



INSIDE

IS MAYOR-ELECT ZOHRA MAMDANI READY?	PAGE 2
MESSAGES	PAGE 3 TO 7
AMERICA'S EASTER AT 250: 2026 RESURRECTS 1776	PAGE 8
A YEAR OF DISSIPATING PROMISES FOR INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY	PAGE 9
2025 : THE YEAR OF TRUMPISM	PAGE 10
2025 HAS BEEN A MOMENTOUS YEAR FOR THE CONSULATE: AMBASSADOR PRADHAN	PAGE 15
DEFINING MOMENTS OF INDIA IN 2025	PAGE 26
2025 IN THE SHADOW OF FEAR: THE DEADLIEST TERROR ATTACKS THAT SHOOK INDIA	PAGE 29
NOTABLE PERSONS WHO PASSED AWAY THIS YEAR	PAGE 43
UNITED STATES AT THE END OF 2025: A SUPERPOWER STRONG ABROAD, STRAINED WITHIN	PAGE 50

Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia dies at 80

PM Modi, Bangladesh Chief Adviser Yunus, Sheikh Hasina offer condolences



Khaleda Zia's political career was marked by intense rivalry with Sheikh Hasina, leader of the Awami League and daughter of Bangladesh's founding father. -File photo / AP

DECEMBER 30, 2025

NEW DELHI / NEW YORK (TIP):

Khaleda Zia, the longtime chief of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and a three-time prime minister, died on Tuesday morning, December 30, 2025, in Dhaka after a prolonged illness. She was 80.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, December 30, conveyed his "sincerest condolences" to the family of the late former PM of Bangladesh Khaleda Zia and recollected her contributions to the development of Bangladesh and India-Bangladesh bilateral relations.

The Chief Adviser of the interim government of Bangladesh, Prof. Mohammed Yunus, said that Begum Zia was not just the leader of a political

CONTD ON PAGE 66

Dr. Hari Shukla Honored with Key to New York City; Joins a Distinguished Lineage of Global Luminaries



Mayor Eric Adams presents the Key to New York City to Dr. Hari Shukla, who is accompanied by wife Kirti Shukla

BY I.S. SALUJA

DECEMBER 29, 2025

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): Dr. Hari Shukla, a highly reputed pediatrician based in Queens, New York, was on December 29, presented with the prestigious Key to New York City by Mayor Eric Adams at a special ceremony honoring his lifetime of service to children, community welfare, and

humanitarian causes. The award recognizes Dr. Shukla's groundbreaking and compassionate contributions to pediatric healthcare, which have improved the lives of countless families across New York City.

Speaking on the occasion, Mayor Adams recognized Dr. Shukla as a renowned medical expert, celebrated for

CONTD ON PAGE 14

Indian-origin billionaire Jayshree Ullal outshines tech giants like Nadella, Pichai

DECEMBER 29, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): Jayshree Ullal, the president and CEO of Arista Networks, has made history by becoming the world's richest Indian-origin woman entrepreneur, topping the Hurun Rich List 2025 with a staggering net worth of USD 5.7 billion. This impressive feat surpasses tech giants like Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai, with Ullal's wealth being more than five times that of Pichai's USD 1.1 billion.

Ullal's journey is nothing short of inspiring. Born in London and raised in New Delhi, she pursued her passion for engineering, earning a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from San Francisco State University and a Master's in Engineering Management from Santa Clara University. Her impressive career spans over three decades, with stints at AMD, Fairchild

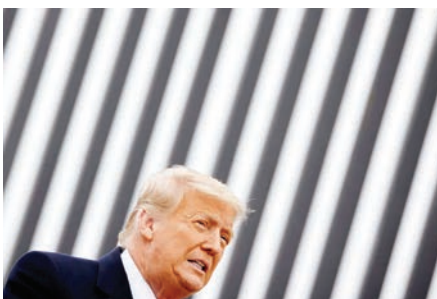


Jayshree Ullal has made history by becoming world's richest woman entrepreneur, topping the Hurun Rich List 2025 with a net worth of USD 5.7 billion -Photo: X

Semiconductor, and Cisco Systems, before joining Arista Networks in 2008.

Under Ullal's leadership, Arista Networks has transformed into a cloud networking powerhouse, competing with industry giants. The company's revenue soared to USD 7 billion in 2024, a 20 per cent increase from the previous year.

CONTD ON PAGE 66



President Donald Trump

File photo

Trump administration moves to void thousands of asylum claims

DECEMBER 29, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The Trump administration has launched a nationwide campaign to invalidate the asylum claims of thousands of people with active cases in U.S. immigration courts by arguing that they can be deported to countries other than their own, CBS News reported on Tuesday, December 30.

Another report says that U.S. could deny migrants access to asylum on the grounds they present a public health risk under a newly finalized regulation drafted during the COVID-19 pandemic in President Donald Trump's first term.

The regulation, effective on Wednesday, December 31, allows U.S. authorities to bar asylum based on "emergency public health concerns generated by a communicable disease," according to a copy posted in the Federal Register on Monday, December 29.

Reuters said it could not immediately independently confirm the report.



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COMMENT

Is Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani Ready?

Come January 1, 2026, and Zohran Mamdani will formally assume charge of New York City, the most complex, influential, and unforgiving city in the United States. No other mayoralty carries such weight. No other city so relentlessly exposes the strengths and weaknesses of those who govern it. As the calendar turns and the New Year begins, it is both appropriate and necessary to extend good wishes to Mayor-elect Mamdani-while also offering an unvarnished reminder of the promises he made and the perils that await him.

Mr. Mamdani's victory was a conscious, calculated choice by New Yorkers. This was not a default election. It was not an accident of turnout or a quirk of division. The people of New York deliberately turned away from familiar political "war horses" and entrusted their future to a new leader, a new political vocabulary, and a new promise of governance. That decision was born of frustration, aspiration, and impatience-frustration with a city that feels unaffordable, aspiration for fairness and dignity, and impatience with leaders who seemed unable or unwilling to confront systemic problems.

