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The INDIAN PANORAMA

EVER TRUTHFUL

Will bring out a profusely illustrated
New Year edition to bid GOODBYE to 2024
and to WELCOME 2025.

Articles and advertisements may please be emailed to
salujaindra@gmail.com by December 23, 2024.

Please email your queries, if any to
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Jagmeet Singh says NDP will vote to topple Trudeau's govt in Canada

Canada PM Trudeau looks set to lose power after key ally vows to topple him



Jagmeet Singh, savior of Trudeau government on many occasions, says his party will vote to topple the government

DECEMBER 21, 2024

OTTAWA (TIP): Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday looked set to lose power early next year after a key ally said he would move to bring down the minority Liberal government and trigger an election.

New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh, who has been helping keep Trudeau in office, said he would present a formal motion of no-confidence after the House of Commons elected chamber returns from a winter break on Jan. 27.

If all the opposition parties back the motion, Trudeau will be out of office after more than nine years as prime minister and an election will take place.

A string of polls over the last 18 months shows the Liberals, suffering from voter fatigue and anger over high prices and a housing crisis, would be badly defeated by the official opposition right-of-center Conservatives. The New Democrats, who like the Liberals aim to attract the support of center-left voters,

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MEA refutes China's '6-point consensus' claim



The MEA spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal said, "The statement by China's Foreign Ministry was at divergence from India's statement describing the outcome of the talks conducted on December 18".

DECEMBER 21, 2024

NEW DELHI (TIP): Two days after China issued a statement giving its version on the outcome of the 23rd round of Special Representative talks in Beijing, the Ministry of External Affairs today said, "we stand by our statement". The statement by China's Foreign Ministry was at divergence from India's statement describing the outcome of the talks conducted on December 18.

The MEA spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal, today, while answering questions on the differences in the two statements said "We stand by our statement. Our release gives a perspective on what happened in SR-level talks".

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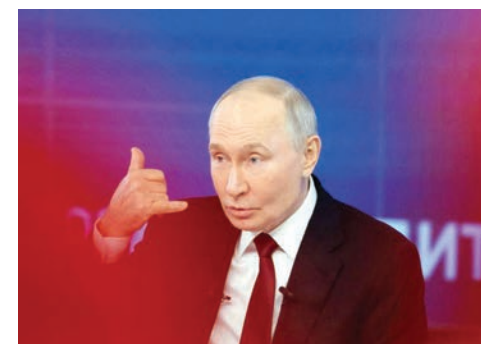
Ready to meet Trump over Ukraine negotiations: Putin

DECEMBER 20, 2024

MOSCOW (TIP): Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday, December 20, that he was ready to compromise over Ukraine in possible talks with US President-elect Donald Trump on ending the war and had no conditions for starting talks with the Ukrainian authorities, a Reuters report says.

Trump, a self-styled master of brokering agreements and author of the 1987 book "Trump: the Art of the Deal", has vowed to swiftly end the conflict, but has not yet given any details on how he might achieve that.

Putin, fielding questions on state TV



Putin addresses annual end-of-year press conference in Moscow. Photo / Reuters

during his annual question and answer session with Russians, told a reporter for a US news channel that he was ready to

CONTD ON PAGE 40



The Senate easily approved on early Saturday, December 21 legislation to avert a government shutdown.

Senate passes spending bill to avert government shutdown

DECEMBER 21, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The Senate early Saturday, December 21 morning passed a bill to avert a government shutdown, sending the measure to President Joe Biden to be signed into law. The bill, which passed by an 85-11 vote, extends federal funds to mid-March, sends more than \$100 billion in relief to farmers and natural disaster victims, and reauthorizes the sweeping

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COMMENT

An Unparalleled Sacrifice in History

**ON THE MARTYRDOM OF THE FOUR
SONS OF GURU GOBIND SINGH**

The history of the world bears testimony to countless acts of bravery and sacrifice, but few compare to the monumental story of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs, and the ultimate sacrifice of his four young sons-Sahibzada Ajit Singh, Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, and Sahibzada Fateh Singh. Their martyrdom is not only an integral part of Sikh history but a chapter of unparalleled valor and commitment to righteousness in human history.

Guru Gobind Singh, the founder of the Khalsa in 1699, envisioned a faith rooted in equality, justice, and the fight against tyranny. Living in a time of severe oppression under Mughal rule, Guru Gobind Singh sought to instill courage and a sense of identity in his followers. The Khalsa, with its distinctive identity and unyielding commitment to justice, emerged as a force against injustice and a beacon of hope for the oppressed. The creation of the Khalsa marked a revolutionary moment in history, but it also drew the ire of tyrannical rulers who sought to crush this growing resistance.

Guru Gobind Singh's life was a saga of relentless battles and unwavering resolve. His personal sacrifices were profound-he became the only figure in history to offer his entire family, including his four sons, for the cause of righteousness. The heartbreaking story of his sons, who faced death with unparalleled bravery, stands as a testament to their faith, principles, and courage.

The two elder sons of Guru Gobind Singh, Sahibzada Ajit Singh (18 years old) and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh (14 years old), embraced martyrdom during the Battle of Chamkaur in December 1704. Outnumbered by the Mughal forces, they stood firm alongside their father and other brave warriors. Despite the overwhelming odds, Sahibzada Ajit Singh led the Khalsa soldiers into battle with extraordinary valor. When he fell, Sahibzada Jujhar Singh took up the mantle, fearlessly plunging into the battlefield to uphold the honor of the Khalsa.

Their sacrifices exemplified unwavering faith and the courage to stand against injustice, inspiring generations of Sikhs to remain steadfast in the face of adversity.

While Guru Gobind Singh and his elder sons faced battle, his two younger sons, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh (9 years old) and Sahibzada Fateh Singh (7 years old), were captured along with their grandmother, Mata Gujri, by Mughal forces. Imprisoned at the fort of Sirhind, they were subjected to immense psychological pressure to renounce their faith and convert to Islam. Despite their tender age, the young Sahibzadas displayed an unshakable commitment to their beliefs.

On December 26, 1704, when they refused to abandon their Sikh faith, the tyrannical Mughal governor Wazir Khan ordered them to be bricked alive. This inhuman punishment shocked the conscience of all who heard of it. Even as the bricks enclosed them, the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh recited Sikh prayers and remained resolute in their faith, demonstrating courage far

BY
INDRAJIT SALUJA

beyond their years. Their martyrdom stands as a poignant reminder of the ultimate price they paid for their principles.

The martyrdom of the Sahibzadas is commemorated annually as Veer Bal Divas (The Brave Children's Day) on December 26. This day serves as a moment of reflection and reverence for their bravery and the values they upheld. It is a day to remember not only their sacrifices but also the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh, who believed in unwavering commitment to righteousness: Shubh Karman te Kabahon na Taron (Never turn away from righteous deeds).

Guru Gobind Singh's life and the sacrifices of his family remind us of the cost of freedom and justice. They exemplify the highest ideals of humanity-courage, selflessness, and steadfastness in the face of tyranny.

In an age where principles often waver under pressure, the story of Guru Gobind Singh and his sons serves as a beacon of inspiration. Their sacrifices remind us to stand firm in the face of injustice, to uphold the values of equality and freedom, and to remain committed to righteous causes, no matter the personal cost.

As we remember the Sahibzadas on Veer Bal Divas, let us pledge to honor their legacy by embodying their values in our own lives. Their story is not just a part of Sikh history-it is a universal testament to the triumph of the human spirit against oppression, a chapter in history that will forever inspire generations to come.

A Time for Reflection,
Joy, and Togetherness

As the year draws to a close, the holiday season ushers in an atmosphere of festivity, warmth, and reflection. Among the myriad celebrations that mark this time of year, Christmas holds a special place in hearts and homes across the globe. It is a season not only of joy and giving but also of profound spiritual significance. Beyond the festivities and traditions, Christmas carries a timeless message of universal brotherhood, peace, and love-a message that resonates with the world today as much as it did over two millennia ago.

Christmas commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, a pivotal figure in human history. Born in the humble town of Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago, Jesus's life and teachings have shaped the moral and spiritual framework of countless generations. Wise men from the East traveled great distances to honor Him, symbolizing the recognition of His significance across cultures and lands.

The story of Christ's birth is imbued with themes of humility and hope. Born in a stable and laid in a manger, Jesus came into the world not as a figure of worldly power but as a beacon of divine love and salvation. His teachings emphasized

compassion, forgiveness, and the inherent dignity of every individual, values that remain cornerstones of human ethics and coexistence.

While Christmas is fundamentally a Christian celebration, its core messages transcend religious boundaries. It is a time to embrace the ideals of love, unity, and generosity. The holiday season encourages us to reflect on our shared humanity and the bonds that connect us all, regardless of our differences.

In a world often marked by division and strife, Christmas serves as a poignant reminder of the potential for harmony and mutual respect. The idea of universal brotherhood, central to the teachings of Jesus, invites us to look beyond the barriers of race, religion, and nationality to recognize the common threads that bind us together.

Christmas traditions vary widely across cultures, but they all share a common essence of joy and togetherness. From decorating Christmas trees and exchanging gifts to singing carols and sharing festive meals, these customs reflect the spirit of giving and celebration.

The act of giving-whether through thoughtful presents, charitable acts, or simply the gift of time-embodies the essence of the holiday. It mirrors the ultimate gift that Christians believe God gave to humanity in the form of His Son.

Similarly, the tradition of gathering with loved ones underscores the importance of relationships and community.

As we celebrate this Christmas, let us take its message to heart and put it into action. The world today is in dire need of the peace and love that the holiday embodies. Whether through small acts of kindness in our daily lives or efforts to address larger societal challenges, each of us has the capacity to make a difference.

Let this season inspire us to be more compassionate, more forgiving, and more committed to fostering understanding and cooperation. In doing so, we honor not only the spirit of Christmas but also the universal values that underpin a just and harmonious world.

This holiday season, let us pause to count our blessings and extend our gratitude for the gift of life and the love of family and friends. May the light of Christmas fill every heart with hope and every home with happiness. Let the message of peace on earth and goodwill for all guide our actions, not just during the holidays but throughout the year.

Merry Christmas and a joyous holiday season to everyone around the globe. May this season of celebration bring you closer to the people you cherish and inspire you to spread kindness and joy far and wide.

Merry Xmas!

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Indian Consulate's Media Reception: An Enjoyable End of the Year Rendezvous

DECEMBER 20, 2024

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): The Consulate General of India in New York organized a Media Reception - "A Year-End Rendezvous" - an evening of delightful conversations, connections, and camaraderie over dinner on Thursday, December 19.

The first of its kind media interaction initiated by the Consul General Binaya Srikanta Pradhan attracted a number of media persons from both the mainstream media and the Indian American media. Also present were a few students doing their studies in mass communication and media.

The event celebrated the year 2024 and looked forward to 2025, highlighting interactions between the consulate and the media. The Consul General expressed gratitude for the media's



Consul General Binaya Srikanta Pradhan said he looked forward to more interactions and one-on-one meetings in the next year and wished everyone a Happy New Year.



Deputy Consul General Dr. Varun Jeph thanked everyone and ended the formal part of the event



Consul Shruti Pandey compered the event



The distinguished gathering

engagement and looked forward to continued collaboration.

The informal conversation touched on various topics, including the importance of media in fostering understanding, the influence of figures like Elon Musk and Trump, and the potential of India's auto

industry. There were mentions of personal anecdotes, such as spine surgery and travel plans, and a general atmosphere of camaraderie and future prospects. The event concluded with informal discussions and good wishes for the New Year.

Consul General Pradhan expressed

gratitude to the Deputy Consul General Dr. Varun Jeph and Consul Press and Culture Shruti Pandey for organizing the event and for their constant engagement with the media.

Dr. Varun Jeph thanked everyone and ended the formal part of the event, inviting attendees to enjoy the cocktails

and starters.

Earlier, Consul Shruti Pandey who compered the event, welcomed the guests.

The guests left pleased with the delectable food served to them and the Happy Holidays gift from the Consulate.

INDIAN-ORIGIN PROFESSIONAL NOMINATED FOR THE HOUSE OF LORDS PEERAGE BY UK PM KEIR STARMER



Krish Raval was nominated by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer as one of his 30 picks for new political peerages in the House of Lords, to be approved by King Charles III.

DECEMBER 20, 2024

LONDON (TIP) : A London-based professional who chairs the Labor Party's diaspora group, Labor Indians, was on Friday, December 20 nominated by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer as one of his 30 picks for new political peerages in the House of Lords, to be approved by King Charles III.

Krish Raval, awarded an OBE in 2018 by Queen Elizabeth II for Services to Leadership Education and Inter-Faith Cohesion, is the Founder-Director of Faith in Leadership - a University of Oxford-based organization working towards fostering inter-faith relations.

He is now expected to join the Labor benches in the Upper House of the UK Parliament as a life peer, along with Starmer's former chief of staff Sue Gray and former Labor shadow minister of Sri Lankan heritage Thangam Debbonaire.

"The King has been graciously pleased to signify his intention of conferring peerages of the United Kingdom for Life," reads the Downing Street statement announcing the nominations this week.

An independent House of Lords Appointments Commission (HOLAC) vets these nominations before the Prime Minister can formally recommend them to the King.

This is followed by legal documents, or the writ of summons, issued by Parliament and a Letters Patent issued by the monarch to create a life peerage for the new members to be able to take their seat in the House of Lords and vote.

The Labor Party has nominated 30 peers in what is seen as an attempt to balance the numbers in the Lords, where the Tories have the greatest number of peers. Once the new nominations are approved, which include Opposition Conservative Party Leader Kemi Badenoch's six picks and Liberal Democrats' two, the governing Labor Party is expected to have 217 peers, Tories 279 and Lib Dems 80. Over 180 crossbench peers are also part of the Lords as unaffiliated with any party, which means no party has an outright majority in the Upper Chamber of Parliament. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

Indian-origin Singapore based comedians aim to reconnect with their roots through performances in India

DEC 13, 2024

SINGAPORE (TIP) : Indian-origin Singaporean comedian couple wants to reconnect with their roots through performances in India and to expand their base in the country's large stand-up comedy market.

Rishi Budhrani and Sharul Channa are set to perform in Bengaluru and Chennai this weekend.

"We have to go overseas, especially to India which is a huge market waiting to be tapped," said Rishi, who has a good fan base in Southeast Asia, but believes he has to expand it to be more successful and enduring.

Rishi, 40, and Sharul, 37, impressed the audience in Cape Town through their performances a few months ago. They believe that they can do the same in India this month.

Singapore-born Rishi, whose parents moved here from Mumbai and Jaipur in the 1960s and the 1970s respectively, has previously performed in Mumbai,



Rishi Budhrani and Sharul Channa are set to perform in Bengaluru and Chennai this weekend.

Bengaluru, Ahmedabad and Gurugram. This time he is looking forward to performing in Chennai.

"In the north, the Hindi-speaking comedians are more popular. It was

difficult to match up to them. But in the south, English is more accepted. So, I'm well-prepared," he told Singapore's Indian community serving Friday weekly Tabla, a tabloid for news in India and the nation's entertainment scene.

"Having grown up in Singapore, I felt like a bit of an outsider in India," Rishi said. "I now want to reconnect with my roots. I am going with a changed perspective. I will be talking more about Indian heritage and the connections among Indians."

Rishi has been performing in India since 2018 but is "super excited" to do a "double headliner" there for the first time.

Sharul will also have solo shows in Bengaluru and Mumbai.

"The Indian comedy scene, on the other hand, is growing fast. The reach is bigger, there is more money, and I want to establish a base there with Rishi," said Sharul.

British Indian hedge fund trader jailed in Denmark for tax fraud



The Danish prosecution said in a statement that the court found it proven that Sanjay Shah was the mastermind behind a complex setup in which 190 American pension companies and 24 Malaysian companies entered into agreements to purchase Danish listed shares at times when the shares were traded with the right to dividends. -

Photo : X

and 24 Malaysian companies entered into agreements to purchase Danish listed shares at times when the shares were traded with the right to dividends. "The verdict is a milestone in the criminal justice settlement following the dividend tax cases, as the convicted person was the main instigator of a fraud against the Danish state of historic proportions," said Marie Tullin, special prosecutor at State Attorney for Serious Crime (SSK). "It is therefore with satisfaction that I can now state that the court has imposed a sentence that reflects the extremely serious and extensive nature of the case," she said. In addition to the prison sentence, the court confiscated a total of approximately 7.2 billion kroner (USD 1bn), corresponding to the economic gain of the convicted person. Among other things, deposits in accounts in foreign banks, shares and bonds, as well as a number of properties or shares thereof belonging to the convicted person, his companies or his wife were confiscated.

"The fraud has caused a major loss for the Danish state, and it is therefore of crucial importance that the court today has confiscated an amount that corresponds to the convicted person's profits from the fraud," says Dennis Bæckmann, special prosecutor, National Unit for Serious Crime (NSK).

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian-origin man jailed for 4 years for 'horrific attack' on woman in UK

DECEMBER 18, 2024

LONDON (TIP) : A 34-year-old Indian-origin man has been jailed for four years for a "horrific attack" on a woman in her own home in London after being found guilty of grievous bodily harm.

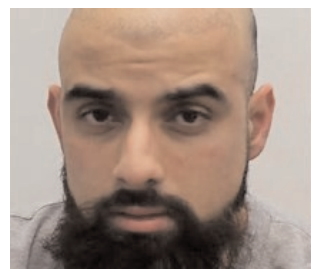
Parvez Patel was arrested at the scene in the Westminster area of the city after neighbors heard the woman's screams and called the police.

The Metropolitan Police said the attack took place late on the evening of January 29, when Patel booked a sex worker and arrived at her home. He went on to launch an assault, leaving the victim in her 40s with severe injuries including a broken nose, extensive bruising, swelling and cuts.

"The victim suffered a horrific attack in her own home, where she was most vulnerable. Patel inflicted significant injuries, and it is thanks to the quick actions of the public, who alerted police, we were able to intervene," said Detective Constable Lloyd Leech from the Met Police's Central West Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Unit.

"Sex workers are among the most vulnerable in society, and we want to ensure they are heard and supported. We encourage anyone who has experienced any form of violence to come forward. You will be listened to, supported, and we will work tirelessly to bring offenders to justice," he said.

Patel was charged on January 31 and following a recent three-week trial at Southwark Crown Court in London, he was sentenced on Monday.



Parvez Patel has been jailed for four years for a "horrific attack" on a woman in her own home in London after being found guilty of grievous bodily harm.

Indian American Chennai-born Caitlin Sandra Neil crowned Miss India USA 2024

DECEMBER 18, 2024

NEW JERSEY (TIP): Caitlin Sandra Neil, a 19-year-old student originally from Chennai, was crowned Miss India USA 2024 at the annual pageant organized by the India Festival Committee. Held in New Jersey, the event celebrated the talent, beauty, and achievements of young Indian American women from across the country.

Caitlin moved to the United States 14 years ago and is currently pursuing her studies at the University of California, Davis. Alongside her academic endeavors, Caitlin is passionate about web design and aspires to build a career in both modeling and acting. She has expressed a commitment to community service, particularly in promoting women's empowerment and literacy.

The first runner-up title was awarded to Nirali Desai from Illinois, while Manini Patel from New Jersey secured the second runner-up position. The



Caitlin Sandra Neil, a 19-year-old student originally from Chennai, was crowned Miss India USA 2024 at the annual pageant organized by the India Festival Committee in New Jersey

competition showed a diverse group of contestants, each bringing their unique talents and stories to the stage.

Caitlin's win highlights her dedication and multifaceted talents, marking a

significant milestone in her journey. "I am honored and thrilled to have this opportunity to represent Indian American women and make a difference in the community," she said during her acceptance speech.

In a related event, Dhruvi Patel, a student specializing in computer information systems, was crowned Miss India Worldwide 2024. The Miss India USA pageant serves as a precursor to the global Miss India Worldwide competition, celebrating Indian heritage and excellence on an international stage.

The India Festival Committee, which has organized the pageant annually since 1980, aims to provide a platform for young women of Indian descent to showcase their talents, foster cultural pride, and pursue their dreams. This year's event continued the tradition of empowering young Indian American women while fostering a sense of community and cultural connection.

INDIAN AMERICAN PROFESSOR DR. RAJ SINGH WINS OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY'S EMINENT FACULTY AWARD



Dr Raj Singh has received Oklahoma State University's highest honor - The Eminent Faculty Award

DECEMBER 19, 2024

OKLAHOMA (TIP) : Dr Raj Singh, Indian American Regents Professor of Materials Science and Engineering, College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology at Oklahoma State University has received the university's highest honor - The Eminent Faculty Award.

The award honors a faculty member who has made sustained contributions to scholarly creative activity, instruction and service, bringing honor and recognition to the university. It includes a \$10,000 stipend.

Besides Raj Singh, three other Indian Americans were among the faculty, staff, and administrators recognized in 22 different categories at the 2024 University Awards Convocation on Dec 13 at the Student Union Ballroom.

"This annual celebration recognizes and commemorates the outstanding achievements of so many OSU faculty and staff," said Provost Jeanette Mendez "And while this ceremony is something we do every year, I continue to be amazed at the dedication and innovative spirit of the OSU family."

A distinguished figure in the field of materials science and engineering, Raj Singh has been instrumental in advancing research on fuel cells, batteries, and advanced nanomaterials.

Singh's contributions have led to products such as ceramic matrix composites for aircraft engines and advanced energy storage solutions. His work has garnered accolades, including his induction as a fellow of the National Academy of Inventors in 2015.

Singh holds an ScD in Ceramics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, Massachusetts; an MS in Physical Metallurgy from the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada; and a BS in Metallurgical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, India. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

Indian-origin Suchir Balaji OpenAI whistleblower, dies by suicide in San Francisco



Suchir Balaji was found dead inside his Buchanan Street apartment in San Francisco on November 26, according to the San Francisco police

DECEMBER 14, 2024

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): : A 26-year-old Indian-origin former employee of the artificial intelligence giant OpenAI has died by suicide in San Francisco, authorities said.

Suchir Balaji was found dead inside his Buchanan Street apartment in San Francisco on November 26, San Francisco police and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner were quoted as reported by media.

The medical examiner's office determined the manner of death to be suicide and police officials said there is "currently, no evidence of foul play." Balaji was known for whistleblowing the blockbuster artificial intelligence company which is facing a swell of lawsuits over its business model.

Balaji's death comes three months after he publicly accused OpenAI of violating US copyright law while developing ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence program that has become a moneymaking sensation used by hundreds of millions of people across the world, the report said.

Its public release in late 2022 spurred a torrent of lawsuits against OpenAI from authors, computer programmers and journalists, who say the company illegally stole their copyrighted material to train its program and elevate its value past US\$ 150 billion.

In an interview with the New York Times published on October 23, Balaji argued that OpenAI was harming businesses and entrepreneurs whose data were used to train ChatGPT.

Balaji left OpenAI because he no longer wanted to contribute to technologies that he believed would bring society more harm than benefit, the report added.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American entrepreneur Harsha Kumar named as the NewRocket CEO

DECEMBER 18, 2024

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): NewRocket, a San Francisco-based leading digital workflow advisor and Elite ServiceNow partner, has named Harsha Kumar, an Indian American entrepreneur, technologist and proven chief executive, as CEO.

Kumar will assume the role previously held by Gary DiOrio, who will re-join the NewRocket board, the company announced Nov 11. NewRocket is backed by Gryphon Investors ("Gryphon"), a leading middle-market private equity firm.

"I'm ready to take off in (a) NewRocket !" Kumar posted on LinkedIn.

"I am honored and super excited to join the NewRocket crew on our mission to be the world's leading ServiceNow partner," he said. "ServiceNow has established itself as the AI platform for business transformation, and I'm confident our consulting acumen and deep technical skills will enable impactful transformations for our clients. I'd like to thank Gryphon and the NewRocket leadership team for providing me this fantastic opportunity."

Kumar, according to the release, is an entrepreneur, technologist and proven CEO with a track record of driving significant revenue and EBITDA growth, customer satisfaction, and career progression for team members.

"We are lucky to have Harsha join the team as CEO. His hands-on leadership style and knowledge of the ServiceNow space, coupled with his track record for building great companies with the best people, is a rare blend of talent," DiOrio said. "We look forward to partnering with Harsha as we continue to build the leader in the ServiceNow ecosystem."

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Harsha Kumar, an Indian American entrepreneur, technologist and proven chief executive has been named as NewRocket CEO

First World Meditation Day in the United Nations

DECEMBER 21, 2024

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations in New York organized "Meditation for Global Peace and Harmony" to mark the First World Meditation Day at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 20 December 2024.

The landmark event was attended by H.E. Philemon Yang, President of the General Assembly, Under Secretary General Mr. Atul Khare and several other dignitaries. Keynote address on the occasion was delivered by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, who also gave a special meditation session during the event to more than 600 enthusiastic participants.

Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, in his welcome address, underscored the importance of the ancient Indian practice of Dhyana as an instrument for personal fulfillment and inner peace, rooted in the civilizational dictum of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - the whole world is one family. He added that the United Nations General Assembly resolution on World Meditation Day acknowledged the link between yoga and meditation as complementary approaches to health and wellbeing. President of General Assembly noted that meditation cultivates compassion and respect for people. Speaking on the occasion, Under Secretary General Mr. Khare outlined the inherent connect between mental health and meditation and the profound impact of meditation on United Nations Peacekeepers. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar highlighted multiple benefits



H.E. Philemon Yang, President of the General Assembly (4th from the left) is flanked by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar 9 to his right) and Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish (to his left).



Attendees at the United Nations

and dimensions associated with meditation in his keynote address.

It may be recalled that on 6 December 2024, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution, declaring 21st December as World Meditation Day. India was instrumental in the unanimous adoption of the said resolution.

Adoption of the resolution at such a time highlights the importance of promoting calm, peace and overall human wellbeing when the world is facing conflicts and suffering. It also marks a significant milestone in global recognition of meditation's transformative potential.

21 December marks the Winter



Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is being received by Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish



Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish at the United Nations

Solstice and in the Indian tradition, Uttarayana begins with the Winter Solstice and is considered as an auspicious time of the year, especially for meditation and inner reflection. It also falls exactly six months after the International Day of Yoga on 21 June, which is the Summer Solstice.



सत्यमेव जयते
Consulate General of India, New York

Consulate General of India, New York

invites you for an exhibition
on the occasion of

Veer Baal Diwas

10am to 4pm
26 December, 2024

Venue:
Consulate Ballroom,
3 East 64 Street,
New York



Consulate General of India in New York to celebrate Veer Bal Diwas

DECEMBER 20, 2024

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): The Consulate General of India, New York is celebrating Veer Bal Diwas on 26th December, 2024 to pay tribute to unparalleled sacrifices made by Sahibzada Zorawar Singh Ji and Sahibzada Fateh Singh Ji, the brave sons of Guru Gobind Singh ji by putting up an exhibition at the Consulate.

Among other events planned on the occasion is a display of the Sikh martial art -Gatka- by the Akal Gatka Group mentored by Sardar Daler Singh, former President of Gurdwara Baba Makhana Shah Lobana Sikh Center

All are cordially invited to attend the exhibition on 'Veer Baal Diwas' on 26th December, 2024 from 10am to 4pm at the Consulate General of India, 3 East 64th Street (Between 5th and Madison Avenues), New York, NY 10065.

To attend, please RSVP at madad.newyork@mea.gov.in by 23rd December 1pm.

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OP-ED

Working Together to Achieve a New Year's Potential



BY ARNOLD W. DRUCKER

As we welcome the arrival of the holiday season (and the cold weather that always seems colder than the year before for some reason), I want to take a moment to wish you all a joyful, peaceful and healthy Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, as well as all religious and cultural holidays and occasions to be celebrated.

With winter now upon us, Legislative District 16 is actively engaged and focused on responding to the particular needs and protections our constituents deserve and expect from my office. Earlier this month, in partnership with the County's Office of Emergency Management, I hosted an Emergency Preparedness Workshop, where approximately 100 Plainview-Old Bethpage seniors received invaluable and potentially life-saving tips and

reminders of what should be done in the event of a major storm affecting the essential services we often take for granted.

