oates has spent 52 years of his career in healthcare which has given him the opportunity to experience and serve diverse communities in the U.K., the Netherlands and the U.S. He has been a member of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) for 28 years and is currently on the ANAC National Board of Directors. He also serves as a Board Commissioner for the City of Newark's Department of Health Mary Eliza Maloney Health Center.

**BEATRICE SIMPKINS**

Beatrice Simpkins has served as Executive Director of the Newark LGBTQ Community Center since 2019. She is a former board member of the Freedom Center for Social Justice in Charlotte, NC, and the Newark Community Health Centers in New Jersey. In 2016, Simpkins became a Rutgers 250 Fellow- receiving a medal at "A Day of Revolutionary Thinking," the culminating event of Rutgers University's yearlong 250th

birthday celebration. Simpkins is a cisgender African American lesbian, mother of two daughters (Evita and Cicely), and Granny B to Darius, Demetrius and Vivienne. She is also a deacon in the Unity Fellowship Church Movement, serving as part of the UFC Newark congregation.

**JAHMILA SMITH**

Jahmila Smith is a Project Manager and Trainer at Garden State Equality where she oversees Health & Wellness and Older Adults Initiatives. Smith has a background working with youth and young adults with adverse experiences, supporting them with their educational and vocational goals and providing emotional support so that they grow into happy, thriving adults. She was a student advocate and program coordinator at Phipps Neighborhoods in the Bronx where she focused on the daily activities and functioning of an after-school program. She also worked with young adults at Graham Windham. Smith is passionate about mental health and wellness, women empowerment, social-

emotional learning, literacy, nutrition and community activism.

**GARY PAUL WRIGHT**

Gary Paul Wright is the Founder and Executive Director of the African American Office of Gay Concerns. The organization provides HIV prevention services to gay and bisexual men of color and runs T.G.I.F, the only state-funded program specifically designed to recruit and retain transgender women of color in HIV prevention. He was appointed to the Essex County Executive's LGBTQ Advisory Board in 2011. Wright also served as a Charter Board Member of the newly established Newark LGBTQ Community Center. He is a member of the New Jersey Governor's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS and Other Blood-borne Pathogens and of the Board of Trustees for Broadway House for Continuing Care in Newark.

**MODERATOR**

**Terri L. Wilder**

Terri L. Wilder, MSW manages the HIV/aging policy advocacy portfolio at SAGE where she implements the organization's federal and state HIV/aging policy priorities. Wilder served on the New York governor's "Ending the Epidemic" task force. She is currently a member of the New York State (NYS) Department of Health AIDS Advisory Council Subcommittee and The Minnesota Council for HIV/AIDS Care and Prevention. She has been recognized for her work in the POZ 100: Celebrating Women (2017) and received awards from the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute, AIDS Survival Project and Bridging Access to Care, Inc. She is an adjunct professor at Columbia University teaching Human Sexuality, Gender and Sexuality, Queer Theory and healthcare policy.

# UNDERSTANDING NEWARK THROUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION WITH TOM KINGDON

**BY MABEL PAIS**

As president of the former Dana College, Dr. Frank Kingdon was instrumental in the creation of the University of Newark, a predecessor to Rutgers University-Newark. He was active in many progressive causes in Newark and later served as the founding chair of the Emergency Rescue Committee, which saved nearly 2,000 people from their deaths during the Holocaust. Kingdon's career provides an important window into understanding Newark during the Great Depression.

The presenter is Tom Kingdon, Professor Emeritus of Emerson College, TV/film producer and son of Frank Kingdon.

**RSVP**



Understanding Newark

Credit: njpac.org

RSVP is required  
Join NJPAC, VIRTUALLY at [njpac.tfaforms.net/145?id=a2FUc0000003tb3MAA](http://njpac.tfaforms.net/145?id=a2FUc0000003tb3MAA)

Join NJPAC, IN-PERSON at [njpac.tfaforms.net/145?id=a2FUc00000041iHMAQ](http://njpac.tfaforms.net/145?id=a2FUc00000041iHMAQ) (at the Newark Public Library) at 5 Washington Street, Newark, NJ 07102

Phone: 973 773 7779  
(Mabel Pais writes on Social Issues, The Arts and Entertainment, Health & Wellness, Spirituality, Education, Cuisine, and Business)





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0 Fox Hill Drive, Stafford Springs, Connecticut 06076 USA. [www.anandakalpataru.org](http://www.anandakalpataru.org)



## Ankita Lokhande To Grace Screens In And As 'Amrapali'

Actress Ankita Lokhande has been roped to star in a series based on royal courtesan Amrapali by filmmaker Sandeep Singh, who produced the film *Swatantra Veer Savarkar*. According to a statement, Sandeep is all set to showcase the life of the royal dancer from the Republic of Vaishali in ancient India. Ankita has been roped in to portray Amrapali, the celebrated nagarvadh. Ankita said that she has received immense appreciation across the globe for playing Yamunabai in the film *Swatantra Veer Savarkar*, because of which she has been getting "film offers with strong performance-oriented characters".

She added, "But I need to choose wisely, and yes, after 'Swatantra Veer Savarkar,' it's Amrapali. I will be making a few more good selections soon. Amrapali will be a surprise for me and the audience. I hope to live up to their expectations."

The series will tell the journey of the dancer from being an imperial courtesan to choosing to become a Buddhist nun. It will capture the emotions experienced by Amrapali, who finally gives up all luxuries and adopts celibacy as a Buddhist devotee.

# Tiger Shroff addresses patch-up rumors: 'Meri ek hi Disha hai life mein'

Tiger Shroff is currently gearing up for his action-extravaganza *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*. However, co-actors and reporters often tease him about his relationship status. In a recent interview with Times Now, the actor addressed the patch-up rumours with Disha Patani.

Tiger was quizzed "Are you single? Aapki Zindagi kis Disha me ja rahi hai? (In which direction is your life heading)" The *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* actor responded humorously and said, "Meri ek hi Disha hai life mein. Haan, aur wo hai mera kaam (I only have one Disha in my life. Yes and that's my work). Got you there, Sir, didn't I?"

The wordplay around Disha started during the trailer launch of *BMCM*. When Akshay Kumar was asked what advice he would like to give Tiger, he told, "Main Tiger se yahi kahunga ki hamesha ek hi Disha mein raha karo (I just want to tell Tiger that you should only focus in one direction)! Akshay's witty remark left Tiger blushing as producer Jacky Bhagnani hugged him.

Disha and Tiger were rumoured to be dating earlier. The reports of their breakup surfaced in 2023. Neither of the duo came forward to deny or clarify about the same. However, recently in an interview with Ranveer Allahabadi, Akshay asked Tiger to give relationship advice to the host. The latter admitted and said, "You know I have only once been in a serious relationship in my life." The rumoured couple worked



together in the music video *Befikra* (2016). The later starred opposite each other in Ahmed Khan's action-thriller *Baaghi 2* (2018). Disha later also made a special appearance in the dance number *Do you love me* in *Baaghi 3* (2020).

Tiger will next be seen in *Jagan*

Shakti's untitled project. He has also joined Rohit Shetty's cop universe in *Singham Again* where he portrays ACP Satya Pattnaik.

Disha has a line-up of releases in 2024, including her Tamil debut with Suriya-Bobby Deol starrer *Kanguva* and Nag Ashwin's *Kalki 2898 AD*. Source: HT

## HEERAMANDI TRAILER

# Bhansali's grandeur dazzles, but leading ladies steal the show

The wait is finally over, This year, Indian audiences are buzzing about the upcoming Netflix series, *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar*. Directed by the renowned Sanjay Leela Bhansali, the trailer promises a visually stunning world filled with suspense, romance, and high drama. OTT giant Netflix, recently shared *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar* trailer. Read on to find more details.

In the heart of the opulent Heeramandi district, where secrets simmer and desires reign, resides Mallikajaan (Manisha Koirala). A woman of unwavering power, she presides over a renowned house of courtesans. But Mallikajaan's iron grip faces a challenge when Fareedan (Sonakshi Sinha), the daughter of her sworn enemy, returns, threatening to ignite a storm within the opulent walls. As tensions rise within Heeramandi,



the city itself churns with the fervor of revolution.

Yearning for freedom from British rule, a new fire ignites within Bibbojaan (Aditi Rao Hydari), one of Mallikajaan's daughters, who joins the fight for an independent India. Longing for escape, Mallikajaan's spirited daughter,

Alamzeb (Sharmin Segal), harbours dreams of love with Tajdar (Taha Shah Badussha), the son of a wealthy nobleman. Her heart yearns for a life beyond the confines of Heeramandi.

In the simmering heat of pre-independence India, where rebellion against British rule threatens to erupt,

forbidden passions ignite and loyalties crumble. Amidst this turmoil, Mallikajaan and Fareedan, two captivating women, engage in a cutthroat struggle for control of Heeramandi, the opulent courtesan quarter. As societal norms clash with their desires, who will ultimately claim the crown of "huzoor" and rule this dazzling yet perilous world.

Renowned filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali brings his signature grandeur to the small screen with his debut series. Prepare to be swept away by a visually enchanting world brimming with complex characters and timeless emotions. This epic saga promises to captivate audiences worldwide.

During the trailer release, director Sanjay Leela Bhansali said, "This is a story of love, power, freedom, and extraordinary women, their desires, and struggles. It marks a new milestone in my journey."



## George Lucas to receive honorary Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival

George Lucas will receive an honorary Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival next month, festival organisers announced on Tuesday. Lucas will be honoured at the closing ceremony to the 77th French film festival on May 25.

He joins a short list of those to receive honorary Palmes. Last year, Harrison Ford, a regular leading man for Lucas in Star Wars and Indiana Jones, was awarded one. Other recent recipients include Michael Douglas, Tom Cruise, Forest Whitaker and Jodie Foster.

"The Festival de Cannes has always held a special place in my heart," Lucas said in a statement. "I was surprised and elated when my first film, THX-1138, was selected to be shown in a new program for first time directors called the Directors' Fortnight. Since then, I have returned to the festival on many occasions in a variety of capacities as a writer, director and producer. I am truly honoured by this special recognition, which means a great deal to me."

# Keith Urban's lessons on love after 17 years of marriage with Nicole Kidman

At the 2024 CMT Music Awards, Keith Urban stole the spotlight not just with his musical prowess but also with a few candid revelations about his enduring romance with Hollywood icon Nicole Kidman.

The Grammy-winning artist, known for his chart-topping hits and charismatic stage presence, graciously shared snippets of wisdom from his 17-year journey alongside Kidman, offering a glimpse into their harmonious relationship to E! News.

In an exclusive chat with E! News on the prestigious event's red carpet, Urban playfully sidestepped offering conventional marriage advice, emphasising the uniqueness of every couple's bond. "If I answer that, it'll come across as advice for other married people," he coyly remarked, adding, "I have no advice for anybody." It seems Urban believes that love's melodies are best orchestrated by the hearts entwined in the relationship itself.

However, despite his reluctance to dispense guidance, Urban hinted at the importance of finding one's rhythm in love. "You guys figure out whatever works for you," he urged, acknowledging the diverse dynamics that shape each relationship. "We're figuring it out. You figure it out. Everybody's different." This sentiment echoes a profound truth that amidst the



cacophony of societal expectations, love's symphony is a deeply personal composition.

But amidst the enigmatic allure of Urban's advice, one element rings clear: music. The country music icon revealed that music forms an integral part of their shared life, with impromptu jam sessions being a common occurrence.

"We sing around the house a lot," Urban shared, hinting at the melodic backdrop that serenades their domestic bliss. And the prospect of a musical collaboration with Kidman? Urban's response was simple yet tantalising:

"Why not?"

Kidman, equally enamoured by the musical ambience of their home, has previously expressed her joy at being married to a musician. In a candid moment on The Ellen DeGeneres Show back in 2013, Kidman illuminated the joyous resonance of music in their household.

"The great thing about being married to a musician is you have music in the house all the time," she enthused, painting a picture of morning serenades around the piano an intimate glimpse into their shared love for both melody and each other. *Source: ANI*

## Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant are back for Bridget Jones 4

Renée Zellweger is officially returning to the screen as Bridget Jones. The British-based romantic film comedy series first introduced us to how big of a lovable mess Jones is in 2001, with the wicked suaveness of Hugh Grant's Daniel Cleaver. Eventually, Emma Thompson also boarded the familiar romantic train in the 2016 Bridget Jones's Baby.

Now, here comes a revamped edition of the English romantic comedies based on Helen Fielding novels' vision. The fourth installment is entitled, Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy. It is ready to bring back some familiar faces, along with some new additions to spice up the scene with sizzling freshness.

The Universal project will roll out on OTT screens via Peacock on Valentine's Day 2025. International viewers will have a chance to grab their big popcorn tubs for its theatrical release.

Renée Zellweger and Hugh Grant - the ultimate OG duo that boarded the Bridget Jones bandwagon in the first installment itself - are back for the next chapter. Emma Thompson is also



reprising her role from the third movie. (Love Actually, Doctor Strange, 12 Years a Slave, 2012) and Leo Woodall (One Day

- Netflix series, The White Lotus).

With the technological face of the world changing, so is Bridget's diary writing medium. In the new chapter of embarrassments, her previous love triangles and baby stories will take a back seat as Jones grapples with the new age of mortifying channels through texts and tweets.

Mad About a Boy will not have her merely navigate through life, work and every messy engagement that comes along with it as a 51-year-old single mother. Could a new romance with a hot, younger somebody be on the table?

Michael Morris will be helming the upcoming adaptation of Fielding's 2013 novel. The OG author is also dropping in to pen the script with source material authenticity.

Hugh Grant previously missed out on joining the original cast members, Zellweger and Colin Firth, for the third round. Under the banner of Working Title Films, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, and Jo Walford are producing the fourth outing, with Amelia Granger and Sarah-Jane Wright as executive producers alongside Fielding.

## RUSSIA TEST-LAUNCHES AN INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE

**MOSCOW (TIP):** The Russian military on April 12 reported a successful test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

Russia's Defense Ministry said in a statement that the launch took place at the Kapustin Yar testing range in the south of the country as part of "state testing of prospective missile systems, as well as confirmation of the stability of missiles in service."

The test launched achieved its results "in full," the ministry added, and confirmed "high reliability of Russian missiles to ensure (Russia's) strategic security." The ministry didn't name the type of the missile that was test-launched.

Russia regularly carries out test launches of ICBMs and other missiles as it seeks to modernize its weapons. (AP)

## PRINCE WILLIAM MAKES FIRST APPEARANCE SINCE WIFE'S CANCER ANNOUNCEMENT



**LONDON (TIP):** Prince William has made his first public appearance since his wife Catherine announced she has cancer, attending a football match between Aston Villa and Lille with son Prince George.

The 41-year-old heir to the British throne was pictured smiling and clapping with son George, 10, as his team Aston Villa recorded a 2-1 win in the first leg of the Europa Conference League quarter-final on Thursday night.

The Princess of Wales, 42, announced last month that she was undergoing treatment for a cancer discovered following abdominal surgery.