This mandate, therefore, is not symbolic. It is specific. It carries expectations, timelines, and accountability.

During his campaign, Mr. Mamdani made clear and repeated promises. He promised to take on the affordability crisis that is hollowing out the middle class and crushing working families. He promised meaningful action on housing-not rhetoric, not pilot programs, not endless studies, but visible relief for tenants burdened by rent increases and displacement. He spoke forcefully of economic justice, insisting that a city built by workers must not be governed solely by the wealthy. He pledged safer streets achieved through trust, reform, and professionalism-not through fear or abandonment. He committed to transparent governance and to listening to communities too often spoken about but rarely heard.

These words won him the election. They must now guide his administration.

For New York is a city where broken promises are remembered long after political victories fade. New Yorkers are a demanding electorate not because they are cynical, but because they are deeply invested in their city. They live with the consequences of municipal decisions every day-on overcrowded subways, in underfunded schools, in neighborhoods transformed by gentrification, and in the rising cost of simply staying put.

Mayor-elect Mamdani must therefore understand a fundamental truth: goodwill has a short shelf life. The honeymoon period in New York is brief, sometimes imaginary. The grace extended to new leaders evaporates quickly when rhetoric outpaces results.



It is both appropriate and necessary to extend good wishes to Mayor-elect Mamdani-while also offering an unvarnished reminder of the promises he made.

One immediate source of pressure will come from within his own ranks. Those who mobilized passionately for his victory will now demand speed, scale, and ideological purity. They will press him to move fast, to disrupt aggressively, to prove that this victory was not merely symbolic. While such energy is understandable, it can also become a trap. Governing a city of more than eight million people cannot be conducted as an activist campaign. Policy made in haste, without institutional grounding, risks unintended harm-especially to the very communities it intends to serve.

Leadership will require Mr. Mamdani to occasionally disappoint his most fervent supporters in order to protect the broader public interest. That is not betrayal; it is governance. Courage in office often means resisting applause when prudence demands caution.

The second pressure will come from seasoned political opponents and entrenched interests. New York City is home to powerful unions, vast real-estate interests, financial institutions, lobbyists, and deeply rooted bureaucracies. Many of these actors will test the new mayor early-not necessarily through open confrontation, but through delay, resistance, selective cooperation, and quiet obstruction. Others will actively hope for failure, waiting to declare that idealism cannot govern.

Mr. Mamdani must not mistake opposition for illegitimacy. He has won fairly. But he must also not underestimate the sophistication of those who have long navigated City Hall. Moral clarity alone will not overcome institutional inertia. Strategy, negotiation, and administrative competence will be equally essential.

Public safety is likely to become the earliest and most decisive measure of his leadership. No political philosophy survives prolonged insecurity. New Yorkers want safety without brutality, policing without prejudice, and accountability without chaos. This is not

By Indrajit Saluja



an abstract debate; it is about whether parents feel safe letting children ride the subway, whether seniors can walk to the store without fear, whether small businesses can operate without being preyed upon.

Mayor-elect Mamdani must remember that reform is not the same as retreat. A city that surrenders its streets to disorder abandons its most vulnerable first. Balancing justice and safety will require firm resolve, clear standards, and unwavering support for lawful, professional public servants-alongside serious reform where reform is due.

Equally critical will be fiscal discipline. The mayor of New York is the steward of one of the largest municipal budgets on the planet. Every promise must ultimately be paid for. Compassion divorced from arithmetic becomes irresponsibility. Progressive aspirations must be matched with credible funding mechanisms, realistic timelines, and transparent trade-offs. New Yorkers are willing to debate priorities; they are far less forgiving of fiscal recklessness disguised as virtue.

Mr. Mamdani must also guard against the intoxicating pull of symbolism. New York is a global stage. Every statement echoes far beyond its borders. But headlines are not governance, and gestures are not substitutes for sustained administrative work. Cities are improved quietly-by fixing systems, appointing capable commissioners, enforcing standards, and insisting on measurable outcomes.

Perhaps the greatest temptation facing the new mayor will be ego-the belief that electoral victory confers infallibility. History offers ample warning here. Power isolates. Advisors flatter. Social media amplifies applause and outrage alike. The strongest leaders are those who remain grounded, who listen to uncomfortable truths, and who remember that authority is borrowed, not owned.

Mr. Mamdani must never forget this: the trust placed in him was not blind allegiance. It was conditional confidence.

The voters who elevated him did so in hope-but they also did so with watchful eyes. They will measure his success not by ideology, but by impact. Are rents stabilizing? Are neighborhoods safer? Are services more reliable? Are opportunities expanding for those long excluded from prosperity?

As the New Year arrives, therefore, we wish Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani well-but not lightly. We wish him wisdom equal to his ambition, patience equal to his passion, and humility equal to his authority. Walk carefully, Mr. Mayor. Govern cautiously, but decisively. Remember that every policy choice touches millions of lives.

New York has entrusted you with its present and a large part of its future. Honor that trust-not with slogans, but with steady, principled, competent leadership.

Happy New Year, Mayor-elect Mamdani! The city is watching and hoping.

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Harish Parvathaneni
Ambassador/PR



संयुक्त राष्ट्र स्थित भारत का स्थायी मिशन
न्यूयॉर्क
PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

29 December, 2025

MESSAGE

Dear readers,

Greetings of the season!

I extend my heartiest congratulations to Indian Panorama for bringing out its Special New Year issue.

As 2025 draws to a close, I note with immense satisfaction India's wide-ranging engagements in the multilateral sphere during the course of the year.