In partnership with the Nassau County Police Department - an agency beyond compare - we hosted a Senior Scam presentation to alert our most vulnerable residents of the increasing and disturbing schemes and scams that unscrupulous criminals have been using to frighten and trick people into disclosing personal information and even giving their money away to these truly nefarious people.

My office is also proud to regularly host Shed the Meds events at various locations in the district - another outgrowth of our partnership with the NCPD, which provides an opportunity for all residents to safely dispose of all unused, expired or excessive medications. In doing so, they are preventing these medications from ending up in the hands of children and other relatives or avoiding harming our environment by throwing them in the garbage.

I am also pleased to host several blood drives throughout the year to address the critical blood shortage we have in our area, and our next will be from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 28 at the Plainview-Old Bethpage Library. I am proud to work with the New York Islanders, who are generously donating two complimentary tickets to an upcoming Islander home game to every donor. Many thanks to the Syosset Fire Department for hosting our last event at the Fire House.

From December 2nd through December 22nd, in partnership with the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless, we sponsored a winter coat drive, and I am proud to acknowledge the Syosset, Jericho and Plainview Old Bethpage Libraries as well as Always Orthodontics of Syosset for so generously volunteering their locations as drop-off sites. Their support made it possible to once again create a tremendous impact for deserving families throughout our region.

Finally, at the Legislature, the Republican Majority finalized the 2025

budget over the objections expressed by myself and my Democratic colleagues. With the court-ordered repeal of Nassau's excessive red light camera fees and other financial stressors, there are significant risks present in the 2025 budget, and I will be especially vigilant to ensure the steps we take to address them will in no way jeopardize the County's operations. I will remain ever mindful of protecting the interests of my constituents and ensuring that the necessary resources and services continue without fail as I have done throughout my service as your Legislator.

As we embark upon a New Year together, I hope that you do so energized by the memories of a blessed, joyous, and prosperous holiday season. Stay warm and always keep in mind that my office is always open to all of you for all of your needs.

(Arnold W. Drucker, of Plainview, is the Deputy Minority Leader of the Nassau County Legislature. He has represented the 16th Legislative District since 2016)

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PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Elon Musk is the ultimate chaos agent

WITH ONE POST ON X, MUSK HAS THE POWER TO SHUT DOWN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MOST POWERFUL NATION IN WORLD HISTORY



BY SIVA
VAIDHYATHAN

Elon Musk holds no public office. He has never stood for election, passed scrutiny for appointment to public office, nor commanded a political force of any measure. He is, however, the latest star and favorite of Donald Trump, the US president-elect. So when Musk issues one of his off-the-cuff missives via his decrepit social network, X, Trump loyalists (almost all the Republicans) take him seriously.

Yet now, suddenly, Musk has the power to shut down the government of the most powerful nation in the history of the world and depose his party's legislative leader, the speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, a Republican lawmaker from Louisiana.

Very early Wednesday morning, fueled by hubris and whatever else, Musk called for the US House of Representatives to reject the negotiated continuing resolution that it must pass this week to keep the federal government funded.

"This bill should not pass," the richest human being in the world wrote at 4.15am E.T. Musk followed up for hours, using every derogatory word he could muster to describe a bill he almost certainly had not read nor understood. "Any member of the House or Senate who votes for this outrageous spending bill deserves to be voted out in 2 years!" Musk wrote Wednesday afternoon.

Johnson spent months garnering enough votes among his divided caucus (plus Democrats, with whom he must negotiate to get such a bill passed) to send the resolution to the Democrats who control the Senate until next month and then to the president, Joe Biden. Johnson knows the failure to pass this resolution would cause great harm to 4 million federal employees and those who depend on their services right before the holidays. Farmers would go without subsidy payments. Small businesses would not get their loan payments. Kids in head start programs would have no place to go during the workday, forcing parents to take time off from work and possibly lose jobs. Active-duty military personnel would work with no December or January paychecks until Congress passes such a resolution.

Because of this impasse, congressional Republicans might force Johnson to resign as speaker and yet another chaotic scramble for that job would ensue. Johnson is the third Republican leader since Trump first took office in 2017. Every time one resigns the factions of the Republican party generate grinding conflict. The last one, after Kevin McCarthy was ousted in 2023 after negotiating a similar agreement with Democrats, yielded a standoff and the



Musk, like Trump, does not believe rules should apply to rich men -Photo / X

MUCH ABOUT THE SECOND RISE OF TRUMP, LIKE THAT OF THE FIRST, UNDERMINES OR OVERTHROWS EVERYTHING WE THOUGHT WE KNEW ABOUT POWER AND POLITICS. TRUMP SEEMS TO MAINTAIN HIS SUPPORT IN SPITE OF, IF NOT BECAUSE OF, HIS WILLINGNESS TO BLOW EVERYTHING UP, TO FLOUT NORMS OF DECORUM AND LAW AND TO ENGAGE IN FABULOUS HYPERBOLE THAT BEARS LITTLE GROUNDING IN REALITY.

ultimate ascension of Johnson, considered a rightwing extremist and Trump loyalist. But talking to Democrats at all now makes one unacceptable to the Trump crowd. So there is a good chance that not only will the government not function for weeks or months, it won't even have the opportunity to come back until the Republicans can once again choose a speaker. That is not going to be easy.

According to news reports, many Republican members of Congress took Musk's rant seriously, and feared crossing Trump's new buddy who allegedly will head some yet-to-be-created federal office that is supposed to ferret out waste from the federal government.

In such an unstable political environment, with no real party discipline within Congress, figures like Musk have unprecedented influence. Being called out by someone with that much volume would be debilitating to

one's political career.

Much about the second rise of Trump, like that of the first, undermines or overthrows everything we thought we knew about power and politics. Trump seems to maintain his support in spite of, if not because of, his willingness to blow everything up, to flout norms of decorum and law and to engage in fabulous hyperbole that bears little grounding in reality.

Musk, who built his early reputation as a charismatic leader of upstart companies like PayPal and Tesla (neither of which he actually founded), inflated his ego faster than he inflated his wealth, merged with Trump to share these features. Years of pushing the limits of automobile and financial regulation, often breaking those limits but rarely held accountable for those abrogations, have left Musk feeling invincible yet victimized. He's a whiner more than a winner.

Musk is also an immigrant (who

worked illegally in the United States for a time) who has turned on immigrants and a former free-speech advocate who has turned off the ability of his critics and independent journalists to find voice on his platform.

The lesson of Musk's effort to shut down the US government and depose the Republican House speaker is that he has no interest in building, maintaining or managing anything responsibly. We know that already from how he runs X, the company he has all-but-destroyed since being forced by a court to buy it. The only things that have kept his two significant companies afloat have been teams of well compensated lawyers and engineers who have kept federal subsidies, loans and contracts (none of which are endangered by the looming shutdown) flowing to both companies.

Musk, like Trump, does not believe rules should apply to rich men. As long as the rest of us keep rewarding them for that, they will not be deterred and neither will the next crop of rich men. And now, with Musk mimicking Trump, we have two chaos agents tearing apart the basic functions of government apart while betraying and mocking the rule of law.

This is the first test of the United States to keep functioning under this new, radical, unleashed Trump. So far, this nation is failing and falling.

(Siva Vaidhyathan is a professor of media studies at the University of Virginia and the author of Antisocial Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy (Oxford University Press, 2018).)

(Source: The Guardian)

It is for historians to dig for tell-tale remains, not bigots



BY P.D.T. ACHARY

IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT JUDICIAL MISDIRECTION IS STIRRING UP THE RETALIATORY INSTINCTS OF PEOPLE FED ON THE FALSEHOODS OF MANUFACTURED HISTORY

Normally, digging at historic sites is done by an archaeologist and historians in search of a lost civilization or an ancient city or some signs of mythological events. But nowhere in the world, in the modern age, is an excavation done underneath a place of worship of one religion to find the remains of a place of worship of another religion. While digging in search of historical facts is a secular act, and is done using internationally recognized scientific methods, digging to establish the presence of a place of worship of one religion in a place of worship of another religion is, clearly, a non-secular act. Therefore, it is absolutely puzzling why the former Chief Justice of India (CJI), D.Y. Chandrachud found nothing objectionable or illegal in a survey in a place of worship of a particular religion by another religious group. In his oral observation, the former CJI, said, in 2022 (he was the CJI then), "a survey may not necessarily fall foul of the Places of Worship Act." He made this tricky observation in the Gyanvapi mosque case.

CLARITY IN THE ACT, YET CHALLENGED

The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act was enacted by Parliament in 1991 in the background of a strident movement by Ram Janmabhoomi supporters which heightened communal tensions in Ayodhya and many other parts of north India. The government of the day apprehended the imminent outbreak of violence in different parts of the country due to the raising of claims over the places of worship of a particular minority community. This Act bars the conversion of places of worship of any religious community into a place of worship of a different religious community. It declares that the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15th day of August 1947, shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day.

The Act further provides that any suit and appeal seeking to convert the religious character of a place of worship existing on 15th August, 1947 pending before any court or tribunal shall abate on the commencement of the Act. It also states that no suit or appeal relating to this matter shall lie in any court after the commencement of the Act, and any suit alleging that the religious character of a place of worship has been converted after 15th August 1947 will be determined in terms of this Act.

But the constitutionality of this Act is under challenge in the Supreme Court of India. A petition was filed in 2020 challenging the constitutional validity of the Act on the grounds that the date of August 15, 1947 was fixed arbitrarily and that this Act takes away judicial review.

The contention that the date of August 15, 1947 was arbitrarily fixed in the Act to prevent the conversion of a place of worship is a specious one. This is the day when the transfer of power from the British government to the Indian government took place. Naturally, this was the earliest date the government could think of for the purpose of this Act. In any case, the Government of India could not have chosen April 21, 1526 when Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in the battle of Panipat and captured Delhi and Agra and laid the foundation of the Mughal empire. Nor could it have chosen, arbitrarily, a later date and kept the field open for a set of religious fanatics to make reckless claims on the places of worship of another religion. Therefore, by all accounts, the date chosen by Parliament in this enactment was the most reasonable one.



A survey or excavation in a place of worship being used by a religious denomination for the purpose of finding out the religious character of that place would be a violation of Article 26'. -Picture for representation only

The second ground cited in the petition is that the Act takes away judicial review which is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution of India and any enactment which alters it is unconstitutional. This contention, needless to say, is without any merit. The Act declares that from the commencement of the Act, all pending suits, appeal or proceedings seeking to convert a place of worship of one religion existing as on August 15, 1947 into that of another religion or altering the religious character of a place of worship shall abate. It is the legislative policy of the government to declare through a law that certain types of suits shall abate under certain circumstances. It is not the same as stating that "no court shall have any jurisdiction in respect of any suit arising from the place of worship of any religion". The latter legislative assertion can be interpreted as an exclusion of judicial review which would, no doubt, be unconstitutional. But that is not the case here.

ON THE LOWER COURTS

Subsequent to the above quoted observation of the former CJI, lower courts in the State of Uttar Pradesh are ordering surveys in mosques to determine their religious character with great alacrity. It has led to violence in Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh in which some lives were lost. The lower courts do not seem to have bothered to check whether it was an order of the Supreme Court or a mere observation of the CJI during the hearing. The fact is that such observations from the Bench have no significance as those are not a part of any judgment of the Court.

Besides, it is a matter of common logic that when the law has barred any kind of conversion of the religious character of a place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947, then what is the relevance of ordering or carrying out a survey to determine its character? Legally, its character is what existed on the date as above. So, where is the need for a fresh survey?

A close reading of the provisions of the Act would reveal that what has been prohibited is not merely the act of conversion but also fresh surveys to establish the

religious character of a place of worship. As that stands settled, any attempt to resurrect the dispute and get an order from the court would be clearly in violation of the Act.

The Places of Worship Act 1991 has been hailed as a law which protects secularism in the Ayodhya judgment of the Supreme Court. Wisely, the Court has now put a blanket ban on all litigations relating to the places of worship till it finally determines the issue of the constitutionality of the Act.

PROTECTION OF A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

Quite apart from the issue of constitutionality or otherwise of the Places of Worship Act, a religious denomination has the fundamental right, under Article 26, to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. Worshipping in a mosque or a church is a matter of religion and any kind of interference by any outsider in that place of worship can be treated as a violation of the fundamental right of that religious denomination. The court, while ordering a survey of such a place of worship, is in fact committing a violation of Article 26 of the Constitution. The object of this Article is to protect the right conferred on a religious denomination. So, even if the Act was not in existence, a survey or excavation in a place of worship being used by a religious denomination for the purpose of finding out the religious character of that place would be a violation of Article 26.

It is possible that beneath some mosques lie remains of temples. And beneath the remains of temples there may be the remains of Buddha or Jain viharas. History has sequestered in the womb of earth these tell-tale remains for an archaeologist and a historian to chronicle the history of this nation, and not for bigots to kindle revanchism and poison the minds of generations of unwary people. It is a great pity that judicial misdirection is refiring the retaliatory instincts of people fed on the falsehoods of manufactured history.

(P.D.T. Achary is a former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha)

Crimes against humanity and an obtuse Indian stance



BY VARSHA SINGH

INDIA'S RESPONSE TO A 'CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY' TREATY ALIGNS WITH ITS AVERSION TO THE ROME STATUTE AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

"India advocates for the inclusion of 'terrorism' as an act amounting to CAH. India's response to a CAH treaty aligns with its aversion to the Rome Statute and the ICC. For the last five years, since 2019, India has consistently argued for an 'in-depth study' and thorough discussion on the need for a dedicated treaty. India's stance at the UNGA reflects its skepticism that a CAH treaty might duplicate the already existing regime under the Rome Statute. Further, India takes issue with the exclusion of 'terror-related acts' and the 'use of nuclear weapons' from the definition of CAH in the proposed treaty. Most importantly, reiterating that it is not a party to the Rome Statute, India has stressed at the UNGA that national legislations and the jurisdiction of national courts are more appropriate fora for dealing with CAH and other international crimes."

On December 4, 2024, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution approving the text of a proposed treaty governing the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity (CAH treaty). This marks the beginning of the negotiation process among states for the conclusion of a CAH treaty. This resolution comes five years after the International Law Commission submitted the draft text of the CAH treaty to the Sixth Committee - the primary forum for considering legal questions in the UNGA. This development is a landmark in the international community's quest to combat impunity for CAH.

THERE IS A GAP IN ACCOUNTABILITY



'There is no dedicated treaty for crimes against humanity yet, creating a gap in terms of accountability in the legal architecture of international criminal justice' -Photo for representation only

Alongside genocide and war crimes, CAH are among the grave international crimes which the International Criminal Court (ICC), established under the Rome Statute, seeks to punish. Importantly, genocide and war crimes are also governed by dedicated treaties, i.e., the Genocide Convention of 1948 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, respectively. However, CAH are governed only under the Rome Statute, which includes specific criminal acts such as murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, torture, imprisonment, and rape committed as part of a 'widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack'. CAH were first codified in the 1945 London Charter establishing the Nuremberg Tribunal to investigate and prosecute the crimes committed in connection with the Second World War, and later in the statutes of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia, and Rwanda. However, there is no dedicated treaty for CAH yet, creating a gap in terms of accountability in the legal architecture of international criminal justice. There are three reasons justifying the need for a CAH treaty.

First, the jurisdiction of the ICC covers a limited number of states, making it challenging to punish perpetrators of CAH in non-member states. Second, the Rome Statute and the ICC only address individual criminal responsibility. A dedicated CAH treaty would allow for holding states accountable under international law for their failure to prevent the commission of CAH, as is the case with the Genocide Convention of 1948. For instance, in 2019, The Gambia filed a case before the International

Court of Justice (ICJ) against Myanmar for alleged violations of the Genocide Convention against the ethnic Rohingya population. A dedicated CAH treaty would create an obligation for state parties to adopt administrative, legislative, or judicial measures to prevent the commission of CAH. Failure to meet this obligation could become the basis for the ICJ's jurisdiction if the CAH treaty so provides. Third, a CAH treaty presents an opportunity to enlarge the scope of CAH to include, as suggested by various states in the Sixth Committee, starvation of civilian populations, gender apartheid, forced pregnancy, the use of nuclear weapons, terrorism, exploitation of natural resources, and crimes against indigenous populations.

INDIA'S STAND

India is not a party to the Rome Statute and has consistently objected to the ICC's jurisdiction over issues such as the powers of the ICC prosecutor, the role of the UN Security Council under the Rome Statute, and the non-inclusion of 'use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction' as a war crime. Further, India has argued that crimes committed only during armed conflicts - and not those committed during peacetime - should be considered CAH. Moreover, India does not favor the inclusion of 'enforced disappearance' as an act that can constitute CAH. Instead, India advocates for the inclusion of 'terrorism' as an act amounting to CAH. India's response to a CAH treaty aligns with its aversion to the Rome Statute and the ICC. For the last five years, since 2019, India has consistently argued for an 'in-depth study' and thorough discussion on

the need for a dedicated treaty. India's stance at the UNGA reflects its skepticism that a CAH treaty might duplicate the already existing regime under the Rome Statute. Further, India takes issue with the exclusion of 'terror-related acts' and the 'use of nuclear weapons' from the definition of CAH in the proposed treaty. Most importantly, reiterating that it is not a party to the Rome Statute, India has stressed at the UNGA that national legislations and the jurisdiction of national courts are more appropriate fora for dealing with CAH and other international crimes.

LEAD THE WAY

Currently, India does not have domestic legislation prohibiting international crimes. In 2018, Justice S. Muralidhar of the Delhi High Court in *State vs Sajjan Kumar* observed that 'neither crimes against humanity nor genocide have been made part of India's criminal law, a lacuna that needs to be addressed urgently'. Nonetheless, there is little or no debate on the need for such laws in the domestic legal and policy spaces. The recent amendments to the criminal law were a missed opportunity to include these crimes in the penal law. This is inconsistent with India's own insistence on the primacy of national and territorial jurisdiction for dealing with CAH. India should incorporate CAH and other international crimes into its domestic law, even if it is not a party to the Rome Statute, and lead the way in ending impunity for grave human rights violations - a role that befits a true Vishwaguru.

(Varsha Singh is Assistant Professor at the National Law University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan)

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The Indian American Medical Association, Illinois Commemorates 44th Anniversary with a Vibrant Gala

DECEMBER 18, 2024

CHICAGO, IL (TIP): The Indian American Medical Association, Illinois (IAMA-IL) marked 44 years with a fundraising gala that featured a cocktail reception, a vendor expo, an awards presentation, a dinner, and musical performances on December 07, 2024 at the Matrix Club in Naperville. The event was a grand success, bringing together leaders, influencers, and community members.

IAMA-IL President Radhika Chimata, MD, organized a splendid gala that included speeches from Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, U.S. Representative for Illinois's 8th Congressional District, and Indian Consul General Somnath Ghosh. She also shared her vision for the upcoming year as the Board of Directors chair. Her objectives include continuing significant fundraising initiatives, establishing a comprehensive database of physician mentors for medical trainees, and boosting IAMA-IL membership among second- and third-generation Americans.

Honorees during the awards presentation included Ashok Fulambarker, MD, recipient of the Distinguished Physician Award; Samir Shah, MD, who received the Lifetime Achievement Award; and Archana Chatterjee, MD, honored with the Dr. Usha Rani Nimmagadda Woman Physician Leadership Award. Rajeev



Honorees during the awards presentation included Ashok Fulambarker, MD, recipient of the Distinguished Physician Award; Samir Shah, MD, who received the Lifetime Achievement Award; and Archana Chatterjee, MD, honored with the Dr. Usha Rani Nimmagadda Woman Physician Leadership Award. Rajeev Kumar, MD, Terence Chiramel, MD, and Utpal Parekh, MD, were acknowledged for their contributions to IAMA-IL and our communities. -Photo : Asian Media USA

Kumar, MD, Terence Chiramel, MD, and Utpal Parekh, MD, were acknowledged for their contributions to IAMA-IL and our communities.

Advocate Health CEO Dia Nichols provided the keynote speech and participated in a fireside discussion alongside President Chimata, Sreenivas Reddy, MD, and Shruti Nathan from Advocate Health. The conversation addressed contemporary challenges faced by physicians, including reimbursement rates.

We express our gratitude to our

Distinguished Guests, including Gerard Moorer, Deputy Chief of Staff to Congressman Danny Davis, U.S. Representative from Illinois's 7th Congressional District, Tara Stamps, Cook County Board Commissioner for the 1st District, and Harry Benton, Illinois House Representative for District 97.

The Ghungroo Bollywood dance troupe captivated the audience with their elegant performances and stunning attire. We appreciate the talent of director Sridevi Pandalai. Biju

Zacharia's artistic vision shone through the gorgeous audio-visual presentation, which complemented the eloquent emceeing by Shana Mohan perfectly. During dinner, Radhika delivered an incredible unplugged performance, accompanied by guitarist Vikas Deo, and concluded the event with an electrifying concert supported by Orchestra Saregama.

Before the entertainment got everyone dancing the night away, IAMA welcomed their new President, Dr. Dilip Shah, and the 2025 executive committee as they assumed their roles for IAMA-IL's 45th year.

The celebration was made possible with the backing of the Grand Sponsor, Wealth Planning Network of Oak Brook, IL, and gold sponsors Orchard Corporation and Neelyx. All attendees received a lovely keepsake provided by Tanishq of Naperville.

ABOUT INDIAN AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, ILLINOIS

The Indian American Medical Association, Illinois (IAMA-IL) is a non-profit organization comprised of Illinois physicians, fellows, residents, and medical students of Indian origin who are committed to professional excellence and quality patient care.

(Photograph and Press release by Asian Media USA)

Spreading Christmas Joy and Hope: International Assembly of God's Outreach in Michigan



Carol singing

DECEMBER 18, 2024

MICHIGAN (TIP): This holiday season, the International Assembly of God (IAG), Michigan, is bringing the joy and love of Christ's birth to the community in a meaningful way. A dedicated group of 75 church members will be visiting homes from December 6-8, 2024, to spread Christmas cheer through caroling and sharing the message of hope, love, and faith. They will be caroling in the surrounding areas of Warren, Troy, Farmington Hills, Canton, and Ann Arbor, bringing festive joy to neighborhoods and homes.

In total, they will impact 93 families and one assisted living facility, offering not only carols and



Love for the elders

gifts but also the true message of Christmas—one of joy and peace. The group's outreach efforts are led by Evangelism Coordinator William Menezes, who is overseeing the visits and ensuring that each interaction leaves a lasting impression of Christ's love. "Our goal is to bring light to every home we visit," Menezes shared. "Christmas is the perfect time to remind people of the true reason for the season."

Additionally, the church is inviting everyone to a special Christmas service on Saturday, December 21, at 6:00 PM. The service will be held at IAG's location at 3949 E 9 Mile Rd, Warren, MI 48091 and promises an evening filled with festive plays, skits, music, and



Prayers for the elders

a powerful message celebrating the birth of Christ. "Christmas is a time for togetherness and faith," said Pr. Charles Chandy, senior pastor of IAG. "We invite everyone to join us for the Christmas service and celebrate the season with us."

For more information or to get involved in the church's outreach efforts, you can contact the International Assembly of God at word.internationalag.org or call +1 586-755-0500. Let's come together this Christmas to spread the love of Christ throughout the community.

(Based on a press release)

Trump says India charges a lot of tariff, threatens to impose reciprocal tax

DECEMBER 18, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): US President-elect Donald Trump has reiterated his intention to impose reciprocal tariffs in retaliation for the high tariff imposed by India on import of certain American products.

Trump made these remarks on Tuesday, December 17, and also said that India and Brazil were among countries that impose high tariffs on certain US products.

"Reciprocal. If they tax us, we tax them the same amount. They tax us. We tax them. And they tax us. Almost in all cases, they're taxing us, and we haven't been taxing them," Trump told reporters on Monday.

He made the remarks while responding to a question on a potential trade agreement with China. Trump said India and Brazil were among countries that impose high tariffs on certain US products.

"The word reciprocal is important because if somebody charges us - India, we don't have to talk about our own - if India charges us 100 per cent, do we charge them nothing for the same? You know, they send in a bicycle and we send them a bicycle. They charge us 100 and 200. India charges a lot. Brazil charges a lot. If they want to charge us, that's fine, but we're going to charge them the same thing," Trump said at a news conference at Mar-a-Lago.

Responding to a question, his



Trump said that India and Brazil were among countries that impose high tariffs on certain US products, and that he intends to impose reciprocal tariffs in retaliation

Commerce Secretary pick Howard Lutnick said "reciprocity" is something that is going to be a key topic for the Trump administration. "How you treat us is how you should expect to be treated," he said.

During his election campaign in October, Trump has claimed that India imposes the highest tariffs on foreign products. But they do it with a smile.

"Perhaps the most important element of my plan to make America extraordinarily wealthy again is reciprocity. It's a word that's very important in my plan because we generally don't charge tariffs. I started that process, it was so great, with the vans and the small trucks, etc," Trump had

said Thursday in October.

In 2019, Trump has repeatedly claimed that India is a "tariff king" and imposes "tremendously high" tariffs on American products.

He has criticized India's "big tariffs" on American paper products and the iconic Harley-Davidson bikes.

The US is the largest trading partner of India in 2023-24. India's exports stood at USD 77.51 billion, while imports aggregated at USD 42.2 billion in the last fiscal.

During April-October this fiscal, the country's exports to America rose by 6.31 per cent to USD 47.24 billion, while imports grew by 2.46 per cent to USD 26 billion.

Between FY 2020 and FY 2024, India's merchandise exports to America rose by 46 per cent from USD 53.1 billion to USD 77.5 billion.

Imports from the US also grew to USD 42.2 billion last fiscal from USD 35.8 billion in 2019-20.

On the other hand, trade in services between the two nations expanded 30.3 per cent from USD 54.1 billion in 2018 to an estimated USD 70.5 billion in 2024.

India is also a key destination for American businesses such as professional, scientific, and technical services, manufacturing, and IT. Washington is the third largest investor. India received USD 66.7 billion of FDI inflow between April 2000 and June 2024. (Source: PTI)

Biden admin makes it easier for US companies to hire foreign workers with H-1B visas



The changes made in the final rule will ensure that U.S. employers can hire highly skilled workers they need to grow and innovate while enhancing the integrity of the program. -Photo for representation only

DECEMBER 18, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): A month ahead of transferring power, the outgoing Biden administration announced a new set of rules on Tuesday, December 17 for H-1B visas that makes it easier for American companies to hire foreign workers with special skill sets and facilitate a smoother transition from F-1 student visas to H-1B visas.

The rule, announced by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), aims to provide greater flexibility to employers and workers by modernizing the definition and criteria for special positions and nonprofit and governmental research organizations that are exempt from the annual statutory limit on H-1B visas. The changes will help U.S. employers hire as per their business needs and remain competitive in the global marketplace, an official release said.

Donald Trump will be the next president of the US after a swearing-in ceremony on January 20.

According to the DHS, the rule also extends certain flexibilities for students on an F-1 visa seeking to change their status to H-1B to avoid disruptions in lawful status and employment authorization for students holding F-1 visas.

It also will allow US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to process applications more quickly for most individuals who had previously been approved for an H-1B visa.

It will also allow H-1B visa holders with a controlling interest in the petitioning organization to be eligible for H-1B status subject to reasonable conditions. The latest move by the outgoing Biden administration builds on its previous efforts to ensure that the labor needs of American businesses are met to reduce undue burden on employers while adhering to all U.S. worker protections under the law. "American businesses rely on the H-1B visa programme for the recruitment of highly-skilled talent, benefiting communities across the country," said Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Ohio State House and Senate designates October as Hindu Heritage Month



"This is a huge win for Hindus across Ohio and the country. Now, every October, we will be able to officially celebrate our Hindu heritage in Ohio," State Senator Niraj Antani said.

DECEMBER 20, 2024

COLUMBUS, OH (TIP): The Ohio State House and Senate has passed a bill to designate October as Hindu Heritage Month.

"This is a huge win for Hindus across Ohio and the country. Now, every October, we will be able to officially celebrate our Hindu heritage in Ohio," State Senator Niraj Antani said after the passage of his bill to designate October as Hindu Heritage Month in Ohio.

Antani is the first Hindu and Indian American State Senator in Ohio's history and the youngest Hindu and Indian American state or federal-elected official in the country.