The news followed on from King Charles III, William's father, revealing that he was receiving treatment for an unspecified cancer.

The king is carrying out official duties behind closed doors but is not conducting public engagements. He did, however, attend an Easter Sunday service.

William is a keen football fan and has supported Birmingham-based Aston Villa since he was a schoolboy. He is also the president of the Football Association (FA). (AFP)

# Israeli settlers rampage through a West Bank village, killing 1 Palestinian and wounding 25

**JERUSALEM (TIP):** Dozens of angry Israeli settlers stormed into a Palestinian village in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on April 12, shooting and setting houses and cars on fire. The rampage killed a Palestinian man and wounded 25 others, Palestinian health officials said.

The violence was the latest in an escalation in the West Bank that has accompanied the war in the Gaza Strip. An Israeli rights group said the settlers were searching for a missing 14-year-old boy from their settlement. After the rampage, Israeli troops said they were still searching for the teen.

The killing came after an Israeli raid overnight killed two Palestinians, including a Hamas militant in confrontations with Israeli forces.

Palestinian health officials say over 460 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli forces since the war erupted in October.

The Israeli human rights group Yesh Din said that settlers stormed into the village of al-Mughayyir late Friday, searching for the Israeli boy. The group said that settlers were shooting and setting houses on fire in the village.

Videos posted to X by the rights group showed dark clouds of smoke billowing from burning cars as gunshots rang out. A photo posted by the group showed what appeared to be a crowd of masked settlers.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said that one man was brought dead to the hospital and 25 were treated for wounds. The Palestine Red Crescent Society said eight of the injured were hit by live fire from settlers.



The Israeli army said it was searching for the 14-year-old boy, and that forces had opened fire when stones were hurled at soldiers by Palestinians. It said soldiers also cleared out Israeli settlers from the village.

"As of this moment, the violent riots have been dispersed and there are no Israeli civilians present within the town," it said.

U.S. officials, including President Joe Biden, have repeatedly raised concerns about a surge in settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank since Israel's war with the militant Hamas group in the Gaza Strip began. Rights groups have long accused the military of failing to halt settler violence or punish soldiers for wrongdoing.

Earlier Friday, two Palestinians were killed in confrontations with Israeli forces in the northern West Bank, Palestinian medics and the military said. Hamas said one of those killed was a local commander.

The military said the target of the soldiers' raid was Mohammed Daraghmeh, a local Hamas commander. It said Daraghmeh was killed in a shootout with Israeli soldiers who discovered weapons in his car. The army alleged that Daraghmeh had been planning attacks on Israeli targets but provided no evidence. It also said assailants also hurled explosives at soldiers.

The Israel-Hamas war started on Oct. 7, when Hamas killed 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, in a surprise attack and incursion into southern Israel. (AP)

## Germany refuses entry to British-Palestinian surgeon Ghassan Abu Sitta

**BERLIN (TIP):** British-Palestinian surgeon Ghassan Abu Sitta has said that the German government has forcibly prevented him from entering the country. He was invited to address a conference in Berlin about his work in Gaza hospitals during the present conflict. However, the government forcibly prevented him from entering Germany, he said in a message posted on platform X.

"Silencing a witness to genocide before the ICJ adds to Germany's complicity in the ongoing massacre," the surgeon said.

Abu Sitta was forced to flee Gaza in November after Israeli tank fire and lack of anesthetics at Al-Ahli Hospital made it impossible for him to work at the then last fully functioning hospital in Gaza City. Healthcare facilities in the besieged

enclave have continued to deteriorate at an alarming level since then due to Israeli bombardment.

Israel's military assault on Gaza has systematically targeted hospitals and healthcare infrastructure in the territory, Al Arabiya report citing agencies said. Since leaving Gaza in late November, the doctor has been raising awareness about the impact of Israel's war, which has killed more than 33,000 Palestinians.

According to the Middle East Eye (MEE), in the initial weeks after Israel began its assault, Abu Sitta was the unofficial English-language representative of Palestinian doctors and surgeons treating Palestinians wounded by Israeli attacks.

He accused the Israeli military of

using white phosphorus, which is illegal in built-up and populated areas like Gaza, and deliberately targeting children.

In an interview with MEE after he left Gaza, Abu Sitta said medics were using household items to treat patients because of an Israeli-imposed blockade on medical equipment entering the enclave. "Eventually, everything was running out. Initially, we replaced the antiseptic solution with washing-up liquid and vinegar," Abu Sitta said.

"Then it ended up being morphine and having to do procedures without any anaesthetic. The situation was medieval-like." Germany is currently subject to an International Court of Justice (ICJ) case filed by Nicaragua, which accuses it of "facilitating" Israeli genocide in Gaza. (NIE)

# Serbia eyes French fighter jets to boost its military

**BELGRADE (TIP):** Serbia's president is confident his country will soon buy French fighter jets, the latest foray in a surge of arms deals with Europe, China and Russia made possibly by a tripling of Belgrade's military budget in the past decade.

"All European countries are arming themselves, and we must do the same," President Aleksandar Vucic said in March.

"Even much more than the others, to stay intact and be able to dissuade possible aggressors," he said.

Serbia has continued to purchase weapons from China and Russia after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

In February, the Serbian president proudly presented his latest acquisitions, Russia's Repellent anti-drone system as well as Chinese drones.

He said Serbia would start producing its own explosive drones by the end of the year.

"Serbia acquires weapons and military equipment both from the East and the West," the country's defence ministry told AFP in March, responding to a question about its purchases.

Belgrade is "opting for those whose characteristics will improve the capabilities of the Serbian armed forces", it said.

'Ridiculous'

Serbia's annual military budget has tripled in the past decade to reach 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion).

The amount exceeds the combined budgets of the other five Western Balkan nations -- Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro.

From 2014 until this year, Serbia spent 2.7 billion euros (\$2.9 billion) on arms purchases. They included the 2019 acquisition of China's FK-3 air-defence system as well as Russian Mi-17 and Mi-35 helicopters and Pantsir anti-aircraft systems.

In February, Vucic hinted that Serbia



was ready to invest three billion euros for a possible purchase of French Rafale planes.

During a visit to Paris earlier this week he went even further.

"I believe we have reached concrete agreements concerning the purchase of Rafales," he said.

"I expect the contract to be signed within the next two months, in the presence of the French president, which is extremely important for our country."

Dassault Aviation, which makes the planes, refused to comment Monday on a possible sale of its jets to Serbia.

The sale would raise questions, given Vucic's closeness to Russia.

"It would be ridiculous for Paris, on the one hand, to mention sending troops to Ukraine, and on the other, to sell an extremely sophisticated weapon to one of Russia's closest allies", political scientist Jasmin Mujanovic said.

Since Russia's aggression on Ukraine in February 2022, Belgrade has not joined any sanctions against Russia.

Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic visited Moscow in late March, an opportunity, according to Belgrade, to improve the "traditionally friendly ties

between Serbia and Russia".

The sale of Rafales to a Russian ally "would be worrying, as it would allow information to leak to China and Russia", Mujanovic told AFP.

The fighter jet, which has been operational since 2004 and is scheduled to fly until 2060s, is the French defence industry's export spearhead.

Seven countries -- Egypt, Qatar, India, Greece, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates and Croatia -- either fly Rafales or have signed deals to acquire them.

Kosovo intimidation?

According to the Serbian defence white paper published last year, the "biggest security challenge" for the country is Kosovo, its former province that proclaimed independence in 2008, a decade after a war that claimed 13,000 lives.

If the Rafale deal goes ahead "you could see French fighter jets used to intimidate Kosovo," Mujanovic said.

Elsewhere in Serbia's neighbourhood, Albania inaugurated a NATO-backed airbase in March, while Croatia bought 12 used Rafale planes and is considering reintroducing compulsory military service. Both Albania and Croatia are NATO members.

Kosovo meanwhile has announced a \$75 million deal for US Javelin anti-tank missiles.

Adnan Cerimagic, a researcher with the European Stability Initiative (ESI) think-tank, pointed to the "European, even global, trend towards increasing military capacities" and the "dominant narrative in Serbia, which speaks of the duty to prepare for conflict".

"Difficult days lie ahead for Serbia," Vucic wrote in a viral Instagram post on March 26, citing "news that directly threatens our vital national interests", without elaborating. "It will be difficult. We will fight. Serbia will win," the president wrote. (AFP)

## CHINA SAYS 'GREAT POSITIVE PROGRESS' MADE TO RESOLVE BORDER ROW WITH INDIA

**BEIJING (TIP):** China and India have made "great positive progress to resolve the border standoff, with both sides maintaining close communication, a senior foreign ministry official said here on April 12.

The foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning's remarks were further elaboration on China's reaction to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent statement in which he said that for New Delhi, ties with Beijing are important and the "prolonged situation" at the borders should be addressed urgently.

In an interview with Newsweek magazine, Prime Minister Modi expressed hope that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, the two countries will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity at their borders.

"About the border issue, I can tell you that China and India are remaining in close communication through diplomatic and military channels and great positive progress has been made," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao told a media briefing here responding to a question on Modi's interview to Newsweek.

"We also believe that a healthy China and India relations serve the interests of the two countries," she said.

"China hopes that India will work in the same direction with China to properly manage the differences and promote the bilateral relations forward on a healthy stable track," Mao said.

This is the second time in as many days that China has reacted to Modi's interview.

"It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us," Modi said in his interview.

"Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and world," he said.

Mao while responding to a question on Modi's interview on Thursday said that China noted Prime Minister Modi's remarks.

"Sound and stable China-India relations serve the interests of both countries and are conducive to peace and development in the region and beyond," she said.

On the boundary question, Mao on Thursday reiterated China's oft-repeated stand that it does not represent the entirety of China-India relations, and it should be placed appropriately in bilateral relations and managed properly. (PTI)

# Italian coast guard rescues 22 shipwrecked people, recovers 9 bodies. Some 15 reported missing

**MILAN (TIP):** The Italian Coast Guard rescued 22 people and recovered nine bodies after a smugglers' boat capsized in a storm about 50 kilometers (about 30 miles) south of the island of Lampedusa, authorities said April 11.

Survivors indicated that the steel bottom boat had departed from Sfax, Tunisia overnight Sunday carrying 46 people from Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali and Ivory Coast. The boat capsized Wednesday morning as waves reached up to five meters (16 feet) and "the group became very agitated when the engine broke down and they were left adrift," the U.N. refugee agency said.

The victims included a six-month-old

child, along with eight men, UNHCR said. Six of the survivors were treated for severe hypothermia and dehydration; two remain hospitalized. After the rescue in rough seas with waves reaching more than 2 1/2 meters (eight feet), the Coast Guard said it continued the air surveillance of the area, which is under Malta's search-and-rescue area.

The number of crossing attempts generally increase as summer approaches, raising concerns about more shipwrecks, especially as Italian port rules are restricting operations of charity rescue boats. Italy's far-right-led government has recently been instructing charity boats to go

to northern ports after each rescue, reducing their operations, and has been impounding boats that it says violates its rules.

"With the arrival of the summer season, we can expect more incidents at sea, as more and more people are leaving with completely unseaworthy metal boats, as we are seeing in these weeks," said Federico Fossi, a spokesman for the UNHCR in Italy. The International Organization for Migration put the number of migrants missing along the deadly central Mediterranean route from northern Africa to Italy at 385 so far this year and 23,109 since they launched the missing migrants project in 2014. (AP)

## PAKISTAN: 19 KILLED, 55 INJURED OVER RESISTING ROBBERIES DURING RAMZAN

**KARACHI (TIP):** During Ramzan, Karachi witnessed a surge in crime, with 19 fatalities and 55 injuries resulting from resistance to robberies, as reported by ARY News.

A police official disclosed that armed robbers were responsible for the deaths of 19 citizens in Karachi during robbery attempts.

This year, the city has seen a notable escalation in robbery-related fatalities, totalling 56, with over 200 individuals injured thus far. In comparison, the corresponding period last year saw 25 fatalities and 110 injuries due to resistance against robberies. In 2023, the figures were alarmingly higher, with 108 deaths and 469 injuries resulting from similar circumstances.

Karachi police have engaged in 425 shootouts with robbers this year, resulting in 55 dacoits being neutralised and 439 sustaining injuries. According to a report by the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC), the first three months of 2024 saw 22,627 reported crimes, including 59 fatalities and over 700 injuries stemming from robbery resistance. Additionally, 373 cars, 15,968 motorbikes, and 6,102 mobile phones were reported stolen or snatched during this period. The CPLC report also documented 25 extortion incidents and five cases of kidnapping for ransom in Karachi, ARY News reported.

Karachi's Police Chief, Additional Inspector General Imran Yaqoob, attributed a significant portion of the city's crime to outsiders, including individuals from interior Sindh and Balochistan. Yaqoob highlighted that approximately 4,00,000 "professional" beggars and criminal elements flock to Karachi during Ramzan and Eid-ul-Fitr.

Addressing Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and other stakeholders during a meeting on April 8, Yaqoob reiterated that Karachi's crime rate was relatively modest, averaging less than one case per police station, despite the challenges posed by external criminal elements, ARY News reported. (ANI)

## NEPAL ARMY TO COLLECT GARBAGE FROM MT EVEREST

**KATHMANDU (TIP):** Nepal army on April 7 said it will collect around 10 tonnes of garbage and five bodies lying at Mt. Everest as it launches Mountain Cleaning Campaign 2024 in the Everest region. A 12-member team led by Major Aditya Karki will embark on the Everest base camp on April 14 to bring the garbage from Mt Everest, Mt Lhotse and Mt Nuptse. PTI

# Militants kidnap, kill 11 people in Pakistan's Balochistan province

**KARACHI (TIP):** At least 11 people, including nine bus passengers, were killed by unknown militants in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, authorities said on April 13.

In the first incident, armed men stopped a bus on the highway in Noshki district and kidnapped nine men at gunpoint on Friday, police said.

"The bodies of these nine men were later found with bullet wounds in the nearby mountainous areas near a bridge," one official said.

"The bus was going from Quetta to Taftan when armed men stopped it and after identifying passengers took the nine men to the mountainous areas," he added.

In a separate incident a car was fired upon on the same highway in which two passengers were killed and two others injured.

Balochistan's Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that the terrorists involved in the killing of the 11 people on Noshki highway would not be forgiven and hunted down soon.

Bugti that the terrorists involved in the attacks would be chased, adding that their aim was to sabotage the peace of Balochistan.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also condemned the incident, saying that the



government stands with the families of the deceased at this time.

"There is no room for such a tragic incident...," he added.

No banned outfit has claimed responsibility for the killings but in recent weeks this year there has been a surge in terror attacks by banned outfits and terrorists in the province in which

security forces and installations have also been brazenly targeted.

The banned Balochistan Liberation Army has claimed to having carried out three major terror strikes in the province in recent weeks in Mach town, Gwadar port and a naval base in Turbat in which security forces killed some 17 militants. (PTI)

## 'No ground' for Indian request for return of Kachchatheevu island: Sri Lankan Minister

**COLOMBO (TIP) :** The statements coming out of India on "reclaiming" Kachchatheevu island from Sri Lanka have "no ground", the Sri Lankan Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda has said.