2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations. The milestone year comes at a time of complex global challenges, ranging from conflicts to humanitarian crises, and systemic and chronic hurdles to sustainable development facing countries of the Global South frustrating the achievement of the 2030 agenda. Even in the wake of these mounting challenges, India has successfully underscored its unwavering commitment to multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core.

India actively engaged in all important processes of the United Nations, with a focus on advancing development priorities and enhancing progress and prosperity for developing countries. Such engagement spanned across all the three pillars of the United Nations - peace and security, development and human rights. India continues to be a global leader in the area of peacekeeping and hosted three landmark events in New Delhi in 2025. Our emphasis in the development sphere has been on putting the needs of our Global South partners at the forefront and working closely with all UN member states towards accomplishing them. We were also able to showcase diverse aspects of the India growth story in the United Nations, through a series of activities on different themes, throughout the year - such as Digital Public Infrastructure, Sustainable Development and Localization of SDGs, Countering Terrorism, AI, and Women Empowerment.

Honourable External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar led the Indian delegation at the General Debate of the 80th UNGA session. He highlighted the current gaps in the UN architecture in terms of discharging its core functions across diverse domains. Reforming the United Nations, with particular emphasis on the Security Council, has been an important area of focus.

As we stand at the door step of 2026, my team at the Permanent Mission of India and I remain devoted to defending and advancing the interests of India and its citizens at the United Nations in the year ahead.

I wish all readers of Indian Panorama a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

(Harish Parvathaneni)



भारतीय राजदूतावास, रोमानिया
Ambasada Indiei, Romania
Embassy of India, Romaniai



Dear Readers of Indian Panorama,

As 2025 draws to a close, I extend my heartfelt New Year greetings to you, the dynamic global Indian community, from the vibrant heart of Bucharest, Romania. May 2026 dawn with renewed hope, prosperity, and an unbreakable spirit, illuminating our shared journey across continents.

Your unwavering connection to the motherland fuels our diplomatic endeavors, and *Indian Panorama* has long served as a cherished bridge in this journey. In Romania's historic embrace, where ancient fortresses meet modern aspirations, the Indian diaspora here continues to shine brightly. Through its dedicated Europe chapter, this beacon of Indian journalism, ably championed by Publisher & Chief Editor Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja, brings our stories vividly to life. From Diwali festivities lighting up the streets of Bucharest to bilateral engagements advancing cooperation in IT, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy, your pages capture the true essence of the India-Romania friendship.

Prof. Saluja's visionary leadership has made *Indian Panorama* more than a newspaper; it has become a trusted friend of the Embassy of India in Bucharest. His personal support, as a steadfast ally, has amplified our cultural exchanges, trade promotions, and community initiatives across Romania and Moldova. These articles do more than report events: they inspire, uniting the Indian diaspora in the United States with their counterparts in Europe, and fostering pride in India's expanding ties with the European Union.

As we step into 2026, exciting horizons lie ahead. India's G20 legacy is evolving into deeper partnerships in green technology, artificial intelligence, and cultural diplomacy. Let us seize these opportunities together, strengthening economic corridors, celebrating festivals such as Holi and Diwali, and building enduring bridges of mutual progress.

To every reader, I offer my sincere gratitude for your passion and resilience. May the New Year bless you and your families with good health, success, and joy. Continue to cherish your roots while embracing global aspirations.

H.E. Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra
Ambassador of India to Romania

Binaya S. Pradhan



Consul General of India
New York

December 11, 2025

MESSAGE

On the joyous occasion of New Year 2026, the Consulate General of India, New York, extends warm greetings to the readers, contributors, and well-wishers of *The Indian Panorama*. Since 2006, your New Year Special Edition has thoughtfully captured the defining events of each passing year while offering a meaningful glimpse into the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Over the past two decades, *The Indian Panorama* has emerged as an important bridge between India, the Indian diaspora, and the wider world. Published from New York, this English-language digital weekly has become a trusted platform for credible news, insightful commentary, and inspiring stories that reflect the aspirations and achievements of our vibrant community.

Guided by the motto "Ever Truthful," *The Indian Panorama* continues to promote understanding, dialogue, and goodwill among diverse cultures, especially here in the United States, where the Indian-American community plays a vital role in strengthening the India-US partnership.

As we step into 2026, the Consulate General of India, New York, conveys its best wishes to the editorial team and readers of *The Indian Panorama* for continued success, good health, and prosperity. May the coming year bring renewed hope and deeper bonds between India and its diaspora.

(Binaya S. Pradhan)

Prof. Indrajit S. Saluja
Chief Editor
The Indian Panorama
39 Charlotte Pl, Plainview, NY



TOM SUOZZI

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NEW YORK 3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Message

"Happy New Year! As we embrace this new year, I extend my heartfelt wishes for peace, health, and happiness to all my friends in the Indian community. Your friendship and steadfast support mean the world to me, and I am truly excited about the opportunities we have to strengthen our connections and build new partnerships in 2026.

A special thank you to my very good friends at Indian Panorama for your exceptional work and commitment to fair reporting over the years. Your unwavering support has been an incredible source of motivation, and I am eager to collaborate closely with you to achieve our shared dreams in the coming year. Together, we can create a lasting and positive impact!"

(Tom Suozzi)

रमेश बाबू लक्ष्मणन
Ramesh Babu Lakshmanan



भारत का प्रधान कौंसल
अटलांटा
Consul General of India
Atlanta



Message

My warm greetings to the readers and the team of *The Indian Panorama* on this special edition.

Over the years, *The Indian Panorama* has played an important role in strengthening the bond between the diaspora and its cultural heritage, while thoughtfully showcasing stories of achievement, service, and shared values that unite the community.