"This was the culmination of a lot of work by Hindu advocates here in Ohio and across the country and I was very happy to partner with them to get this passed," Antani said. A day earlier, he amended his bill into HB 173 on the Senate floor. Both chambers subsequently passed the legislation unanimously.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Prepare to remove TikTok from app stores: US lawmakers to Google, Apple

DECEMBER 14, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): Two influential US lawmakers, including Indian-American Raja Krishnamoorthi, have asked Google and Apple to remove TikTok from their app stores ahead of a potential ban on the video-sharing platform next month.

A bill signed by President Joe Biden into law in April requires China-based ByteDance, which owns TikTok, to divest from it by January 19 or face a US ban.

Ahead of the January 19 deadline, House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Chair John Moolenaar and Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi on Friday wrote to Apple CEO Tim Cook, Google CEO Sundar Pichai and TikTok CEO Shou Chew.

The lawmakers asked Cook and Pichai to prepare to remove TikTok from their play stores by January 19. In their letter to the TikTok CEO, they urged Chew to "immediately execute a qualified divestiture". All three letters come after the DC Circuit Court's 3-0 opinion that upheld the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act. In the letters to Cook and Pichai, the lawmakers said, "Today, we sent a letter to TikTok highlighting that Congress has provided ample time-233 days and counting-for the company to take the necessary steps to comply with the law and pursue a divestment that protects US national security." "As you know, without a qualified divestiture, the Act makes it unlawful to provide services to distribute, maintain, or update such foreign adversary-controlled application.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Two US lawmakers have asked Google and Apple to remove TikTok from their app stores ahead of a potential ban on the video-sharing platform next month.

Pannun's threat to Indian ambassador taken up with US: MEA

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday, December 20, said New Delhi had taken "seriously" the latest threat issued by US-based Khalistan separatist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun against India's Ambassador to the US, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, and raised it with the authorities in Washington.



Vinay Mohan Kwatra

In a recent video, Pannun threatened that Kwatra is on the radar of pro-Khalistan Sikhs in America for allegedly coordinating with Russian authorities, who in turn were providing inputs to Indian intelligence agencies on the Khalistan network in the United States.

"As and when such threats are issued, we take them very seriously and raise them with the US government. In this particular case also, we have raised it with the US government and it is our expectation that the United States government will take our security concerns seriously and act on it," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said during a weekly media briefing in New Delhi on Friday, December 20. A former Foreign Secretary, Kwatra took charge as India's Ambassador to the United States in August this year, succeeding Taranjit Singh Sandhu.

His appointment came at a time when Khalistan separatists continue to target Hindu community in the country and also the Indian missions.

Amid din, Lok Sabha sends 'one nation, one election' Bills to joint committee of Houses

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Amid uproar over Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks related to B R Ambedkar, the Lok Sabha on Friday, December 20, referred the two bills on simultaneous polls to a joint committee of Parliament.

Opposition members were raising slogan haling Ambedkar and slamming Shah when the House met for the day.

Instead of taking up the Question Hour, Speaker Om Birla asked Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal to move the resolution to refer the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 referred to Joint Committee of Parliament comprising 27 members from the Lok Sabha and 12 from the Rajya Sabha.

The resolution was adopted by a voice vote amid noisy scenes. The Lok Sabha was then adjourned sine die (indefinitely), bringing to an end the Winter session which began on November 25.

The two 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) bills, including one requiring an amendment in the Constitution, lay down the mechanism to hold simultaneous elections and were introduced in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday after a fiery debate.

BJP MP Bhartruhari Mahtab is being considered to head the joint committee of Parliament that will scrutinise the two bills proposing simultaneous elections, sources said.

With the BJP set to get the position of the chair for the crucial panel, official sources said Mahtab's parliamentary experience may weigh in his favour. The strength of the committee was increased from 31 MPs to 39, giving representation to more parties.

While the panel already includes BJP's P P Chaudhury and Anurag Thakur, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra of the Congress is another prominent member on the committee. Among the Lok Sabha members, 17 are from the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, including 12 from the BJP.

Lok Sabha adjourns sine die amid protest by Congress

The Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die on Friday, December 20, after four weeks of high drama and protests,



which crippled the Parliament.

As soon as the Lok Sabha convened for the day, the Speaker called Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal to present a resolution for setting up a joint committee of Parliament to examine the bills related to 'one nation, one election'. Slogans of 'Jai Bhim' reverberated in the House as the Speaker read out directions barring demonstrations and protests at the gates of Parliament.

As the protests continued, the Speaker adjourned the House sine die.

Even before the House proceedings began, Congress members started raising slogans "Jai Bheem, Jai Jai Bheem".

Amid the slogans by the opposition, Prime Minister Narendra Modi entered the Lok Sabha chamber.

The Winter Session saw a standoff between the Congress and BJP with charges of 'attempt to murder' against the Opposition and they demand resignation of the Home Minister over remark on BR Ambedkar.

The Opposition MPs staged a protest at Vijay Chowk here on Friday again demanding Home Minister Amit Shah's apology and resignation for allegedly "insulting" BR Ambedkar.

They also carried out a protest march from Vijay Chowk to Parliament. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also slammed the BJP over the FIR filed against the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, saying it "shows their desperation level".

2,200 cases of violence against Hindus in B'desh, 112 in Pak: Govt

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday, December 20, revealed that as many as 2,200 cases of violence against Hindus took place in Bangladesh in the year 2024, especially after the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government collapsed in the neighbouring country. The government noted that 112 such cases were also reported in Pakistan during the same period.

Submitting the data in Rajya Sabha, MEA said that it has written to both Bangladesh and Pakistan, asking the respective governments to ensure safety, security and well-being of Hindus in their countries.

"The government has taken serious note of these incidents and shared its concerns with the Government of Bangladesh. India's expectation is that the Government of Bangladesh will take all necessary measures to ensure the safety and welfare of Hindus and other minorities," a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs stated.

"The Government of India raises the issue of violence against minority communities through diplomatic channels and has urged the Government of Pakistan to take steps to prevent religious intolerance, sectarian violence, systemic persecution and attacks on



Relations between India and Bangladesh nosedived following the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August this year.

minority communities and ensure their safety, security, and well-being. India continues to highlight the plight of minorities in Pakistan at an appropriate international forum," the statement added. As per the data shared, 47 incidents of violence against Hindus were reported in Bangladesh in the year 2022, 302 in 2023 and surged to 2,200 in 2024 (till December 8, 2024).

In Pakistan, 241 cases of atrocities against Hindus were reported in 2022, 103 in 2023 and 112 in 2024 (till October), the data added.

The government also noted that no cases of violence against Hindus were reported in any neighbouring countries other than Bangladesh and Pakistan.

"Cases of violence against Hindus and other minorities in other neighbouring countries (except Pakistan and Bangladesh) - NIL," it read.

Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh gave the information in a written response to a query in Rajya Sabha, citing data from minority and human rights organisations.

The Union minister in his response also said the "government has taken serious note of these incidents and shared its concerns with the government of Bangladesh".

"India's expectation is that Bangladesh will take all necessary measures to ensure safety and welfare of Hindus and other minorities. The same was also reiterated during the visit of the Foreign Secretary to Bangladesh on December 9, 2024," he added.

Relations between India and Bangladesh faced significant tension following the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was compelled to leave the country amidst large-scale anti-government protests in August. Days later, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus assumed power after Hasina sought refuge in India.

52 kg gold, Rs 10 cr cash seized from Innova abandoned in Bhopal forest

The Income Tax (I-T) Department on Friday, December 20, recovered 52 kg of gold and Rs 9.86 crore in cash from an abandoned Innova car in the forests near Bhopal, the police commissioner said. This latest seizure comes in the backdrop of the ongoing raids on several construction companies across Bhopal and Indore.

During one of these ongoing raids, the authorities received a tip-off of a car leaving Bhopal with a huge amount of cash and jewellery. Acting on the tip-off, a team of 100 policemen along with the I-T Department seized a four-wheeler in the wee hours of Friday in Mendori village.

Earlier in the week, the I-T department raided 51 locations of a construction company in Bhopal and Indore.

So far, Rs 2.85 crore in cash has been recovered from the house and office of former RTO constable Saurabh Sharma.

According to Lokayukta DSP Ravindra Singh, 60 kg silver bars have also been recovered from Sharma's house.

Apart from this, gold, silver and diamond jewellery worth Rs 50 lakh has also been recovered during the ongoing raids. The anti-corruption unit has also found 4 vehicles at Saurabh Sharma's house, out of which one is a luxury car.

According to Lokayukta, documents of properties worth crores have also been recovered from Sharma's house and office. A note found on a counting machine in his house has also stumped Lokayukta. A probe is underway.

'US man gifted drone to Manipur ultras'

Daniel Stephen Courney, a 40-year-old controversial evangelist of US origin, emerged as a subject of public interest after a video of him distributing drones and bulletproof jackets among Kuki militants in Manipur surfaced online. The video, which has been cited as proof to accuse him of inciting violence in ethnic violence-hit Manipur, was uploaded on his YouTube channel named "Fool for Christ" in March this year.

However, it was likely shot between August 16 and September 3, 2023, as India Today's Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) team has established by analysing photos and videos posted by Courney and his associate MS Kumar on YouTube and Facebook. Apart from distributing relief materials to Kuki civilians, he also distributed socks, boots, two bulletproof vests, and a small drone to monitor the movement of the "enemy", i.e., "Meitei Hindus". Though there is nothing illegal about buying or gifting drones or bulletproof vests, such activities in an already strife-torn region by a foreign national with a claimed history in the US armed forces triggered concerns and veered too far from how religious preachers are expected to function.

PM Modi's Kuwait visit to open new chapter in bilateral ties: MEA

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to visit Kuwait on a two-day tour starting Saturday, December 21, marking the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the Gulf nation in over four decades.

Modi's visit will help in opening a new chapter in the bilateral ties, the MEA said on Friday, adding that his visit would help develop a more dynamic partnership between the two countries.

The visit aims to bolster a more dynamic partnership between the two nations, MEA said, adding, "We are looking at bolstering ties in several areas, including defence and trade."

Elaborating on details of the visit in a special briefing, Secretary (CPV & OIA) Arun Kumar Chatterjee said, "This marks the first visit by an Indian PM to Kuwait in 43 years...There are excellent political relations between the two countries."

Upon his arrival, PM Modi will be accorded a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the Bayan Palace. This will be followed by separate meetings with the Emir of Kuwait and the Crown Prince of Kuwait, Chatterjee said.

Additionally, the Prime Minister will address the Indian diaspora at a community event and will also visit a labour camp, that hosts Indian expat workers.

As a special guest of the Emir of Kuwait, PM Modi will also attend the opening ceremony of the 26th Arabian



Gulf Cup. "There has been a major transformation in India's ties with the Gulf region. The honourable PM has given special emphasis to strengthening and deepening relations with the Gulf countries," Chatterjee added.

India and Kuwait Relations

The Indian community is the largest expatriate community in Kuwait.

Kuwait is also among India's top trading partners, with bilateral trade valued at \$10.47 billion in the financial year 2023-24. It ranks as India's sixth-largest supplier of crude oil, fulfilling 3 per cent of the nation's energy needs. Indian exports to Kuwait reached USD 2 billion for the first time, while investments from the Kuwait Investment Authority in India have exceeded USD 10 billion. Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jabar Al Sabah made a private visit to India in July 2017. The last high-level visit between the two nations was in 2013, when the Prime

Minister of Kuwait travelled to India.

Bilateral mechanisms

India and Kuwait have institutionalised their cooperation through mechanisms such as the Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC), which was established during the visit of the Kuwaiti foreign minister to India in December 2024, which is headed at the foreign minister level. Seven new Joint Working Groups (JWGs) have been established in the areas of trade, investment, education, technology, agriculture, security, and culture. These complement the three existing JWGs in hydrocarbons, health, and consular matters, bringing the total number of JWGs to 10 following the signing of the JCC. Six rounds of Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs) have been held, with the latest taking place in July 2024. Additionally, 26 agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) have been signed under this framework.

Economic relations

Kuwait is among India's top trading partners, with bilateral trade valued at USD 10.47 billion in FY 2023-24.

Kuwait is India's 6th largest crude supplier, meeting 3% of the country's energy needs. Indian exports to Kuwait reached USD 2 billion for the first time, while investments by the Kuwait Investment Authority in India exceed USD 10 billion.

Archaeological Survey of India surveys newly found temple, wells in Sambhal

NEW DELHI (TIP)

A four-member team of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) inspected the newly uncovered temple, 5 'teerth' and 19 wells in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh, district magistrate Dr Rajender Pensiya told news agency ANI.

"In Sambhal, 5 'teerth' and 19 wells were inspected by ASI. The new temple that was found was also inspected. The survey took place 8-10 hours. In total around 24 areas were surveyed," DM Pensiya said.

He also stated that the ASI would submit a report to them based on their findings. The Sambhal district administration had written to the ASI for carbon dating of the temple and the well, news agency PTI reported.

On December 13, the 'ancient' Shri Kartik Mahadev Temple (Bhasma Shankar temple) was reopened for prayers, after it was discovered by officials during an anti-encroachment drive near the Shahi Jama Masjid. The temple had allegedly been closed since communal riots in the area in 1978 led to the displacement of Hindu families.

This discovery of the temple came on the heels of clashes between the police and residents in the area over a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid.

The violence that ensued on November 24 claimed the lives of five people and left 20 police officers injured. Since then, police forces have been deployed around the site.

The Supreme Court, in November, ordered civil courts to cease taking up fresh suits challenging the ownership or title



A well was found near the ancient Lord Shiva temple discovered in Sambhal (ANI Grab)

of any place of worship or ordering surveys of disputed religious places as per the Places of Worship Act (1991).

India in history this Week

DECEMBER 20 TO DECEMBER 26

20 DECEMBER

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

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

1955 Indian Golf Association was formed.

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

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

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

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

21 DECEMBER

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



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

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

2009 The first meeting of the Finance Committee and Executive Board (BoG) of Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi was held.

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

22 DECEMBER

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

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



1887 Mathematician Srinivasan Ramanujam was born.

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

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

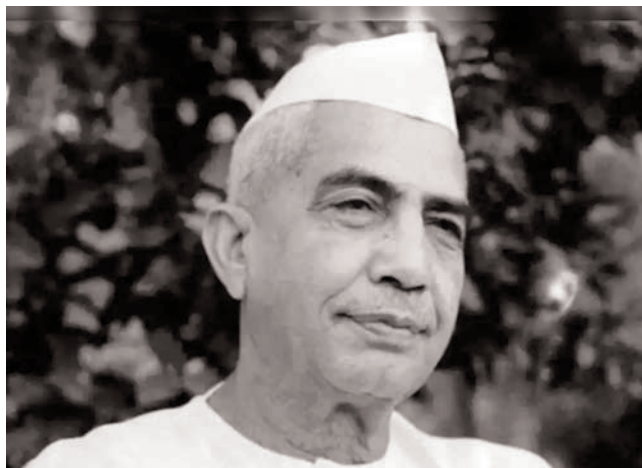
1843 Rabindranath Tagore's father Devendranath Tagore joined the Brahmo Samaj.



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

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

23 DECEMBER



1902 The birth of Chaudhary Charan Singh, the fifth Prime Minister of the country popular as the leader of the farmers. This day is celebrated as 'Farmer's Day' in the country.

1921 Visva-Bharati University was inaugurated.

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

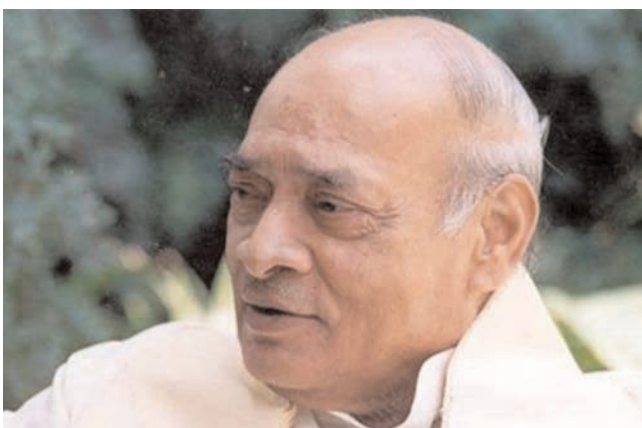
1968 Successful launch of country's first rocket 'Maneka'.

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

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

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

2004 9th Prime Minister of India Narasimha Rao died.



24 DECEMBER

1894 First medical conference organized in Calcutta.

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

2000 Vishwanathan Anand became world chess champion.

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

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

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

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

25 DECEMBER

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

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

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

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

1763 Maharaja Surajmal of Bharatpur was killed.

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

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

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

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

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



26 DECEMBER

2004 Two and a half million people died due to tsunami in the Indian Ocean. A 9.15 magnitude earthquake in the ocean caused a tsunami wave. People from many countries including India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia were killed.

1904 Inauguration of country's first cross country motorcar rally between Delhi and Mumbai.

1925 Establishment of Communist Party of India.

1978 Former Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi was released from prison. Morarji Desai's government arrested Indira Gandhi on 19 December.

1977 Naveen Patnaik, son of Odisha's prominent leader Biju Patnaik, founded the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

1666 Guru Gobind Singh was born.

9 MARCH 1951 -- 16 DECEMBER 2024

Ustad Zakir Hussain: Tabla loses its vibrant voice

ONE OF THE GREATEST GLOBAL AMBASSADORS OF INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC, THE MAESTRO TRANSFORMED THE MODEST INSTRUMENT INTO A ROBUST VOICE FOR UNIVERSAL PEACE AND BROTHERHOOD.

The tabla fell silent as Ustad Zakir Hussain (1951-2024), one of the greatest global ambassadors of Indian classical music, passed away on Monday (December 16, 2024) after a brief illness in San Francisco, California. A maestro who transformed the modest instrument into a robust voice for universal peace and humanity, Hussain's incredible speed, dexterity, and creativity mesmerised audiences across cultures.

Having grown up singing odes to Mother Saraswati, verses of the holy Quran, and hymns of the Bible as a daily ritual, India's syncretic soul echoed through Hussain's rhythmic art. With a flair for carving stories out of percussive sound, his conversational music buzzed with a spark of spontaneity. Natural flow defined his music and personality. The Padma Vibhushan would impress the purists, enthrall the seekers of fusion, and handhold the fans of Bollywood music into his creative space with equal felicity. At the peak of his creativity genius, he bagged three Grammys in one night this February.

Like his carefully designed free-flowing style, the versatile artist would execute complex rhythms, intricate patterns, and nuanced dynamics and then move on to items like the sound of traffic signal and deer's walk, without putting music into brackets. In tune with technology, over the years, he experimented with frequencies to highlight the subtle shades of the instrument to establish that tabla is not just a rhythmic instrument but also a melodic one. He emerged on the scene alongside eminent tabla artists like Anindo Chatterjee, Shafaat Ahmed Khan, Kumar Bose, and Swapan Chaudhuri, but Hussain's role in popularising tabla and providing it a global platform remains unparalleled.

Born to Ustad Alla Rakha, the eminent accompanist of Pandit Ravi Shankar, credited with taking tabla to foreign shores, tabla chose Hussain. He grew up in Mumbai in an environment where his father believed that every instrument has its spirit. Hussain befriended the tabla at the age of three and by the time he hit teenage, the instrument had become his muse for life and perhaps an extension of his personality. After watching him play, one couldn't see playing tabla as a chore in classical music.

His other two brothers, Taufiq and Fazal, are also noted percussionists but Hussain took his father's legacy to the next level by adding a touch of



showmanship and expanding the riches he inherited from the Punjab gharana. A keen learner and listener, Hussain was like a responsive satellite in orbit as an accompanist, shone like a star in his solos, and reserved the adventurous streak of a meteor for creating fusion music.

A child prodigy who gave his first professional performance at 12, Hussain was not regimented by his teacher-father. Rooted in Indian tradition, he was allowed to develop wings and explore new shores. His day would start with devotional music that would invoke Hindu deities followed by polishing Koranic verses in the neighbourhood madarsa before he would join the morning prayers at the Convent school. By 19, Hussain taught at the University of Washington before joining Ustad Ali

Akbar Khan's music college in San Francisco where he met his soulmate Antonia Minnecola.

Another fortuitous meeting in New York led to a lifelong bond with the iconic English guitarist John McLaughlin. Their friendship led to the formation of the groundbreaking Shakti band in 1973 which included violinist L. Shankar and percussionist T. H. Vinayakram who blended Hindustani and Carnatic classical music with Western jazz influences. This year, the band where Hussain joined hands with a new set of distinguished musicians won the Grammy for Best Global Music.

Hussain's desire to experiment led to rewarding collaborations with Irish singer Van Morrison, American percussionist Mickey Hart, Latin Jazz percussionist Giovanni Hidalgo, and

Jerry Garcia, the lead vocalist and guitarist of the Grateful Dead. He joined the Asian Underground music's electronic surge as well in the 1990s but retained the natural acoustic quality of tabla. He shared a special bond with Santoor maestro Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, flautist Hari Prasad Chaurasia, and sarangi stalwart Ustad Sultan Khan. Their jugalbandis would start as melodic banter and then turn meditative. In sync with the next generation, last year, he composed the Triple Concerto for Tabla, Sitar and Flute, with Niladri Kumar and Rakesh Chaurasia, and his collaboration with Carnatic musicians extended to violinist Kala Ramnath and veena exponent Jayanthi Kumaresh.

Fusion was never a novelty for Hussain as he had grown up listening to stories of how Amir Khusrau blended the Indian traditions of Dhrupad and Haveli sangeet with Sufi Qaul to create Khayal. As a young musician, he saw his father and colleagues contributing to Hindi film music that liberally drew from diverse musical streams. Hussain had his brush with cinema when he played tabla for Laxmikant Pyarelal's maiden venture Parasmani. Later he composed music for Ismail Merchant's films like Muhafiz, Aparna Sen's Mr And Mrs Iyer, and Rahul Dholakia's Parzania. The meaningful sound of his tabla lent layers to storytelling in international productions like Francis Ford Coppola's Apocalypse Now and recently Dev Patel's Monkey Man.

Hussain also had a flair for acting from a young age. It is said Dilip Kumar recommended his name to K Asif for the role of young Salim in Mughal-e-Azam but Ustad Alla Rakha vetoed it. Later, he performed in Ismail Merchant's Heat & Dust and Sai Paranjpye's Saaz. However, he became a household figure when he brought classical music to the mainstream by promoting a tea brand in a commercial where he played tabla at the iconic Taj Mahal. As an article in The Hindu described, "The combination of 'Wah Taj!' with the dashing young Hussain's curly locks flying about his face as his fingers flew across the surface of his tabla — not to mention that charming smile accompanied by the resonance of his playing — ensured brand immortality.

Fame didn't diminish his humility and age didn't wilt his curiosity. Music was an endless journey for Hussain. Every time someone would toss the word perfection, he would say, "I haven't played good enough to quit."

Source: The Hindu

A Tale of Heroism: The Martyrdom of the Sahibzadas

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE YOUNGER SAHIBZADAS IS OBSERVED AS VEER BAL DIVAS. ON 9TH JANUARY 2022, THE DAY OF THE PRAKASH PURAB OF SRI GURU GOBIND SINGH JI, THE PRIME MINISTER HAD ANNOUNCED THAT 26TH DECEMBER WOULD BE OBSERVED AS 'VEER BAL DIWAS', TO MARK THE MARTYRDOM OF THE YOUNGER SONS OF SRI GURU GOBIND SINGH - SAHIBZADAS BABA ZORAWAR SINGH JI AND BABA FATEH SINGH JI.

The martyrdom of the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the founder of Khalsa, is one of the most tragic and yet most glorious part of the proud community's history. The Sikhs have a long history of heroic struggle and sacrifice. The 5th Master of the Sikhs, Guru Arjan Dev Ji and the 9th Master of the Sikhs, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji made supreme sacrifices for humanity, at large. The 10th Master and the Founder of the Khalsa which means pure (that is how the Sikhs came to be known) made sacrifices that stood out in the realms of world history. The martyrdom of the four Sahibzadas, Guru Gobind Singh's sons, has to be seen in that glorious tradition that Sikhs take pride in and derive inspiration from.

The four young princes of genteel birth – The Char Sahibzade – is the term endearingly used for the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, all of whom died as martyrs while still in their tender age. Their names are reverently preserved in Sikh memory and are recalled every time the Sikh Ardas or prayer of supplication is recited at every religious ceremony in a congregation and privately twice a day (after the morning and evening prayer) by an individual. Sahibzada Ajit Singh, the eldest son of Guru Gobind Singh, was born to Mata Sundri at Paonta on 26 January 1687. The following year the Guru and his family returned to Anandpur. Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, the second son of Guru Gobind Singh, was born to Mata Jito-ji at Anandpur on 14 March 1691. From a very young age both brothers were taught the religious texts, philosophy and history alongside their training in swordsmanship, archery and horse riding. Soon they grew up into handsome young men, strong, intelligent and natural leaders of men.

In 1699 both Sahibzade Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, 12 years and 8 years of age respectively, received the rites of Khalsa initiation. Soon after the creation of Khalsa on 30 March 1699, Ajit Singh had his first test of skill. A Sikh Sangat coming from Pothohar was attacked and looted by Ranghars on the way, a short distance from Anandpur across the River Sutlej. Guru Gobind Singh sent Sahibzada Ajit Singh, then barely 12 years of age, at the head of about 100 Sikhs to punish the Ranghars and to recover the loot. The following year, 29 August 1700, when the hill Rajas, backed by Imperial troops, attacked Anandpur.



Ajit Singh was made responsible for the defense of Taragarh Fort which became the first target of attack. Ajit Singh, assisted by Bhai Ude Singh, a seasoned soldier, repulsed the attack. On 15 March 1701 a column of Sikh devotees coming

from Darap area (present Sialkot district) was waylaid by Gujjars and Ranghars. Sahibzada Ajit Singh led a successful expedition against them.

Instructed by his father, on 7 March 1703, he took out 100 horsemen to Bassi,

near Hoshiarpur and rescued a young Brahman bride forcibly taken away by the local Pathans. During the prolonged siege of Anandpur, it became necessary to leave the city under the pressure of pursuing enemy. Both the Sahibzade were experienced warriors, strong and fearless, displaying qualities of courage and steadfastness. On the night of 5 December 1705 Guru Gobind Singh gave each of his sons the command of a band of brave Sikhs to wade through the flooded Sarsa river on horseback and head towards the Fort of Chamkaur. Amidst the fierce fighting in the darkness of night and the hazardous long journey the Guru and the Sikhs, together with his family and both the elder Sahibzade in command of their bands, made their way to Chamkaur.

Further reduced in numbers by casualties at the hands of the enemy they reached Chamkaur by nightfall on 6 December 1705 and took up position in the Garhi – high walled fortified house. The enemy, with extra reinforcements from Malerkotla and Sirhind and from among local Ranghars and Gujjars, threw a tight ring around the fort of Chamkaur. An unequal but grim battle commenced with the dawn of 7 December 1705 – in the words of Guru Gobind Singh's Zafarnama – 'a mere forty defying a million'. The Sikhs, after they had exhausted the meager stock of ammunition and arrows, made sally in batches of five to engage the encircling enemy with sword and spear. Sahibzada Ajit Singh led one of the sallies and laid down his life fighting in the bloody battle, followed by his younger brother Sahibzada Jujhar Singh who led the next sally. Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, 18 and 14 years old respectively, who like the other brave Sikhs, fell fighting heroically. The valour displayed by the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh has been sympathetically and vividly narrated in the poems of a devout Muslim, Allahyar Khan Jogi.

Today Gurdwara Qatalgarh Sahib (Shahid Ganj) is the main shrine at Chamkaur. This marks the site where the most fierce hand-to-hand combat took place on 7 December 1705 between the Mughal army and a handful of brave Sikhs, including Sahibzade Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, and three of the original Panj Piare (Guru's Five Beloved ones). Unfortunately, during the crossing of the flooded river Sarsa, Mata Gujri and the two younger Sahibzade Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, aged 9

and 7 years respectively, together with their cook, Gangu, were separated from the Guru and the Sikhs. Seizing the opportunity of a reward Gangu spied on them and handed them over to the enemy. Both the young Sahibzade were executed on 12 December 1705 in Sirhind. Sahibzada Zorawar Singh was born on 17 November 1696 and Sahibzada Fateh Singh on 25 February 1699. After the tragic death of their mother Mata Jito-ji (5 Dec 1700) they were brought up under the care of their grandmother Mata Gujri Ji.