The senior Sri Lankan Tamil politician's comments came days after the Narendra Modi Government targeted the Congress Party and its ally the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu accusing them of overlooking national interests in the ceding of Kachchatheevu island to Sri Lanka in 1974.

The BJP has also been targeting the two parties for not ensuring the rights of the fishermen wanting to fish in waters around the Kachchatheevu island.

"It is the election time in India, it is not unusual to hear such noises of claims and counterclaims about Kachchatheevu," Devananda told reporters in Jaffna on Thursday.

"I think India is acting on its interests to secure this place to ensure Sri Lankan fishermen would not have any access to that area and that Sri Lanka should not claim any rights in that resourceful area", Devananda said.

The statements on "reclaiming" Kachchatheevu from Sri Lanka's hold



has "no ground," Devananda has said.

The Sri Lankan Minister said according to the 1974 Agreement, fishermen from both sides could do fishing in the territorial waters of both countries. But it was later reviewed and amended in 1976.

Accordingly, fishermen from both countries were banned from fishing in neighbouring waters.

Devananda stressed, "There claims to be a place called West Bank which is located below Kanyakumari - it is a much bigger area with extensive sea resources - it is 80 times bigger than Kachchatheevu, India secured it at the 1976 review agreement."

As a Fisheries Minister, Devananda has faced pressure from the local fishermen in recent months.

The local fishermen have led widespread protests to stop illegal fishing by their Indian counterparts in the Sri Lankan waters. They say the bottom trawling by the Indians is harmful to Sri Lankan fishing community interests.

So far this year, at least 178 Indian fishermen and 23 trawlers have been arrested by the Sri Lanka Navy.

Devananda, an ex-Tamil militant who now leads the Eelam People's Democratic Party, was named a proclaimed offender by a court in Chennai in 1994.

On Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) steered clear of the row surrounding Kachchatheevu island.

To a volley of questions on the Kachchatheevu issue, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal referred to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's recent comments on the matter.

"I would like to tell you that on the issues that have been raised, the external affairs minister has spoken to the press here in Delhi and also in Gujarat clarifying all the issues," he said.

"I would refer that you please look at his press engagements. You will get your answers there," Jaiswal said in New Delhi. (PTI)

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**BEJAN DARUWALLA AND  
CHIRAG DARUWALLA**

## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - APRIL 15 TO APRIL 21, 2024

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

**VIKRAM SAMVAT 2081 STARTED ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2024**



### ARIES

Ganesha says that the first week of the year is going to be full of happiness for the people of Aries zodiac sign. From the beginning till the end of the week, you will get the full support of luck. Employed people will be blessed by seniors. People associated with commission and marketing will get a different kind of enthusiasm if their targets are met on time. Respect for working women will increase in the workplace as well as at home. There will be an additional source of income for employed people and the accumulated wealth will increase. This time is also good from a business point of view. Plans for business expansion will be seen bearing fruit. However, one should avoid lending money or investing in risky schemes during this period. This week is completely favorable for you in terms of love relationships. Love and harmony with your love partner will increase. Married life will be happy.



### TAURUS

Ganesha says that the beginning of the first week of the year has brought good fortune for the people of the Taurus zodiac sign. During this time, any old pending work will be completed with the advice or help of a friend. Obstacles in land and building-related works will be removed. You will get benefits with the cooperation of power and government. People associated with politics may get some important responsibility. Those who were thinking of starting their own business for a long time will see their wish fulfilled. There will be enthusiasm in the mind due to the start of some new work. The second half of the week is very auspicious for you financially. During this time, you will get opportunities to spend time happily with family. There will be chances of tourism or visiting religious places in the second half of the week. However, during this time you will have to be cautious of seasonal diseases. In love relationships, you will need to take a step forward thoughtfully. Do not take any step in haste otherwise, you may have to repent later.



### GEMINI

Ganesha says that the first week of the year is going to be full of ups and downs for the people of the Gemini zodiac sign. At the beginning of the week, some business-related challenges will become a major cause of your problems. People involved in business may have to face tough competition from their competitors during this period. The workload of employed people may suddenly increase. The mind will be a little worried due to not getting the expected support from superiors and colleagues. People of the Gemini zodiac will have to try to behave well with people and bring about changes in themselves this whole week, otherwise, they will have to regret later if something big goes wrong. Avoid wasteful expenditure this week and spend



### CANCER

Ganesha says that in the first week of the year, people of the Cancer zodiac sign will have to take great care of both health and relationships. At the beginning of the week, you may face physical pain due to seasonal or chronic disease. During this time, you will have to control your anger and speech. Avoid abusing someone, otherwise, the relationship built over years may break or there may be a rift in the relationship. You may suddenly have to travel long or short distances in the middle of the week. Take care of both your health and luggage during the journey. Take special care while driving this week, otherwise, there is a possibility of injury. People who are doing business in partnership may have to face some difficulties this week. Make money transactions and expand business very carefully. However, this time will prove to be auspicious for those working abroad. Love relations will remain normal due to bitter and sweet disputes with a love partner. Married life will be happy.



### LEO

Ganesha says that the first week of the year has brought auspiciousness and good fortune for the people of the Leo zodiac sign. At the beginning of the week, you will feel relieved by getting rid of any major problems or completing the pending work. Professional people will get the desired success this week. The journey undertaken in connection with a career or business will prove to be pleasant and beneficial. Profits will continue to accrue even at a slow pace in business. In the middle of the week, land-building-related disputes will be resolved with the help of some influential person. Any major decision taken by you this week will give pleasant results in the future. New sources of income will be created. However, along with income, there will also be possibilities for expenditure. Long or short-distance travel with family members is possible in the second half of the week. During this period, youth will spend most of their time in fun. There will be intensity in love relationships. You will have a pleasant time with your love partner. Married life will be happy.



### VIRGO

Ganesha says that people of the Virgo zodiac will have to manage their time and energy in the first week, only then their planned work will be completed on time. At the beginning of the week, your mind will be a little disturbed due to a sudden big problem in your life. However, you will eventually be able to overcome it with the support of your best friends. Due to changes in responsibilities at work, you may have to put in extra hard work and effort to achieve your goal. People associated with business will get less profit as expected in the first half of the week, but the conditions will remain favorable for you till the second half of the week.



### LIBRA

Ganesha says that people of the Libra zodiac sign will spend the first week of the year happily with their relatives. At the beginning of the week, a trip to a tourist or religious place may be planned with close friends or family members. The problem of pending work like promotion or transfer in the ruling government will be resolved. Jobs will become an additional source of income for people. With the support of luck, your planned tasks will be accomplished. The investment made in any scheme earlier will be beneficial. Business expansion plans will come to fruition. There will be an atmosphere of happiness in the house due to the purchase of any luxuries-related items in the second half of the week. There will be intensity in love relationships. Married life will be happy.



### SCORPIO

Ganesha says that this week will prove to be mixed for people of the Scorpio zodiac sign. At the beginning of the week, you will be a little worried about something. Its effect can be seen more in working professionals and students of the Scorpio zodiac sign. At the beginning of the week, you will not be able to get the desired support from seniors and juniors in the workplace. In the middle of the week, any problem related to children may become a major cause of your worry, but with the help of your relatives, you will eventually be able to solve it. This time cannot be called favorable for you from a business point of view. In such a situation, during this period, take any decision related to business thoughtfully. During this period, the business plan will be successful only after a lot of effort. Take the help of dialogue to solve any problem arising in love relationships. For a happy married life, avoid ignoring your spouse's feelings.



### SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says that the first week of the year has brought auspiciousness and good fortune for the people of the Sagittarius zodiac sign. This week you will be successful in doing big work on the strength of your speech and discretion. Employed people may get some major success or honor at the beginning of the week. Seniors will appreciate your work. In the second half of the week, money will be spent on home decoration or luxuries. People who are associated with the stock market can suddenly get big profits. Amidst your work schedule, you will have to take special care of your body. Do not ignore health-related problems in the second half of the week and keep your daily routine and eating habits in order. With the help of a female friend, misunderstandings in love affairs

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



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR  
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

### APRIL 15

Ganesha says you were born with a natural tendency to take the lead. People are drawn to you because of the charm in your personality. You are a brave and driven individual who is not hesitant to put yourself in harm's way to accomplish what you set out to do. However, to avoid coming off as arrogant, you need to remember to keep a healthy balance between your assertiveness and humility. A time of maturation and introspection is in store for you today according to the horoscopes. Embrace change and let your intuition lead you.

### APRIL 16

Ganesha says you have a pure and noble heart, which will be appreciated today. You have a kind and generous personality, and yet you are passionately protective of the people you care about. Your inventiveness and enthusiasm set you apart from the rest of the pack. The cosmos invites you to put more of your attention into your relationships today. Today is the perfect day to cultivate relationships and, if necessary, make amends. Keep

in mind that communication is the most important.

### APRIL 17

Ganesha says you are a shining example of hope today as things start turning in your favor. Your upbeat attitude is contagious, and you have a natural talent for elevating the spirits of those who are in your immediate vicinity. You have a daring spirit and enjoy nothing more than exposing you to novel situations and concepts. Today, the universe seems to be indicating that you could stumble onto unforeseen chances while you are out exploring. Maintain an open mind and be prepared to make the most of the opportunity.

### APRIL 18

Ganesha says people think that you have a sharp mind and a quick wit. Because you possess both a bright mind and a quick tongue, you are an engaging and fascinating communicator. You place the utmost importance on telling the truth and being honest. The constellations point to a period of increased scholastic achievement today. Take advantage of

this opportunity to learn something new or to expand your expertise in a subject that interests you.

### APRIL 19

Ganesha says you are a hardy individual, which is fitting given that you will be able to have a day as you wish. You charge headfirst into difficulty, and as a result, you emerge from the experience more resilient. You are the rock of support that your loved ones may lean on in times of need. This is a day that lends itself well to reflection, according to the cosmos. Take some time to think about how far you've come on your trip and map out the next steps.

### APRIL 20

Ganesha says, you have a rebellious nature. You place a high emphasis on being independent and you enjoy living life to the rhythm of your drum. You have a vivid imagination and a singular outlook on the way the world works. Today, the universe urges you to express your creative side in ways that are fresh and interesting, so take advantage of this opportunity.

### APRIL 21

Ganesha says you care deeply about other people and are always willing to offer assistance to those who need it. You can bring peace to tense circumstances and restore order everywhere you go. The stars indicate that this will be a day filled with opportunities for self-actualization. Follow your bliss and do the things that bring you inner calm.

**Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations.**  
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### CONTD FROM PAGE 32

will be resolved and you will get the opportunity to spend happy moments with your love partner. Married life will be happy.

### CAPRICORN



Ganesha says that the first week of the year will be mixed for Capricorn people. The beginning of the week will be auspicious and full of benefits, but you may have to face some problems in the second half. In the first half of the week, you may suddenly have to go on a long or short-distance journey. The journey will prove pleasant and beneficial. In the second half of the week, your mind may remain worried about something. During this period, avoid making any major decisions in any kind of haste or haste. Domestic disputes will be a major cause of your worry. Especially when the expected support from family members will not be available to solve it. Students preparing for examination competitions will have to study with concentration to achieve the desired success. During this period, avoid investing money in any risky scheme, otherwise, you may have to suffer loss. Increase ping thoughtfully in love relationships. For a happy married life, avoid ignoring your spouse's feelings.

### AQUARIUS



Ganesha says that people of the Aquarius zodiac sign will need a lot of patience and prudence to achieve success in any work in the first week of the year. If you have recently started some work, then to get success or desired benefits in it, you will have to work hard with patience, otherwise the near success may slip from your hands. You may get busy with unnecessary work in the middle of the week. During this time, you may have to work extra hard and try to do even the smallest tasks. This time cannot be called favorable from an investment point of view. In such a situation, stay away from gambling, lottery, etc. during this period. In the second half of

the week, Aquarius people should be extremely careful in money transactions. Time is going to be normal in terms of love relationships. Married life will be happy.



### PISCES

Ganesha says that in the first week of the year, people of the Pisces sign can get the happiness that they have been trying to get for a long time. This week will give you the desired success in your career business. If you were working abroad for your career or business, then you may get some great success in

this regard. The respect of working women will increase at home and office. The arrival of a loved one in the middle of the week will create an atmosphere of happiness. During this time, a picnic party will be organized with relatives. People associated with the field of social service can be honored for their work. In the second half of the week, it is possible to meet an influential person, with the help of whom you may get an opportunity to get involved in profitable schemes in the future. Mutual trust and closeness will increase in love relationships. Married life will be happy.

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# Woman need more sleep than men

That males and females have different physical needs is something we all know. Yet, a research points to an important aspect where men and women are also different. This is something not everyone is aware of. A study has shown that women need more rest than men. It was performed by the Sleep Research Center at England's Loughborough University.

The study found that woman's brains need more time to recover from their daily routine. Sleep deprived females were also more susceptible to distress or anger. This is in comparison to men when getting the same amount of rest. So how much more rest do they need? It turns out that as little as twenty minutes of extra sleep can have significant benefits. The reason behind this is that, while awake, female brains most often work harder. But, let's get into more detail.

## They Have Busier Schedules

You should take into account that most women have a day job – part or full-time – and take care of the children. Also, with making dinner after work, it's no wonder women end up needing more sleep. This multi-tasking can be very exhausting to do day in and day out. The expectations that society puts on women in most cultures are evident. They have a visible effect and harmful effect.

## Go Through More Hormonal Changes

Puberty, regular monthly differences in hormones all have a serious effect on women. This also



includes pregnancy and menopause. Physical discomfort and pain are another reason why female brains need more sleep. Aside from that, women are more prone to conditions such as anxiety and depression.

## Don't Get Enough Rest

As a result of a more demanding routine, a lot of women don't get the rest they need. If you have small children, you know the demands of raising them and how you need to sync to their resting patterns. When they finally go down for a nap, you scramble to clean the house or do the cooking. Men should consider helping around the house more. Especially, since the study points to increased irritability from too little sleep.

## Links To Weight Gain

Men don't have as tough of a time losing weight as women do, especially the ones that aren't getting enough rest. Obese women are more

likely to be sleep deprived, so there's a link between insomnia and being overweight. Furthermore, the stress hormone cortisol releases in higher amounts thanks to sleep deprivation. More cortisol leads to a bigger appetite and obesity.

## They Are Wired Differently

In comparison to men, women are wired differently. Their connections are optimized for analytical and intuitive thinking. They tend to multi-task, and this higher momentum doesn't slow down as quickly when bedtime comes. So it can be harder for them to fall asleep.

Modern life and society expectations have harmful effects on the health of women. All around the world they are facing too much daily stress. This affects their sleep in the most negative way. Disrupted sleep cycles lead to a lack of concentration and worse quality of life. Getting regular sleep is essential for any individual.