These shared values are mirrored in India's ongoing development journey, which continues to gain momentum through people-centric initiatives such as Digital India, Make in India, Startup India, Ayushman Bharat, Aatmanirbhar Bharat, and PM Gati Shakti, along with significant investments in infrastructure and renewable energy. Guided by the vision of Viksit Bharat, these efforts aim to build a developed, inclusive, and resilient nation.

The Indian diaspora in the United States contributes meaningfully to this vision through its leadership in technology, healthcare, academia, entrepreneurship, and public service, while also strengthening economic cooperation and people-to-people ties between India and the United States.

In this shared endeavour, the Consulate remains firmly committed to the welfare of the Indian diaspora and to further deepening the enduring partnership between the two democracies.

As we welcome the New Year 2026, I wish *The Indian Panorama* continued success and its readers a year filled with prosperity, good health, and new opportunities.

(Ramesh Babu Lakshmanan)



RAJ KUMAR SINGH

AMBASSADOR OF INDIA TO
GUATEMALA

(CONCURRENTLY ACCREDITED
TO EL SALVADOR & HONDURAS)

Message

Dear Readers,

As we step into the New Year, I extend my warm greetings and best wishes to the readers of *Indian Panorama*. The year gone by has been a significant and rewarding one for India's engagement with the Central American region, marked by strengthened partnerships, meaningful dialogue, and deepening people-to-people ties.

The year 2025 witnessed notable progress in India's relations with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Our engagement expanded across diverse sectors including trade and commerce, capacity building, development cooperation, culture, education, and health. India's growing presence in Central America was reflected in increased bilateral interactions, successful business-to-business engagements, cultural initiatives, and development-oriented projects that resonate with our shared priorities of inclusive growth and mutual prosperity.

I am particularly encouraged by the positive momentum in trade and economic cooperation, with greater interest from both Indian and Central American businesses to explore new opportunities. Our collaboration with local governments and institutions has paved the way for deeper partnerships in areas such as SMEs, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, infrastructure, and skill development. At the same time, India's cultural outreach-through yoga, cinema, festivals, and educational exchanges-has further strengthened the bond between our peoples.

Looking ahead, the year 2026 presents fresh opportunities to build upon this strong foundation. Our focus will remain on enhancing trade and investment linkages, promoting Indian culture and traditions, expanding development cooperation, and fostering closer collaboration with the governments and communities of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. We aim to further amplify people-to-people connections and support initiatives that contribute to sustainable development and shared growth.

May the New Year bring joy, prosperity, and success to all of you. As we turn the pages of 2026, let us write them with the ink of unity and shared accomplishments.

Wishing you and your loved ones a year filled with peace, happiness, and significant achievements. Happy New Year!

(Raj Kumar Singh)



भारत का प्रधान कौंसल
ह्यूस्टन
CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA
HOUSTON

December 23, 2025

Message

I would like to congratulate the *Indian Panorama* for bringing out this elaborately illustrated Special Edition on the occasion of New Year 2026. *Indian Panorama* serves as a vibrant link between the Indian community in the USA.

The India-US relations in the year 2025 continued the momentum despite trade-related headwinds. The Consulate General of India in Houston also organized various events highlighting the mutual and potential opportunities for business, academic and other people-to-people connect between both the countries. The dynamic Indian American Community in the US is a strong pillar in strengthening the bilateral relations between our countries. We look forward to their continued support for our events and activities.

I also take this opportunity to extend seasons greetings and best wishes for everyone for a Happy New Year 2026.

D.C. Manjunath
(D.C. Manjunath)

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January 1, 2026

The Indian Panorama
P.O. Box 190067
South Richmond Hill, NY 11419

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year and best wishes to the readers of the Indian Panorama on the publication of its New Year's Special Edition!

As we celebrate the holiday season and bid farewell to 2025, we take this time to reflect on the successes of the past year and look forward to the future with renewed hope, optimism, and ambition. A brighter future lies ahead!

As always, the Indian Panorama was there through it all, bringing readers the latest news and important information so that our community can make informed choices and stay abreast of current events. Since the newspaper's inception in 2006, the Indian Panorama has rapidly come to occupy a central place for the South Asian community and serve as an essential resource in our increasingly multicultural, multi-religious contemporary American society.

As we enter 2026, we look forward to building on our many years of achievement together, and we look to chart a path forward and create a stronger community and a better New York for all. As your New York State Legislator and the Chair of the Committee on NYC Education, I will continue to push for public policies that improve the quality of our public education system, and commit to supporting programs and services that uplift our diverse communities in the new year and beyond.

Wishing you and your loved ones a most joyous and happy holiday season and best wishes for the New Year!

Sincerely,

John C. Liu



HARRY SINGH BOLLA
CEO & PRESIDENT
BOLLA OIL CORPORATION

809, STEWART AVENUE
GARDEN CITY, NY 11530

Message

As an Indian-origin American businessman who arrived in this great country only a few years ago, I extend my warm New Year greetings to the readers of The Indian Panorama.

America remains a land of opportunity-a true green pasture-for all who come with hope, discipline, and purpose. But this dream is not automatic. Success here rests on a simple but unwavering mantra: hard work, honesty, law-abiding conduct, and loyalty to this country of adoption.

Those who immigrate in search of a better future must respect the laws of this land and contribute positively to its society. The American Dream is realizable for those who work diligently and honestly, without shortcuts.

Above all, I strongly urge our young generation to embrace education. Look around, and one finds that those with education have better avenues to succeed in life. Their success powerfully demonstrates how learning, integrity, and perseverance open doors. With feet firmly planted on the ground, look for the stars.

Happy New Year!

(Harry Singh Bolla)



RAVI BATRA
X @RAVIBATRA

Only in America

To be an American, at the time of our Founders or now, is to appreciate Guru Gobind Singh as a selfless protector of the universal thirst throughout history for a people's Bill of Rights, rather than Marie Antoinette's "let them eat cake," when they couldn't afford bread. Beyond "Affordability," and more important, are the Rights and Liberties we take for granted.