Both the princes were closely attached to their grandmother. Mata Gujri took charge of both the princes as the column moved out of Anandpur. As Guru Gobind Singh evacuated Anandpur on the night of 5 December 1705, he was pursued by the host. In front ran the river Sarsa, swollen with rain water. Under cover of a quick rearguard action fought on the river bank, the Guru, his brave Sikhs and his family succeeded in crossing the Sarsa. Unfortunately, in the commotion of confused cries in the dark, Mata Gujri and the two younger Sahibzade, along with their cook, Gangu, were separated from the Guru and his band. Not knowing where to go Gangu offered to shelter them at his house in village Kheri, now known as Saheri, near Morinda. The journey being hazardous and dark they reached Kheri the following night. Tired and hungry they were asked to rest in the attic. But Gangu proved deceitful. During the night Gangu stole Mata Gujri's saddlebag containing cash and valuables. In the hope of a reward from the government he spied on them. With the help of the village headman he betrayed them to Jani Khan and Mani Khan, the Ranghar officials of Morinda.

The latter took Mata Gujri and the two Sahibzade into custody and in the morning dispatched them to Sirhind where they were confined in the Cold Tower – Thanda Burj – of the Fort. On the morning of 9 December 1705 Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, aged 9 and 7 respectively, were summoned before the faujdar, Nawab Wazir Khan. Wazir Khan tried to lure the Sahibzade to embrace Islam with promises of riches and honors. But the brave and fearless sons of Guru Gobind Singh spurned the suggestion. He then threatened them with death but they remained undaunted. Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan, a high ranking officer and chief of Malerkotla, who was also present in the court, intervened for the innocent children to be spared their lives; to be given some more time to ponder over the suggestion to convert. As a result the two Sahibzade spent another two days of severe winter in their grandmother's lap in the Cold Tower. Still adamant as ever, on 11 December 1705 Nawab Wazir Khan ordered their death by bricking them alive. Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan pleaded against the death sentence on the grounds that the boys were too young to be given such a harsh penalty.

They could not, in any case, be held responsible for the actions of their father. As Wazir Khan began to waver at the just reproof of his peer,



GURDWARA GARHI SAHIB, SHRI CHAMKAUR SAHIB



Gurdwara Qatalgarh Sahib (Shahid Ganj) is the main shrine at Chamkaur Sahib.



Suchchanand put in a remark “The progeny of a serpent shall grow up as serpents, and should therefore be shown no mercy.” Wazir Khan was encouraged by these words and thereupon reiterated his order for the children to be bricked alive in a wall. By Divine Will, as the masonry around their tender bodies reached chest high, it crumbled. Wazir Khan's anger at this failure ordered the princes back to the Cold Tower for another night. The next day, 12 December 1705, the Sahibzade were once again offered the choice to convert to Islam or face death by execution. The brave Sahibzade chose the latter and were executed. The aged Mata Gujri, who had all along been kept in the Cold Tower, only a short distance away, breathed her last as the news of the execution reached her ears. After the death of Mata Gujri and the two Sahibzade, Seth Todar Mall, a wealthy merchant and an influential citizen of Sirhind, made arrangements to perform the last rites. But no one would give him a patch of land in the locality to be used as cremation ground. Then one Chandhari Atta, a local resident, agreed to sell him a small plot.

He stipulated that Todar Mall could take only as much land as he could cover with gold nuggets, mohran. The Seth produced the mohran and bought the piece of land he needed. After the cremation a Sikh, Jodh Singh, of village Attevali buried the ashes. Sirhind suffered a full fury of Sikh ire when Banda Singh Bahadur marched upon it with his daring host. Wazir Khan was killed. Diwan Suchchanand, who explicitly championed the penalty laid upon the young Sahibzade, was captured and killed. Sirhind and the Fort were razed to the ground. A memorial was erected marking the spot where the two princes were executed. In 1764 Maharaja Karam Singh of Patiala built the Gurdwara Fatehgarh on the site and ordered to search for and determine the exact spot where the three were cremated. At the spot, in 1843, the Gurdwara Joti Sarup was built. In 1888 Giani Thakar Singh started the annual Jor-Mela (fair) held during the last week in December to commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's mother, Mata Gujri Ji, and his two sons Sahibzadas Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh. A century later, in 1944, Maharaja Yadavinder Singh set up a committee for the improvement of Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib and Gurdwara Joti Sarup Sahib. Today Gurdwara Fatehgarh, with all the affiliated shrines, is administered directly by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

Sahibzada Ajit Singh Ji

Sahibzada Ajit Singh (1687-1705) was born to Mata Sunder Kaur and Guru Gobind Singh at Paonta Sahib. Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh are remembered as ‘Vade Sahibzada’ in Sikh history. Sahibzada Ajit Singh was very intelligent, gifted with Gurbani, and agile from his childhood. At an early age, he mastered horseback riding and gun shooting. On May 23, 1699, while commanding a group

of one hundred Singhs, he successfully raided the nearby village of Ranghars, who had once plundered the company of Pothohar Sikhs coming towards Anandpur Sahib. On March 15, 1700, he attacked the Gujars of Bajrur village, who once robbed the caravan of Singhs. On August 29, 1700, when the hill kings attacked the Taragarh fort, Sahibzada Ajit Singh bravely fought along with the Singhs. Similarly, in October 1700, again, the mountain forces attacked Nirmohgarh. Sahibzada took the lead, fought vigorously, and killed many hilly soldiers. Once, Dwarka Das Brahmin's wife was taken away by the ruler of Bassi Kalan. On March 7, 1703, along with Bhai Uday Singh, Sahibzada and a group of one hundred (100) Singhs rescued the wife of the Brahmin from Basi Kalan and handed her over to the Brahmin. Sahibzada Ajit Singh spent most of his life on the land of Anandpur Sahib. In May 1705, when Anandpur Sahib was besieged by a coalition force of Hill Chieftians and Mughal forces, he was also there. Both the elder Sahibzadas were with their father while leaving Anandpur Sahib. When forty Singhs fought a fierce battle in the fort of Chamkaur, Sahibzada Ajit Singh went to the battlefield with Singh spirit, showed his bravery, and killed many enemies. "Gur Sobha" testifies to this. Sahibzada Ajit Singh's total age at the time of martyrdom was 18 years, 11 months, and 19 days.

Sahibzada Jujhar Singh Ji

Sahibzada Jujhar Singh (1691-1705) was born to Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Jit Kaur at Anandpur Sahib. Like his elder brother, he too was very intelligent, Gurbani-oriented, and skilled in horseback riding and archery. When Guru Sahib left Anandpur Sahib, he was also a companion. During the war of Chamkaur, he demonstrated his unwavering bravery and skill in a face-to-face fight with enemy forces. Before achieving martyrdom, he fought fiercely and killed many soldiers of the Mughal forces. Such a great personality was Guru Gobind Singh ji that before the start of the battle, he himself introduced both the Sahibzadas to the tradition of martyrdom. The Battle of Chamkaur was fought between the Khalsas and the joint forces of Mughals and hill chieftains of Shivalik Hills. It started at noon and continued until sunset. Guru Sahib has also mentioned this battle in his historical letter in Farsi, 'Zafarnama' or "Epistle of Victory," addressed to Aurangzeb. The details of this battle are also found in 'Bhattvahi Multani Sindhi'. By evening, only five Singhs were left in this battle. A council of Punj Pyares was convened and appealed Gurmata to order the Guru Sahib to leave the fort (kachi garhi) with three Singhs. The next morning, December 8, 1705, the remaining two Singhs, Bhai Sant Singh and Bhai Sangat Singh achieved martyrdom fighting the Mughal forces. Thus, the Battle of Chamkaur, fought between 40 odd Singhs and ten lacs of coalition forces led by the Mughals, remained the most unparalleled battle ever fought.

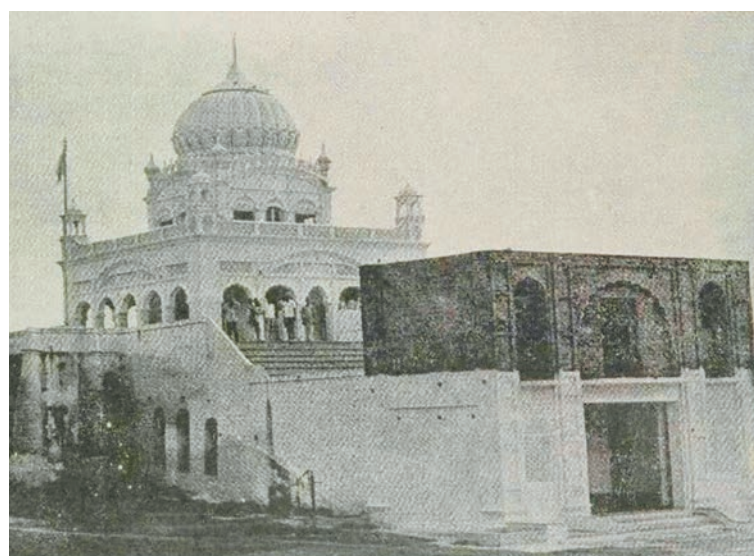
Sahibzada Zorawar Singh Ji



Sahibzada Zorawar Singh (1696-1705) was born at Anandpur Sahib to Mata Jit Kaur and Guru Gobind Singh. From an early age, like his elder brothers, he too had a compelling learning spirit. When Guru Sahib decided to leave Anandpur Sahib, both the younger Sahibzadas, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, were also travelling with them and were in the care of their grandmother, Mata Gujri ji. During the turbulence-dark night at the bank of the Sarsa River, they got separated from the main jatha, and on the way, they happened to meet their former cook servant, Gangu, who had been discharged from Guru Gobind Singh's household. Gangu took Mata Gujri and the younger Sahibzades to his village, Saheri (Kheri), near Morinda. He sheltered them in his house. In the night, when Mata Ji and Sahibzades fell asleep, Gangu searched their belongings and stole valuables. In the morning, when Mata ji raised the issue with Gangu, the greedy Gangu became angry and protested his innocence, who later got them arrested at the Kotwal of Morinda, and from there they were sent to the court of Subedar Wazir Khan of Sirhind.

Sahibzada Fateh Singh Ji

Sahibzada Fateh Singh (1699-1705) was born to Mata Jit Kaur and Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur Sahib. Fateh Singh was one year and ten months old at that time of the demise of his mother. So the upbringing of these two young heroes was approved under the care of their grandmother. At Sirhind, despite the chilly winter weather, they were kept as royal prisoners in an open, cold tower (Thanda Burj). From here, starts the mental and physical torture of the innocent sahibzadas. First, they were offered to convert to Islam, with promises. When they stood firm to their religious beliefs and flatly refused to convert to Islam, tactics of torture and threats were used on them. But both the Sahibzadas, aged 9 and 7, did not bow to



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



any threat to their lives. Finally, Subedar Wazir Khan, on the advice of Diwan Sucha Nand, and the Quazi passed the order of killing the innocent Sahibzadas by bricking them alive in a wall. It is said that during the court proceeding, the Nawab of Malerkotla, Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan, stood in protest against the gruesome order of the Subedar. On December 12, 1705, both the Sahibzadas were bricked alive in a wall, and when the walls came up on their shoulders, they were killed by cutting

their heads. Mata Gujri Ji was also tortured and killed in the cold tower by the subedar's soldiers. A merchant in Sirhind Diwan Todar Mall paid a heavy price in gold coins to purchase the land where Sahibzadas were cremated; it is considered to be the most valuable land in the history of the world.

At the site of cremation now stands a glorious Gurdwara, Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib, where thousands of devotees pay their obeisance to the youngest martyrs.

NORTH TO SHORE FEST: INVITES ARTISTS FOR 2025 COMPETITION

BY MABEL PAIS



Logo

Photo : Courtesy njpac.org

Local artists and organizations seeking COMMUNITY ARTS AWARDS can apply now by visiting NorthtoShore.com.

The 'Prudential presents North to Shore Festival' will return in June 2025 to commence the Garden State summer with another three-city (Newark, Asbury Park and Atlantic City) celebration of the arts, entertainment, and new ideas.

HISTORY

Conceived by Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy, the 'Prudential presents North to Shore Festival' aims to spotlight New Jersey's role as a destination for the arts and entertainment and an incubator of new ideas and fresh talent.

Launched in 2023, the festival is a unique combination of performances by artists beloved both internationally and in their hometowns. In its first two years, the festival brought in more than \$25 million for ticketed events and has drawn a total audience of over 500,000 to more than 650 shows in approximately 250 venues in Newark, Asbury Park and Atlantic City.

SCHEDULE

The 2025 festival will take place from June 9-29 and will be sponsored by Prudential Financial for the second year in a row. Details about the lineup and venues will be announced at an in-person press conference in the first quarter of 2025.



North to Shore (N2S) Architects: (left to right) - Asbury Park Mayor John Moor, Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, Governor Phil Murphy, Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small, First Lady Tammy Murphy, NJPAC President & CEO John Schreiber. -Photo : Courtesy njpac.org

PRODUCERS

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC - njpac.org) will again produce the festival, in partnership with a cohort of other live entertainment presenters and producing partners.

The festival will again collaborate with its local advisory groups in Atlantic City, Asbury Park and Newark to provide 'North to Shore Community Arts Awards' of up to \$10,000 each. The aim of the Community Arts Awards is to support New Jersey's creative economy by providing a global platform that amplifies the voices of under-recognized artists and arts organizations.

ARTISTS

Once again, both global headliners and artists who hail from cities along the festival route will take the stage in front of an audience drawn from across the region. 'North to Shore Community Arts Awards' will be given to artists, arts organizations, nonprofits, and small businesses to produce and present free festival events. Additionally, the festival will now include season-long community engagement events in Atlantic City. A complete list of free and ticketed festival

events will be shared at northtoshore.com in spring 2025.

PAST PERFORMERS

Free events featuring artists from Newark, Asbury Park and Atlantic City will be presented alongside the festival's headlining artists. During the festival's first two seasons, headliners included New Jersey pop diva Halsey, hip hop legends Eric B. & Rakim, classic rocker Santana, New Jersey native Jack Antonoff's The Bleachers, comedic powerhouse Kevin Hart, multi-platinum award-winning, singer/songwriter Prince Royce, four-time Grammy Award winner Gary Clark, Jr., and multiple Latin Grammy award winner Marisa Monte.

"What separates North to Shore from other festivals is the breadth of experiences it offers," said John Schreiber, President and CEO of NJPAC. "Whether you want to see the biggest names in entertainment, discover the next big star, or listen to leading innovative voices, this festival has something for you."

ELIGIBILITY

Awards will be granted to independent producers, small businesses, and nonprofit and faith-based organizations in each city to self-produce performing and visual arts events during the festival. Additionally, awards ranging from \$500 to \$2,500 will be available for independent artists to perform as part of the festival on community stages in each city. Events produced by recipients of the 'North to Shore Community Arts Awards,' which will be known as 'N2S Official Selections,' will be revealed at this year's in-person festival press conference.

APPLICATIONS

Local artists and organizations seeking Community Arts Awards can apply now by visiting northtoshore.com.

The 'Prudential North to Shore Festival' 2025 will build on past success. "Like our home state of New Jersey, the strength of this festival is rooted in its incredible diversity and spirit of innovation," said David Rodriguez, NJPAC's Executive Producer and Executive Vice President. "We're excited to take what we've learned the past two years and produce something even bolder and even more Jersey."

THE PRUDENTIAL PRESENTS NORTH TO SHORE FESTIVAL

The 'Prudential presents North to Shore Festival,' launched in 2023, features all the talent, diversity and creativity that New Jersey has to offer, delivering performances, screenings, parties and conversations in three of the state's most iconic cities.

In partnership with Atlantic City, Asbury Park, and Newark, the festival guarantees an over-the-top showcase of Jersey excellence, aligned with Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy's vision of a celebration worthy of the Garden State's long legacy of innovation in the arts. For the latest updates and new concert listings, visit northtoshore.com.

THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

NJPAC located in downtown Newark, New Jersey, is among the largest performing arts centers in the United States. It is the artistic, cultural, educational and civic center of New Jersey - where great performances and events enhance and transform lives every day. As New Jersey's anchor cultural institution, NJPAC brings diverse communities together, providing access to all and showcasing the State's and the world's best artists, while acting as a leading catalyst in the revitalization of its home city. Through its extensive Arts Education programs, NJPAC is shaping the next generation of artists and arts enthusiasts. NJPAC has attracted more than 11 million visitors (including more than two million children) since opening its doors in 1997, and nurtures meaningful and lasting relationships with each of its constituents. Visit njpac.org for more information.

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



N2S 2025 Awards Announcement, poster.

Photo : Courtesy njpac.org

'ALL IN: COMEDY ABOUT LOVE'.....

COMES TO BROADWAY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

BY MABEL PAIS



Performers Credit: www.thehudsonbroadway.com

'All In: Comedy About Love,' by playwright Simon Rich and director Alex Timbers began its Broadway previews at the Hudson Theatre (141 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036) on December 11 and will continue through February 16, 2025. Opening night is December 22. John Mulaney leads the cast.

The work comprises Simon Rich-penned stories about dating, heartbreak, and marriage, all adapted from short stories that were published in The New Yorker magazine, whose cartoonist Emily Flake has created illustrations for the production as well. The performances also feature live music from married duo Abigail and Shaun Bengson. The pair will perform songs live on stage from The Magnetic Fields (composed by Stephin Merritt), including songs from the album '69 Love Songs,' which according to Rich inspired the stories that serve as the play's script.

'ALL IN' stories are performed by a rotating cast of some of the funniest Broadway and comedy favorites that will change throughout the run. For the first 5 weeks, John Mulaney leads the cast and is joined by Fred Armisen, Renée Elise Goldsberry (12/11 - 12/30), Chloe Fineman (1/2 - 1/12), and Richard Kind. For the complete schedule of performers for each week, visit thehudsonbroadway.com.

PARTIAL LIST OF CREDITS

Director: Alex Timbers
Playwright: Simon Rich
Producers: Seaview and Lorne Michaels
Scenic Design: David Korins

Lighting Design: Jake DeGroot
Costume Design: Jennifer Moeller

SCHEDULE

December 18-22: Wednesday @7:30pm, Thursday @7:30pm, Friday @7:30pm, Saturday @2pm and 7:30pm, Sunday @7:30pm

Run Time: 90 minutes with no intermission

TICKETS & UPDATES

For updates and to purchase tickets for the show, visit thehudsonbroadway.com.

TODAYTIX LOTTERY

A limited number of \$45 tickets will be available for every performance throughout the run via a TodayTix lottery for the play.

For performances beginning the week of Monday, December 16, the lottery will open every Sunday at 12:00am for the following week's performances and will close for entries the day prior to the performance at 12:00pm. Entrants can enter for a chance to win up to two \$45 tickets. This lottery is available in the TodayTix app only, and those looking to enter may do so by downloading the app in the Apple or Android store.

NJ SYMPHONY WELCOMES APPLICATIONS FOR 2025 CONE INSTITUTE COMPETITION

BY MABEL PAIS

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

The New Jersey Symphony is now accepting applications for the 11th annual Edward T. Cone Composition Institute in partnership with American Composers Orchestra's EarShot program. This tuition-free Institute is an opportunity designed to promote contemporary orchestral music by enhancing the careers of four emerging composers.

Winning composers will have their music performed by the New Jersey Symphony and will participate in in-depth career development sessions with industry leaders. The Institute will take place July 14-19 in Princeton, NJ, and culminate in a New Jersey Symphony performance of the participants' works on Saturday, July 19 at 8 pm.

Composer Steven Mackey, a music professor and director of graduate studies in composition at Princeton University, is the institute director. Christopher Rountree, a conductor and composer who is deeply embedded in the new music scene, returns as the Institute's guest conductor.

Institute composers will hear their works in rehearsal and performance, participate in coaching sessions with Mackey and Rountree and receive musical feedback from New Jersey Symphony musicians. Career-development opportunities with industry leaders will provide the composers with insights into getting their music funded, published and performed.

ELIGIBILITY

The Institute is open to university composition students and composers in the early stages of their professional careers. The application form, composition requirements, program details and eligibility requirements are available at njsymphony.org/institute.



Former Musician-Competitors for Cone Institute

Credit: njsymphony.org

The New Jersey Symphony presents the Institute in collaboration with Princeton University Department of Music. The New Jersey Symphony Edward T. Cone Composition Institute grew out of bi-annual reading sessions the Symphony held with Princeton University graduate students, beginning in 2000, and celebrates its namesake, Edward T. Cone for his legacy as both a composer and a Princeton University professor.

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Composers will receive housing and meals in Princeton, and the New Jersey Symphony will reimburse participants up to \$250 towards travel costs.

Application deadline: February 16, 2025

2025 Cone Institute: July 14-19, 2025 in Princeton, NJ

For questions or more information, contact coneinstitute@njsymphony.org

EarShot

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

Christmas: Celebrating the anniversary of Jesus' birth



The middle of winter has long been a time of celebration around the world. Centuries before the arrival of the man called Jesus, early Europeans celebrated light and birth in the darkest days of winter. Many peoples rejoiced during the winter solstice, when the worst of the winter was behind them and they could look forward to longer days and extended hours of sunlight.

In Scandinavia, the Norse celebrated Yule from December 21, the winter solstice, through January. In recognition of the return of the sun, fathers and sons would bring home large logs, which they would set on fire.

The people would feast until the log burned out, which could take as many as 12 days. The Norse believed that each spark from the fire represented a new pig or calf that would be born during the coming year.

The end of December was a perfect time for celebration in most areas of Europe. At that time of year, most cattle were slaughtered so they would not have to be fed during the winter. For many, it was the only time of year when they had a supply of fresh meat. In addition, most wine and beer made during the year was finally fermented and ready for drinking.

In Germany, people honored the pagan god Oden during the mid-winter holiday. Germans were terrified of Oden, as they believed he made nocturnal flights through the sky to observe his people, and then decide who would prosper or perish. Because of his presence, many people chose to stay inside.

Saturnalia and Christmas

In Rome, where winters were not as harsh as those in the far north, Saturnalia—a holiday in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture—was celebrated. Beginning in the week leading up to the winter solstice and continuing for a full month, Saturnalia was a hedonistic time, when food and drink were plentiful and the normal Roman social order was turned upside



down. For a month, enslaved people were given temporary freedom and treated as equals. Business and schools were closed so that everyone could participate in the holiday's festivities.

Also around the time of the winter solstice, Romans observed Juvenalia, a feast honoring the children of Rome. In addition, members of the upper classes often celebrated the birthday of Mithra, the god of the unconquerable sun, on December 25. It was believed that Mithra, an infant god, was born of a rock. For some Romans, Mithra's birthday was the most sacred day of the year.

Is Christmas Really the Day Jesus Was Born?

In the early years of Christianity, Easter was the main holiday; the birth of Jesus was not celebrated. In the fourth century, church officials decided to institute the birth of Jesus as a holiday. Unfortunately, the Bible does not mention date for his birth (a fact Puritans later

Christmas is celebrated on December 25 and is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. For two millennia, people around the world have been observing it with traditions and practices that are both religious and secular in nature. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a spiritual leader whose teachings form the basis of their religion. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. December 25—Christmas Day—has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870.

How Did Christmas Start?



pointed out in order to deny the legitimacy of the celebration).

Although some evidence suggests that Jesus' birth may have occurred in the spring (why would shepherds be herding in the middle of winter?), Pope Julius I chose December 25. It is commonly believed that the church chose this date in an effort to adopt and absorb the traditions of the pagan Saturnalia festival. First called the Feast of the Nativity, the custom spread to Egypt by 432 and to England by the end of the sixth century.

By holding Christmas at the same time as traditional winter solstice festivals, church leaders increased the chances that Christmas would be popularly embraced, but gave up the ability to dictate how it was celebrated. By the Middle Ages, Christianity had, for the most part, replaced pagan religion.

On Christmas, believers attended church, then celebrated raucously in a drunken, carnival-like atmosphere similar to today's Mardi Gras. Each year, a beggar or student would be crowned the "lord of misrule" and eager celebrants played the part of his subjects. The poor would go to the houses of the rich and demand their best food and drink. If owners failed to comply, their visitors would most likely terrorize them with mischief. Christmas became the time of year when the upper classes could repay their real or imagined "debt" to society by entertaining less fortunate citizens.

When Christmas Was Cancelled

In the early 17th century, a wave of religious reform changed the way Christmas was celebrated in Europe. When Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan forces took over England in 1645, they vowed to rid England of decadence and, as part of their effort, cancelled Christmas. By popular demand, Charles II was restored to the throne and, with him, came the return of the popular holiday.

The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs than Cromwell. As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston. Anyone exhibiting the Christmas spirit was fined five shillings. By contrast, in the Jamestown settlement, Captain John Smith reported that Christmas was enjoyed by all and passed without incident.

After the American Revolution, English customs fell out of favor, including Christmas. In fact, Christmas wasn't declared a federal holiday until June 26, 1870.

Washington Irving Reinvents Christmas in America

It wasn't until the 19th century that Americans began to embrace Christmas. Americans re-invented Christmas, and changed it from a raucous carnival holiday into a family-centered day of peace and nostalgia. But what about the 1800s piqued American interest in the holiday?

The early 19th century was a period of class conflict and turmoil. During this time, unemployment was high and gang rioting by the disenfranchised classes often occurred during the Christmas season. In 1828, the New York city council instituted the city's first police force in response to a Christmas riot. This catalyzed certain members of the upper classes to begin to change the way Christmas was celebrated in America.

In 1819, best-selling author Washington Irving wrote *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, gent.*, a series of stories about the celebration of Christmas in an English manor house. The sketches feature a squire who invited the peasants into his home for the holiday. In contrast to the problems faced in American society, the two groups mingled effortlessly. In Irving's mind, Christmas should be a peaceful, warm-hearted holiday bringing groups together across lines of wealth or social status. Irving's fictitious celebrants enjoyed "ancient customs," including the crowning of a Lord of Misrule. Irving's book, however, was not based on any holiday celebration he had attended—in fact, many historians say that Irving's account actually "invented"



tradition by implying that it described the true customs of the season.

'A Christmas Carol'

Also around this time, English author Charles Dickens created the classic holiday tale, *A Christmas Carol*. The story's message—the importance of charity and good will towards all humankind—struck a powerful chord in the United States and England and showed members of Victorian society the benefits of celebrating the holiday.

The family was also becoming less disciplined and more sensitive to the emotional needs of children during the early 1800s. Christmas provided families with a day when they could lavish attention and gifts on their children without appearing to "spoil" them.

As Americans began to embrace Christmas as a perfect family holiday, old customs were unearthed. People looked toward recent immigrants and Catholic and Episcopalian churches to see how the day should be celebrated. In the next 100 years, Americans built a Christmas tradition all their own that included pieces of many other customs, including decorating trees, sending holiday cards and gift-giving.

Although most families quickly bought into the idea that they were celebrating Christmas how it had been done for centuries, Americans had really re-invented a holiday to fill the cultural needs of a growing nation.

Who Invented Santa Claus?

The legend of Santa Claus can be traced back to a monk named St. Nicholas who was born in Turkey around A. D. 280. St. Nicholas gave away all of his inherited wealth and traveled the countryside helping the poor and sick, becoming known as the protector of children and sailors.

St. Nicholas first entered American popular culture in the late 18th century in New York, when Dutch families gathered to honor the anniversary of the death of "Sint Nikolaas" (Dutch for Saint Nicholas), or "Sinter Klaas" for short. "Santa Claus" draws his name from this abbreviation.

In 1822, Episcopal minister Clement Clarke Moore wrote a Christmas poem called "An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas," more popularly known today by its first line: "'Twas The Night Before Christmas." The poem depicted Santa Claus as a jolly man who flies from home to home on a sled driven by reindeer to deliver toys.

The iconic version of Santa Claus as a jolly man in red with a white beard and a sack of toys was



immortalized in 1881, when political cartoonist Thomas Nast drew on Moore's poem to create the image of Old Saint Nick we know today.