## Remedies for blemishes

### Lemon Juice

Lemon juice works as an excellent skin-lightening home remedy to reduce dark spots and hyperpigmentation due to its bleaching effect.

Its high citric acid content exfoliates the skin, removes excess oil and kills acne-causing bacteria. It also minimizes the appearance of large pores and smoothes the skin.

- Simply apply fresh lemon juice on your skin and leave it on for 15 to 20 minutes before rinsing it off. Do this daily for a month or so.
- Alternatively, combine one-quarter teaspoon each of lemon juice and organic honey. Rub it on your skin and wash it off after 15 to 20 minutes. Repeat a few times a week for one month or until you see improvement.
- You can also mix together equal parts of lemon juice and tomato juice. For extra exfoliation, add one tablespoon of oatmeal (optional). Apply the mixture on the affected area. Leave it on for about 15 minutes, and then rinse it off. Do this daily, or three or four times a week for about a month or until you get encouraging results.

### Tomato Juice

Being rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, tomato juice is excellent for creating glowing and blemish-free skin. Plus, it helps shrink large pores and cure acne due to its astringent properties. Tomatoes are also good for reducing suntan due to their high lycopene content.

- Massage your skin with tomato pulp.
- Leave it on for 10 to 15 minutes, and then rinse it off with cool water.
- Follow this simple routine daily for several weeks or until you get the desired results.
- To enjoy clear and healthy skin, also include fresh tomatoes in your daily diet.

### Apple Cider Vinegar

Apple cider vinegar is rich in alpha hydroxy acids and hence lightens dark spots and blemishes. In addition, it helps balance the skin's pH levels, reduces excess oils and opens clogged pores.

Due to its anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties, apple cider vinegar also fights acne breakouts.

- Mix one part organic apple cider vinegar and three parts water. If it seems too strong, you can increase the amount of water.
- Dip a cotton ball in this solution and dab it on the affected area.
- Leave it on for 10 to 15 minutes, and then wash it off.
- Use two or three times a day until the blemish fades away.

## FOOD CORNER

### Sabudana Vada

#### INGREDIENTS

1/2 Cup Sabudana (sago) 1/2 cup Peanuts (roasted and crushed) 2 Potatoes (boiled and peeled) 1/2 tsp Jeera Powder 1 tsp Ginger Green Chilli Paste 1/2 tsp Lemon Juice 1/2 tsp Sugar to taste Salt Oil (for deep drying).

#### Method

- Rinse 1/2 cup sabudana until the water turns clear. Then soak it in 1/2 cup water overnight (or 4 to 6 hours depending on the quality of sabudana).
- In the morning, the sabudana would have absorbed all the water. It should be soft, press with a finger to check, it should crush easily.
- Drain sabudana in a colander, most likely there will be no water but you still drain it. Then transfer the sabudana to a large bowl along with the following:
- 2 medium potatoes, boiled & mashed (1 cup mashed potatoes), 1/4 cup roasted peanuts, 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, 1 to 2 green chilies, finely chopped, 2 teaspoons lemon juice, 1/2



- teaspoon salt, or to taste
- Mix everything together using a spatula or your hands. Divide the mixture into 10 equal parts, flatten them a bit and make them into round shapes. You will get 9 to 10 vadas, around 50 grams each, 2 inches in diameter.
- Heat oil on medium heat in a kadai or wok. Add vadas to the oil one by one, don't overcrowd the kadai. Maintain the oil temperature to medium heat. Fry vadas on medium heat until golden brown and crispy from both sides. Drain on a paper towel.

# Wear prescription glasses: A care guide to see better

So, you got your eyesight tested and found out you need your first pair of glasses. Or you found out you need a stronger pair than the ones you have. You put them on and everything looks crystal clear. But after a few weeks things look blurrier without them than they did before your eye test. What's going on?

Some people start to wear spectacles for the first time and perceive their vision is "bad" when they take their glasses off. They incorrectly interpret this as the glasses making their vision worse. Fear of this might make them less likely to wear their glasses.

But what they are noticing is how much better the world appears through the glasses. They become less tolerant of a blurry world when they remove them.

Here are some other things you might notice about eyesight and wearing glasses.

## Lazy eyes?

Some people sense an increasing reliance on glasses and wonder if their eyes have become "lazy".

Our eyes work in much the same way as an auto-focus camera. A flexible lens inside each eye is controlled by muscles that let us focus on objects in the distance (such as a footy scoreboard) by relaxing the muscle to flatten the lens. When the muscle contracts it makes the lens steeper and more powerful to see things that are much closer to us (such as a text message). From the age of about 40, the lens in our eye progressively hardens and loses its ability to change shape. Gradually, we lose our capacity to focus on near objects. This is called "presbyopia" and at the moment there are no treatments for this lens hardening. Optometrists correct this with prescription glasses that take the load of your natural lens. The lenses allow you to see those up-close images clearly by providing extra refractive power. Once we are used to seeing clearly, our tolerance for blurry vision will be lower and we will reach for the glasses to see well again.

## The wrong glasses?

Wearing old glasses, the wrong prescription (or even someone else's glasses) won't allow you to see as well as possible for day-to-day tasks. It could also cause eyestrain and headaches.



Incorrectly prescribed or dispensed prescription glasses can lead to vision impairment in children as their visual system is still in development.

But it is more common for kids to develop long-term vision problems as a result of not wearing glasses when they need them.

By the time children are about 10-12 years of age, wearing incorrect spectacles is less likely to cause their eyes to become lazy or damage vision in the long term, but it is likely to result in blurry or uncomfortable vision during daily wear.

Registered optometrists in Australia are trained to assess refractive error (whether the eye focuses light into the retina) as well as the different aspects of ocular function (including how the eyes work together, change focus, move around to see objects). All of these help us see clearly and comfortably.

## What about dirty glasses?

Dirty or scratched glasses can give you the impression your vision is worse than it actually is. Just like a window, the dirtier your glasses are, the more difficult it is to see clearly through them. Cleaning glasses regularly with a microfibre lens cloth will help.

While dirty glasses are not commonly associated with eye infections, some research suggests dirty glasses can harbour bacteria with the remote but theoretical potential to cause eye infection.

Source: PTI



## Benefits of vitamin C to maintain fit and healthy body

Beyond its reputation for fighting the common cold, Vitamin C provides many benefits that are vital to maintaining a fit and healthy body. Let's look at some strong reasons why this simple vitamin deserves a prominent place in your everyday diet.

### Immune System Boost

Vitamin C strengthens the body's defense mechanisms. Its antioxidant capabilities improve immune function by neutralising damaging free radicals and stimulating white blood cells, which are essential for combating infections. Regular consumption of vitamin C can boost immune health.

### Improved Skin Health

Vitamin C is needed for collagen production, which is responsible for preserving skin suppleness and firmness. Vitamin C helps to battle indications of aging, such as wrinkles and drooping skin, by increasing collagen formation. Incorporating Vitamin C-rich foods into your daily routine can improve skin health.

### Reduces Inflammation

Since vitamin C has antioxidant properties, it can reduce free radical damage that can damage cells. Vitamin C's antioxidant properties not only combat free radicals but also help alleviate inflammation, a common factor in various chronic diseases. By neutralizing oxidative stress, it supports immune function and tissue repair, contributing to overall health and well-being. Including Vitamin C-rich foods in daily intake can aid in reducing inflammation and promoting cellular health.

### Absorption of Iron

Vitamin C also aids in the absorption of iron, a mineral essential for oxygen delivery and energy creation. Additionally, iron plays a crucial role in energy metabolism, supporting various physiological processes. Adequate absorption facilitated by Vitamin C ensures optimal iron levels, preventing anemia and supporting overall health.

Source: News18

# Beverages for a balanced, happy liver

## Jamun Juice

Jamun, a low-calorie fruit, effectively improves liver health. Also, it is rich in vitamin A, which promotes good eye health. No doubt our ancestors used this versatile food to cure multiple illness and Health issues.

## Lemon Juice

Lemon has many health benefits and its usefulness for good skin is known to all. At the same time, it boosts metabolism, thus promoting weight loss. The antioxidants and vitamin C fortify liver health.

## Beetroot Juice

Enriched with betaine, beetroot promotes liver function by facilitating fat breakdown and bile flow, thereby enhancing digestion.

## Amla Juice

One of the richest sources of Vitamin C, amla is known for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, which help safeguard liver health.

## Barley Grass Juice

Packed full of antioxidants, enzymes, and



chlorophyll, barley grass juice supports liver detoxification and enhances liver function in general. It is a great complement to a diet that is beneficial to the liver because of its strong nutrient profile.

## Dandelion root tea

This beverage has been traditionally to promote liver health. Dandelion root tea is a natural diuretic, which helps remove toxins through the urine. It stimulates the synthesis of bile, which helps in the digestion of fats. Daily consumption of dandelion root tea can help the liver to function well.

Source: HT

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## Microsoft to open new AI hub in London

Months after creating the new Microsoft AI organisation to help advance their consumer AI products and research, including Copilot, the tech giant has now announced that it is opening a new AI hub in London, UK.

According to the company, the new AI hub will drive pioneering work to “advance state-of-the-art language models and their supporting infrastructure, and to create world-class tooling for foundation models, collaborating closely with our AI teams across Microsoft and with our partners, including OpenAI.”

The new AI hub will be led by Jordan Hoffmann, an AI scientist and engineer. Before joining Microsoft AI, Hoffmann distinguished himself as an AI pioneer at Inflection and DeepMind, based in London.

Hoffmann will be joined by a group of Microsoft AI team members based in the company’s London Paddington office. “There is an enormous pool of AI talent and expertise in the UK, and Microsoft AI plans to make a significant, long-term investment in the region as we begin hiring the best AI scientists and engineers into this new AI hub,” the company said in a blogpost. In the post, the tech giant also highlighted its recently announced 2.5 billion pound investment to upskill the UK workforce for the AI era and to build the infrastructure to power the AI economy, including its commitment to bring 20,000 of the most advanced GPUs to the country by 2026.

# Google could finally make Android work faster on PCs with new desktop mode

Android users are waiting for the day when their phones can connect to a big screen and convert into a full-fledged Android PC. We have seen hints of the development but nothing concrete has shown up so far, except for Samsung’s DeX mode. But things could finally change and we could see the standard Android version getting the PC mode, at least that’s what some code strings of the next Android 15 update suggest.

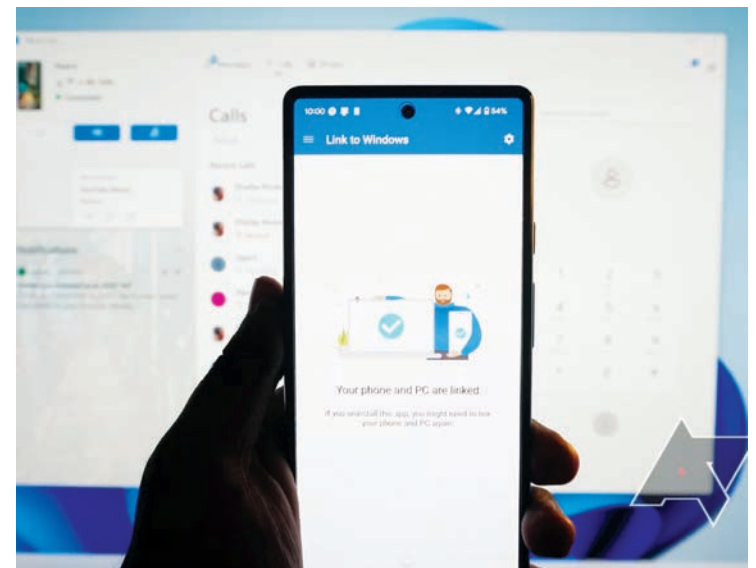
Reports point out that Android 14 is slowly but surely preparing a big upgrade for its successor which will be unveiled in around a month’s time from now at the Google I/O 2024 keynote in May.

It has been observed that the latest version of Android’s desktop mode in Android 14 beta allows users to move the apps around the big screen as well as resize them depending on how many apps they want to use simultaneously.

These features might not sound new but when you realise that we are talking about Android running on a big screen and supporting these options, you can imagine the excitement people will have thinking about the tool if and when it officially rolls out. We have already seen glimpses of what Google has in store for Android users.

The new Pixel 8 series launched in 2023 come with support for external display via the USB C port for wired transmission of data and all the mobile capability on a big screen. Having the hardware support will amplify when Android is ready to fully utilise the device and its AI features and tech that will finally let people enjoy Android beyond phone, tablet and watches. Bringing the PC mode to Pixel series also could be a gamechanger for the company with more consumers ready to get their hands on an Android phone, just to see how the technology works.

Apple already offers a similar feature but only within its ecosystem. Android being open source means you could have a premium phone and a basic 4K monitor to get the PC mode up



and running without breaking the bank.

## Google turns on its new, global Find My device network for Android

Google has officially announced that it’s finally turning on its long-awaited revamped Find My Device network for Android, which works even with offline devices. This is going live on devices running Android 9 and later, across the world.

The network will have over a billion devices, so it will make it very easy to locate yours, even when they’re offline. As a bonus for the Pixel 8 and Pixel 8 Pro, these will be trackable even when they’re powered off or the battery is dead, thanks to some “specialized Pixel hardware”.

Starting in May, new Bluetooth tracker tags will become available from Chipolo and Pebblebee, and these will be locateable in the Find My Device app, as they’re built specifically for the new Find My Device network.

## Spotify now lets you use AI to make playlists using text prompts

Searching music on apps can be a multi-layer process but AI is here to your rescue. Spotify is bringing its new AI feature that gets you a list of tracks in a playlist just with the help of text prompts. So, if you want to listen to energetic morning music, just use the Spotify AI feature and get a full playlist of songs that matches your description. The AI Playlist feature is like Copilot for your music listening. If you don’t like what Spotify shows you, users can tweak the prompts further and give more details to get closer to your preferences.

Available for both Android and iOS smartphone users, the feature is limited to markets like the UK, Australia, and will soon be expanded to more markets.

Spotify Premium users can now use text prompts or phrases like “songs to serenade my cat” or “beats to battle a zombie apocalypse.” They can also include emojis, colours, names of movie characters, and more to get music recommendations. Based on these inputs, Spotify will recommend music that matches either artist, genre, mood, or all of the above.



Spotify uses inputs from a generative AI model (LLM) to understand users’ intent and offer music that suits their moods and tastes. The company also recently introduced a new AI-powered DJ, which offers custom curation of music, including spoken-word commentary.

### SPOTIFY AI PLAYLIST: HOW IT WORKS

Spotify AI Playlist is available to premium subscribers for now, so expect

the feature to work like a beta product. You can start giving text prompts to the platform for a new playlist by doing these things:

- Go to your Spotify library and tap on the + icon to activate the AI assistant
- Spotify users will see a screen with ‘What do you want to hear today’ message
- The platform even has few pre-loaded templates just to get you

started

- Spotify will use its AI tech to find the best tracks for your playlist
- The list of songs will show on your screen, click on create to make a new AI Playlist

Spotify is only giving the AI Playlist to its subscribers in the UK and Australia and only for those with the mobile app. We still don’t know if and when Indian subscribers will get to try the feature but we expect that to happen soon.