It has recently dawned upon me, in the course of writing an appellate brief, that America fulfilled humanity's yearning for rights and liberties, when such rights had previously only belonged to Emperors, Kings, Counts and Barons.

But two other facets also came into sharp focus and clarity: 1. First Amendment's Freedom of Religion is a gift of Christendom to itself, as at our Founding in 1776 there were multiple denominations of Christianity, and to grant each denomination its freedom is why Religious Freedom was born; hence, to be Jewish, Hindu, Catholic, Moslem, Sikh, Jain, etc. freely in America is a gift of Christianity; 2. that the genius of our Founders on December 15, 1791 of enacting and ratifying that engine of American Exceptionalism - the Bill of Rights - had the Ninth Amendment to safeguard all other unenumerated rights and liberties, has somehow been lost in society and worse, in the courts, as people, teachers, professors, politicians, lawyers, judges have forgotten our history: from Moses to Cicero to Thomas Becket to Magna Carta to John Locke to John Stuart Mill. Including, separation of Church and State.

Under President Trump-47, as we prepare to celebrate our 250th, it's time we stop, rediscover and understand the true original genius of our Founding Fathers and Mothers, as if we were there with them signing the Declaration in 1776, passing the Constitution in 1787 and joining Ben Franklin in Philadelphia and assuring our fellow-American: "It's a Republic Madam, if you can keep it."

America's beauty isn't that we can celebrate Guru Gobind Singh and others who fought for human rights and liberties. It is that Christianity in America, at our founding in 1776, gave us that right, and all of us must first protect and defend Christianity as it was in America in 1776.

I say it that way, as the papacy during the Middle Ages was so corrupt during the Medici time, that a German Monk Martin Luther stood up to protest, and gave birth to Protestants.

So, even Christianity has been at its best only in America. How divine after 2000 years, that we should have the first-ever American Pope: Leo XIV, who was born Robert Francis Prevost on Sept. 14, 1955 in Chicago to Louis Marius Prevost and Mildred Martínez. His father is of French and Italian descent, and his mother is of Spanish descent.

We must pledge to resurrecting America's exceptionalism as we celebrate her 250th birthday. As Lincoln predicted in Gettysburg, if we can keep the Government to be "of, by and for" the people, it will survive for a thousand years.

So, I'm proud to be an American and a Hindu by birth, and relish my core obligation as an American to protect Christianity First. If we can protect Christianity, then all of the faiths will be protected too. The recent military strike in Nigeria, as POTUS ordered our Department of War, to stop the persecution and killing of Christians is exactly justified with America First.

(Ravi Batra)



DR. UPENDRA CHIVUKULA
FORMER DEPUTY SPEAKER
AND ASSEMBLYMAN (D17)
OF THE NJ GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

MESSAGE

Happy Holidays!

This is an incredibly special time of the year as we end 2025 hoping for a better 2026. The series of changes from Washington, D.C. has increased our resolve about things we thought would never happen. That has changed our perspectives as Indian diaspora and forced our community faced challenges. Immigration, especially in the IT industry, for business owners who depend on H - 1B visas. U.S. universities have seen a significant drop in students from India because of the changes in F-1 visas.

Indian immigrants in the U.S. faced heightened enforcement, stricter documentation rules, and increased visa risks. Executive Orders like 14159, Indian embassy warnings against illegal entry, and the Project 2025 proposals created new challenges for both legal and undocumented Indian nationals. Delays at the Customs and Border Patrol and the U.S. Consulates and Embassy caused hardship to Indian nationals.

Trade tariffs disrupted exports from India, and food-price increases affected our pocketbooks adversely. U.S. policies affected India causing trade tensions. But they also led to India's domestic economic reforms, and the deepening of U.S.-India innovation ties. These developments helped shape India's global standing and the Indian diaspora in America faced opportunities/challenges.

(Upendra Chivukula)



ASSEMBLYMAN EDWARD
C. BRAUNSTEIN
26TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT,
NEW YORK

Message

I want to congratulate The Indian Panorama on another successful year covering the important issues impacting the Indian American Community.

Thank you for informing our communities and promoting goodwill and understanding among diverse cultures.

I wish everyone at the paper, all of your readers, and the New York community at large a happy and healthy new year.

(Edward C. Braunstein)



V.K. RAJU, MD, FRCS, FACS

Ophthalmologist, Regional Eye Associates
Past President and Founder, Eye Foundation of America
President and Founder, Goutami Eye Institute
Clinical Professor, West Virginia University
Director, International Ocular Surface Society
Adjunct Professor, GSL Medical School
Adjunct Professor, Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University
Author: Musings on Medicine, Myth, and History/India's Legacy
Publisher: How to Live Like Gandhi, Life's Little Rules

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New Year Message

I am pleased to note that The Indian Panorama is bringing out a special New Year issue. I extend my warm wishes to its readers for a happy and meaningful New Year.

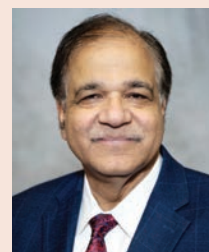
Having witnessed India's journey since independence, I remain deeply optimistic about its future. For over seven decades, the nation has defied early doubts and demonstrated remarkable resilience and potential. Through my long association with India, particularly my work in combating preventable blindness, I have seen both its challenges and its extraordinary strengths.

India's greatest asset lies in its people-especially its youth. While we must acknowledge persistent issues in health, sanitation, and inequality, we should also recognize the immense talent, energy, and promise that set this country apart.

As Nelson Mandela said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way it treats its children." My hope for the New Year is that India continues to invest in its most vulnerable and ensures a healthier, more equitable future for all.

Best regards.