Christmas Facts

- Each year, 25-30 million real Christmas trees are sold in the United States alone. There are about 15,000 Christmas tree farms in the United States, and trees usually grow for between four and 15 years before they are sold.
- In the Middle Ages, Christmas celebrations were rowdy and raucous—a lot like today's Mardi Gras parties.
- When Christmas was cancelled: From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was outlawed in Boston, and law-breakers were fined five shillings.
- Christmas was declared a federal holiday in the United States on June 26, 1870.
- The first eggnog made in the United States was consumed in Captain John Smith's 1607 Jamestown settlement.
- Poinsettia plants are named after Joel R. Poinsett, an American minister to Mexico, who brought the red-and-green plant from Mexico to America in 1828.
- The Salvation Army has been sending Santa Claus-clad donation collectors into the streets since the 1890s.
- Rudolph, "the most famous reindeer of all," was the product of Robert L. May's imagination in 1939. The copywriter wrote a poem about the reindeer to help lure customers into the Montgomery Ward department store.

Hanukkah: The Jewish festival

Hanukkah, Jewish festival that begins on Kislev 25 (usually in December, according to the Gregorian calendar) and is celebrated for eight days. Hanukkah reaffirms the ideals of Judaism and commemorates in particular the rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem by the lighting of candles on each day of the festival. Although not mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, Hanukkah came to be widely celebrated and remains one of the most popular Jewish religious observances.

Origin and history

Hanukkah commemorates the Maccabean (Hasmonean) victories over the forces of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175–164 BCE) and the rededication of the Temple on Kislev 25, 164 BCE. Led by Mattathias and his son Judas Maccabeus (died c. 161 BCE), the Maccabees were the first Jews who fought to defend their religious beliefs rather than their lives. According to I Maccabees, a text of the Apocrypha (writings excluded from the Jewish canon but included in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Old Testament canons), Antiochus had invaded Judaea, tried to Hellenize the Jews, and desecrated the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Following the Jewish victory in a three-year struggle against Antiochus, Judas ordered the cleansing and restoration of the Temple. After it was purified, a new altar was installed and dedicated on Kislev 25. Judas then proclaimed that the dedication of the restored Temple should be celebrated every year for eight days beginning on that date. In II Maccabees the celebration is compared to the festival of Sukkoth (the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths), which the Jews were unable to celebrate because of the invasion of Antiochus. Hanukkah, therefore, emerged as a celebration of the dedication, as the word itself suggests.

Although the traditional practice of lighting candles at Hanukkah was not established in the books of the Maccabees, the custom most likely started relatively early. The practice is enshrined in the Talmud (Shabbat 21b), which describes the miracle of the oil in the Temple. According to the Talmud, when Judas Maccabeus entered the Temple, he found only a small jar of oil that had not been defiled by Antiochus. The jar contained only enough oil to burn for one day, but miraculously the oil burned for eight days until new consecrated oil could be found, establishing the precedent that the festival should last eight days. The early date for this story or at least the practice of lighting eight candles is confirmed by the debate of the 1st-century-CE scholars Hillel and Shammai. Hillel and his school taught that one candle should be lit on the first night of Hanukkah and one more each night of the festival. Shammai held that all eight candles should be lit the first night, with the



number decreasing by one each night thereafter.

Traditions

The celebration of Hanukkah includes a variety of religious and nonreligious customs. Like Purim, Hanukkah is a joyous festival that lacks the work restrictions characteristic of the major festivals of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Menorah

The most important of all Hanukkah

traditions is the lighting of the menorah each evening. Also known as the Hanukkah lamp, the menorah recalls the Temple lampstand and is a simple or elaborate candelabra with eight branches plus a holder for the shamash (“servant”) candle that is used to light the other eight candles. One candle is lit on the first evening, and an additional candle is lit on each subsequent evening until eight candles are burning on the last evening. Olive oil was traditionally used for lighting the menorah, but it was replaced by candles,

which are inserted in the menorah incrementally each night of the festival from right to left but are lit from left to right. A blessing is also offered while the candles are lit each night. The menorah was originally kindled outside the home, but it was brought inside in ancient times to guard against offending neighbours.

Liturgy and prayers

The Hanukkah observance is also characterized by the daily reading of Scripture, recitation of some of the Psalms, almsgiving, and singing of a special hymn. The liturgy includes Hallel, public readings from the Torah, and the ?al ha-nissim (“for the miracles”) prayer. The Scroll of Antiochus, an early medieval account of Hanukkah, is read in some synagogues and homes. Along with the daily prayers, thanks are offered to God for delivering the strong into the hands of the weak and the evil into the hands of the good. The word Hanukkah in Hebrew also means “education,” and rabbis and Jewish educators try to instill in their congregants and students the notion that the holiday celebrates Jewish strengths, perseverance, and continuity.

Nonreligious traditions

There are also a number of nonreligious customs associated with Hanukkah, including festive meals, songs, games, and gifts to children. Potato pancakes (latkes), doughnuts (sufganiyot), and other treats fried in oil, which recall the miracle of the oil, are popular. Children receive presents and gifts of money (Hanukkah gelt), which is sometimes distributed in the form of chocolate coins wrapped in gold foil. Card playing is common, and children play a game with a four-sided top called a dreidel (Hebrew sevivon). On each side of the top is a Hebrew letter, which forms the initials of the words in the phrase nes gadol haya sham, meaning “a great miracle happened there.” In modern Israel the letters of the dreidel were changed to reflect the translation “a great miracle happened here.” In countries where Christmas rituals are widespread, some echoes of those rituals appear in Hanukkah celebrations. Some families, for example, exchange gifts or decorate their homes. In contemporary Israel, Hanukkah is a national holiday, and students present plays, sing holiday songs, and have parties. Schools are closed, and menorahs are displayed atop such prominent buildings as the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. A highlight of the eight-day festival is an annual relay from Modi’in to Jerusalem. Runners carry burning torches through the streets, beginning in Modi’in. The runners continue until the final torchbearer arrives at the Western Wall, which is the last remnant of the Temple. The torchbearer hands the torch to the chief rabbi, who uses it to light the first candle of a giant menorah.



Taapsee begins shoot for Gandhari: Let the war begin

Actor Taapsee Pannu began shooting for her next film, Gandhari. Touted to be an action-thriller, Gandhari is directed by Devashish Makhija and produced by Kanika Dhillon. Taapsee shared pictures from the set and wrote a lengthy caption.

Sharing images from her first day on set, Taapsee wrote, "Dear God, grant my request so that I may never deviate from doing good deeds. That, I shall have no fear of the enemy when I go into battle and with determination I will be victorious (sic)."

She added, "That, I may teach my mind to only sing your praises. And when the time comes, I should die fighting heroically on the field of battle. Let the war begin! #Gandhari (sic)."

In the pictures, Taapsee's face remains hidden as she poses with her back to the camera. Dressed in attire reminiscent of a village woman, she is seen posing alongside Kanika and Devashish.

Gandhari marks Taapsee's reunion with producer Kanika Dhillon following the success of their Haseen Dillruba franchise. They had also collaborated for the 2018 film Manmarziyaan, co-starring Abhishek Bachchan.

Gandhari is set to release in theatres in 2025.

Shahid Kapoor, Kriti Sanon to reunite for the 2nd time in Homi Adajania's Cocktail 2

A sequel to the 2012 Homi Adajania film Cocktail is reportedly underway. A Pinkvilla report states that the sequel, which will be helmed by Homi again, will see Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon reunite again after their Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya.

The publication quoted sources stating that Dinesh Vijan will produce the sequel to the hit film. Much like the first film, it will be a love triangle, with the hunt on for another female lead. Rashmika Mandanna's name has also been attached to the project, according to some recent reports.

"After the success of Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya, Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon are reuniting on Cocktail 2. The duo loved the script and are excited to venture into the world of this romantic comedy," they quoted a source as saying.

When Cocktail was released in 2012, the film became a game changer for Deepika, skyrocketing her career. The film was successful when it was released, with the story penned by Imtiaz Ali. It told the story of a love triangle between a playboy, a photographer and a conservative girl. The rom-com's sequel will also see Luv reportedly be involved in the process. The casting for the film is reportedly underway and will go on floors in May 2025.

Shahid, last seen in TBMAUJ, is shooting for Rosshan Andrrrews' Deva with Pooja Hegde. He has also reportedly said yes to films directed by Vishal Bharadwaj. After TBMAUJ, Kriti starred in Crew and the Netflix film Do Patti. Kriti has yet to announce her upcoming projects but she recently hinted a potential collaboration with sister Nupur Sanon.

Source: HT



Ananya Panday calls Deepika Padukone her inspiration



Ananya Panday recently opened up during an event on her experience of working with Deepika Padukone on Gehraiyaan and showered praises on her co-star. She revealed that it was Deepika who inspired her to stand up for herself.

Looking back on their time working on the Shakun Batra relationship drama, Ananya shared that Deepika showed her the way on how to speak her mind in a more confident and assured, but polite way.

"When I started out in the industry, I didn't really know that one could really stand up and reinforce what they want. I used to simply do what I was asked to do. Deepika is a woman who stands up for every person on the set, in a very polite way," she said.

The CTRL actress further added, "Whenever a

girl speaks up she is called bossy, or difficult to work with, but she used to convey her needs in a very polite and empathetic way, which made me realise that there is a way in which you can do this."

Ananya regarded the experience of working with Deepika as an empowering one, which instilled the value of choosing more consciously in her. "Deepika inspired me as a younger female actress to go on further to make a change. Now I do speak up when I am not comfortable doing certain things or saying certain things, because I don't want a young girl to be spoken to in a certain manner because I am being shown like that on-screen," she remarked.

On the work front, Ananya Panday's recent OTT successes include Call Me Bae, an eight-episode comedy-drama which released on Amazon Prime Video in September, and the Netflix original, CTRL, a sci-fi thriller directed by Vikramaditya Motwane.



Mufasa The Lion King: Visually stunning but a forgettable prequel

Disney's *Mufasa: The Lion King* takes us back to the Pride Lands to explore the origin story of the mighty lion king, Mufasa. The prequel to *The Lion King* [1994] dives into the humble beginnings of Simba's father, tracing his journey from an orphaned cub - an outsider - to his rise as the beloved leader of Pride Rock.

Mufasa: The Lion King opens with Rafiki (John Kani) recounting the story of Mufasa (voiced by Aaron Pierre) to Kiara [Simba's daughter], Timon and Pumbaa, sharing how the once-ordinary cub overcame his vulnerabilities and status as an outsider to become a king. During a flood, Mufasa gets separated from his parents to find himself in new surroundings where he meets Taka [Kelvin Harrison Jr], who eventually becomes Scar. The bond between young Mufasa and Taka starts as brotherly love but spirals into rivalry during their escapade to Milele. Despite meeting familiar characters, the lacklustre screenplay by Jeff Nathanson undercuts the story's emotional depth, leaving potentially poignant moments feeling hollow. On the brighter side, the visuals are fantastic. Disney once again delivers photo-realistic animation that brings the Pride Lands to life with stunning detail.

Angelina Jolie again 'losing one of her' children as her battle with Brad Pitt continues

Angelina Jolie is "quickly losing her kids one by one" as her 18-year-old daughter, Shiloh Nouvel Jolie, prepares to leave home and pursue dance.

RadarOnline cited that the actress finds it difficult to cope with the prospect of her most "private" children moving out, as her ongoing legal disputes with ex-husband Brad Pitt over a French winery continue to add stress to her life.

"It's all happening so quickly," a source close to the family told RadarOnline. "One by one, her kids are moving out, and no matter how natural it is in the cycle of life, it's just very hard for Angelina to come to terms with."

Shiloh intends to live with friends while pursuing her passion for dance. "It's especially nerve-racking for Ange to send Shiloh into the world because she wants to pursue dance, and it's not a traditional career path. She wants to live with friends while she studies dance, which means she won't be on a university campus with all the protections that come with living in a dorm," they explained.

"She's proud of Shiloh and would never hold her back from her dreams," the source continued. "Still, it won't be easy for her to let go."

Having moved out at just 16, the *Maleficent* star "sees a lot of herself in Shiloh, who can be quite a free spirit, so the idea of her being out on her own in the world is pretty terrifying. She just can't help but worry about what sort of trouble she could get into," the insider shared.



Shiloh has also legally dropped her father's last name, 'Pitt' earlier this year. This decision reportedly left Pitt feeling deeply hurt. "They used to have a good relationship, but that's in the past, and it breaks his heart," a source told Page Six earlier. "Brad feels like

Angelina has turned his kids against him. He feels like Angelina knows exactly what she's doing."

Jolie and Pitt, who officially divorced in 2019, share six children: Maddox, 23; Pax, 21; Zahara, 19; Shiloh, 18; and twins Knox and Vivienne, 16.

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck's divorce on hold



Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck's highly-publicised split is far from over. After almost 6 months of their Will they? Won't they? divorce drama and promises to part amicably, tensions are running high behind the scenes as they struggle to finalise details.

The situation has become so contentious that Affleck has reportedly been spending more time with his ex-wife, Jennifer Garner while avoiding his ex at all costs. Their complicated co-parenting scene only adds to the drama, as they both seek a smooth transition for their blended families.

The Jenny From the Block singer filed for divorce without a lawyer on the couple's second wedding anniversary. Since then, the two have largely been spending time apart and rarely been seen together, despite their attempts to present a friendly split. A source told In Touch that the situation has grown "increasingly tense and argumentative," with Affleck choosing to spend more time with his ex-wife rather than addressing the ongoing divorce.

Lopez "feels sidelined and frustrated," believing

Affleck should meet her demands, but he remains resolute believing he has been fair and that Lopez is deliberately prolonging the process.

"It's been six months since she filed and nothing has been resolved, it doesn't seem like they're anywhere close to finalising the divorce," the source added. The insider continued, "They both said they wanted to do it amicably and have even talked a good game about wanting to consciously uncouple, but that plan seems to be out the window because they can't agree on how to divide things up, which of course is affecting things."

The divorce argument makes sense since the couple entered their marriage on uneven footing, with Lopez's \$400 million net worth greatly outweighing Affleck's \$150 million, and no prenup in place. "She's worth more than twice as much as him so it's especially hard for him not to see this as her being vindictive and greedy," the source added. "They both say they're desperate to avoid more drama, but the longer this drags on, the worse it's going to get."

'DECISION TO INVADE UKRAINE SHOULD HAVE BEEN MADE EARLIER': PUTIN AT ANNUAL NEWS CONFERENCE

20 DEC 2024

MOSCOW (TIP): President Vladimir Putin boasted that his military operation in Ukraine has strengthened Russia and denied that the ouster of key ally Bashar Assad in Syria had hurt Moscow's prestige, as he took questions at his annual news conference and call-in show on Dec 19.

He used the tightly choreographed event, which lasted about 4 and a half hours, to reinforce his authority and demonstrate a sweeping command of everything from consumer prices to military hardware.

Sending troops into Ukraine in 2022 has boosted Russia's military and economic power, Putin said, adding that if he could do it over, "such a decision should have been made earlier" and Russia could have "prepared for it in advance and more thoroughly." "Russia has become much stronger over the past two or three years because it has become a truly sovereign country," he said. "We are standing firm in terms of economy, we are strengthening our defense potential and our military capability now is the strongest in the world."

Putin, who has held power for nearly a quarter-century and began another six-year term earlier this year, said the military was "advancing toward achieving our goals" in what he calls the special military operation in Ukraine.

In response to a question about a new hypersonic ballistic missile that Russia used for the first time last month to strike Ukraine, Putin scoffed at claims by some Western experts that it could be intercepted by NATO's air defences.

He mockingly challenged Ukraine's allies to a "high-tech duel," suggesting that Moscow could give advance notice of a strike on Kyiv with the Oreshnik missile and see if the West could protect the city. "Let them select a target, possibly in Kyiv, put their air defense assets there and we shall strike it with the Oreshnik," he said with a dry smile. "Let's see what happens." Speaking on a visit to Brussels, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy responded to Putin's comment by asking, "Do you think it's a sane person?"

Russia is making steady, if slow, advances in Ukraine, but has also suffered embarrassing setbacks. On Tuesday, Lt. Gen Igor Kirillov was killed by a bomb planted outside his apartment building in Moscow — a brazen assassination claimed by Ukraine that brought the conflict once again to the streets of the Russian capital. Putin described Kirillov's killing as a "major blunder" by Russia's security agencies, noting they should learn from it and improve their efficiency. (AP)

At least two dead, 60 injured after car drives into German Christmas market, Saudi man arrested

21 DEC 2024

MAGDEBURG (TIP): A car plowed into a busy outdoor Christmas market in the eastern German city of Magdeburg on December 20, killing at least two people and injuring at least 60 others in what authorities called a deliberate attack.

The driver was arrested at the scene shortly after the car barreled into the market at around 7 p.m., when it was teeming with holiday shoppers looking forward to the weekend.

Verified bystander footage distributed by the German news agency dpa showed the suspect's arrest on a walkway in the middle of the road. A nearby police officer pointing a handgun at the man shouted at him as he lay prone. Other officers soon arrived to take the man into custody.

The two people confirmed dead were an adult and a toddler, but officials said additional deaths couldn't be ruled out because 15 people had been seriously injured.

The violence shocked the city, bringing its mayor to the verge of tears and marring a festive event that's part of a centuries-old German tradition. It also prompted several other German towns to cancel their weekend Christmas markets as a precaution and out of solidarity with Magdeburg's loss.

The suspect is a 50-year-old Saudi doctor who moved to Germany in 2006,



Tamara Zieschang, the interior minister for the state of Saxony-Anhalt, said at a news conference. He has been practicing medicine in Bernburg, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Magdeburg, she said.

"As things stand, he is a lone perpetrator, so that as far as we know there is no further danger to the city," Saxony-Anhalt's governor, Reiner Haseloff, told reporters. "Every human life that has fallen victim to this attack is a terrible tragedy and one human life too many."

The violence occurred in Magdeburg, a city of about 240,000 people west of Berlin that serves as Saxony-Anhalt's capital. Friday's attack came eight years after an Islamic extremist drove a truck into crowded Christmas market in Berlin, killing 13 people and injuring many others. The attacker was killed days later in a shootout in Italy.

Christmas markets are a huge part of German culture as an annual holiday tradition cherished since the Middle Ages and successfully exported to much of the Western world. (AP)

China has improved military infrastructure and training along LAC

19 DEC 2024

NEW DELHI (TIP): The US Department of Defence, in its latest report, said that China has improved its training and infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control aimed at long-term sustenance of the troops along the de-facto borders.

Mentioning the People's Liberation Army, the Report says that the PLAA continued to improve its methods and standards of training combined arms units. Training encompassed individual to collective soldier events integrating reconnaissance, infantry, artillery, armour, engineers, and signal units.

In addition to continued PLAA deployments to the Indian border and Burma, the PLAA conducted multiple large-scale exercises in training areas throughout the country.

The 2024 report to the US Congress on the military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China (PRC) covers security and military developments involving the PRC through early 2024.

The report, to elaborate its point about the Chinese actions along the LAC linking it with the military infrastructure spruce-up, gives the background of China's tensions with India along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). LAC - a disputed border between the PRC's western provinces and India's northern provinces—sparked a standoff between PRC and Indian forces in mid-May 2020, which escalated on June 15, 2020, after a skirmish ensued in the Galwan Valley between the Indian Army and PLA forces that ended with 20 Indian soldiers and four PRC soldiers dead.

The two sides agreed to tactical pull-backs from most of the contested areas in early 2021 but standoffs continued at two locations in Ladakh on the Western Sector of the LAC. In late 2022, PRC and Indian forces engaged in an unarmed clash near Tawang along the Eastern Sector of the LAC separating Tibet and the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. This was the first such clash since the 2020 skirmish although local commanders quickly defused the clash and the overall standoff

did not substantively escalate.

"These engagements coincide with a significant and sustained escalation in military infrastructure to support a long-term presence on the LAC," says the DoD. In late 2023, India hosted the 20th round of commander-level meetings with the PLA. Both sides agreed to maintain communication and dialogue through military and diplomatic channels. In 2020, PLA Special Operations Forces (SOF) from the Tibet Military Region were deployed to the border with India following clashes between PRC and Indian forces along the LAC, the report adds.

Currently, there has been disengagement from all standoff points in Eastern Ladakh with the latest being those at the Depsang and Demchok in October. The PRC has defined its core interests, says the report, as issues so central to its national rejuvenation that the official position on them is not subject to negotiation or compromise and this also includes the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

(New India Express)

'People in Gaza are struggling to survive apocalyptic conditions': MSF



19 DEC 2024

RAFAH (TIP): A new report by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) on December 19 noted that "repeated Israeli military attacks on Palestinian civilians over the last 14 months, the dismantling of the health care system and other essential infrastructure, the suffocating siege, and the systematic denial of humanitarian assistance are destroying the conditions of life in Gaza, Palestine."

"People in Gaza are struggling to survive apocalyptic conditions, but

nowhere is safe, no one is spared, and there is no exit from this shattered enclave," said Christopher Lockyear, MSF secretary general, who visited Gaza earlier this year.

The MSF reiterated its call for an immediate and sustained ceasefire.

The report, "Gaza: Life in a death trap," urgently called on all parties, once again, for an immediate ceasefire to save lives and enable the flow of humanitarian aid. Israel must stop its targeted and indiscriminate attacks

against civilians, and its allies must act without delay to protect the lives of Palestinians and uphold the rules of war.

"The total destruction of Palestinian life in Gaza must stop," MSF said.

It also called for immediate and safe access to northern Gaza, to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid and medical supplies to hospitals.

"While MSF continues to provide lifesaving care in central and southern Gaza, we call on Israel to end its siege on the territory and open vital land borders, including the Rafah crossing, to enable a massive scale-up of humanitarian and medical aid," the report noted.

The Human Rights Watch in a 179-page report on Thursday revealed that Israeli authorities have intentionally deprived Palestinians in Gaza of access to safe water for drinking and sanitation needed for basic human survival.

"Water is essential for human life, yet for over a year the Israeli government has deliberately denied Palestinians in Gaza the bare minimum they need to survive," said Tirana Hassan, executive director at Human Rights Watch (HRW) as the organisation described this as "nothing short of crime against humanity of extermination, and an act of genocide," HRW noted. (AP)



SEVERAL CHILDREN KILLED IN STAMPEDE AT A HOLIDAY FAIR EVENT IN NIGERIA, STATE GOVERNOR SAYS

18 DEC 2024

ABUJA (TIP): Several children have died during a stampede on December 18 at a holiday funfair in southwestern Nigeria, authorities said.

The incident happened at the Islamic High School in Basorun, Oyo State, near the economic hub of Lagos. Security forces attended the scene and arrested the event organizers, state governor Seyi Makinde said in a statement.

"Earlier today, an incident occurred in Islamic High School Basorun, the venue of an event organised for families. Sadly, a stampede at the venue has led to multiple loss of lives and injuries. This is a very sad day," Makinde said.

"We sympathise with the parents whose joy has suddenly been turned to mourning due to these deaths," he added.

Nigeria's national emergency services said it has deployed a team to help provide assistance to the victims.

Children injured at the venue were taken to local hospitals where parents were asked to check for missing persons.

Video footage that appeared to be from the scene showed a large crowd of mostly children looking on as some children were being carried away from an open field.

Local media identified the event organizers as the Women In Need Of Guidance and Support Foundation, which held a similar event for children last year.

The group was preparing to host up to 5,000 young people at this year's event, the Oyo-based Agidigbo FM radio station reported on Tuesday, citing the organizers who had featured on its program. Children "will win exciting prizes like scholarships and other bountiful gifts," they said.

An investigation has been opened into the causes of the stampede, Makinde said, adding "anyone directly or remotely involved in this disaster will be held accountable." (AP)

Gisèle Pelicot's ex-husband, 50 others found guilty of rapes in France, get jail terms of up to 20 years

19 DEC 2024

AVIGNON, FRANCE (TIP): A court in France on December 19 sentenced the ex-husband of Gisèle Pelicot to a maximum 20 years of imprisonment for drugging and raping her and allowing other men to rape her while she was knocked out, in abuse that lasted nearly a decade.

The sentence against Dominique Pelicot was declared after he was found guilty of all charges against him. At age 72, it could mean that he spends the rest of his life in prison.

The verdict was read by the lead judge of the court in Avignon, Roger Arata.

Arata read out verdicts one after the other against Pelicot and 50 other men, declaring "you are therefore declared guilty of aggravated rape on the person of Mme. Gisèle Pelicot" as he worked his way through the first names on the list.

Gisèle Pelicot was seated on one side of the courtroom, facing the defendants as Arata announced one guilty verdict after another.

The historic case has profoundly shaken France over the past several months.

Dominique Pelicot admitted that for years he knocked his then wife of 50 years out with drugs so that he and strangers he recruited online could abuse her while he



filmed the assaults.

The appalling ordeal inflicted over nearly a decade on Gisèle Pelicot, now a 72-year-old grandmother, in what she thought was a loving marriage and her courage during the bruising and stunning trial have transformed the retired power company worker into a feminist hero of the nation.

Stretching over more than three months, the trial galvanized campaigners against sexual violence and spurred calls for tougher measures to stamp out rape

culture.

Dominique Pelicot and 49 other men were tried in the southern French city of Avignon for aggravated rape and attempted rape and face up to 20 years imprisonment if convicted.

Prosecutors asked that he get the maximum penalty and for sentences of 10 to 18 years for the others. They also requested a four-year prison term for another defendant who was tried for aggravated sexual assault.

Of the 50 men accused of rape, just one was acquitted but was found guilty of aggravated sexual assault.

The defendants were all accused of having taken part in Dominique Pelicot's sordid rape and abuse fantasies that were acted out in the couple's retirement home in the small Provence town of Mazan and elsewhere. Dominique Pelicot testified that he hid tranquilizers in food and drink that he gave his then wife, knocking her out so profoundly that he could do what he wanted to her for hours.

One of the men was on trial not for assaulting Gisèle Pelicot but for drugging and raping his own wife — with the help and drugs from Dominique Pelicot, who was also tried for raping the other man's wife. (AP)



SRI LANKA'S NAVY RESCUES 102 ROHINGYA REFUGEES FOUND ADRIFT ABOARD A FISHING TRAWLER

20 DEC 2024

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA (TIP): Sri Lanka's navy rescued more than 100 people believed to be Rohingya refugees who were found adrift aboard a fishing trawler off the island nation, a navy spokesman said on December 20.

Navy spokesman Gayan Wickramasuriya said fishermen had spotted the refugees, including 25 children and 30 women, off Sri Lanka's northern coast on Thursday. Navy vessels then escorted the trawler to naval base on Sri Lanka's east coast where they were given medical care, food and water.

Wickramasuriya said the navy hasn't yet confirmed whether the refugees are Rohingya because of communication difficulties. But the navy believes the group to be from Myanmar.

The rescue mirrored a similar incident in 2022 when the Sri Lankan navy picked up 100 Rohingya refugees who were also found adrift aboard a fishing boat inside Sri Lankan waters.

Hundreds of thousands of the predominantly Muslim Rohingya have fled Myanmar amid widespread discrimination. Most are denied citizenship.

About 1 million Rohingya live in Bangladesh as refugees. Most of them had fled a brutal counterinsurgency campaign in 2017 by Myanmar's security forces, who were accused of committing mass rapes and killings.

Thousands have been trying to flee Bangladesh's overcrowded camps to neighboring countries with Indonesia seeing a spike in refugee numbers since November which prompted it to call on the international community for help. Rohingya arriving in Aceh face some hostility from some fellow Muslims.

Returning safely to Myanmar is virtually impossible because the military that attacked them overthrew Myanmar's democratically elected government in 2021. No country has offered them any large-scale resettlement opportunities. (AP)

Women's rights under threat in Bangladesh amid growing radicalism, intolerance

20 DEC 2024

DHAKA (TIP): Bangladesh is not going to become another Iran or Afghanistan, as far as the rights of women are concerned. Nevertheless, it's women who are bearing the brunt of the recent political upheaval in the country.

The radical elements which have the support of the present interim government seem to be on a mission to muffle the freedom that women have had until now.