Spotify wants more people to pay for its service and we have seen the change happen in front of our eyes recently. Basic features like playing the same song again or repeat has gone behind the paywall, while the free users see their options limited by the day.

AI is definitely popular among segments, and it is imperative for Spotify to jump in the wagon. Having said that, AI has raised its concerns, and the last thing you want is for your music app to throw some funny results. The platform will have to be careful of how the results its AI model shows to avoid unnecessary scrutiny.



## Fitch downgrades outlook on China to negative, affirms 'A' rating

**F**itch Ratings revised the outlook on China's long-term foreign debt to negative from stable, citing increasing risks to the country's public finance prospects.

Rising economic uncertainties and China's efforts to shift its growth model away from one driven by the property market "have eroded fiscal buffers from a ratings perspective," according to a statement by the rating agency.

"Fiscal policy is increasingly likely to play an important role in supporting growth in the coming years which could keep debt on a steady upward trend," it said. "Contingent liability risks may also be rising, as lower nominal growth exacerbates challenges to managing high economy-wide leverage," it added.

The nation's actual issuer default rating is affirmed at A, considering its "large and diversified" economy, "still solid" economic growth prospects relative to peers, strength in global goods trade, robust external finances, and reserve currency status of the Chinese currency, Fitch said in the statement.

# US FAA probing Boeing whistleblower's quality claims on 787, 777 jets

WASHINGTON (TIP)

US air regulator is probing a Boeing whistleblower's claims that the company dismissed safety and quality concerns in the production of the planemaker's 787 and 777 jets, an agency spokesperson said.

Boeing engineer Sam Salehpour's allegations stem from work on the company's widebody 787 and 777 jets. Salehpour, who works at Boeing's plant in Everett, Washington, said he faced retaliation, such as threats and exclusion from meetings, after he identified engineering problems that affected the structural integrity of the jets.

This latest allegation came as the US planemaker has been facing a safety crisis that has undermined its reputation following a Jan. 5 mid-air panel blowout on a 737 MAX plane. It has undergone a management shakeup, U.S. regulators have put curbs on its production, and deliveries fell by half in March. Boeing paused deliveries of the 787 widebody jet for more than a year until August 2022 as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) investigated quality problems and manufacturing flaws.

In 2021, Boeing said some 787 airplanes had shims that were not the proper size and some aircraft had areas that did not meet skin-flatness specifications. A shim is a thin piece of material used to fill tiny gaps in a manufactured product. In a statement, Boeing said it was fully confident in the 787 Dreamliner, adding



that the claims "are inaccurate and do not represent the comprehensive work Boeing has done to ensure the quality and long-term safety of the aircraft."

Salehpour observed shortcuts used by Boeing to reduce bottlenecks during the 787 assembly process that placed "excessive stress on major airplane joints, and embedded drilling debris between key joints on more than 1,000 planes," his lawyers said. He told reporters in a call later on Tuesday that he saw problems with misalignment in the production of the 777 widebody jet which were remedied by using force.

"I literally saw people jumping on the pieces of the airplane to get them to align," he said. Boeing shares closed down nearly 2% at \$178.12 on Tuesday after the FAA confirmed the

investigation, which was first reported by the New York Times. "Voluntary reporting without fear of reprisal is a critical component in aviation safety," the FAA said. "We strongly encourage everyone in the aviation industry to share information. We thoroughly investigate all reports."

U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal's office said his investigation subcommittee will hold a hearing on Boeing issues with Salehpour on April 17 titled "Examining Boeing's Broken Safety Culture: Firsthand Accounts." Blumenthal added he wants Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun, who said last month that he will step down by year-end, to testify at a future hearing. The panel had initially sought to have Calhoun testify at next week's hearing according to a March 19 letter.

## Tesla in talks to partner with Reliance for EV manufacturing plant: Report

**E**lectric vehicle (EV) manufacturing giant Tesla is in the initial stages of talks with Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) to form a joint venture to build a manufacturing plant in India, reported The Hindu BusinessLine quoting sources.

One of the persons quoted in the report said the talks are in the initial stages and have been "ongoing for over a month".

However, the person added that the "move shouldn't be construed as RIL's entry into the automobile space", adding that the oil-to-telecom conglomerate's objective in the joint venture is to build capacities for electric vehicles in India.

Another source quoted in the Hindu BusinessLine report said the role of RIL has not been "crystallised yet", but it may play a "significant hand in establishing the manufacturing facility and the allied ecosystem for Tesla in India".

Tesla has reportedly earmarked \$2 billion for its upcoming ventures in India, with plans to establish a



manufacturing plant in either Gujarat or Maharashtra.

While Maharashtra may emerge as the preferred location due to its port facilities, no final decision has been made yet.

The report further hinted that senior officials from Tesla are expected to visit India soon to finalise the plant's location and discuss a potential joint venture with Reliance Industries Limited (RIL).

However, if the ongoing talks with RIL do not materialise, Tesla may explore other domestic partners.

## Ola to shut ops in Britain, Australia, New Zealand; to focus on India

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Ride-hailing services provider Ola has decided to shut down operations in the UK, Australia and New Zealand and will continue to focus on India business, its promoter ANI Technologies said.

The Softbank-backed company said that it sees immense opportunity for expansion in India. "Our ride-hailing business is growing rapidly, and we remain profitable and segment leaders in India. The future of mobility is electric - not just in personal mobility, but also for the ride-hailing business and there is immense opportunity for expansion in India.

With this clear focus, we have reassessed our priorities and have decided to shut down our overseas ride-hailing business in its current form in the UK, Australia and New Zealand," an Ola Mobility spokesperson said.

The company had launched these operations in phases in 2018. ANI Technologies has reported a narrowing



of consolidated net loss to Rs 772.25 crore in the fiscal 2023, according to a regulatory filing. The company posted a consolidated loss of Rs 1,522.33 crore in the financial year (FY) 2022.

The consolidated revenue from operations increased by about 48 per cent to Rs 2,481.35 crore in FY23 from Rs 1,679.54 crore in the year-ago period. On a standalone basis, ANI Technologies, which comprises a ride-hailing business, has reported a narrowing of loss to Rs 1,082.56 crore in FY23 compared to a loss of Rs 3,082.42 crore in FY22. *Source: PTI*

# Sikh History This Week

## APRIL 12 TO APRIL 18

### 12th April

1759 Sikhs gathered in huge numbers for Baisakhi in Amritsar. Hukamnana was issued in the name of the Sikhs from Sri Akal Takht for the collection of Daswand and to engage in religious deeds.

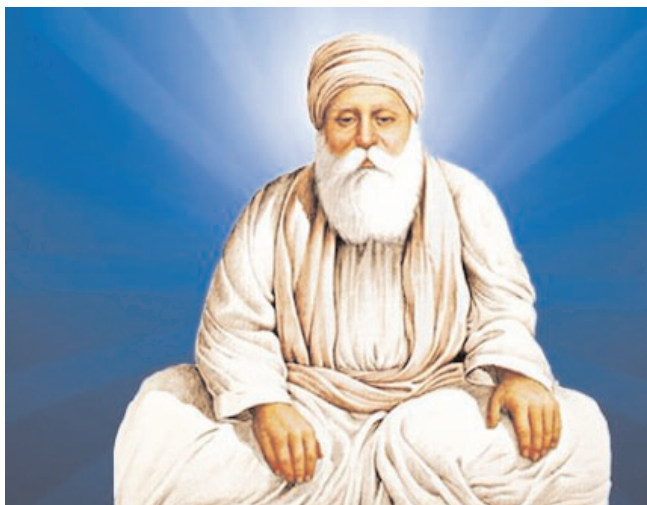
1759b Maratha Sabaji and the Sikhs together attacked Jahan Khan.



1801 Coronation of Ranjit Singh as Sarkar-i-Wala. Ranjit Singh's was proclaimed ruler by Baba Sahib Bedi, a descendant of Guru Nanak. At the coronation ceremony Sardar Ranjit Singh assumed the title Sarkar-i-Wala. Although the ceremony was conducted in accordance with the ancient ceremony of Hindu monarchy, "abhisekha," he never sat on a throne in respect to the concept of Sikh sovereignty, for sovereignty belonged only to Guru Khalsa Panth and not any individual. He asked all non-Sikhs to address him as Maharaja and all Sikhs as Singh Sahib. He struck "NanakShahi" Silver Rupee coins, symbolising sovereignty the same year. The legend "Deg Tegh Fateh" of 1765 on Lahore mint Rupees was changed to the legend that existed on Amritsar coins of 1775 and coins of Banda Bahadur of 1710. Ranjit Singh adopted the same couplet and exactly in the same form as it appeared on 1784 Amritsar coins, without any modifications.

1876 Maharaja Mohinder Singh of Patiala passed away.

### 13th April



1559 Guru Amar Das Patshah established the Vaisakhi Maela traditions.

1746 Panth Khalsa passed a resolution on the Vaisakhi day, not to be part of the Afghan kingdom and actively work against any such designs.

1814 Nirankari Chief, Baba Darbara Singh, son of Baba Dyal Ji was born.

1861 Baba Ram Singh started the Namdhari movement.

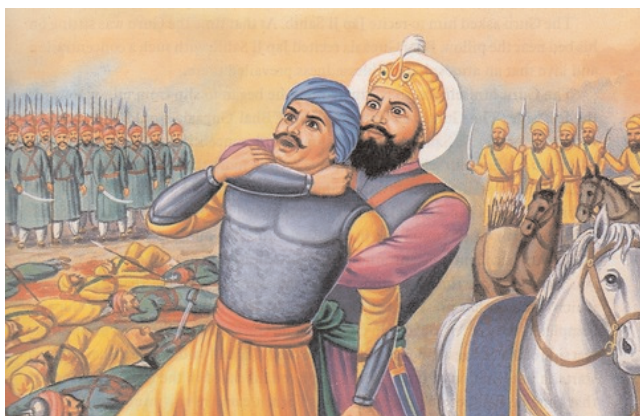
1919 Jallianwala massacre took place, 379 unarmed



killed and 2,000 wounded.

### 14th April

1634 Battle of Amritsar took place between Mughals and Sikhs, led by Guru Hargobind Ji. The immediate cause of this battle was the seizure of royal hawk by Sikhs hunting near village Guntala in the vicinity of Amritsar. The royal hawk had actually strayed away while on a hunt. Sikh tradition hold that teh royal hawk was trying hard to capture its target and was flying up and down in the sky time and again. The target was almost caught when it came to the notice of the Sikhs hunting nearby who moved by compassion set off their own hawk which pounced upon the royal hawk. The royal hawk fell and was captured by the Sikhs. The royal solidiesr approached the Sikhs and demanded the return of the royal hawk but on account of their insolent manners, they were refused. The matter was reported to the concerened local authorities with the result that a clash took place between the mughal troops and the Sikhs.



1772 Sikh forces had crossed Indus and plundered Peshawar city. On this day Ahmad Shah died.

1892 Khalsa College Council eastablished at Amritsar.

1923 Babbars appeal to the people to swell their ranks. This appeal was distributed through "Babbar Akali Doaba" newspaper.

1930 Civil disobedience movement initiated in the Punjab.

1949 Sirdar Kapur Singh I.C.S was suspended by government of Gopi Chand Bhargav on frivolous charges. His real crime was being a committed Sikh.

1984 Surinder Singh Sodhi, a right-hand man of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwalae, was killed.

### 15th April

PRAKASH UTSAV, Patshahi First, Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Guru Nanak Dev Ji Patshah came to this planet in Talwandi, also known as Nankana Sahib, situated about 48 miles westward from Lahore, Pakistan. He was born

in the house of Kalu Chand Bedi and Mata Tripta. Today is the actual date of birth, though Guru Khalsa Panth observes it in Nov.

1634 Bhai Ballu Ji accepted Shahadat while fighting the Turks in Amritsar.



1940 Master Tara Singh declares his opposition to the establishment of Sikh rule.

1980 Sikh Bank, the Punjab and Sind Bank, Nationalised.

### 16th April

1764 Sikhs captured Lahore and issued their own coins.

1781Sikhs attack Shahdara Patpat, Delhi.

1961 The passing away of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh Ji.

### 17th April

1766 Conquest of PaharGanj, Delhi by Khalsa Forces.

In 1727 Nawab Kapur Singh took charge of the political affairs of the Sikhs. At that time the Sikh Nation was in disarray. The Mughal Governor, Zakria Khan's policy to annihilate the Sikhs had forced them to disperse towards the hills and jungles.

But it did not take long and the Sikhs once again started to reappear and consolidate their forces. The credit to reorganize the Sikh Polity, and institutionalize it into specific units, goes to Nawab Kapur Singh. He realized that the support group was equally necessary to keep the supply-line open for the forces in combat. Consequently, he divided the Khalsa society into two groups. The name of Taruna Dal was designated to the armed forces and the combat troops. Mostly the people under the age of forty were taken in it.

1841 Mehan Singh, Governor of Kashmir, murdered by mutineous troops asking for the arrears of their salaries. Gulab Singh was sent to crush mutineous troops who used very repressive measures. Shaikh Ghulam Muhiud-din made Governor of Kashmir.

1923 Subedar Ganda Singh of Ghurial is murdered.

### 18th April

1908 1st Sikh Educational Conference by Chief Khalsa Diwan held.

1924 4th Shahidi Jatha of 500 valiant Akali Satyagrahies, led by Jathaedar Puran Singh Bahowal (Hoshiarpur), courted arrest on reaching Jaito.

1661 Ninth Patshah, Guru Tegh Bahadur visited Arayag.

1717 Bhai mani Singh assumed control of Amritsar and wrote a letter to Matta Sundar Kaur and Matta Sahib Kaur describing the painful tales at the hands of the barbarians. As a result Bandiai Khalsa was removed.

1758 Sikhs gather in huge numbers for Baisakhi in Amritsar and performed cleaninsing and kar-sewa. Maratha Sardar Rangunath Rao and Malhaar Rao donated Rs. 25,000.

# Ram Navami: Celebration of Lord Rama's birth

Ram Navami is a joyous occasion celebrated by millions of people around the world. It marks the birth anniversary of Lord Rama, the seventh avatar of the Hindu deity Vishnu. This auspicious festival falls on the ninth day of the Chaitra month in the Hindu calendar, typically during the months of March or April. In 2024, Ram Navami falls on Wednesday, April 17th, is a day to remember Rama's birth and celebrate the ideals he represents, it brings communities together to honor the beloved hero, Lord Rama. Let's delve into this vibrant festival's rich history, significance, and traditions.

## The Birth and Legacy of Lord Rama

To truly appreciate Shree Ram Navami, we must first understand the captivating tale of Lord Rama. According to Hindu mythology, Lord Rama was born to King Dasharatha and Queen Kausalya in the ancient city of Ayodhya. His birth is believed to have occurred thousands of years ago, during the Treta Yuga, a time of great virtue and righteousness.