(Dr. V. K. Raju)



DR. AVINASH GUPTA, MD, FACC

Diplomate American Board of Cardiovascular Disease, Nuclear Cardiology & Lipidology
Chief of Cardiology & President of Medical Staff, MMC-SC
Member, Ocean County Board of Health
Chairman, Shree Siddhivinayak Temple USA, Toms River
Past President, FIA, BJANA, MOCAAPI
Regional Director, National AAPI, Mid-Atlantic II
Director, PRAN-BJANA Medical Group

MESSAGE

As we welcome the New Year, I extend my warmest wishes to all the esteemed readers of The Indian Panorama. May this year bring you and your families abundant happiness, good health, and lasting prosperity.

The bond between the world's oldest and largest democracies-the United States and India-continues to be a source of strength, inspiration, and stability for the global community. I sincerely hope that in the coming year, this partnership grows even deeper, fostering peace, progress, and shared prosperity across the world.

As someone who has had the privilege of serving several community organizations-including the Shree Siddhivinayak Temple, FIA, AAPI, MOCAAPI, and BJANA-I remain grateful for the trust placed in me and for the opportunity to contribute to the wellbeing of our community. These organizations have played an essential role in enriching the lives of Indian Americans in our Karmabhoomi, while also extending a compassionate hand to our brothers and sisters in our Matribhoomi.

My heartfelt wish is that these institutions continue to thrive, serve with dedication, and uphold the values that bind our global Indian family together.

Wishing everyone a blessed and fulfilling New Year!

(Avinash Gupta, MD, FACC)
agupta4577@gmail.com
732-598-2480



GOBIND (BEN) BATHIJA
C.E.O / PRESIDENT
GBN ENTERPRISES, GROUP OF
COMPANIES

Message

--Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Indian Community,
As we stand at the threshold of 2026, I extend my warmest greetings and best wishes to each of you and your families.

This past year has shown us the incredible strength of our community when we stand together. As we embrace the New Year, let us renew our pledge to uphold our 'Indian Heritage and American Commitment.' May this year bring prosperity to your businesses, peace to your homes, and a spirit of service to our society. Let us continue to build a legacy of excellence and compassion in our adopted home while keeping the flame of our culture alive for the next generation.

Wishing you all a Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous New Year!

Gobind Bathija
631-748-9333 cell , 631-281-2195 office, 631-514-3736 fax



TIRLOK MALIK
EMMY AWARDS NOMINATED FILM
MAKER, ACTOR AND PRODUCER,
HAPPY YOGA GURU AND SPEAKER

MESSAGE

TO THE INDIAN PANORAMA READERS AND FRIENDS

2025 has been a challenging year for many of us in various ways. Much happened which we did not want. But Life is about moving forward in the hope that better times will come, that good will prevail over evil. Always believe in "we shall overcome".

Wishing you and family a very happy new year, blessed with happiness, good health, peace & prosperity .

Wishing you gratitude, hope, and courage as you reflect and plan for the New Year.

Let us all pray and wish each other A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

(Tirlok Malik)



VEN PARAMESWARAN
FORMER CEO, FIRST ASIAN
SECURITIES
SCARSDALE, NY

Message

72 years ago, I came to the USA by boat from India. At that time there were only 3000 Indian Americans, all students and some government officials. Now we are over 5 million leading the Asians and the fastest growing. Politically we have enormous clout. We elected the first woman Vice President, who also ran for President; two governors; six Congressmen; New York City Mayor; and many others. Next year we will elect Krishnamoorthy to the U S Senate. Indian Americans are the CEOs of trillion-dollar corporations - Microsoft and Google and 50 other corporations.

India is the fastest growing economy @8.2%. India is the youngest with 50% of its population under 25 and 70% under 35. Google, Microsoft, Mat, and Amazon investing a total of over 100 billion in AI Storage facilities in India. There is a shortage of babies in China, the US and Europe. One can easily imagine the great potential for India.

I wish India and the Indian Americans a Happy New Year and look forward to harnessing their potential for growth.

(Ven Parameswaran)



GOBIND MUNJAL
NATIONAL PRESIDENT,
ASSOCIATIONS OF INDIANS IN
AMERICA (AIA)

New Year Message

As we step into the New Year, I as the National President of The Association of Indians in America (AIA), extend my warm greetings to the readers and editorial team of The Indian Panorama, and to Indian communities across the globe. I am deeply grateful to the members of AIA for entrusting me with the responsibility of serving as National President for a 4 years' term 2022-2025.

Over the past few years, AIA has made meaningful progress in strengthening our organization and expanding our reach. We have opened new chapters in some states, rejuvenated inactive chapters, and welcomed next generation of members into leadership roles. Landmark initiatives such as the revival of the prestigious Medical Council Awards Gala at "CIPRIANI", the celebration of India's 75th Independence anniversary with distinguished leaders at "Terrace on the Park" reflect our commitment to cultural pride and community engagement.

We also focused on good governance by updating our bylaws, improving communication among chapters, restarting the national newsletter, and ensuring prudent financial growth of life membership funds. AIA's active participation in major national events and its collaboration to support senior citizens further reinforce our service-oriented mission.

I sincerely thank the National Executive Committee, Past Presidents, and all AIA members for their unwavering support. Together, we look forward to a New Year filled with unity, service, and continued progress.

(Gobind Munjal)

The Message of the Rose

With Christmas and New Year wishes
God must have a lot to do
Whose will he grant we can't help wonder/
And just how many may come true

Peace in the world is the need of the hour
Not belligerent ultimatums issued
God's earth too beautiful to be trifled with
By various lobbies, new generation WMDs, nukes

And is leadership across the world
Geared to a new history?
Reinventing unsavoury pasts
Over them pasting respectability?

The crimson tide of violence and persecution unleashed
By men playing God with shrill *newmessianicrevisionist*
speech
Has abjured the path of justice
Enjoyed all too briefly.