"I have never covered my head or face with a scarf and never will. I am a woman and enjoy being one, why should anyone object to what I wear? Things have changed for the worse. A woman wearing western clothes is often subject to cat calls, threatened or looked down upon," Naseem Rahat Bano*, a writer in Dhaka told TNIE."

"We will not give in to the radicals who seem to be getting comfortable inside our once tolerant country," added Bano. She is most comfortable wearing western dresses and enjoys having a glass of wine while socializing.

It is not just older women but even teenage girls who are now being sermonized and admonished.

"My teenage daughter is under peer pressure to cover up as she fears being bullied and trolled. When we are at home she is fine, but the world has changed outside though we are optimistic that this would not be a permanent feature,"



said Bano.

There is a lot of concern and fear, which is also experienced by men who support women for the choices they make.

"I am ok with whatever the women in my family want to wear but get extremely worried when they are out of the house and fear their being bullied, scoffed at and even attacked in public. Our country has gone offtrack. Our history is being denied, Pakistan has become a friend from being a foe and India is viewed as an enemy even though it has been a supporter all through," said

Rafik who works with a publishing house in Dhaka.

Interestingly, when there was a regime change, the narrative was against the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina. Four months since then, the narrative appears to be changing yet again but in her favour.

Whether the situation on the ground changes or remains the same is yet to be seen, but until then women like Bano will continue resisting the radical forces to protect their rights which include the freedom to wear what they want. (AFP)

52 killed in two bus accidents in central Afghanistan

19 DEC 2024

KABUL (TIP): Two bus accidents involving a fuel tanker and a truck on a highway through central Afghanistan killed 52 people and injured 65, the Taliban government spokesmen said on December 19.

The accidents happened in Ghazni province on the same highway between the capital Kabul and southern Kandahar city late Wednesday, provincial head of information and culture Hamidullah Nisar said on X, without specifying how many people were killed and injured in each accident.

"We learned with great regret that two fatal traffic accidents occurred on the Kabul-Kandahar Highway, in which 52 of our compatriots were killed and 65 others were injured," said chief government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

Nisar said one bus collided with a fuel tanker near Shahbaz village in central Ghazni, while the other hit a truck in the eastern district of Andar.

He added that rescue teams rushed to the site and transported the injured to the hospital, with some in "serious condition."

Traffic accidents are common in Afghanistan, due in part to poor roads after decades of conflict, dangerous driving on highways, and a lack of regulation.

In March, more than 20 people were killed and 38 injured when a bus collided with a fuel tanker and burst into flames in southern Helmand province.

Another serious accident involving a fuel tanker took place in December 2022, when the vehicle overturned and caught fire in Afghanistan's high-altitude Salang Pass, killing 31 people and leaving dozens more with burns. (AFP)

Pakistan court extends interim bail of Imran Khan, his wife in second Toshakhana case until January 7

17 DEC 2024

LAHORE (TIP): A Pakistani court on December 17 extended the interim bail of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the second Toshakhana case until January 7.

While the 72-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician remains behind bars due to other ongoing cases, Bibi was released in October after the Islamabad High Court approved her post-arrest bail plea.

Additional Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Mujoka of Islamabad-based District and Sessions Court conducted the hearing of bail petitions in the case, also called the Toshakhana 2.0. After hearing the lawyers, the court extended the interim bails of Khan and Bibi until January 7 next year and adjourned the hearing.

The case is related to the alleged violation of the state gift repository Toshakhana rules during Khan's term as the prime minister to acquire a precious jewellery set.

Pakistani police issues charges against Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi for inciting violence. The two were indicted in the case earlier last week by a trial court, where Special Judge Central Shahrukh Arjumand read out the charge sheet against them. The court, after the indictment, adjourned the hearing until December 18 when the prosecution the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) will present the first four of its 28 witnesses.

The Toshakhana 2.0 case involves allegations against the former premier and his wife for illegally retaining a Bulgari jewellery set gifted to them during a visit to Saudi Arabia in May 2021. The set included a ring, a bracelet, a necklace, and a pair of earrings and was valued at approximately Pakistani Rs 75.7 million. (PTI)

Sikh History This Week

DECEMBER 20 TO DECEMBER 26

20th December



1520 Guru Nanak Dev Ji visited Baghdad, Iraq.
1704 Guru Gobind Singh Ji evacuated Anandpur Sahib.



1920 Gurudwara Panja Sahib management came under the Panthic controls.

21st December

1704 Sikhs blocked the advances of the joint Hindu-Mughul army near Sirsa (Ropar district) so that Guru Gobind Singh Ji could reach some safer zone.



1838 Ranjit Singh suffered a stroke and severe attack of paralysis. Remained critical for several days. Speech

and sight virtually gone.

22nd December



1666 Parkash Utsav, Patshahi Tenth, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Guru Gobind Singh, born as Gobind Das or Gobind Rai, was the tenth Sikh Guru, a spiritual master, warrior, poet and philosopher. When his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed by Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh was formally installed as the leader of the Sikhs at the age of nine, becoming the tenth and final human Sikh Guru. Among his notable contributions to Sikhism are founding the Sikh warrior community called Khalsa in 1699 and introducing the Five Ks, the five articles of faith that Khalsa Sikhs wear at all times. Guru Gobind Singh is credited with the Dasam Granth whose hymns are a sacred part of Sikh prayers and Khalsa rituals.

1704 SHAHEEDHI, Wadhae Sahibjadhae, Sakka Chamkaur.

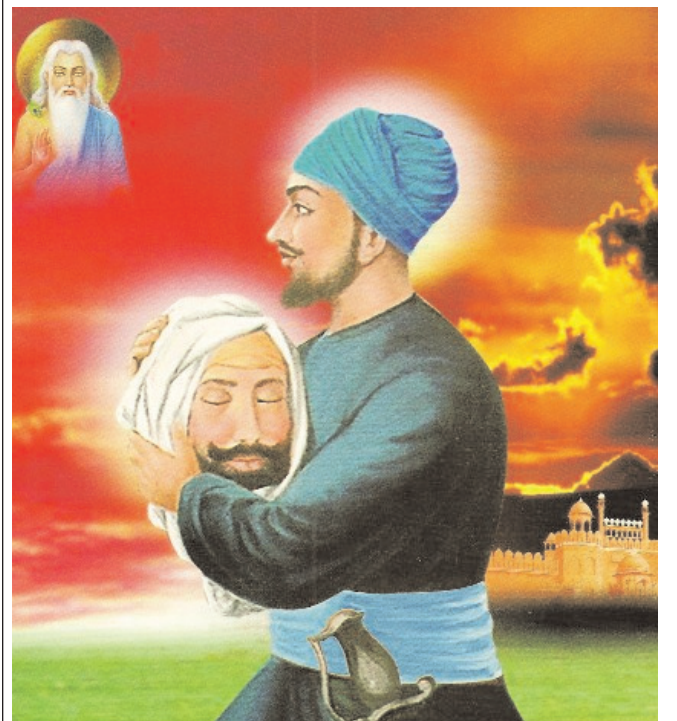


1899 Birth of freedom fighter Sardar Udham Singh.

23rd December



1667 Birth of Mata Sudari Ji.



1704 Martyrdom of Bhai Jaita.

24th December

1805 Fateh Singh Ahluwalia sought understanding between General Lake and Jaswant Rai Hulkar.

1921 Kishan Singh Garhgaj attended diwans at Chamjkaur Sahib and Sirhind during Dec. 24-28 and delivered fiery speeches.

25th December

1850 Lord Dalhousie visits Fatehgarh to meet Maharaja Dalip Singh.

1922 First meeting of Babbar is held at Jassowal to decide the reformation of the Jholichuks.

1922 Special issue of "Babbar Akali Doaba" newspaper on Kalghidhar.

26th December

1802 Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured Amritsar.

1832 Sada Kaur died at a ripe old age of 70 years.

1832 Indus Navigation Treaty signed.

Morning habits for a toned body: Start your day right

Achieving a toned body isn't just about hitting the gym; it's about establishing consistent habits that align with your fitness goals. Your morning routine sets the tone for the day, ensuring you stay energized, focused, and motivated. Here are some essential morning habits to help you sculpt a toned, strong physique.

Hydrate Immediately

Start your day by drinking a glass of water, ideally with lemon. After hours of sleep, your body is dehydrated, and water kickstarts your metabolism while flushing out toxins. Proper hydration supports muscle function, recovery, and overall energy levels.

Prioritize Protein in Breakfast

A protein-rich breakfast fuels your muscles and keeps hunger at bay. Include eggs, Greek yogurt, or a protein smoothie in your morning meal. Protein not only repairs and builds muscle but also keeps you full, reducing the urge to snack on unhealthy options later. Pair it with complex carbohydrates like oats or whole-grain bread for sustained energy.

Morning Movement

Incorporate some form of exercise into your morning routine. A quick 20-30-minute workout, such as bodyweight exercises, yoga, or a brisk run, can activate your muscles, improve blood circulation, and boost your metabolism. Resistance training or high-intensity interval training (HIIT) is especially effective for toning muscles.

Stretch or Foam Roll

Stretching or foam rolling post-workout can improve flexibility, prevent injuries, and reduce muscle soreness. It also helps in improving posture, which is crucial for a toned appearance. Focus on areas prone to stiffness, such as hamstrings, shoulders, and back.



Plan Your Day

Dedicate a few minutes to plan your meals and schedule your workouts for the day. This proactive approach keeps you committed to your fitness goals, ensuring you stay on track with your diet and exercise regimen.

Practice Mindfulness

Take a moment to meditate or practice gratitude. A positive mindset reduces stress, which can otherwise lead to weight gain and muscle loss. Lower cortisol levels also contribute to better muscle recovery and fat-burning efficiency.

FOOD CORNER

Veg jalfrezi

Ingredients

For the Vegetables: 1 cup bell peppers (red, green, yellow), julienned 1 cup carrots, julienned 1 cup French beans, cut into 2-inch pieces, 1 cup cauliflower florets, 1 cup paneer (optional), cubed 1 cup onions, sliced 1 cup tomatoes, diced or sliced ½ cup green peas (optional)



For the Sauce: 2 tablespoons oil, 1 teaspoon cumin seeds, 1 tablespoon ginger-garlic paste, 2 green chilies slit, 1 teaspoon turmeric powder, 1 teaspoon red chili powder, 1 teaspoon coriander powder, 1 teaspoon garam masala, 1 teaspoon cumin powder, 1 tablespoon tomato ketchup, 2-3 medium tomatoes, pureed, Salt to taste, ½ teaspoon sugar (optional, to balance flavors)

For Garnish: 2 tablespoons fresh coriander leaves, chopped 1 teaspoon kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves).

Instructions

- Parboil the carrots, beans, and cauliflower in salted water for 2-3 minutes. Drain and set aside.
- Keep the bell peppers, onions, and tomatoes raw, as they cook quickly.
- Heat oil in a large pan or wok.
- Add cumin seeds and let them splutter.
- Add ginger-garlic paste and slit green chilies; sauté for 1 minute.
- Stir in turmeric, red chili powder, coriander powder, and cumin powder.
- Add the pureed tomatoes and cook until the oil separates (about 5-7 minutes).
- Add tomato ketchup, salt, and sugar if needed.
- Add the parboiled and raw vegetables to the sauce. Toss to coat evenly.
- Cook for 5-7 minutes on medium flame, keeping the vegetables slightly crunchy.
- Add garam masala and kasuri methi. Add cubed paneer and cook for 2 minutes. Serve.

Happiness tips for working women: Balancing work and life

In today's fast-paced world, working women often juggle multiple responsibilities, from meeting deadlines to managing household tasks. Amid this whirlwind, finding happiness can seem like a challenge. However, cultivating joy doesn't have to be overwhelming. Here are practical tips for working women to embrace happiness and create a fulfilling life.

Prioritize Self-Care

Self-care is not a luxury; it's a necessity. Dedicate time to recharge, whether it's through skincare routines, reading, or simply relaxing. Regular exercise and a balanced diet also play a crucial role in maintaining physical and mental well-being, which are essential for happiness.

Set Boundaries

Learn to say no when necessary. Clear boundaries between work and personal life prevent burnout and ensure you have time for yourself and loved ones. Turn off work notifications after hours and create a designated space for relaxation.

Practice Gratitude

Focusing on what you're grateful for can shift your mindset. Start or end your day by noting three things you're thankful for. Gratitude helps you appreciate the positives in your life, boosting your overall happiness.



Invest in Relationships

Strong connections with family, friends, and colleagues are vital for emotional well-being. Make time to nurture these relationships, whether through a phone call, a coffee date, or simply sharing your day. A supportive network can lighten your load and bring joy to your routine.

Pursue Your Passions

Amid work responsibilities, don't lose sight of activities that bring you joy. Whether it's painting, dancing, or gardening, carving out time for hobbies can rejuvenate your spirit and provide a creative outlet.

Embrace Mindfulness

Incorporate mindfulness into your daily routine. Take a few minutes to meditate, practice deep breathing, or simply pause and focus on the present moment. Mindfulness reduces stress and enhances your ability to tackle challenges calmly.

Celebrate Small Wins

Recognize and celebrate even minor accomplishments. Whether it's completing a task at work or making a healthy meal, acknowledging these victories fosters a sense of achievement and happiness.

Seek Support When Needed

It's okay to ask for help, whether from coworkers, friends, or professional counselors. Sharing your burdens eases stress and reminds you that you're not alone. Happiness for working women lies in balance, self-awareness, and prioritizing what truly matters. By embracing these habits, you can lead a more joyful and meaningful life, no matter how busy your schedule gets.

Back & neck pain: Protect your spine health when it gets cold outside

Low temperatures during winter may cause the muscles and ligaments around the spine to contract, leading to stiffness and discomfort. Reduced physical activity, combined with shorter daylight hours, impacts circulation and spinal mobility. People with conditions such as arthritis, herniated discs, and spinal stenosis are particularly vulnerable. With proper care and lifestyle adjustments, you can prevent back pain and keep your spine healthy during winter months.

Add layers

Cold weather stiffens muscles and the spine, increasing the risk of pain and discomfort. Wearing thermal clothing, scarves, and shawls helps retain body heat. For added relief, use heating pads or hot water bottles to keep your back warm. Pay special attention to covering your lower back.

Proper posture

Spending more time indoors often means extended sitting, whether working on a laptop or watching TV. Poor posture strains the spine and worsens back pain. Sit with your back straight, shoulders relaxed, and feet flat on the floor. Use ergonomic chairs for lumbar support. These habits reduce spinal stress and preserve its strength.

Keep moving

While winter may discourage outdoor workouts, staying active is vital for spine health. Gentle stretches and exercises boost blood circulation and keep spinal muscles flexible. Activities like yoga and brisk walking strengthen the back and prevent stiffness. Home workouts using simple props or bodyweight exercises ensure consistent movement during cold weather.

Eat a spine-healthy diet

Nutrition plays a key role in spine health. Include calcium, vitamin D, and omega-3-rich foods such as



milk, leafy greens, nuts, and fatty fish. Stay hydrated, as water helps maintain tissue lubrication and prevents discomfort. Consider consulting a physician for a vitamin D supplement during winter when sun exposure is limited.

Sleep well

A comfortable sleeping setup helps prevent back pain. Use a firm mattress and sleep on your side with a pillow between your knees to reduce lower back pressure. Quality sleep rejuvenates the body, allowing natural repair processes to occur, essential during colder months.

Manage stress

Winter often brings stress due to reduced outdoor activities and gloomy weather. High stress levels are linked to muscle tension, which frequently impacts the back. Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or mindfulness exercises. Winter-friendly activities like indoor yoga can help reduce stress and improve flexibility.



Different fungi groups behind allergy-induced sniffles, asthma: Study

People with allergy-induced sniffles and asthma may have different fungal colonies or mycobiomes in their noses, finds a study.

The common respiratory disease, formally called allergic rhinitis, has frequently been associated with asthma. Typical symptoms of allergic rhinitis include sneezing, itching, inflamed nasal mucous membranes, and a blocked and runny nose. It's often comorbid with asthma, which also involves inflammation and obstructed airways.

Researchers from the University of Porto, Portugal, showed that this association may be because of different fungal colonies or mycobiomes in their noses.

"We showed that allergic rhinitis samples displayed a significantly higher fungal diversity and a different fungal community structure compared to those of healthy controls," said Dr. Luís Delgado of the University of Porto.

"This may suggest that allergic rhinitis increases the diversity and changes the composition of the upper airway's microbiome."

To study the nasal mycobiome, the researchers recruited 214 participants among children and young adults attending an immunology and asthma clinic in Porto. About 155 patients had both allergic rhinitis and asthma, while 47 were only diagnosed with allergic rhinitis and 12 with asthma. The team also enrolled 125 healthy controls.

The team analysed 306 samples, taken via nasal swabs. DNA sequencing revealed Ascomycota and Basidiomycota as the most common fungi families across all samples. In these two families, 14 genera dominated the mycobiomes.

"Among these dominant genera we detected common fungi that have been recognised in humans as allergenic or opportunistic pathogenic fungi," said Delgado. "This suggests that the nasal cavity is a major reservoir for fungi that could be involved in allergic rhinitis and asthma."

Source: IANS

Superfoods to manage uric acid levels

Lemon Water

Lemon water helps in alkalizing the body and reducing uric acid levels. The vitamin C in lemons aids in dissolving uric acid crystals and promotes their elimination through urine. Drinking lemon water regularly can help prevent gout flare-ups and maintain healthy uric acid levels in the body.

Green Tea

Green tea is rich in antioxidants and has anti-inflammatory properties that can help lower uric acid levels. It supports kidney function and enhances the body's ability to eliminate toxins. Drinking green tea regularly can provide relief from gout symptoms and promote overall wellness.

Flaxseeds

Flaxseeds are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and fiber, which help reduce



inflammation and support healthy kidney function. They aid in the elimination of uric acid and prevent its buildup in the bloodstream. Including flaxseeds in your diet can help manage uric acid levels and improve overall health.

Turmeric

Turmeric contains curcumin, a powerful anti-inflammatory compound that helps reduce uric acid levels and joint inflammation. Its antioxidant properties support the body in eliminating toxins, including excess uric acid. Turmeric

can be consumed as a spice in meals or taken as a supplement for best results.

Ginger

Ginger is known for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, which can help reduce uric acid levels and alleviate gout symptoms. It supports kidney function and promotes the elimination of toxins. Adding ginger to your diet can provide relief from pain and inflammation caused by high uric acid.

Celery

Celery has natural diuretic properties, which help in flushing out excess uric acid from the body. It is low in purines and contains antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds. Consuming celery regularly can aid in reducing joint inflammation.

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YouTube says it will soon start detecting AI avatars of celebs

YouTube is stepping up to protect creators from misuse of their likenesses with the help of AI. The platform is teaming up with the Creative Artists Agency (CAA) to roll out tools that allow creators and celebrities to detect AI-generated content that uses their image, face, or voice. This partnership aims to give individuals more control over how their digital likeness is used, especially as artificial intelligence becomes more sophisticated and widespread.

Starting early next year, YouTube will test these tools with celebrities and athletes. The idea is to let them find videos on the platform that mimic their face, voice, or other aspects of their identity using AI and make it easier to request that such content be removed. Once this initial phase is complete, YouTube plans to expand the program to include top creators on the platform, creative professionals, and other influential figures. This move is expected to protect YouTube's most prominent users, who often have to deal with issues like impersonation and misuse of their image.

In September, YouTube had already announced plans to develop tools that help manage AI-generated depictions of creators, including their voices. Now, the company is building on that commitment by giving celebrities the ability to deal with these issues on a larger scale. This is especially relevant as AI tools can now create hyperrealistic versions of someone's face, voice, or body, which can then be used in ways that the original person never agreed to.

Apple releases iOS 18.3 first developer beta

Apple has released the first developer beta version of its upcoming iOS 18.3 update, just days after introducing iOS 18.2 that was packed with Apple Intelligence features. While Apple has not yet disclosed specific changes in the latest beta, there is speculation about support for more smart home devices, such as robot vacuum cleaners, within the Home app.

Although the first developer beta for iOS 18.3 is now available, the stable version of the update is expected to roll out in January next year.

What to expect from upcoming iOS updates

The iOS 18.2 update added advanced Apple Intelligence features, such as image generation tools and system-wide ChatGPT integration. However, there are more intelligence features that Apple has yet to roll out, including on-screen awareness, personal context understanding, and more for the digital assistant Siri. Apple has also not yet launched the Priority Notification feature, which uses AI to sort notifications based on their importance.

More advanced Siri features are expected with the iOS 18.4 update in March next year, but iOS 18.3 could bring some minor tweaks and changes to existing Apple Intelligence features.

Apple Intelligence features with iOS 18.2

Last week, Apple released the iOS 18.2 update for eligible iPhones, adding several new Apple Intelligence features, including support for OpenAI's ChatGPT within Siri and Writing Tools, Image Playground, and Genmoji. Here are the key Apple Intelligence features:

- Image Playground: A tool for generating images using text input or existing images from the Photos app. Users can create images based on themes, styles (such as animation, 3D, or illustrations), and specific requests. It is integrated within native apps like Messages, Freeform, and Keynote and also available as a standalone app.
- Genmoji: Integrated into the emoji keyboard, Genmoji enables users to generate custom emojis using text and images.
- Image Wand: Introduced in the Notes app, this tool transforms sketches into illustrations or generates images based on surrounding text.
- Describe Your Change (Writing Tools): This new option complements existing tools like Rewrite, Proofread, and Summarise, giving users more control over writing style and expressiveness.
- Compose with ChatGPT (Writing



Tools): OpenAI's chatbot integration allows users to generate text and accompanying images, accessible systemwide.

- Visual Intelligence: iPhone 16 series introduces a new Visual Intelligence feature. By long pressing the new Camera Control button, users can get information about real-life objects using Google image search or ChatGPT. It can also translate text, summarise it, and even detect and save phone numbers and email addresses.
- ChatGPT in Siri: With ChatGPT integration, Siri can now suggest using ChatGPT for specific queries and provide ChatGPT-powered responses directly. Users can enable or disable this integration and manage shared information.

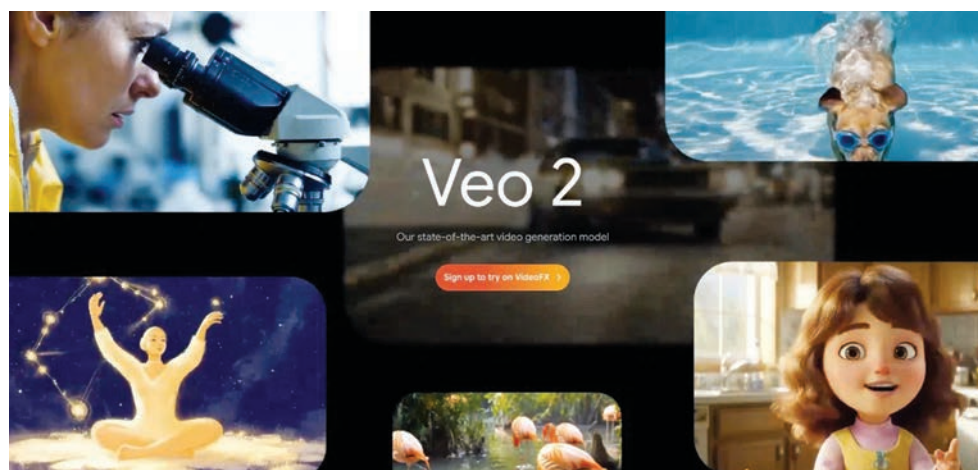
While the iOS 18.2 update is available for all iPhones running iOS 18 versions, Apple Intelligence features are only available on iPhone 15 Pro models and the new iPhone 16 series.

Google unveils Veo 2 video AI generator to compete with OpenAI's Sora

Google has introduced a new and improved Veo 2 video generator model to compete with the likes of OpenAI's Sora. The company claims that the successor to the original Veo AI model can create realistic motion and high-quality output of up to 4K, which it says is better than leading AI video generator platforms. Alongside this, Google also announced the latest Imagen 3 version and new Whisk model to create a single image from multiple visuals. Here is everything to know.

Google shared a series of short video clips created using Veo 2, which shows that this platform can generate hyper-realistic videos of animals and food. We can also see animated clips of humans, all of which are 8-second videos.

"Veo 2 outperforms other leading video generation models, based on human evaluations of its performance," Google



said. While the company hasn't mentioned the names of the rivals, it is likely pointing towards OpenAI's Sora -- which is also a video generator. In the benchmark list, the company has added a graph, which claims that its Veo 2 model

is preferred more by people in comparison to Meta Movie Gen, Kling V1.5, Minimax and Sora Turbo.

The samples shared by Google look great, but some scenes with motions are seemingly a bit inaccurate. A few details

in parts of a frame are missing. Google acknowledges this and says that complete consistency throughout complex scenes or those with complex motion still remains a challenge. But, the overall quality of the videos is seemingly quite impressive. "While Veo 2 demonstrates incredible progress, creating realistic, dynamic, or intricate videos, and maintaining complete consistency throughout complex scenes or those with complex motion, remains a challenge. We'll continue to develop and refine performance in these areas," said Google DeepMind.

As for the Imagen 3 model, Google claims it can now create brighter and more realistic images with vibrant hues, better colour balance, and fidelity. The company is also claiming that it can currently produce highly detailed textures and attractive visuals.

Bears tighten grip on markets; Sensex tanks 1,176 points, Nifty falls below 23,500 level

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty plunged about 1.5 per cent on Friday, December 20, taking their downtrend to the fifth straight session, due to risk aversion in the global markets after the hawkish stance of the US Federal Reserve.

The 30-share BSE benchmark tumbled 1,176.46 points or 1.49 per cent to settle at 78,041.59. During the day, it slumped 1,343.46 points or 1.69 per cent to 77,874.59.

The NSE Nifty tanked 364.20 points or 1.52 per cent to 23,587.50.

From the 30 blue-chip Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, State Bank of India, Tata Consultancy Services, UltraTech Cement and Reliance Industries were the biggest laggards.

In contrast, JSW Steel, Nestle and Titan were the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower.

Equity markets in Europe were trading in the negative territory. Wall Street ended on a mixed note on Thursday, December 19.

Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 4,224.92 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.96 per cent to USD 72.18 a barrel.

New Zealand falls into recession with abrupt economic slowdown

New Zealand tipped into recession in the third quarter, official data showed Thursday, December 19, with the economy suffering an unexpectedly sharp slump that sent the country's currency tumbling and sparked political finger-pointing.

The conservative coalition government defended its "respect for taxpayers' money" as the opposition accused it of feeding a "recessionary fire".

The economy has for months teetered on the verge of recession, with consumer sentiment weighed by high prices, elevated borrowing costs and a housing crisis.

But the latest figures showed gross domestic product fell a bigger-than-expected 1.0 percent July-September from the previous three months. Analysts had forecast a contraction of 0.2 percent.

Fed cuts by a quarter point, indicates fewer reductions ahead

WASHINGTON (TIP)

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday, December 18, lowered its key interest rate by a quarter percentage point, the third consecutive reduction and one that came with a cautionary tone about additional cuts in coming years.

In a move widely anticipated by markets, the Federal Open Market Committee cut its overnight borrowing rate to a target range of 4.25%-4.5%, back to the level where it was in December 2022 when rates were on the move higher.

Though there was little intrigue over the decision itself, the main question had been over what the Fed would signal about its future intentions as inflation holds steadily above target and economic growth is fairly solid, conditions that don't normally coincide with policy easing.

In delivering the 25 basis point cut, the Fed indicated that it probably would only lower twice more in 2025, according to the closely watched "dot plot" matrix of individual members' future rate expectations. The two cuts indicated slice in half the committee's intentions when the plot was last updated in September.

Assuming quarter-point increments, officials indicated two more reductions in 2026 and another in 2027. Over the longer term, the committee sees the "neutral" funds rate at 3%, 0.1 percentage point higher than the September update as the level has drifted gradually higher this year.

"With today's action, we have lowered our policy rate by a full percentage point from its peak, and our policy stance is now significantly less restrictive," Chair Jerome Powell said at his post-meeting news conference. "We can therefore be more cautious as we consider further adjustments to our policy rate."

"Today was a closer call but we decided it was the right call," he added.

Stocks sold off sharply following the Fed announcement, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average closing down more than 1,100 points while Treasury yields soared. Futures pricing pared back the outlook for cuts in 2025, according to the CME Group's FedWatch measure.