The story of Lord Rama's life is chronicled in the epic Ramayana, written by the sage Valmiki. It narrates the journey of Rama, his wife Sita, and his loyal companion Hanuman, as they face numerous trials and tribulations. From his exile to the forests to his epic battle against the demon king Ravana, Lord Rama exemplifies courage, compassion, and devotion to righteousness.

Ram Navami marks the auspicious day when Lord Rama incarnated on earth to rid the world of evil and establish dharma, or righteousness. His life serves as an inspiration to millions, embodying the values of honor, sacrifice, and love for all beings.

## Ram Navami Importance

Ram Navami holds immense significance in Hindu culture and spirituality. It symbolizes the victory of good over evil and the triumph of righteousness over injustice. Devotees believe that by observing this festival with devotion and piety, they can seek the blessings of Lord Rama for peace, prosperity, and spiritual growth.

For many, Ram Navami is not just a religious observance but a time for introspection and renewal of one's commitment to leading a virtuous life. It serves as a reminder of the enduring values embodied by Lord Rama and the importance of upholding them in our daily lives.

## Celebrations and Traditions

Ram Navami is celebrated with great fervor and devotion by Hindus worldwide. The festivities typically begin with devotees taking a holy bath before sunrise, followed by prayers and rituals dedicated to Lord Rama. Temples are adorned with flowers and lights, and special ceremonies are conducted to honor the deity.

One of the highlights of Ram Navami is the recitation of the Ramayana, the epic saga of Lord Rama's life. Devotees gather in temples or community halls to listen to the enchanting tales of Rama, Sita, Hanuman, and other characters from the epic. The recitation is often accompanied by devotional songs and hymns praising the virtues of Lord Rama.

Another integral part of Ram Navami celebrations is the procession or 'Rathayatra' of Lord Rama. Idols or images of Lord Rama, along with his consort Sita, his loyal brother Lakshmana, and devotee Hanuman, are placed on elaborately decorated chariots and paraded through the streets amidst chanting of hymns and mantras. Devotees throng the streets to catch a glimpse



of the divine procession and seek blessings from Lord Rama.

Feasting is an essential aspect of Ram Navami celebrations, with devotees preparing and sharing delicious vegetarian dishes as offerings to the deity. Special sweets like 'Panakam' (a sweet drink made of jaggery and spices) and 'Neer mor' (buttermilk) are prepared to mark the occasion. Sharing food with family, friends, and neighbors is believed to be a way of spreading joy and goodwill during the festival.

## Ram Navami Significance and Symbolism

Ram Navami holds profound symbolism and significance in Hinduism. The birth of Lord Rama symbolizes the victory of righteousness and dharma over adharma (evil). It serves as a reminder of the importance of upholding moral values, respecting one's duties and responsibilities, and standing up against injustice and tyranny.

The festival also signifies the beginning of spring, a season of renewal, growth, and prosperity. Just as the earth blossoms with new life during spring, Ram Navami rejuvenates the spirit of devotees, filling their hearts with hope, joy, and devotion.

Ram Navami also promotes unity and harmony among people of different communities and backgrounds. Regardless of caste, creed, or nationality, devotees come together to celebrate the universal ideals of love, compassion, and righteousness embodied by Lord Rama.

## Teaching Lessons from Ram Navami

Ram Navami offers valuable lessons that can be imparted to students, fostering moral and spiritual

**“Everyone thinks how to become a better son or daughter, mother or father, brother or sister, husband or wife, and man or woman. But no one puts actual thoughts on that they are all HUMAN and how to become a better HUMAN. What can we do to learn how to be a better human? ”**

**-- Arish K Sahani**

development. Here are some teaching points inspired by the festival:

**THE IMPORTANCE OF VIRTUE:** Ram Navami teaches students the significance of leading a virtuous life guided by principles of truth, compassion, and integrity, as exemplified by Lord Rama.

**RESILIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE:** The story of Lord Rama's exile and his subsequent triumph over adversity teaches students the importance of resilience, perseverance, and determination in overcoming challenges.

**RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY:** Ram Navami promotes inclusivity and respect for diversity, encouraging students to embrace people from different backgrounds and cultures with understanding and compassion.

**SERVICE AND SACRIFICE:** The devotion of Hanuman and other characters in the Ramayana highlights the virtues of selfless service and sacrifice, inspiring students to contribute positively to society.

**UPHOLDING DHARMA:** Ram Navami emphasizes the importance of upholding dharma (righteousness) and fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities with sincerity and dedication.

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The Land of High Passes, Ladakh, the newly created Union Territory in India (previously a part of Jammu & Kashmir), boasts a landscape that can leave you with your jaws dropped. It is a place where the landscape changes dramatically; it is truly astonishing to see the mountains, snow, cold desert, alpine meadows and lakes at a short distance from each other. Tourism in Ladakh is an absolute delight for nature lovers as well as adventurers.

Adorned with the lofty barren mountains, Ladakh is home to some of the highest motorable passes like Khardung La (5359 m), Marsimik La (5582 m), and Chang La (5360 m), and alpine lakes like Pangong Tso (4350 m) and Tso Moriri (4522 m). Ladakh is further divided into three regions - Leh, Nubra, and Zaskar, and each region has several places to see.

Ladakh is majorly popular amongst the adventurers who feel welcomed by the number of adrenaline rushing activities offered here. The union territory is amongst the top trekking destinations in India with amazing and unmatched treks like the popular Frozen River Trek/Chadar Trek. Ladakh also has opportunities for mountaineering, motor biking, mountain biking, white water rafting and more.

A lot of volunteering options are also available for those who have the leisure of time and would like to contribute to the cause of not just conservation but also social upliftment by contributing to the development efforts in the region. Camel safari in the sand dunes of Hunder is another surreal experience, perfect for a family trip. All this if you can take a break from gaping at the larger than life landscapes here!

#### STOK KANGRI

Stok Kangri is the highest mountain peak in the Stok range of the Himalayas. At 20,500 ft, it is also the highest trekkable summit in India. It has always been a great lure for trekkers from all over the world and is quite popular since it requires relatively less trekking skills. Ideally done between 6-10 days, it is one of the must have Ladakh experiences.

You need to be properly acclimatised to the high altitude conditions before attempting this one. It is advisable to make a summit attempt if you have prior experience of scaling some 14,000 ft peaks. A lot of mental fitness also goes into this one, for weather can take sudden turns on the trek to Stok Kangri. Still, it is a must do if adventure is your calling and you harbour a secret wish to scale a world-famous Indian peak.

#### BIKING

This one is for the more ardent adventurers. Leh Ladakh offer one of the toughest terrains and the most alluring landscapes in the world, making the region perfect for biking expeditions. You can rent a bicycle (at INR 300-500 per cycle per day) or a motorbike (at INR 800-1600 per bike per day) from one of the rental points in Leh and explore the region at your pace. Though Khardung (17,582 ft), one of the highest motorable passes in the world, is right at the top of bikers' favourite list, there is a lot more.

# Leh & Ladakh: The land of high passes



You can join an expedition or go solo on some of the most awe-inducing stretches that include Leh-Pangong Tso, Leh-Nubra Valley, Leh-Alchi, Leh-Tso Moriri and Leh-Hunder. Time to set some new records.

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Leh and Ladakh are such great loves of photographers that you will see hordes of them, trekking in high-altitude zones, lugging their bulky camera equipment with them. If you, too, share their love or harbour a wish to shoot some fascinating photos or time-lapse videos, get ready to be enthralled. Some of the best vantage points for photography in Leh and Ladakh are the Shanti Stupa, Leh Palace, the sand dunes of Hunder, Stakna Monastery, Diskit Monastery, Chang La, Khardung La, Pangong Tso and Tso Moriri, which offers some fascinating views of the Changthang region. Changpas and Ladakhis of course make for some of the best portraits that you can capture. Their bright smiles might just be too hard to catch with a camera though.

#### CAMEL SAFARI AT HUNDER

Hopping on for a ride on the Bactrian camels and exploring the sand dunes at Hunder is another must do in Ladakh. These camels are one of the few reminders of the Silk Route days, when Hunder was a major business port. With most of the camels domesticated now, you can approach the village people to arrange a ride for you. These safaris can extend from hours to days, depending on your choice. Sunsets are the best time to go on the safari, for the dunes turn golden under the setting Sun.

#### Must see

The Leh Palace, which is situated behind the main market has eight stories and is similar to the Potala Palace of Lhasa and still belongs to the royal family



of Ladakh. Just ahead of the palace is the famous Chamba Temple, which is a oneroomed shrine that has a huge icon of Maitreya, the Buddha to come. Since this temple cannot be found easily, it is essential to enquire about it in the second row of shops. Also in the bazaar, at the top of the street, one can see the Jama Masjid. This has been painted in green and white colour. Another place that you must visit is the Sankar Gompa, which is situated within the city and is one of the oldest structures here. At one time, this monastery only welcomes maximum twenty monks and is a fairly active one.

Also the monks here are extremely hospitable and always offer yak butter tea to those visiting the monastery.

Also a visit to the famous Thikse Monastery is a must. This monastery is the largest such structure in central Ladakh and is primarily known for its magnanimous statue of Maitreya (future Buddha) in its Maitreya Temple. This statue is 15 meters (49 ft) high and the largest such statue in Ladakh. The Buddha here is unusually portrayed as seated in the lotus position rather than his usual representations as standing or in a sitting posture on a high throne.

**CONTD FROM PAGE 1****West Asia on edge as fears of Iran's retaliation loom**

was assassinated. Iran and Syria immediately blamed Israel for the strike. Israel has neither confirmed nor dismissed its role in the attack.

"The question is not if but when. The Supreme Leader, the government and senior military leaders have all warned that a response is coming. Iran cannot back off this time," a strategic analyst based in Tehran with close links to the regime told The Hindu on the phone, requesting anonymity.

On Thursday, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian reiterated that Iran's response was necessary. "When the Israeli regime completely violates the immunity of individuals and diplomatic places in violation of international law and the Vienna Conventions, legitimate defense is a necessity," Mr. Abdollahian told his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock in a phone call, Iran's Mehr news agency reported.

"Had the UN Security Council condemned the Zionist regime's reprehensible act of aggression on our diplomatic premises in Damascus and subsequently brought to justice its perpetrators, the imperative for Iran to punish this rogue regime might have been obviated," Iran's mission to the United Nations wrote on X. on Thursday, April 11.

In Israel, political leaders as well as military and diplomatic officials said they were ready for any scenario. Asked if it was Israel that carried out the attack, Michael Ronen, head of South and Southeast Asia Division at Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said: "They say Israel carried out the strike. Well, I don't know. What I can say is that Israel is ready for any response from Iran."

American media reported on Friday, April 12, citing U.S. and Iranian sources that an Iranian attack could come within the next 48 hours. Mr. Khamenei is considering different options, from launching direct air strikes on Israel from Iran to attacking Israeli assets in the region either directly or through proxies, according to these reports. Israeli leaders have warned that they will strike inside Iran if the origin of the attack is Iran.

"Iran is the source of all problems in the Middle East. Hamas, Houthis, Hezbollah and the Islamic Jihad... What do all these terrorist entities have in common? Iran is the godfather of all of them," Yossi Zilberman, deputy spokesperson of the MFA, told The Hindu here. "Iran is the puppeteer. Unless Iran is reined in, there won't be peace in the Middle East," he said.

Israel has frozen all leaves for combat units "in accordance with the situational assessments" and drafted reservists to strengthen for air defenses. The IDF has also scrambled the GPS system, which could be used to misguide incoming weapons. On Thursday, those who turned on their GPS in Tel Aviv found that their location was shown in Beirut. In the northern settlement of Tefen in the Upper Galilee region, the

GPS showed the location was Syrian Golan.

The U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem on Friday told American citizens in Israel that the "security environment remains complex" in Israel. U.S. government employees and their family members were asked not to travel "outside the greater Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Be'er Sheva areas until further notice." India's Ministry of External Affairs advised Indians not to travel to Iran and Israel until further notice. "All those who are currently residing in Iran or Israel are requested to get in touch with Indian Embassies there and register themselves," it said. (Source: The Hindu. Stanly Johny was in Israel as part of a media delegation)

**India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra Reviews with US Officials the India-US Global Strategic partnership**

Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership.

During his visit to Washington DC, Foreign Secretary had discussions with his counterparts at the State Department Deputy Secretary Richard Verma and Deputy Secretary Kurt Campbell as well as other senior officials. He also held discussions with key counterpart officials at the National Security Council, Department of Defense, Department of Commerce and Department of Energy. These discussions spanned the entire gamut of India-US ties, growing defense and commercial ties, supply chain resilience and contemporary regional developments.

Foreign Secretary also had meetings with representatives of leading thinktanks and chambers of commerce. The visit is in keeping with the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries and provides an opportunity to further advance our growing and future-oriented partnership.

**India advises citizens against travel to Israel and Iran amid rising tensions between the two countries**

precautions about their safety and restrict their movements to minimum.

"In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indians are advised not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice," it said.

"All those who are currently residing in Iran or Israel are requested to get in touch with Indian Embassies there and register themselves," the MEA said.

"They are also requested to observe utmost precautions about their safety and restrict their movements to the minimum," it added.

(Source: PTI)

**India among 12 nations responsible for 60 per cent of world's mismanaged plastic waste: Report**

The Plastic Overshoot Day report by Swiss non-profit EA Earth Action also said global plastic waste



generation has risen by 7.11 per cent since 2021. The world is estimated to have generated 220 million tons of plastic waste this year, 70 million tons of which will end up polluting the environment.

The report comes ahead of the fourth meeting of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) in Ottawa, Canada, as the world leaders attempt to develop a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution.

"Twelve countries are responsible for 60 per cent of the world's mismanaged plastic waste: China, India, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, Vietnam, Iran, Indonesia, Egypt, Pakistan, the United States and Turkey," it said.

Though the report classifies India as a "low-waste-producing" polluter due to its low per capita plastic waste production (8 kg per capita per year), it said the country's expected mismanaged waste in 2024 will be 7.4 million tons, which is "very high".

Still, India's mismanaged plastic waste will be less than one-fifth of China and one-third of the US.

The report also claimed India is estimated to release an average of 3,91,879 tons of microplastics into the environment and 31,483 tons of chemical additives into waterways.

People living in Belgium are the top generators of plastic waste, with a yearly waste production of 147.7 kg per person. This is 16 times higher than in India, it said.

Oman tops the list of countries in terms of mismanaged plastic waste, with a projected 111 kg of mismanaged plastic per person in 2024. This is 30 times higher than Norway. India is in the bottom 12 countries.

The report said that by April 2024, almost half of the world's population will be living in areas where plastic waste has already exceeded the capacity to manage it.

On September 5, it said that the plastic waste produced worldwide will surpass the planet's waste management systems and will be called "Plastic Overshoot Day".

Each country has its own "Plastic Overshoot Day", determined by the amount of plastic waste generated and the country's capacity to manage it. India will reach its Plastic Overshoot Day on April 23, it said.