The Seven Ages of man
Have been before us
And did we stop to think
In the daily grind and bustle
That life's road has a final stop somewhere

Things are not what they seem.
And prayers for peace across the world
Spring from hopes and dreams
Of human beings in the bivouac of Life
Beating hearts denied life

Hope springs eternal
It's what makes us human
And striving knows no rest
When there's so much at stake.

The thorns of life we tread on
Steel us on our way
The rose that grew above them
Speaks of all that life held

© Vanita Singh
New Delhi, December 2025

America's Easter at 250: 2026 resurrects 1776

TRUMP REVIVES AMERICA

Our Declaration of Independence In Congress, July 4, 1776

By Ravi Batra



The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new

Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:



For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by

Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

Which is why Thomas Jefferson is my favorite Founding Father Hero.

America's Best is Yet to Come!

HAPPY 250TH BIRTHDAY, AMERICA!



America's Christian generosity of spirit welcomed Ranju's journey to the Diwali stamp:

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



Ranju Batra, Chair

A year of dissipating promises for Indian foreign policy



By Suhasini Haidar

New Delhi confronts challenges that concern economic and energy security, global strategic stability, and regional security

The year 2025 began as one of considerable promise for Indian foreign policy. After 2024, a year that was dominated by national elections and political recalibration, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was expected to resume active diplomacy, with a full calendar of bilateral visits and multilateral engagements. Relations with the United States were expected to be reset under the second term of the Trump administration, continuing from Donald Trump's first term. Long-running Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) negotiations with partners such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the European Union (EU) seemed imminent, with commitments to complete them by the end of the year.

Across the geopolitical divide, a new engagement appeared to be taking shape with China after years of a stand-off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), especially after Mr. Modi's visit to China. Economic ties with Russia were also at a high point: India's oil imports from Russia had surged to \$52 billion, with U.S. and EU sanctions pressure having eased. Regionally, the government attempted to repair frayed relationships by reaching out to the Yunus administration in Bangladesh with a visit, in December 2024, by the Foreign Secretary, Vikram Misri, sending External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to Pakistan (October 2024), engaging the Taliban leadership in Dubai (January 2025), and preparing for regional visits from Nepal, Sri Lanka, and others. Five years after the Balakot strikes and the reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir, New Delhi was also projecting confidence in its security posture and its deterrent capacity for terrorism from Pakistan.

However, many of those expectations for 2025 dissipated by the end of the year. India's foreign policy planners found themselves wrestling with profound challenges across four interconnected domains: economic security, energy security, global strategic stability and regional security.

ECONOMIC AND ENERGY SECURITY

Instead of resetting India-U.S. ties, 2025 proved to be the most difficult year of this century. Actions by the Trump administration on tariffs, immigration and sanctions pushed trust levels back by decades. Washington's decision to levy a steep 25% reciprocal tariff on Indian goods hit key labor-intensive sectors such as apparel, gems and jewelry, and seafood. This followed from the Trump first term, where India's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) trade privileges were withdrawn.

To compound matters, the U.S. introduced a 25% surcharge on Indian imports of Russian oil, effectively making India the most heavily tariffed trading partner. Even if a forthcoming BTA softens the blow, the losses in contracts mean that factory-line closures and the retrenchment of workers remain. Immigration restrictions, particularly on H-1B visas, further undermined remittances, a key pillar of India's foreign exchange inflows. Of all the trade deals on the anvil, India signed FTAs with the U.K., Oman and New Zealand. But the big prizes that leaders had committed to signing in 2025, with the U.S. and the EU, are still pending.

Ties with China and Russia remained tenuous despite the iconic photo-moment of Mr. Modi-President Xi-President Putin holding hands at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit (September 2025) and the Modi-Putin bear hug on the tarmac of New Delhi airport earlier this month. While India-China flight-visa-pilgrimage links were restored, more fundamental security guarantees for the LAC were not. Neither have economic investment



India must recognize the limits of performative diplomacy.' Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping sitting on a traditional swing on the Sabarmati River front in Ahmedabad in September 2014.

File photo : PTI

regulations been removed. The hours-long detention of an Indian air passenger from Arunachal Pradesh at Shanghai (November 2025) has raised new concerns.

After three years of resisting western pressure over Russian Ural energy imports, New Delhi appeared to bend, after a new wave of U.S. sanctions. Whether India will be compelled to zero out its Ural imports - similar to how it halted Iranian and Venezuelan oil imports under U.S. pressure in the past - remains uncertain, but the choice carries economic and reputational costs. The India-Russia summit, that ended without any major agreements in strategic spheres such as defense, energy, nuclear and space cooperation, disappointed all the hype preceding it.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SECURITY

A central challenge for Indian strategists in 2025 has been the rise in global unpredictability. In its 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS), Washington identified China and Russia as "revisionist powers" seeking to undermine U.S. influence and global stability. In contrast, the 2025 NSS presents a softened, more ambiguous stance - avoiding direct mentions of China's aggression in the South China Sea and toward Taiwan, and treating Russia with more caution than criticism. The 2017 NSS hailed India's rise as a "leading global power" and "major defense partner", but the 2025 version offers only a limited articulation of India's role, primarily in the context of Indo-Pacific security and critical minerals. Given the short shrift to traditional U.S. allies in Europe and Asia, any deeper alignment with Washington, as had earlier been envisaged, seems risky now. Mr. Trump's references to his meeting with Xi Jinping as a potential "G-2" only intensify concerns about India's position in the Asian power balance.

At the same time, global acceptance of the Gaza and Ukraine peace proposals - both of which critics argue favor the aggressors - signals a weakening of the international rules-based order. China's rollout of a framework for "Global Governance" reflects its ambition to shape an alternative international architecture. For India, this requires serious thought about its own vision for a future global order, especially as the UN's failures at controlling conflict grow.