"We moved pretty quickly to get to here, and I think going



forward obviously we're moving slower," Powell said.

For the second consecutive meeting, one FOMC member dissented: Cleveland Fed President Beth Hammack wanted the Fed to maintain the previous rate. Governor Michelle Bowman voted no in November, the first time a governor voted against a rate decision since 2005.

The fed funds rate sets what banks charge each other for overnight lending but also influences a variety of consumer debt such as auto loans, credit cards and mortgages.

The post-meeting statement changed little except for a tweak regarding the "extent and timing" of further rate changes, a slight language shift from the November meeting. Goldman Sachs said the adjustment was "hinting at a slower pace of rate cuts ahead."

The cut came even though the committee jacked up its projection for full-year 2024 gross domestic product growth to 2.5%, half a percentage point higher than September. However, in the ensuing years the officials expect GDP to slow down to its long-term projection of 1.8%.

Other changes to the Summary of Economic Projections saw the committee lower its expected unemployment rate this year to 4.2%, while headline and core inflation according to the Fed's preferred gauge were pushed higher to respective estimates of 2.4% and 2.8%, slightly higher than the September estimate and above the Fed's 2% goal.

No impact of Swiss withdrawal of MFN status to country: Nestle India

NEW DELHI (TIP)

FMCG major Nestle India on Thursday, December 19, said the suspension of the MFN (most favoured nation) clause granted to India by Switzerland will have 'no impact' on the company.

The suspension of MFN status under the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) is a policy issue between the government of India and Switzerland and is not 'Nestle-specific', the FMCG firm said in a statement.

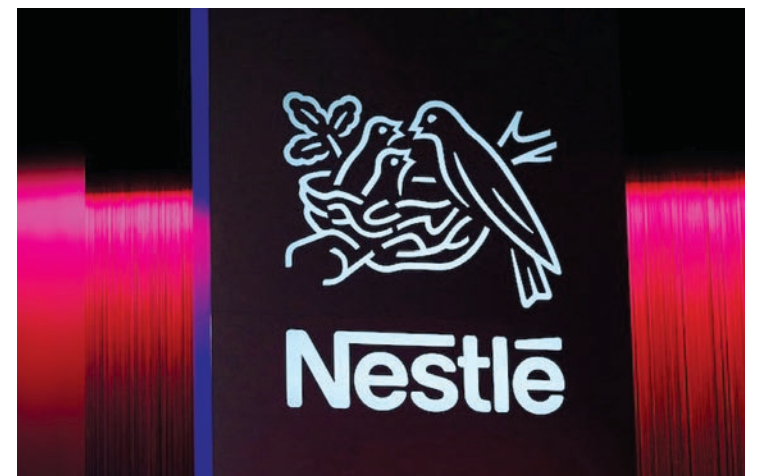
Nestle India, which owns popular brands such as Maggi, Nescafe and KitKat, said the company was already "deducting 10 per cent withholding tax" on cross-country payments.

Earlier on December 11, the Swiss government had announced the suspension of the MFN status granted to India following a ruling by the Supreme Court of India, which in a judgement last year had said MFN status under the DTAA cannot be enforced unless notified under Section 90 of the Income Tax Act.

This judgement of the apex court had come in a case related to Nestle, where it overturned an earlier order passed by the Delhi High Court in 2021, which had upheld the residual tax rates' applicability after considering the MFN clause in DTAA.

This has increased the tax liabilities for Indian companies having their operations in Switzerland.

"The matter is not a Nestle-specific issue but is a policy



matter between India and Switzerland. We would like to inform you that Nestle India was/is deducting a 10 per cent withholding tax, and this has no impact on Nestle India," a Nestle India spokesperson said.

India is among the top ten markets of the Swiss FMCG major Nestle SA, where it has been operating for 112 years.

It is investing Rs 6,000-6,500 crore between a period of 2020-2025 in the Indian market to scale up its manufacturing capabilities and others.

Source: PTI



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



ARIES : Ganesha says this week is going to be full of positive energy. New possibilities are expected to open up for you in both your personal and professional life. Your efforts and dedication at the workplace will be appreciated by everyone, which may lead to a higher position or new responsibility. Positive changes can also be seen in your social life. Time spent with friends and family will rejuvenate your soul. A long-standing problem may find a solution, which will bring relief to your mind. Be cautious in matters of health. Regular exercise and focusing on a balanced diet will help you maintain your energy levels. This week is also great for self-love and self-care. Your enthusiastic and adventurous nature will inspire others. Do not hesitate to embrace new experiences, as it is essential for your growth. This week of your sensitivity and loyalty can be the key to your success. Maintain a positive attitude and face every challenge in the days to come.



TAURUS : Ganesha says this week you have a chance to experience new possibilities. You are moving towards progress in your professional life. This week, you will get the opportunity to complete challenging projects with increased teamwork and collaboration. A sense of independence and stability will fill you with enthusiasm. In financial matters, adopt a balanced approach. Planning and making timely decisions can benefit you. You will get some financial opportunities, but be careful and avoid making investments without thinking. In personal life, take advantage of spending time with family and friends. Warmth and affection will increase in your close relationships. If there were any kind of concerns in your relationships, then this week is the time to resolve them. In terms of health, pay attention to your routine. A little exercise and proper diet will be beneficial for you. Include meditation and yoga in your habit to keep your mental health better. In general, this week symbolizes new beginnings and stability for you. Maintain a positive attitude and see whatever challenge comes as an opportunity for yourself.



GEMINI : Ganesha says this week the door to new possibilities is opening for you. Activity will increase in social life and new relationships can begin. It will be necessary to coordinate with colleagues in a new

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - DEC 23 TO DEC 29, 2024

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

project or work. Your ability to communicate will prove to be a great help to you at this time. It is important to maintain mutual understanding and harmony in personal relationships. Express your thoughts clearly and respect the opinions of others. This will be especially helpful in love relationships. It is important to be health conscious. Pay attention to diet and exercise regularly. Include meditation and yoga for mental health; it will make you introverted and provide new energy. It is necessary to be cautious in financial matters. Think well before making big investments. Control small expenses this week. Overall, this week is going to be positive for you in terms of self-knowledge and social relationships. Make full use of your enthusiastic nature and celebrate the little moments of life.



CANCER : Ganesha says for Cancer natives, this week is a sign of new possibilities for you. Your emotions will be strong at this time, which will enable you to have deep and meaningful conversations with people around you. Spending time together with family and friends will be especially beneficial. On the work front, focus on your projects, as your hard work is now at the chance to bear fruit. The efforts you have put in for months will now start yielding results. Use your creativity at this time; muster the courage to adopt new ideas. In terms of health, practice meditation and yoga to negate mental stress. Your emotional state may be affected, so it is important to keep yourself balanced. Spending some time with family will also give you a feeling of well-being. Maintain harmonious relations with people around you this week. Enjoying small joys and bringing ease into a routine will prove beneficial for you. Overall, this week will be pleasant and developmental for you.



LEO : Ganesha says Leo the doors of new possibilities seem to open for you this week. Your confidence will increase, which will enable you to proceed more efficiently in your tasks. This is the time to make the necessary strategies to achieve your goals. In terms of structure, it will be important to maintain harmonious relations with family members. Spending time with your loved ones will give you mental peace. Health needs attention. Do not ignore minor problems. Yoga and meditation will improve your energy level. Financial aspects also seem stable this week. Take investment decisions wisely. Ultimately, this week is about having faith in yourself and keeping your intentions firm. The results of your hard work will soon be visible.



VIRGO : Ganesha says this week you are likely

to get the fruits of your hard work. New possibilities can also open up in the workplace, which will strengthen your position. Keep in mind that you understand your plans well and also listen to the opinions of others. You will also get some good opportunities in social life. Spending time with friends and family will boost your energy. You will get an opportunity to share your thoughts, which will strengthen your relationship even more. There is a need to be a little cautious in terms of health. You can resort to meditation and yoga to avoid mental stress. Finally, awaken the creativity within you, it will give you new energy. Move forward with positive thinking and ease, this week is going to be very fruitful for you.



LIBRA : Ganesha says this week is a time of balance and dedication for Libra people. Your creativity and social skills will provide you with new opportunities. This is the right time to strengthen mutual relations with friends and family. Conversation with someone special can deepen, which will bring new happiness in your life. Some challenging situations may arise in work life, but your rationality and diplomatic mind will help take things in a better direction. Pay attention to your health this week; regular exercise and a balanced diet will be beneficial for you. The situation in financial matters is likely to remain satisfactory, but it is important to control expenses. It may be time to plan a long trip, which will give you new experiences and knowledge. Your self-analysis will help you make important decisions this week, so pay attention to your inner voice.



SCORPIO : Ganesha says this week is a period of prosperity and self-introduction for Leo. You will find yourself full of new energy and enthusiasm. Your thoughts will be clear and you will be motivated to achieve your goals. At work, your efforts will be appreciated and relationships with colleagues will strengthen. This is the time to start new projects or carry forward old plans. You will work with a new approach, unleashing your creativity. In personal life, you will get a chance to spend time with family and friends. This will strengthen relationships and increase mutual understanding. In terms of health, try to stay away from stress. Spending some time in meditation and yoga will be beneficial for your mental health. Have faith in yourself this week and move forward with positive thinking. Your hard work, dedication, and perseverance will lead you to success.



SAGITTARIUS : Ganesha says this week, a sense of self-reliance and independence will prevail for you. Your

energy will be at its peak, and you will keep moving towards your goals. This is the time when you can make new plans and start working on them. Spending time with friends and family will give you mental peace. In the field of business, you may get a new opportunity. Do not hesitate to express your ideas, as your suggestions will be appreciated. For physical health, focus on regular exercise and a balanced diet. Some good changes can come in your relationships. Spending time with someone special will bring sweetness to your relationship. This week is for self-renewal and positive thinking. Move forward by staying positive, as this time is going to give the fruits of your hard work and efforts.



CAPRICORN : Ganesha says this week the door to new opportunities is going to open for you. In professional life, you may get some good offers, which can take your career to new heights. Increasing coordination with the team will be beneficial for you. In personal life, you will get a chance to spend time with family. They will feel proud of your achievements, which will give you more positive energy. Try to strengthen your relationship with your loved ones. In terms of health, it is time to make some changes in your routine. Include exercise and yoga in your routine, which will improve mental and physical health. Focus on your goals this week and do not be afraid of difficulties. Your hard work will give you the desired results. Remember, patience and determination are the keys to success.



AQUARIUS : Ganesha says this week will be full of new challenges and opportunities for Capricorn natives. There will be no lack of novelty and creativity in your ideas, which will not only inspire the people around you but will also bring positive changes in your personal and professional life. This week your sociability will increase and you will meet new people. It is a good time for emotional depth in relationships; shared plans and ideas will bring you closer. At work, new projects or the scope of work may increase. Your hard work and strategy will enable you to overcome challenges. Keep in mind to cooperate in teamwork, your approach will become an inspiration for colleagues. In terms of health, it is necessary to pay attention to mental health. Include yoga or meditation in your daily routine. This week will be full of your creativity and unique ideas, just listen to your inner voice and move forward.



PISCES : Ganesha says this week, a new door of possibilities is going to open for Pisces natives. You will be able to listen

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : DEC 23 TO DEC 29 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

DECEMBER 23 : Ganesha says you are gifted with strong intuition, a lot of ingenuity, and a remarkable imagination. You are simple and honest, but you need to control your tendency to be unfair, hypocritical, and ungrateful from time to time. Investments made in real estate this year can prove to be very profitable. However, indulging in speculation can be harmful and should be avoided. Legal disputes, that were troubling your mind, can be resolved amicably to your satisfaction. Children can be the main source of happiness and a life partner can keep you happy.

DECEMBER 24 : Ganesha says you are energetic, practical, enthusiastic, authoritative, and dependable. You are intelligent and can do wonders with your ability to exert maximum effort, but you need to control your tendency to be careless, stubborn, and impatient from time to time. New alliances and partnerships can bring prosperity. Your confidence and determination may be at their peak. Financial benefits accrue in the form of delayed payments and bad debts. Speculating in real estate and shares can prove beneficial. Your partner can support your concerns and provide you with love and affection.

DECEMBER 25 : Ganesha says you are a big fan of music and literature. You are research-oriented and have determination. You may get wonderful opportunities that may come your way but you need to grab them before others. There can be economic benefits from old investments. A wonderful period to do the things you love and make you feel good. There is a possibility of a distant journey for pleasure or pilgrimage at the end of the year. Your health may be fine but the health of an elderly family member may be a matter of concern. New friendships and contacts developed during this period can be highly meaningful.

DECEMBER 26 : Ganesha says your energy can be high and can give you immense benefits. Speculating in real estate can give good returns. Long-distance travel can be undertaken for business purposes as well as for pleasure. Children need to pay more attention to their careers. Despite some initial problems, health can be more or less fine. You need to spend time on meditation and yoga for remarkable benefits. Your association with people in high positions can develop your best opportunities. Suddenly the sum of profit and loss is being made. Expect gifts and presents, both in cash and kind, but some unexpected expenses may

take you by surprise.

DECEMBER 27 : Ganesha says you should plan things well in advance to avail the benefits. Your efforts made during this period may give desired results in the long run. Favorable period for property investment. Romance may top your list. There is also a possibility of new arrivals. You can work on new ideas, which can increase your income. Your financial condition can improve by getting a job with high responsibility and position. Some good news from distant relations can increase the enthusiasm of the whole family. Travel and traveling can be enjoyable.

DECEMBER 28 : Ganesha says your work environment can be good, due to which you can get a lot of job satisfaction. You can interact with important people who can help you in your career as well. Your contacts with the public can be vibrant and challenging. Your income may increase but saving may be necessary for you. Your beloved may be in a very romantic mood and both of you may spend a good time together. Property transactions or acquiring a new vehicle are likely during this period.

DECEMBER 29 : Ganesha says you



**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

should try to channel your energy into professional endeavors. This can be a time of success and happiness, as you can make huge profits. You can easily beat your competitors because of your superior skills and abilities. Investments made during this time can also give good returns. New proposals for joint ventures can be tempting, but the partnership is not in your cards this year. You can make new friends through old friends. Investment can be profitable but don't put all your money in one place.

Nastur Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at www.bejandaruwalla.com | info@bejandaruwalla.com | +91 81412 34275

CONTD FROM PAGE 36

to your inner voice, which will give you clarity in different areas of your life. In terms of work, your creativity and insight will help you make important decisions. There can be fun changes in your social life as well. Time spent with friends and family will make your mind light and happy. Closeness can also increase in love relationships, so try to spend more time with your partner. In terms of health, resorting to meditation and yoga will help maintain your mental balance. Stay away from negativity; hold on to positive thinking and keep moving towards your goals. Financially, this week can provide some new investment opportunities. This is the right time to review the plans and move in the right direction. Use this time and move forward towards realizing your dreams.

AUTHOR BIO : Chirag Daruwalla is the best astrologer and one of the most famous names in the astrology world. He has more than 18 years of experience. Readers may seek his advice related to career, health, finance, business, money, love and marriage. He has complete knowledge, solutions, and guidance to all the problems related to life. Visit his website chiragdaruwalla.com. He is available for consultations on WhatsApp number +91 8141566266 or by email: info@chiragdaruwalla.com

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Saphala Ekadashi



Saphala Ekadashi is a sacred day observed in the Hindu tradition, dedicated to the worship of Lord Vishnu, the preserver of the universe. Falling on the 11th day (Ekadashi) of the Krishna Paksha (waning phase of the moon) in the month of Pausa, this auspicious day is revered for its spiritual, moral, and religious significance. Derived from the Sanskrit term "Saphala," meaning "fruitful" or "successful," this Ekadashi is believed to grant immense blessings to devotees, helping them attain spiritual progress and material prosperity.

The Mythological Background of Saphala Ekadashi

Like other Ekadashis, Saphala Ekadashi is rooted in ancient Hindu scriptures, primarily the Puranas. The Padma Purana elaborates on the glory of this sacred day and recounts the story of a king named Mahishmata and his son Lumpaka. Lumpaka, a wayward and sinful prince, indulged in immoral activities, disrespecting his family and Dharma. As a consequence, he was exiled from the kingdom by his father.

Despite his misdeeds, Lumpaka unknowingly observed a fast and performed penance on Saphala Ekadashi while living in the forest. On this day, he abstained from consuming food and spent the night under a banyan tree, which is considered sacred in Hinduism. His accidental observance of the Ekadashi vrat (fast) pleased Lord Vishnu, who forgave Lumpaka's sins and restored him to his rightful place as the heir to the kingdom. The story underscores the transformative power of Saphala Ekadashi, highlighting how even unintentional devotion can lead to redemption and divine grace.

The Significance of Saphala Ekadashi

- **Spiritual Upliftment:** Saphala Ekadashi is regarded as a powerful day for spiritual cleansing and advancement. Observing the fast with devotion helps individuals purify their minds and souls, bringing them closer to moksha (liberation).
- **Forgiveness of Sins:** According to the scriptures, fasting on Saphala Ekadashi absolves one of past sins and misdeeds. It is believed to erase the negative karmas that hinder spiritual growth.
- **Material Prosperity:** While the primary goal of Ekadashi vrat is spiritual enrichment, Saphala Ekadashi is also associated with material success. Devotees who sincerely worship Lord Vishnu on this day are blessed with prosperity and well-being.
- **Alignment with Cosmic Energies:** The observance of Saphala Ekadashi aligns devotees with the cosmic energies that govern the universe. This alignment helps them cultivate inner peace, resilience, and a positive outlook on life.

Rituals and Observances

The rituals associated with Saphala Ekadashi are steeped in devotion and discipline, designed to honor Lord Vishnu and invoke his blessings. Here is a detailed guide to the observances:

Pre-Fasting Preparations:

- Devotees wake up early, preferably during the Brahma Muhurta (around 4 AM), and take a ritual bath.
- The puja altar is cleaned and decorated with flowers, incense, and lamps.
- An idol or image of Lord Vishnu is placed on the altar, and offerings like fruits, Tulsi leaves, and sweets are prepared.

Fasting (Upavasa):

- Fasting is the cornerstone of Saphala Ekadashi observance. Some devotees observe a Nirjala fast (without water), while others consume only fruits and milk.
- The fast begins at sunrise on Ekadashi and ends at sunrise the following day, known as Dwadashi.
- During the fast, devotees abstain from grains, pulses, meat, onion, and garlic.

Worship and Prayers:

- Devotees perform Vishnu puja, chanting sacred mantras like the Vishnu Sahasranama (a thousand

Important information

Saphala Ekadashi, Paush, Krishna Ekadashi

Thursday, 26 December 2024

Ekadashi date start: 25 December 2024 at 22:29 PM

Ekadashi date ends: 27 December 2024 at 00:43 AM

names of Vishnu) and Om Namoh Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

- Reading or listening to stories from the Bhagavad Gita or Vishnu Purana enhances spiritual merit.
- Night Vigil (Jagran): Staying awake throughout the night is a key aspect of Saphala Ekadashi. Devotees engage in kirtans (devotional songs), bhajans, and meditation to keep their minds focused on Lord Vishnu.

Charity and Acts of Kindness:

- Offering food, clothes, or monetary support to the needy is considered highly auspicious. Acts of charity performed on this day amplify the spiritual benefits of the vrat.

Breaking the Fast (Parana):

- On Dwadashi, devotees break their fast after offering food to a Brahmin or a needy person. The Parana should be completed within the prescribed time to ensure the vrata's efficacy.

Astrological and Environmental Significance

- **Astrological Influence:** Observing Saphala

"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 humanRs "

-- Arish K Sahani

Ekadashi during the Krishna Paksha amplifies the moon's calming energies, aiding in emotional balance and mental clarity. This day is particularly beneficial for individuals seeking relief from stress and negative influences.

- **Environmental Awareness:** The rituals emphasize simplicity and mindfulness, encouraging devotees to reduce their ecological footprint. Abstaining from elaborate meals and opting for natural offerings aligns with sustainable practices.

The Global Observance of Saphala Ekadashi

Saphala Ekadashi is celebrated with great fervor across India and other countries where Hindu communities reside. Temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu, such as Tirupati Balaji, Ranganathaswamy, and Dwarkadhish, witness special pujas and festivities. Devotees gather to participate in collective prayers, kirtans, and charitable activities. The day fosters a sense of unity and shared devotion among the community.

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NOTICE OF NAME CHANGE

To whomsoever it may concern

I, Dalbir Singh Multani s/o Jasvir Singh (DOB: May 14, 1988), holder of Indian Passport number W4104934, resident of 68 B Street Number 3 Bahadurgarh Patiala Punjab, and now living at 1688 Gordon Drive Greenwood Indiana 46143, have changed my name from DALBIR SINGH MULTANI TO DALBIR SINGH.

Get to the
Point



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CONTD FROM PAGE 1

Jagmeet Singh says NDP will vote to topple Trudeau's govt in Canada

complain Trudeau is too beholden to big business.

"No matter who is leading the Liberal Party, this government's time is up. We will put forward a clear motion of non-confidence in the next sitting of the House of Commons," said Singh.

The leader of the Bloc Quebecois, a larger opposition party, promised to back the motion and said there was no scenario where Trudeau survived.

The Conservatives said they would ask Governor General Mary Simon - the personal representative of King Charles, Canada's head of state - to recall Parliament to hold a no-confidence vote before the end of the year. Constitutional experts say Simon would reject such a move.

"We cannot have a chaotic clown show running our government into the ground. What is clear is that Justin Trudeau does not have the confidence of Parliament," Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre told reporters.

Shortly after Singh issued his letter a smiling Trudeau, under growing pressure to quit after the shock resignation of his finance minister this week, presided over a cabinet shuffle.

Trudeau's office was not immediately available for comment.

Trudeau, who has not publicly spoken about Freeland's exit, usually addresses reporters after cabinet shuffles but left without saying a word. Major domestic media organizations said his office had canceled traditional end-of-year interviews.

Votes on budgets and other spending are considered confidence measures. Additionally, the government must allocate a few days each session to opposition parties when they can unveil motions on any matter, including non-confidence.

Singh's move is a political risk, since the polls showing a bad defeat for the Liberals also have bad news for the NDP.

Darrell Bricker, CEO of polling firm Ipsos-Reid, said Singh saw a chance to replace the Liberals as the first choice for voters who opposed the Conservatives.

"Waiting to give the Liberals and even Trudeau a chance to get off the mat is ill-advised," he said by email.

Before Singh made his announcement, a source close to Trudeau said the prime minister would take the Christmas break to ponder his future and was unlikely to make any announcement before January.

Liberal leaders are elected by special conventions of party members, which take months to arrange.

Singh's promise to act quickly means that even if Trudeau were to resign now, the Liberals could not find a new permanent leader in time for the next election. The party would then have to contest the vote with an interim leader, which has never happened before in Canada.

So far around 20 Liberal legislators are openly calling for Trudeau to step down but his cabinet has stayed loyal.

The timing of the crisis comes at a critical time, since U.S. President-elect Donald Trump is due to take office on Jan. 20 and is promising to impose a 25% tariff on all imports from Canada, which would badly hurt the economy.

The premiers of the 10 provinces, seeking to create a united approach to the tariffs, are complaining about what they call chaos in Ottawa. (Agencies)

Ready to meet Trump over Ukraine negotiations: Putin

meet Trump, whom he said he had not spoken to for years.

Asked what he might be able to offer Trump, Putin dismissed an assertion that Russia was in a weak position, saying that Russia had got much stronger

since he ordered troops into Ukraine in 2022.

"Soon, those Ukrainians who want to fight will run out, in my opinion, soon there will be no one left who wants to fight.

We are ready, but the other side needs to be ready for both negotiations and compromises." Putin said on Thursday that Russia had no conditions to start talks with Ukraine and was ready to negotiate with anyone, including President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Zelenskyy, whose term has technically expired but who has delayed an election because of the war, would need to be re-elected for Moscow to consider him a legitimate signatory to any deal to ensure it was legally watertight, said Putin.

'Pulled back Russia from edge of abyss'

President Vladimir Putin said he had pulled Russia back from the edge of the abyss after the chaos which accompanied the fall of the Soviet Union, and had built the country into a sovereign power able to stand up for itself. He admitted there was inflation but said that Russian growth rates outstripped those of Britain.

MEA refutes China's '6-point consensus' claim

The statement by China's Foreign Ministry was at divergence from India's statement on the outcome of the December 18 talks.

The Chinese ministry had said both sides reached a 'six-point consensus'

It mentioned putting the border issue in an 'appropriate position' and harked back to an agreement the two sides reached in 2005

India had not mentioned any of these aspects in its statement

The Chinese statement further added, "Both sides agreed to further refine the management rules for the border areas and strengthen confidence-building measures"

The Indian statement did not mention anything to 'refine' border management rules

The Chinese Foreign Ministry had said both sides reached a 'six-point consensus'. It mentioned putting the border issue in an 'appropriate position' in bilateral relations and harked back to an agreement the two sides had made in 2005. India had not mentioned any of these aspects in its statement issued late on Dec 18.

Answering a question on 'six-point consensus', Jaiswal said "our statement gives a perspective on what was discussed. We can speak for our press release only".

Meanwhile, sources on the Indian side said the phrase 'six-point consensus' is misplaced. These were points of 'discussions' between the two Special Representatives (SRs) - National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

For China, the 'appropriate position' of the border issue is to treat the matter as, one among, the many issues, sources said and added for India, a resolution of the pending boundary issue is a prime security concern and top-most priority. The Indian statement reflected it in as many words saying "reiterated the importance of maintaining a political perspective of the overall bilateral relationship while seeking a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable framework for settlement of the boundary question and resolved to inject more vitality into this process".

The Chinese statement had a different take. It said "both sides reaffirmed their commitment to continuing to seek a fair, reasonable, and mutually acceptable package solution to the border issue in accordance with the political guiding principles agreed upon by the two countries' special representatives in 2005".

The Chinese statement further added, "Both sides agreed to further refine the management rules for the border areas, strengthen confidence-building measures". The Indian statement did not mention anything to 'refine' border management rules. It said, "Drawing on the learnings from the events of 2020, they discussed various measures to maintain peace and tranquility on the border and advance effective border management". On expected lines, the two statements



had a rather expected divergence. The Chinese side mentioned "promoting the resumption of pilgrimages by Indian pilgrims to Xizang". Xizang is the name China uses to refer to Tibet.

The Indian side just mentioned the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in its statement. Also, China mentioned resumption of trade via the Nathu La Pass in Sikkim. India remained silent on the issue. (Source: TNS)

Senate passes spending bill to avert government shutdown

agriculture policy and anti-poverty law called the farm bill. It was the final vote of the 118th Congress of the United States.

It comes after a week of chaos in the House that materialized into a last-gasp compromise on Friday afternoon. House Republicans abandoned a bipartisan deal earlier in the week only to arrive at another, substantially similar bill after rejecting demands from President-elect Donald Trump and Elon Musk, his billionaire adviser.

Trump ordered Republicans to suspend the nation's borrowing limit to set up an easier path for the GOP to pass a new tax cut law in 2025. The GOP tried to include that measure in a Thursday night bill, but it was refused by a combination of Democrats and conservative hard-liners.

Brampton MP Ruby Sahota joins Cabinet as Justin Trudeau inducts eight new faces



BY
PRABHJOT SINGH

DECEMBER 20, 2024

OTTAWA (TIP): With the induction of Brampton MP Ruby Sahota, the number of South Asians in the 38-member Cabinet of Justin Trudeau has gone up to six. She will be the Minister for Democratic Institutions and Minister Responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

Never before have MPs of South Asian descent had such a good representation in the federal Cabinet. Questions were being asked about the longevity of the reshuffled Cabinet as all the three Opposition parties - Conservatives, Bloc Quebecois and New Democrats - are out baring their knives to kill the government at the first possible opportunity.

The American threat of a 25 per cent tariff looms large in the air as President-elect Donald Trump is scheduled to assume office on January 20.