"The data is unequivocal: improvements in waste management capacity are outpaced by rising plastic production, making progress almost invisible," Sarah Perreard, Co-CEO, at EA Earth Action & Plastic Footprint Network, said.

"The assumption that increased recycling and waste management capacity will solve the plastic crisis is flawed. Without aggressive reduction at the source, our struggle against plastic pollution will be a holding pattern at best," Perreard said. (Source: PTI)

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# History This Week

APRIL 12 - APRIL 18

APRIL 12



April 12, 1861 - The American Civil War began as Confederate troops under the command of General Pierre Beauregard opened fire at 4:30 a.m. on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina.

April 12, 1945 - President Franklin D. Roosevelt died suddenly at Warm Springs, Georgia, after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage. He had been President since March 4, 1933, elected to four consecutive terms and had guided America out of the Great Depression and through World War II.

April 12, 1961 - Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human in space. He traveled aboard the Soviet spacecraft Vostok I to an altitude of 187 miles (301 kilometers) above the earth and completed a single orbit in a flight lasting 108 minutes. The spectacular Russian success intensified the already ongoing Space Race between the Russians and Americans. Twenty-three days later, Alan Shepard became the first American in space. This was followed in 1962 by President Kennedy's open call to land an American on the moon before the decade's end.

April 12, 1981 - The first space shuttle flight occurred with the launching of Columbia with astronauts John Young and Robert Crippen aboard. Columbia spent 54 hours in space, making 36 orbits, then landed at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

APRIL 13



Birthdays - Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was born in Albermarle County, Virginia. He was an author, inventor, lawyer, politician, architect, and one of the finest minds of the 1700's. He authored the American Declaration of Independence and later served as the 3rd

U.S. President from 1801 to 1809. He died on July 4, 1826, the same day as his old friend and one-time political rival John Adams.

APRIL 14

April 14, 1775 - In Philadelphia, the first abolitionist society in America was founded as the "Society for the relief of free Negroes unlawfully held in bondage."



April 14, 1828 - The first dictionary of American-style English was published by Noah Webster as the American Dictionary of the English Language.

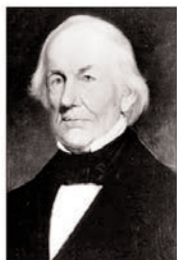
April 14, 1865 - President Abraham Lincoln was shot and mortally wounded while watching a performance of Our American Cousin at Ford's Theater in Washington. He was taken to a nearby house and died the following morning at 7:22 a.m.

April 14, 1986 - U.S. warplanes, on orders from President Ronald Reagan, bombed the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi in retaliation for the April 5th terrorist bombing of a discotheque in West Berlin in which two American soldiers were killed. Among the 37 person killed in the air raid was the infant daughter of Muammar Qaddafi, Libya's head of state.

APRIL 15



Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet



Laurent Clerc

Retrieved from peoplepill.com

April 15, 1817 - The first American school for the deaf was founded by Thomas H. Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc in Hartford, Connecticut.

April 15, 1912 - In the icy waters off Newfoundland, the luxury liner Titanic with 2,224 persons on board sank at 2:27 a.m. after striking an iceberg just before midnight. Over 1,500 persons drowned while 700 were rescued by the liner Carpathia which arrived about two hours after Titanic went down.

APRIL 16

April 16, 1862 - Congress abolished slavery in the District of Columbia and appropriated \$1 million to compensate owners of freed slaves.

April 16, 1995 - Iqbal Masih, a young boy from Pakistan who spoke out against child labor, was shot to death. At age four,



he had been sold into servitude as a carpet weaver and spent the next six years shackled to a loom. At age ten, he escaped and began speaking out, attracting worldwide attention as a featured speaker during an international labor conference in Sweden.

Birthdays - American aviation pioneer Wilbur Wright (1867-1912) was born in Millville, Indiana. On December 17, 1903, along with his brother Orville, the Wright brothers made the first successful flight of a motor driven aircraft. It flew for 12 seconds and traveled 120 feet. By 1905, they had built a plane that could stay airborne for half an hour, performing figure eights and other aerial maneuvers. Wilbur died of Typhoid fever in May 1912.

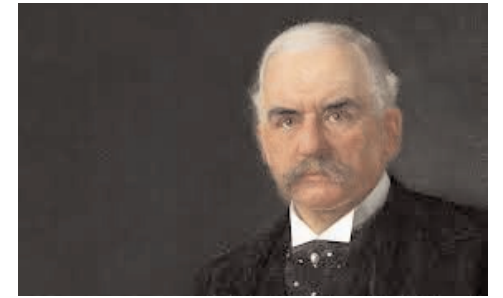
Birthdays - Film comedian Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) was born in London. He began in vaudeville and was discovered by American film producer Mack Sennett. He then went to Hollywood to make silent movies, developing the funny 'Little Tramp' film character. Chaplin's classics include The Kid, The Gold Rush, City Lights and Modern Times. In 1940, he made The Great Dictator poking fun at Adolf Hitler, who bore a resemblance to Chaplin. In his later years, Chaplin had a falling out with Americans, but returned in 1972 to receive a special Academy Award. In 1975, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.

APRIL 17

April 17, 1961 - A U.S.-backed attempt to overthrow Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba failed disastrously in what became known as the Bay of Pigs fiasco. About 1,400 anti-Castro exiles invaded the island's southern coast along the Bay of Pigs but were overrun by 20,000 Cuban soldiers and jailed. Trained and guided by the U.S., the exiles had expected support from U.S. military aircraft and help from anti-Castro insurgents on the island. Instead, due to a series of mishaps, they had fended for themselves with no support. The failed invasion heightened Cold War tensions between Cuba's political ally, Soviet Russia, and the fledgling administration of President John F. Kennedy. The following year, the Russians brazenly installed nuclear missiles in Cuba resulting in the Cuban Missile Crisis.

April 17, 1989 - The Polish labor union Solidarity was granted legal status after nearly a decade of struggle, paving the way for the downfall of the Polish Communist Party. In the elections that

followed, Solidarity candidates won 99 out of 100 parliamentary seats and eventually forced the acceptance of a Solidarity government led by Lech Walesa.



Birthdays - American financier John Pierpont (J.P.) Morgan (1837-1913) was born in Hartford, Connecticut. He displayed extraordinary management skills, reorganizing and consolidating a number of failing companies to make them profitable. His extensive interests included banking, steel, railroads and art collecting. In 1895, he aided the failing U.S. Treasury by carrying out a private bond sale among fellow financiers to replenish the treasury.

APRIL 18

April 18, 1775 - The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere and William Dawes occurred as the two men rode out of Boston about 10 p.m. to warn patriots at Lexington and Concord of the approaching British.

April 18, 1906 - The San Francisco Earthquake struck at 5:13 a.m., followed by a massive fire from overturned wood stoves and broken gas pipes. The fire raged uncontrollably for three days resulting in the destruction of over 10,000 acres of property and 4,000 lives lost.

April 18, 1942 - The first air raid on mainland Japan during World War II occurred as General James Doolittle led a squadron of B-25 bombers taking off from the carrier Hornet to bomb Tokyo and three other cities. Damage was minimal, but the raid boosted Allied morale following years of unchecked Japanese military advances.



April 18, 1982 - Queen Elizabeth II of England signed the Canada Constitution Act of 1982 replacing the British North America Act of 1867, providing Canada with a new set of fundamental laws and civil rights.

Birthdays - American attorney Clarence Darrow (1857-1938) was born in Kinsman, Ohio. He championed unpopular causes, and is best known for the Scopes 'monkey trial' in which he defended a teacher who taught the theory of evolution.

# Eid Celebrated in Jersey City



**APRIL 11, 2024**  
**JERSEY CITY, NJ (TIP):** Thousands of

culmination of the 30-day Ramadan fasting period on April 10th. The inaugural



Muslims from various nations, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, convened at Lincoln Park in Jersey City to observe Eid ul-Fitr, marking the

prayers were led by Shaiq Aala of the Al Tawheed Islamic Center on West Side

Jersey Governor and current Jersey City Mayoral Candidate James Edward McGreevey, extended greetings to the Muslim community.

The gathering in Lincoln Park underscored the significance of Eid al-Fitr as a time of spiritual renewal, communal prayer, and collective celebration. It served as a poignant representation of the vibrant Islamic culture thriving within Hudson County.

Eid al-Fitr, translated as "the celebration of breaking the fast," holds profound importance for Muslims worldwide, symbolizing gratitude and reflection after a month of fasting from dawn till sunset. Beyond its religious significance, the celebration also serves as a reminder of the



Avenue in Jersey City. Notable figures from the community, including former New

plight of the less fortunate, fostering empathy and compassion within the

community.

The presence of Jersey City Councilman Yousef J. Saleh City Council President Joyce Watterman and other city officials, at this year's festivities added a significant dimension to the event. A native of the Jersey Heights, Councilman Saleh's participation underscored his deep-seated ties to the community and highlighted his Palestinian heritage, further emphasizing the unity and strength inherent within Hudson County's Muslim community.

In essence, the Eid al-Fitr celebration in Lincoln Park not only served as a spiritual gathering but also as a public demonstration of solidarity and resilience, showcasing the unwavering commitment to different communities within Jersey City.

Text & photos : Mohammed Jaffer / SnapsIndia





## Mayank Yadav unlikely to play LSG's next 2 games

**P**ace sensation Mayank Yadav is unlikely to play the next two games for Lucknow Super Giants as he continues his recovery from tightness in his hip, said head coach Justin Langer on Thursday, April 11. LSG face Delhi Capitals here on Friday before travelling to Kolkata for the away game on April 14. Langer and Co. is hoping that Mayank regains full fitness before the home game against Chennai Super Kings on April 19.

"That's the plan (to have Mayank fit for the match against Chennai Super Kings on April 19). We want him to play every game if possible," Langer said on the eve of the game against DC.

"But he'll be working towards it; he's working very hard every day to be ready for whatever our next game is. He won't play tomorrow, it's unlikely... with the very short turnaround, it's unlikely that he plays these two games. But he's certainly working towards playing whenever he possibly can."

Mayank, who became an overnight sensation by consistently bowling at 150kmph plus on his IPL debut, had gone off the field after bowling just one over against Gujarat Titans on Sunday.

"He felt a little bit of tightness at the top of his hip leading into the last game, but that was about a one-out-of-ten pain, and we thought that they were clinical signs," Langer said.

IPL 17

# Mumbai Indians thrash Royal Challengers by 7 wickets to register 2nd win

MUMBAI (TIP)

Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan provided the fireworks with the bat after Jasprit Bumrah's magical five-wicket haul as Mumbai Indians pummelled Royal Challengers Bengaluru by seven wickets for their second win in the IPL on Thursday, April 11.

Kishan went ballistic to make 69 off just 34 balls (7x4s, 5x6s) and Suryakumar dazzled with a 19-ball 52 with four sixes and five fours, as Mumbai Indians overhauled RCB's 197-run target in just 15.3 overs.

RCB huffed and puffed but put up a challenging 196/8 courtesy skipper Faf du Plessis (61), Rajat Patidar (50) and Dinesh Karthik's 23-ball 53 not out but the total proved to be far from enough.

The tone for an aggressive reply on a placid deck was set by Kishan, who tore into Mohammed Siraj to collect 23 runs off the India pacer's second over, hammering him for three sixes and a four.

The onslaught continued when RCB introduced Glenn Maxwell in the sixth over, with the MI opener swatting two fours and a six to race to his first fifty of the season off only 23 balls.

Kishan once again forged a vital stand for Mumbai in the company of Rohit Sharma, with the pair putting on 101 runs off 53 balls for the first wicket.

While Rohit (38 off 24 balls, 3x4s,

Mumbai Indian's player Suryakumar Yadav plays a shot during the IPL 2024 cricket match against Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Mumbai Indians at Wankhede Stadium, in Mumbai, Thursday, April 11, 2024. PTI



3x6s) played second fiddle to both Kishan and Suryakumar, the former MI skipper also dished out some spectacular shots before he fell to a stunning one-handed diving catch at short fine leg from Reece Topley off debutant Will Jacks.

Suryakumar, who was dropped by Glenn Maxwell at backward point on 15, went after Akash Deep in the 11th over to collect 24 runs with three sixes and one four.

Playing only his second game after comeback from injury, Suryakumar was aided by wayward RCB bowlers who presented him plenty of deliveries to knock himself into form and the world No. 1 T20 batter obliged with

a 17-ball fifty.

The contest, which saw partisan crowds cheering loudly for both India stars Rohit and Virat Kohli, also witnessed booing of MI skipper Pandya intermittently.

As he walked out to bat, Pandya was hit by loud boos but a section also began chanting 'Hardik... Hardik' with Kohli immediately encouraging the fans to cheer for the India all-rounder.

Hardik made it harder for the fans to boo him by smashing three sixes in his 6-ball 21 not out.

Earlier, Bumrah weaved his magic en route to a five-wicket haul before Karthik played a blinder in the death overs to take RCB close to 200.

## Stronger, fitter Neeraj eyes triumphant start to season

**O**lympic champion Neeraj Chopra is into the final stretch of his pre-season training in Antalya, Turkey, and the 26-year-old is confident of repeating his top finish at the season-opening Doha Diamond League on May 10. Chopra won in the Qatari capital in 2023 with a throw of 88.67m, but this year, more than acing the Diamond League, the focus is understandably on retaining the Olympic crown.

"Defending my Olympic gold is my biggest goal this season but there is still time for that. Before that, I will participate in 3-4 events and the target will be to finish well in each of them. That will put me in the right space going into Paris," Chopra said in an interaction facilitated by JSW Sports. The six-month off-season since his last competitive appearance at the Hangzhou Asian Games — where he won the gold medal — has seen him train in Potchefstroom, South Africa before moving to Gloria Sports Arena in Turkey, primarily working on his strength.

His two-member team of biomechanics expert Klaus Bartonietz and physiotherapist Ishaan Marwah has seen an addition in the form of strength and conditioning expert Spencer Mackay. Mackay had



worked with Chopra during his rehabilitation phase post his elbow surgery in 2019 and sensing the need to raise his level in the Olympic year, the javelin ace has sought his services again.

"I have been working on my strength and conditioning for the past 2-3 months. There is a lot of

improvement in my technique when it comes to clean and jerk and snatches. I have also started javelin-specific workouts. I am really excited going into the season," Chopra said.

While Olympics remain the big prize, Chopra is not taking the tune-up lightly. It's a change, he says, that has been brought about by his success in Tokyo.

"Before Tokyo, I was satisfied by merely competing. I would finish fourth or fifth and would be alright. But post Tokyo, I have this desire to do well everywhere. I want to finish on the podium as much as possible," he said, a testament to his stunning consistency post his Tokyo high.

"I was never satisfied after Tokyo, but consistent results demand consistent training. I enjoy pushing myself in training, and now is the time to push from the 87-89m bracket and get consistent with bigger throws," he added.

The reigning world champion also showered praise on compatriot Kishore Jena — who he reckoned may throw 90m before him — and Germany's 19-year-old sensation Max Dehning, the latest entrant in the 90m club.