After Ruby Sahota's inclusion, other MPs of South Asian descent on the Canadian Cabinet are Anita Anand, Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, as she sheds the portfolio of President of the Treasury (that goes to Ginette Petitpas Taylor), Jaffna-born Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Kamal Khera, Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Harjit S. Sajjan, President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, and Arif Virani, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

While the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, announced changes to the Ministry, in his declared intent to continue till the next federal election in October of next year, both the Leader of Opposition, Pierre Poilievre, and the Liberals ally, Jagmeet Singh of New Democrats, made clear their stands to bring down the minority Liberal government at the early possible opportunity to force an early election.

Pierre Poilievre, who earlier in the day taunted the NDP leader Jagmeet Singh for his open letter to the Canadians, took to X to say that he has written to the Governor-General "confirming that the Prime Minister has lost the confidence of the House and that Parliament must be recalled to hold a vote before the end of the year on triggering an Axé The Tax election. I am asking the NDP leader to match his actions to his word and send a

letter to Her Excellency asking for the same."

In an earlier post on X, Pierre Poilievre said: "Ha! Now that Parliament is closed there is no chance to introduce any motion for months-until after you get your pension. You did the same stunt in September, claiming you would no longer prop Trudeau up. Then you went back on your word and voted 8 times against an election and for your boss Trudeau. Just 11 days ago you voted against a non-confidence motion filled with your own words. Had you voted the other way, we would be almost halfway through the election now. Only common-sense Conservatives can and will replace this costly NDP-Liberal clown show.

Hours before the swearing-in ceremony at Rideau Hall, Jagmeet Singh took to X and announced that "Justin Trudeau failed in the biggest job a Prime Minister has: to work for people, not the powerful. The NDP will vote to bring this government down, and give Canadians a chance to vote for a government who will work for them."

In an open letter to Canadians that he shared on X, Jagmeet Singh said that he "called Justin Trudeau to resign and he should. He cannot fix health care. He cannot build homes you can afford. He cannot lower your bills.

"I have always fought like hell to get dental care, free birth control and diabetes medication. I did not give up when Justin Trudeau said no. And I won't let Pierre Poilievre take it all away.

"The next fight is a big one. Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives will give CEOs and big businesses anything they want, and make callous cuts to pay for it. They will cut health care, childcare, housing and people's pensions."

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's office released a statement saying that the new Ministry will deliver on what matters most.

It said "Building on the work done since 2015 to invest in Canadians, the team will continue to move forward on housing, childcare, and school food while working to put more money back in people's pockets.

"THE CHANGES TO THE MINISTRY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Anita Anand becomes Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Gary Anandasangaree becomes Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Steven MacKinnon becomes Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, and Ginette Petitpas Taylor becomes President of the Treasury Board

"THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO WELCOMED THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS TO THE MINISTRY:

Rachel Bendayan becomes Minister of

Official Languages and Associate Minister of Public Safety, Élisabeth Brière becomes Minister of National Revenue, Terry Duguid becomes Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada, Nate Erskine-Smith becomes Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Darren Fisher becomes Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, David J. McGuinty becomes Minister of Public Safety, Ruby Sahota becomes Minister of Democratic Institutions and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, and Joanne Thompson becomes Minister of Seniors.

"These new ministers will work with all members of Cabinet to deliver real, positive change for Canadians. They join the following ministers remaining in their portfolio:

- Terry Beech, Minister of Citizens' Services
- Bill Blair, Minister of National Defence
- François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
- Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant
- Karina Gould, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons
- Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
- Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario
- Mark Holland, Minister of Health
- Ahmed Hussen, Minister of International Development
- Gudie Hutchings, Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth
- Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Kamal Khera, Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities
- Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs
- Diane Lebouthillier, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
- Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
- Soraya Martinez Ferrada, Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec
- Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
- Mary Ng, Minister of Export



Brampton MP Ruby Sahota
Photo / Courtesy House of commons

Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development

- Harjit S. Sajjan, President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada
- Ya'ara Saks, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health
- Pascale St-Onge, Minister of Canadian Heritage
- Jenna Suds, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
- Rechie Valdez, Minister of Small Business
- Arif Virani, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
- Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources," the statement said.

(Prabhjot Singh is a Toronto-based award-winning independent journalist. He was celebrated by AIPS, the international body of sports journalists, for covering ten Olympics at its centennial celebrations held at UNESCO Centre in Paris during the 2024 Olympic Games. Besides, he has written extensively about business and the financial markets, the health industry, the public and private sectors, and aviation. He has worked as a political reporter besides covering Sikh and Punjab politics. He is particularly interested in Indian Diaspora and Sikh Diaspora in particular. His work has also appeared in various international and national newspapers, magazines and journals)

History This Week

DEC 20- DEC 26

DECEMBER 20

December 20, 1956 - The Montgomery bus boycott ended after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling integrating the Montgomery bus system was implemented. The boycott by African Americans had begun on December 5, 1955, after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus to a white man.

December 20, 1989 - The U.S. invaded Panama attempting to capture Manuel Noriega on charges of narcotics trafficking. Operation Just Cause occurred seven months after Noriega had declared unfavorable election results in his country to be null and void. The invasion toppled the Noriega government and resulted in the installation of Guillermo Endara as president. Noriega temporarily eluded capture, but surrendered a few weeks later to U.S. troops. He was then tried, convicted, and imprisoned in the U.S.



Birthday - American industrialist Harvey S. Firestone (1868-1938) was born in Columbiana County, Ohio. He founded Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. and was a close friend of Henry Ford and Thomas Edison.

DECEMBER 21



December 21, 1945 - World War II General George Patton died in Germany following a car accident. He had been injured on December 9th near Mannheim and was taken to a hospital in Heidelberg where he died. He was buried in Luxembourg. Nicknamed "Old Blood and Guts," he once stated during the war, "We shall attack and attack until we are exhausted, and then we shall attack again."

December 21, 1972 - East and West Germany established diplomatic ties, ending nearly two decades of Cold War hostility and paving the way for international recognition of East Germany.

December 21, 1988 - Pan American Flight 103 exploded in midair as the result of a terrorist bomb and crashed into Lockerbie, Scotland. All 259 passengers and crew members along with 11 persons on the ground were killed.

December 21, 1993 - The KGB (Soviet Secret Police) organization was abolished by Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Birthday - British statesman Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) was born in London. He led the Tory Party and twice held the post of prime minister. He was instrumental in the expansion of the British Empire into India and the Middle East during the reign of Queen Victoria. He also pioneered the concept of the political novel and produced such works as Vivian Grey, Coningsby, and Lothair.

Birthday - Soviet Russia leader Josef Stalin (1879-1953) was born in the village of Gori in Georgia, Russia (as Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili).

DECEMBER 22

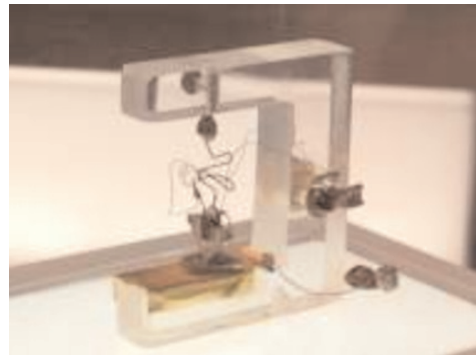
December 22, 1783 - Following a triumphant journey from New York to Annapolis, Maryland, George Washington, victorious Commander-in-Chief of the American Revolutionary Army, appeared before Congress and voluntarily resigned his commission.



Birthday - Italian composer Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) was born in Lucca, Tuscany. Widely considered the greatest Italian opera composer, he is best known for popular works such as Madama Butterfly and La Boheme.

Birthday - "Lady Bird" Johnson (1912-2007) was born in Karnack, Texas (as Claudia Alta Taylor). She was beside her husband Lyndon Johnson on board Air Force One when he was sworn in as the 36th U.S. President following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. She proved to be a gracious First Lady, remembered for her anti-litter campaign, asking citizens to help "Beautify America."

DECEMBER 23



December 23, 1947 - The transistor was invented at Bell Laboratories by John Bardeen, Walter Brattain and William Shockley, who shared the Nobel Prize for their invention which sparked a worldwide revolution in electronics.

December 23, 1948 - Hideki Tojo was hanged for war crimes. He had been Japanese prime minister from 1941-44. Following Japan's defeat in World War II,

he was arrested as a war criminal, tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to death. He was hanged along with six other Japanese wartime military leaders at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo, with the sentence carried out by the U.S. 8th Army.

December 23, 1987 - Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager set a new world record of 216 hours of continuous flight around the world without refueling. Their aircraft Voyager traveled 24,986 miles at a speed of about 115 miles per hour.

Birthday - Mormon prophet Joseph Smith (1805-1844) was born in Sharon, Vermont. He founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Birthday - Japanese Emperor Hirohito (1901-1989) was born in Tokyo. He was Japan's wartime Emperor and was allowed to remain in his position after the war.

DECEMBER 24



December 24, 1942 - The first surface-to-surface guided missile, later known as the V-1 Flying Bomb, was launched by German rocket engineer Wernher von Braun. Called "Buzz Bombs" for the loud buzzing sound of their motor, they were used by Nazi Germany against Britain beginning in September 1944.

December 24, 1943 - General Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force preparing for D-Day.

December 24, 1990 - On Christmas Eve, the bells of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow rang for the first time since the death of Lenin.

December 24, 1992 - Caspar Weinberger and five other Reagan aides involved in the Iran-Contra scandal were pardoned by President George Bush.

Birthday - Howard Hughes (1905-1976) was born in Houston, Texas. He was a movie producer, aviator and industrialist whose legendary desire for privacy generated many rumors and much curiosity. Perhaps best remembered for designing an eight-engine flying boat, nicknamed the Spruce Goose, which was to carry 750 passengers, although it only made one brief test flight.

Birthday - Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) was born in northern Spain (as Inigo de Onaz y Loyola). He founded the Catholic Jesuits (Society of Jesus).

DECEMBER 25

December 25, 1926 - Hirohito became Emperor of Japan.

December 25, 1989 - In Romania, a television broadcast of a Christmas symphony was interrupted with the announcement that Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife had been executed following a popular uprising. A pro-democracy coalition then took control. Ceausescu, a hard-line Communist, had been ousted from power after ordering his black-

shirted state police to suppress a disturbance in the town of Timisorara, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 4,500 persons.

Birthday - Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was born in Woolsthorpe, Lincolnshire, England. He was a mathematician, scientist and author, best known for his work Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica on the theory of gravitation. He died in London and was the first scientist to be honored with burial in Westminster Abbey.

Birthday - American nurse and philanthropist Clara Barton (1821-1912) was born in Oxford, Massachusetts. She served as a nurse during the Civil War and in 1881 founded the American Red Cross.



Birthday - The founder of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) was born in Karachi.

Birthday - Film actor Humphrey Bogart (1899-1957) was born in New York City. Best known for The African Queen, The Maltese Falcon, Casablanca and To Have and Have Not.

DECEMBER 26

December 26-January 1 - Kwanzaa, an African American family observance established in 1966 celebrating traditional African harvest festivals, focusing on family unity, with a community harvest feast on the seventh day. Kwanzaa means "first fruit" in Swahili.

December 26, 2004 - An estimated 230,000 persons were killed and 1.5 million left homeless when a magnitude 9.3 earthquake on the seafloor of the Indian Ocean set off a series of giant tsunami waves that smashed into the shorelines of a dozen countries including Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and Somalia.



Birthday - Mao Tse-Tung (1893-1976) was born in Hunan Province, China. He was a Chinese librarian, teacher, communist revolutionist, considered the "founding father" of the People's Republic of China.

Discover Rishikesh: The Yoga Capital of the World

Nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas in northern India, Rishikesh is a captivating town that offers a unique blend of spirituality, adventure, and natural beauty. Situated along the sacred Ganges River in the state of Uttarakhand, Rishikesh has earned the title of "Yoga Capital of the World." This serene destination attracts travelers from across the globe, from spiritual seekers and yoga enthusiasts to adventure junkies and nature lovers. This guide explores what makes Rishikesh a must-visit destination and offers insights into its rich culture, vibrant attractions, and thrilling activities.

A Sacred Gateway

Rishikesh holds immense religious significance in Hinduism. Known as the "Gateway to the Garhwal Himalayas," it is a starting point for the Char Dham pilgrimage, which covers the sacred shrines of Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri. The town is dotted with ancient temples, ashrams, and ghats that exude a spiritual aura. Legend has it that Rishikesh was named after Lord Hrishikesh, a manifestation of Lord Vishnu. Pilgrims flock here to seek blessings, meditate, and cleanse their sins in the holy waters of the Ganges.

Yoga and Wellness Haven

Rishikesh's global reputation as the "Yoga Capital of the World" stems from its abundant yoga schools and wellness retreats. Aspiring yogis and seasoned practitioners alike come here to deepen their practice. The International Yoga Festival, held annually in March, attracts participants from every corner of the world, offering workshops, classes, and lectures from renowned yoga teachers.

Some of the best yoga schools in Rishikesh

- Parmarth Niketan: Located on the banks of the Ganges, this ashram offers yoga classes, meditation sessions, and spiritual lectures.
- Yoga Niketan: One of the oldest yoga schools, emphasizing traditional practices and techniques.
- Sivananda Ashram: Known for its disciplined approach to yoga and Vedantic philosophy.

Wellness centers and spas in the area also provide Ayurvedic therapies, detox programs, and holistic treatments to rejuvenate the mind and body.

Adventure Capital

Rishikesh is not just a spiritual hub—it's also a paradise for adventure enthusiasts. The town offers an array of adrenaline-pumping activities:

- Whitewater Rafting: The Ganges



River is famous for its rapids, ranging from Grade I to IV. Shivpuri, located a short distance from Rishikesh, is a popular starting point for rafting adventures.

- Bungee Jumping: India's highest bungee jumping platform, operated by Jumpin Heights, is located here. Plunge 83 meters for an unforgettable thrill.
- Trekking: The surrounding hills feature numerous trekking trails, such as the Neer Garh Waterfall trek and the Kunjapuri Temple trek.
- Camping: Riverside camps offer stunning views, bonfires, and a chance to connect with nature.
- Ziplining: Glide over the Ganges for a breathtaking aerial view of the river and the lush forests.

Iconic Landmarks

Rishikesh's iconic landmarks add to its charm. These sites are a blend of religious, architectural, and cultural significance:

- Laxman Jhula and Ram Jhula: These suspension bridges are among Rishikesh's most famous landmarks. Spanning the Ganges, they offer stunning views and connect the main town with ashrams and temples.
- Triveni Ghat: A bustling ghat where pilgrims perform rituals and ceremonies. The evening Ganga Aarti is a mesmerizing spectacle of lamps, chants, and devotion.
- Beatles Ashram: Officially known as the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi Ashram, this place gained fame when The Beatles visited in 1968. The graffiti-adorned walls make it a haven for art and music lovers.
- Neer Garh Waterfall: A natural retreat, this picturesque waterfall is ideal for picnics and photography.
- Kunjapuri Temple: Perched at 1,676 meters, this temple offers panoramic views of the Himalayas and the



Ganges valley, especially during sunrise.

Culinary Experiences

Rishikesh is a vegetarian and alcohol-free zone, reflecting its spiritual ethos. However, this does not limit the town's culinary diversity. Cafes and restaurants here serve an eclectic mix of Indian and international cuisines. Popular spots include:

- The Little Buddha Cafe: Known for

its laid-back vibe and river views, it serves everything from Indian curries to vegan dishes.

- Ganga Beach Cafe: A cozy spot offering delectable Israeli, Italian, and Indian fare.
- Chotiwalla Restaurant: An iconic eatery offering authentic Indian thalis and sweets.
- Pure Soul Cafe: A wellness-focused cafe serving organic, gluten-free, and vegan options.

Tributes pour in for Justice Kuldip Singh, Justice Harjit Singh Bedi

Tributes poured in for two stalwarts of the Indian judiciary — Justice Kuldip Singh and Justice Harjit Singh Bedi — who passed away in November this year.

Justice Harjit Singh Bedi died on November 21, followed closely by Justice Kuldip Singh on November 25.

“Their passing has created an irreplaceable void, but their contributions and values will continue to inspire us as we move forward,” a resolution, signed by former judges, including Justice S S Sodhi, Justice M S Liberhan, Justice Mehtab Singh Gill, Justice S S Saron, Justice Ranjit Singh Randhawa, Justice Nawab Singh, Justice Rajiv Narain Raina, Justice Nirmaljit Kaur, Justice Jaishree Thakur, and Justice Sabina, expressed deep sorrow at the untimely passing of both luminaries within days of each other, stated.

Justice Kuldip Singh

(1 Jan 1932 - 25 Nov, 2024)

Justice Kuldip Singh was a renowned jurist and former judge of the Supreme Court of India, recognized for his unwavering commitment to environmental protection and human rights. His tenure in the judiciary left a significant impact on Indian jurisprudence, particularly in public interest litigation (PIL) and environmental law. Below is a detailed profile of his illustrious career and contributions.

Early Life and Education

Justice Kuldip Singh was born on January 1, 1932, in Punjab, India. He pursued his education with distinction, earning his degree in law from Panjab University, Chandigarh. After completing his studies, he embarked on a legal career that would see him rise to prominence in the Indian legal system.

Legal Career

Justice Singh began practicing law in the early 1950s, specializing in constitutional, civil, and corporate law. His expertise and dedication earned him widespread respect within the legal fraternity. Over the years, he was involved in several landmark cases, which helped cement his reputation as an advocate of justice and fairness.

He was designated as a Senior Advocate by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, a recognition of his legal acumen and skill. Subsequently, he served as the Advocate General for the state of Punjab, a role in which he provided legal counsel to the state government on critical legal and constitutional matters.

Appointment to the Supreme Court

Justice Kuldip Singh was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court of India on December 14, 1988. During his tenure, which lasted until December 21, 1996, he delivered several landmark judgments that have had a lasting impact on Indian



Justice Kuldip Singh

law and society.

Landmark Contributions

Justice Singh's judicial philosophy was marked by his emphasis on social justice and environmental sustainability. His notable contributions include:

Environmental Jurisprudence

Justice Singh is often referred to as the "Green Judge" for his landmark rulings in environmental cases. Under his watch, the Supreme Court actively employed the principle of sustainable development to balance environmental protection with economic progress.

In cases like *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum v. Union of India* (1996), he emphasized the importance of the "precautionary principle" and the "polluter pays principle" in managing environmental challenges.

He also played a pivotal role in directing measures to control industrial pollution, protect forest cover, and preserve biodiversity.

Public Interest Litigation (PIL)

Justice Singh was a strong proponent of PILs as a tool to address societal inequities. Through his judgments, he expanded the scope of PILs to include issues like environmental degradation, human rights violations, and corruption. His rulings empowered ordinary citizens to approach the judiciary for redressal of public grievances.

Human Rights Advocacy

Justice Singh demonstrated a profound commitment to upholding human rights. He authored judgments that safeguarded the rights of marginalized communities, upheld personal liberties, and strengthened the implementation of constitutional guarantees.

Electoral Reforms

Justice Singh was instrumental in advocating for transparency and fairness in the electoral process. His judgments stressed the need for free and fair elections, ensuring the sanctity of democratic institutions.

Legacy and Recognition



Justice Harjit Singh Bedi

Justice Kuldip Singh's judicial career left a deep imprint on the Indian legal system. His proactive approach to environmental and social justice earned him widespread recognition, both domestically and internationally. He is celebrated for bringing environmental issues into the mainstream of judicial discourse in India.

Post-retirement, he continued to contribute to legal and social causes. He chaired various committees and commissions, including one on electoral reforms, where he made significant recommendations to enhance transparency and accountability in India's democratic processes.

Justice Kuldip Singh is known for his humility and dedication to public service. Despite his high-profile career, he remained grounded, focusing on issues that affect the common man.

Justice Kuldip Singh's legacy as a jurist lies in his progressive judgments and his commitment to the ideals of justice, equality, and environmental sustainability. His contributions continue to inspire legal practitioners, environmentalists, and social activists in India and beyond.

Justice Harjit Singh Bedi

(Sept 5, 1946 - Nov 21, 2024)

Justice Harjit Singh Bedi (September 5, 1946 – November 21, 2024) was a distinguished Indian jurist who served as a judge of the Supreme Court of India. His legal career was marked by significant contributions to the Indian judiciary, characterized by fairness, integrity, and a deep commitment to justice.

Early Life and Education

Born in Sahiwal (formerly Montgomery), now in Pakistan, Justice Bedi hailed from a family of agriculturists. Notably, he was a direct descendant of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, being 17th in the line. Following the partition of India, his family settled in Fazilka, a township near the India-Pakistan border. His father, Tikka Jagjit Singh Bedi, served as a judge on the Punjab and Haryana High Court until his retirement in 1969.

Justice Bedi completed his schooling at

Bishop Cotton School in Shimla, obtaining his Senior Cambridge certificate in 1962. He pursued higher education in law, which laid the foundation for his illustrious legal career.

Legal Career

Enrolled as an advocate with the Bar Council of Punjab & Haryana on July 17, 1972, Justice Bedi practiced in civil, criminal, and writ matters. Between 1974 and 1983, he also served as a part-time lecturer in the Department of Laws at Panjab University, Chandigarh, demonstrating his dedication to legal education.

His career in public service began with his appointment as Deputy Advocate General for Punjab in 1983. He was designated as a Senior Advocate in 1987 and subsequently served as Additional Advocate General until 1989. In 1990, he was appointed Advocate General of Punjab, a position he held for about a year.

Judicial Appointments

Justice Bedi's judicial career commenced with his appointment as an Additional Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on March 15, 1991. He became a permanent judge on July 8, 1992. His judicial acumen led to his elevation as the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court on October 3, 2006. Shortly thereafter, on January 12, 2007, he was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court of India, where he served until his retirement in 2011.

Notable Contributions

Beyond his tenure on the bench, Justice Bedi was entrusted with significant responsibilities post-retirement. In 2012, the Supreme Court appointed him as the Chairman of a Special Task Force monitoring committee to oversee investigations into custodial deaths in Gujarat. His report, submitted in 2019, identified misconduct in several cases, underscoring his unwavering commitment to human rights and accountability.

Additionally, he was tasked by the Jammu and Kashmir Government to probe the mysterious death of National Conference activist Mohammad Yousuf Shah, approaching the assignment with the tenacity and care that defined his career.

Justice Bedi's personal life was deeply rooted in his family's legal tradition. His son, Justice Jasjit Singh Bedi, continues the legacy, serving as a judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Colleagues and friends remember Justice Bedi as a gentleman judge, whose judgments were known for their clarity and compassion. His demeanor combined gentle firmness with a profound sense of humanity, leaving an indelible mark on Indian jurisprudence.

All India-Pakistan matches until 2028 at neutral venues, including Champions Trophy

The International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed on December 19 that the 2025 Champions Trophy will be conducted in a hybrid model that will see India's matches in the eight-team event taking place at a neutral venue.

In a statement released by the ICC, it confirmed: "India and Pakistan matches hosted by either country at ICC Events during the 2024-2027 rights cycle will be played at a neutral venue," as reported by India Today last week. This will mean that Pakistan will not travel to India for their matches during the Women's ODI World Cup in 2025 and the T20 World Cup in 2026.

The tournament, scheduled to begin on February 19 in Pakistan, faced uncertainty due to India's refusal to travel to the host nation. The ICC reiterated in its statement: "This will apply to the upcoming ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 (hosted by Pakistan), set to be played in February and March 2025, as well as the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 (hosted by India) and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 (hosted by India and Sri Lanka)."

The statement also announced that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has been awarded the hosting rights for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2028, where neutral venue arrangements will also apply. Additionally, Cricket Australia is set to host one of the senior ICC women's events during the 2029-2031 cycle. "It was also announced that the PCB has been awarded hosting rights of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2028, where neutral venue arrangements will also apply."

R Ashwin announces retirement from international cricket

BRISBANE (TIP)

Indian cricket team spinner R Ashwin announced his retirement from international cricket following the third Test match against Australia in Brisbane on Wednesday, December 18. Ashwin made the announcement in the post-match press conference along with skipper Rohit Sharma after the game ended in a draw. Ashwin played the second match of the five-Test series in Adelaide but was replaced by Ravindra Jadeja for the match in Brisbane. Ashwin retires from the game as the second highest wicket-taker for India in Tests with 537 scalps in 106 games, leaving him only behind Anil Kumble (619 wickets).

Ashwin will continue to play T20 tournaments and he will represent Chennai Super Kings in IPL 2025.

"I won't take too much of your time. Today will be the last day for me as an India cricketer," Ashwin said at the end of the drawn third Test here in a joint press conference with captain Rohit Sharma during which he declined to take any questions and left after making the announcement.

The 38-year-old played the day-night Test in Adelaide and picked up one wicket. "He was very, very sure of his decision. We should stand by what he wants," said Rohit after Ashwin left the stage.

He was seen sharing an emotional moment with star batter Virat Kohli in the dressing room hours before the announcement. "A name synonymous with mastery, wizardry, brilliance, and innovation," said the BCCI in its tribute post on X.

With Ashwin stepping down from



the international stage, he is truly leaving behind a tremendous legacy and massive boots to fill for the youngsters who will come in to make up for his presence.

Ashwin spearheaded the bowling attack and was a major face behind India's rise to the top and eventual domination in Test cricket that lasted from 2014 to 2019.

When one turns to look at his dominance in the home conditions, he was a phenom. His expertise wasn't just limited to the ball but also some impactful contributions with the bat.

In the white-ball format, Ashwin made 181 appearances and snatched 228 wickets. He made 116 ODI appearances and took 156 wickets at

an average of 33.20, with best figures of 4/25. He also made 707 runs at an average of 16.44, with one fifty, a knock of 65 in 63 innings. He is the 13th-highest wicket-taker in ODIs for India.

In 65 T20Is, he took 72 wickets at an average of 23.22. His best figures are 4/8. He also scored 184 runs in 19 innings at an average of 26.28, with best score of 31. He is the sixth-highest wicket-taker for India in T20Is.

With 765 scalps in 287 matches, he is India's second-highest wicket-taker across all formats, next to Kumble (953). He also won the 2011 50-Over World Cup and 2013 Champions Trophy with India.

McSweeney dropped, Konstas called up for Boxing Day Tests

MELBOURNE (TIP)

Teenage sensation Sam Konstas was handed a maiden call up as Australia on Friday dropped rookie opener Nathan McSweeney for the final two Test matches of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India.

The 19-year-old is set to become Australia's youngest Test batting debutant in over 70 years.

If Konstas, who turned 19 on October 2, is selected in the playing XI in the Boxing Day Test, he would become Australia's youngest Test debutant since captain Pat Cummins, who was 18 years and 193 days old when he made his debut against South Africa in Johannesburg in 2011. The teenager would also become the youngest specialist batter to debut for Australia since Ian Craig when he played against South Africa at the MCG in 1953 aged 17 years 239 days.

Konstas's inclusion follows a series of disappointing performances from the Australian top order in the first three Tests especially McSweeney.

The 25-year-old, who made his Test debut in the series-opener in Perth, failed to score a single half century and could only manage scores of 10, 0, 39, 10 not out, 9 and 4 in his six innings and was dismissed by

Sam Konstas



Indian pace Jasprit Bumrah spearhead four times.

Konstas had been in the reckoning to partner experienced Usman Khawaja after grabbing the attention of Cricket Australia's selection committee following his twin Sheffield Shield centuries for New South Wales.

He had scored an unbeaten 73 at the MCG against India A while notching up a ton (107) in the Prime

Ministers XI pink ball game against India in Canberra.

"Sam gets a call up to the Test squad for the first time. His style of batting offers a point of difference and we look forward to watching his game develop further," Australian Chair of Selectors George Bailey said.

"We remain confident Nathan has the ability and temperament to succeed at Test level in the future. It was a difficult decision to leave him out.

"It has clearly been a challenge at the top of the order for batters throughout the series and we want to provide the option of a different line up for the next two matches," he added.

Konstas's inclusion follows a warning from former pacer Merv Hughes, who cautioned selectors against making any changes to the batting lineup for the Boxing Day Test.

The former selector said it would have been a "panic call" move from Australia to add Konstas in the squad.

"Now it would almost be a panic call to me... Just stay calm. They drew the last Test. The last two Tests have been a draw and a win, so what is there to panic about," Hughes had told 'The Courier Mail'.

Konstas had said earlier this week, "It would be a dream come true (playing the Boxing Day Test)."



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 beautiful facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses, and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"

Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



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