# 'I Am In A Dire Situation': IIT-Roorkee Graduate Shares Heartbreaking Story As Unable To Secure Job Since January

APRIL 09, 2024

**NEW DELHI / NEW YORK (TIP):** Balwant Singh, an IIT-Roorkee graduate who did B. Tech in Computer Science Engineering in 2022, wrote in a post on LinkedIn saying his family's wellbeing hangs in the balance, and the pressure to provide is immense.

Balwant Singh, an IIT-Roorkee graduate who did B. Tech in Computer Science Engineering in 2022, wrote in a post on LinkedIn saying his family's wellbeing hangs in the balance, and the pressure to provide is immense.

IIT-Roorkee CSE graduate Balwant Singh could not get a job in the campus placement in 2022; he later found an internship outside the campus, at Cognizant; sometime later, he lost his internship role as well

At a time when reports are doing rounds on IITs' below-par placement rate, an IIT-Roorkee graduate took to social media on Monday, April 8, to share his "dire situation" in a heartbreaking post, saying that he is "desperately" reaching out for help, as he has not been able to secure a job since January despite efforts.

"I'm in a dire situation and desperately reaching out for help. After graduating from IIT Roorkee in



2022 with a CSE degree, I've found myself in an unexpected struggle. The burden of supporting my family and managing mounting debts is growing heavier by the day. Despite my efforts, I haven't been able to secure a job since January, and the stress is unbearable," Balwant Singh, the IIT-Roorkee graduate who did B. Tech in Computer Science

Engineering in 2022, wrote in a post on LinkedIn.

Talking to news18.com, Balwant Singh said he could not get a job from IIT-Roorkee in the campus placement in 2022 when his B. Tech was completed. Later, he found an internship outside the campus, at Cognizant. Sometime later, he lost his internship role as well at the IT company amid layoffs and has been unemployed since March 2023. Meanwhile, he was preparing for the GATE exam.

In the LinkedIn post, he said his family's well-being hangs in the balance, and the pressure to provide is immense.

"We're facing financial difficulties like never before, and I'm at a point where any salary will do. I just need a chance to work, to earn, and to start clearing our debts. Despite being an alumnus of IIT Roorkee, I have not received any support from any of my peers. This post is a desperate attempt for me to get an interview, I am ready to learn and open to any roles available in the IT field," the IIT-Roorkee graduate wrote.

Meanwhile, as per reports recently, this year at IIT Bombay, a significant 36 per cent of the 2,000 students who registered for the 2024 placements are still looking for job offers.

(Report by Mohammad Haris)

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## Elections 2024: Tight race in Thiruvananthapuram, Tharoor is expected to prevail

The world knows about all the allegations of corruption by Pinarayi Vijayan and his family members. While Modi's ED is busy arresting and jailing opposition leaders and other opponents of the current regime across the country, how does the Chief Minister of Kerala go scot-free? Even the Delhi CM Kejriwal is in prison without any substantial evidence of wrongdoing, yet, there is hardly any investigation into the gold smuggling, Life mission, Cochin Minerals payments, and so forth by the famed Agencies, let alone the Lavalin case being postponed multiple times upon the request from the prosecution's side. The BJP government keeps contending that specialized agencies are only doing their jobs. If so, how would they justify their inactions in this regard?

In the same way, Vigilance in the state is not doing any better either, having failed to find the source of the three crores of rupees of black money recovered during the last election cycle allegedly from people with links to the BJP. All of these spark suspicion that there is an underlying agreement between BJP and CPM. The question then is, what is the deal here? Is there a quid-pro-quo in the works for the CPM finally to enable the BJP to open an account for the Lok Sabha from Kerala? Only time will tell.

Despite all the advantages of money and power, Rajeev Chandrasekhar is proving himself a dud. He is unwilling to debate Tharoor, although he is touted here as yet another 'global citizen' with a great background. When a reporter asked Chandrasekhar what he has done for Karnataka as their Rajya Sabha MP, in addition to showing his ignorance of an ongoing project, he not only fumbled but dismissed it as an out-of-state question while repeatedly accusing Tharoor of not doing enough in TVM. Chandrasekhar made his early riches primarily through his in-law's company, BPL. A report available in the public domain states, "Before Chandrasekhar sold his BPL stake, his father-in-law took him to court for mismanagement of the

company and discrepancies in the shareholding pattern in 2004 and filed petition to restrain Chandrasekhar from selling or transferring BPL Mobiles without his consent."

Now, we know that on his nomination form, he listed his total assets as around 28 crore rupees and a taxable income of Rs. 680. Video circulating on social media details his holdings in various entities, including shell companies abroad. In those reports, it is estimated that he is said to be worth around 7500 Crores. He could legally justify it all through 'smart' accounting for tax purposes. However, the very fact the Modi administration, which once proclaimed to bring all black money back to India, has just crowned someone as a candidate who possesses excellent expertise as to how to hide his assets. They are some of the champions of nationalism who constantly lecture ordinary people like us about patriotism, duty, and honor to the country. If these allegations are proven correct, it is fraudulent misrepresentation while deceiving the voters in Thiruvananthapuram by not telling the truth. Moreover, It is indeed an integrity issue, and whether the voters want to be represented by such a character come April 26.

Another challenging issue for the Tharoor campaign is how to counter a BJP narrative that is undoubtedly taking a perch in the minds of this constituency's elites and the upper middle class. According to several people I talked to, the conversation goes like this: 'Modi is going to win anyway, Congress has no future, if Chandrasekhar wins, he might do something for Thiruvananthapuram!' There is very little doubt that people are being brainwashed about the inevitable victory of Modi through their effective propaganda network. The upper echelons of society all over India do not care, as they have no stakes in this election. Nevertheless, the Tharoor campaign needs to respond to this very quickly before it gains any more momentum.



Author joins in door-to-door campaigning

There is little doubt that some disgruntled Congressmen and jealous leaders are in the Tharoor camp. To them, a Tharoor defeat or his banishment from the political arena is welcome, and many empires/endeavors have failed not due to external threats but because of the conflicts within. Those elements could come through the front door, and not only would they end up wreaking havoc, but they would also be capable of giving a devastating blow to the leadership. That may explain why a couple of Tharoor's 'Paryadanams' were marred by some dissenting voices and shouting slogans in trying to create a stir. Many of them, like in the media, may allegedly be bought off and become tools in the hands of the BJP.

Despite all the hurdles, the people of Thiruvananthapuram will choose to preserve the Constitution and our way of life. Keralites are a competent electorate who can distinguish the wolves in Sheep's clothing. Ultimately, common sense will reign, and Tharoor is expected to prevail.

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**43 SOCIAL WORKERS HONORED...**

"People who come to our hospitals need more social work," said NYC Health + Hospitals President and CEO Mitchell Katz, MD. "Not only are they dealing with illness, they are often living in substandard housing, managing family crises and challenges, or struggling with substance abuse. These realities make the job much harder, but also more important. Our communities need social workers in so many ways that medicine alone can't fix. We couldn't do what we do without our social workers."

"We extend our deepest gratitude to our social workers who are on the front lines of our work every day," said NYC Health + Hospitals Deputy Chief Medical Officer and System Chief of Behavioral Health Omar Fattal, MD, MPH. "As a psychiatrist, I have firsthand experience of the power of social work and the indispensable role they play in patient care. Thank you to all the social workers working tirelessly in our system every day, and congratulations to all the award winners."

"Every day, in hundreds of ways large and small, our social workers are all making changes in people's lives that give them help, hope, opportunity," said NYC Health + Hospitals Director of Social Work Kara Simpson, LCSW-R. "I could not be more honored to celebrate them."

Social work is one of the fastest growing professions in the United States, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. There are almost 720,000 professional social workers in the country, and that number is expected to surpass 800,000 by 2030.

**THE 2024 SOCIAL WORK HONOREES INCLUDE:**

**HOSPITALS**

- Adina Safdeye and Casey Linder  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue
- Jennifer Gurtman and Mae Siegel  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst
- Megan Wall and Romona Jennings  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem
- Daniel Griffin and Victoria Lopez  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi
- Andrea Zvonkovic and Ebone Cruel  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County
- Daniella Jacobs and Lissette Vasquez-Restituyo  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln
- Lujuanda Rush and Tiffany Slotkin  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan
- Donna Delgado and Lisa Hamlett  
NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx
- Dolly Thomas and Shiza Iqbal  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens
- Georgia Tsamasiros and Jolene Lespes  
NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health
- Mindel Boduch and Rachel Lipman  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull

**POST-ACUTE CARE**

- Merary Guzman and Stephanie Kloskowski  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Carter
- Janelle Hartman and Theodore Morrison  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler

**FREDA MORALES**

- NYC Health + Hospitals/Gouverneur
- Bibi Saffee-Razak  
NYC Health + Hospitals/McKinney
- Deirdre Figueroa  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Sea View

**GOTHAM HEALTH**

- Hazel Ordanez and Nancy Hernandez  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham, Belvis
- Morella Bynoe  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham, Cumberland
- Evette Vazquez and Nakima Edwards  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham, East New York
- Shanda Oliver and Shun Ru Xiao

- NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham, Gouverneur
- Aisse Magassa  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham, Morrisania
- Denise Lucero  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham, Roosevelt
- Lynnsue Jolley  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham, Sydenham

**COMMUNITY CARE**

- Miguel Valdez and Donna Alleyne  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Community Care

**CORRECTIONAL HEALTH SERVICES**

- Meaghan Lammers and Jerry Mims  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Correctional Health Services

**CENTRAL OFFICE PROGRAMS**

- Shlomit Levy  
NYC Health + Hospitals Central Office

**ABOUT NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS**

NYC Health + Hospitals is the largest municipal health care system in the nation serving more than a million New Yorkers annually in more than 70 patient care locations across the city's five boroughs. A robust network of outpatient, neighborhood-based primary and specialty care centers anchors care coordination with the system's trauma centers, nursing homes, post-acute care centers, home care agency, and MetroPlus health plan-all supported by 11 essential hospitals. Its diverse workforce of more than 43,000 employees is uniquely focused on empowering New Yorkers, without exception, to live the healthiest life possible. For more information, visit [www.nychealthandhospitals.org](http://www.nychealthandhospitals.org) and stay connected on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

**CONTD FROM PAGE 15**

**Special Saturday help available...**

Frequently, taxpayers can get the help they need by visiting [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).

Before travelling to an office, the IRS encourages everyone to visit the event page [IRS face-to-face Saturday help](http://IRS.gov) to get current information. The IRS notes representatives can't accept cash payments during the special Saturday openings, and tax return preparation is not an available service.

The IRS has online resources for many common tax situations, including several tools for making payments, getting an extension to file and setting up installment agreements. Taxpayers can make payments using their personal financial accounts, debit or credit cards and even digital wallets using tools on [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).

**TIPS FOR TAXPAYERS PLANNING A VISIT**

Individuals should bring the following documents when they visit IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers:

Current government-issued photo identification, along with a second form of identification for identity verification services.

Social Security or Individual Taxpayer Identification numbers for themselves and all members of their household, including their spouse and dependents (if applicable).

Any IRS letters or notices received and related documents.

A copy or digital image of the tax return in question if one was filed.

The IRS noted that because appointments aren't necessary for these special Saturday hours, some locations may see high demand and wait times can be longer than usual. To help with this and avoid delays, the IRS encourages people to plan ahead, review key tips and come prepared with needed information. IRS employees will be working hard to serve as many people as quickly as possible.

**EXTENDED OFFICE HOURS ON TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS**

During the filing season, the IRS has also been providing extended office hours at many TACs nationwide. The added hours will end on Tuesday, April

16. To see if a nearby office is participating in the program, check its listing on the [IRS/taclocator](http://IRS.gov). Taxpayers can walk in or make appointments for service during extended hours. Cash payments are accepted during the additional office time, but taxpayers must have an appointment at a TAC currently accepting cash.

Normally, TACs are open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and provide service by appointment only. To make an appointment, call 844-545-5640.

**SERVICES PROVIDED**

The IRS's Contact Your Local Office site lists all services provided at specific TACs. Tax return preparation is not a service offered at IRS TACs during these events or any operating hours. The IRS will provide information to anyone needing to find free local tax preparation resources. Additionally, File your return on [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov) gives step-by-step information on how to file individual tax returns.

If someone has questions about a tax bill or IRS audit, or if they need help resolving a tax problem, they'll receive assistance from IRS employees specializing in those services. If these employees aren't available, the individual will receive a referral for these services. IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service employees may also be available to help with some issues.

Professional foreign language interpretation will be available in many languages through an over-the-phone translation service. For deaf or hard of hearing individuals who need sign language interpreter services, IRS staff will schedule appointments for a later date. Alternatively, these individuals can call TTY/TDD 800-829-4059 to make an appointment.

**DURING THE VISIT, IRS STAFF MAY ALSO REQUEST THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:**

A current mailing address,

Proof of financial account information included on a tax return to receive payments or refunds by direct deposit.

**TAX RETURN PREPARATION OPTIONS**

While tax return preparation is not a service offered at IRS TACs, information will be shared about available local free tax preparation options. Help is also available using the following services:

Eligible individuals or families can get free help preparing their tax return at Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) sites. To find the closest free tax return preparation help, use the VITA Locator Tool or call 800-906-9887.

To find an AARP Tax-Aide site, use the AARP Site Locator Tool or call 888-227-7669.

Any individual or family whose adjusted gross income (AGI) was \$79,000 or less in 2023 can use IRS Free File's Guided Tax Software at no cost. There are products in English and Spanish.

Free File Fillable Forms are electronic federal tax forms, equivalent to a paper 1040 form. Taxpayers should know how to prepare their own tax return using form instructions and IRS publications, if needed. Anyone, regardless of income, can use the forms. They are a free option for those whose AGI is greater than \$79,000.

MilTax, a Department of Defense program, offers free return preparation software and electronic filing for federal tax returns and up to three state income tax returns. It's available for all military members, and some veterans, with no income limit.

IRS Direct File. Eligible taxpayers can file 2023 federal tax returns online, for free, directly with the IRS. Direct File is available to taxpayers who live in one of the 12 participating pilot states and report certain types of income, deductions and credits. Taxpayers can check their eligibility at [directfile.irs.gov](http://directfile.irs.gov) to see if Direct File is the right option for them. Once they've started their return, taxpayers can pause and sign back into IRS Direct File securely to complete it any time before the April filing deadline.

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



## An Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh combatting avoidable blindness in children.

"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MD. I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautifully facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses, and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"

**Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins**



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**3.5 + million served**  
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- conducting community research
- providing education to physicians and the public



In 2018 Prasanth, Sushanth and Nisanth were diagnosed and treated for Prematurity Retinopathy. An illness in premature babies which can cause blindness.

Luckily through GEMROP an initiative funded by EFA to screen premature babies throughout hospitals in India, the triplets were able to receive an expensive surgery free of charge. The boys are now the age of 4 with perfect vision.

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**Give the gift**  
**of sight today.**

**Visit [eyefoundationofamerica.org](http://eyefoundationofamerica.org)**

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