India's immediate neighborhood, which initially appeared stable in early 2025, became more volatile as the year progressed. The terror attack in Pahalgam (April) was a grim reminder that even with the security crackdown in Jammu and Kashmir and past cross-border operations in 2016 and 2019, threats remain embedded. That terrorists came hundreds of

kilometers inside the Valley to carry out the killings and escaped should merit serious introspection. India's retaliatory Operation Sindoor was militarily effective, but New Delhi's diplomatic campaign following the strike encountered setbacks. While countries condemned the terror attack, few openly supported India's cross-border response. Persistent questions - particularly regarding speculation about the loss of Indian jets - damaged India's credibility, as the government neither confirmed nor denied the reports.

Complicating matters were claims that other countries supported Pakistan's military actions. While India set aside concerns over China's role in Pakistan Air Force strikes, ties with Türkiye and Azerbaijan have nose-dived. The announcement of a Saudi-Pakistan mutual defense pact was an additional blow to India's regional calculus.

Mr. Modi's declaration of a "new normal" after the Pahalgam attack led to international worries over rapid escalation of the next conflict in South Asia. India's restrained handling of the Delhi blasts conspiracy (November 2025) eased some of those worries, but the broader issue remains: how will New Delhi respond to the next major attack, especially with Pakistan's political landscape increasingly shaped by the ultra-hawkish Field Marshal Asim Munir?

The 2024 regime-change protests in Bangladesh and the 2025 Gen-Z demonstrations in Nepal have created fragile transitional governments, reducing predictability in India's periphery. With elections in both countries scheduled for early 2026, New Delhi must prepare to engage with new leadership that is not necessarily positively disposed to it. With Bangladesh in particular, the end of the year has seen relations at their lowest ebb yet. The elections in Myanmar, on December 28, will be held on the Junta's terms, despite New Delhi's best attempts at fostering talks with the deposed NUG members and to ask for the more humane treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi.

LESSONS FOR 2026

Several lessons from 2025 stand out clearly. India must recognize the limits of performative diplomacy - warm embraces, highly publicized summits and symbolic gestures such as awards and leaders driving together in the same car do not necessarily translate into tangible gains. Performative aggression - threats to isolate or boycott countries only mean something if other countries join in. The government was sensible in shifting its projection of India as "Vishwaguru" (global teacher) during the G-20 year in 2023 to "Vishwamitra" (global friend). But it must now avoid slipping into the narrative of a "Vishwa-victim", blaming all others - American sanctions, Chinese maneuvering, Pakistan's machinations, or the "ingratitude" of neighboring states - for its disappointments.

New Delhi must stop being blind to its own double standards too - concerns over the lynching of a minority member in Bangladesh can only ring true only if the Modi government is prepared to condemn and stop similar attacks on minorities in India. The same is true for concerns about democracy and inclusive elections in the neighborhood. If rising Islamism in the region is an issue, then how does the government sanguinely sup with the Taliban? In 2026, with a world turning increasingly transactional, India can only bring up principles if it follows them consistently, regardless of whether they pertain to ties with geopolitical powers, or its own neighbors.

(The author is an editor with The Hindu. They can be reached at suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in)

2025 : The year of Trumpism

US-India relations have sunk to a new low, with the Cold War era distrust returning



By Sanjay Baru

"AS FOR THE NSS, THREE THINGS HAVE SO FAR BEEN CLARIFIED. FIRST, THAT TRUMP WOULD LIKE TO, AS IT WERE, 'CIRCLE THE WAGONS' AND SECURE CONTROL OVER THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, DECLARING NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA AS "OUT OF BOUNDS" FOR "OUTSIDE" POWERS. IN SOME WAYS, THIS MIRRORS VIEWS IN ASIA THAT BELIEVE THE US IS AN "OUTSIDE" POWER IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. THERE IS, HOWEVER, NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT TRUMP WOULD HAVE US FORCES RETREAT FROM ASIA AND HAND OVER THE SECURITY OF THE REGION TO REGIONAL POWERS."

There is little doubt that US President Donald Trump dominated world headlines in 2025. He did so on five different fronts: first, with his 'America First' and 'Make America Great Again' policy that has not only had an impact on US domestic politics and economics but also on global trade, migration and investment flows; second, with his tariff war and the use of tariffs as a geo-economic weapon; third, by seeking to inject himself into various bilateral conflicts around the world, from South, West and South-east Asia to Europe; fourth, by altering the equation between the US, China and Russia, seeking a G-2 with the former and a détente with the latter; and, finally, by becoming the subject of investigations and news headlines about his sex life.

Most recently, the focus has been on the Trump administration's National Security Strategy (NSS). Scores of papers and articles have been written worldwide commenting on this document. It has been described as a new Monroe Doctrine, not only asserting the primacy of the Western Hemisphere in American security strategy but also proposing military action in the region to defend those interests.

How important this stated strategy



Trump's Worldview: The NSS does not suggest that the US troops overseas would be retreated. -Photo :Reuters

would be in influencing the actual behaviour of the US on the diplomatic and military fronts remains to be seen. In India, much of the commentary has been on the NSS view of US-India relations and India's place in Trump's worldview and 'grand strategy'. It has been noted widely that US-India relations have sunk to a new low, with the distrust of the Cold War era returning, especially in the nature of the relationship at the leadership level.

In Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's time, the unprintable language in which President Richard Nixon spoke about her and India remained within closed doors and sealed papers till the confidentiality was broken and various memoirs recorded the low level of discourse in Washington, DC, about India and its leadership. Today, most of what is said is on television and social media. This has cast a long shadow on the relationship.

As for the NSS, three things have so far been clarified. First, that Trump would like to, as it were, 'circle the wagons' and secure control over the western hemisphere, declaring North and South America as "out of bounds" for "outside" powers. In some ways, this mirrors views in Asia that believe the US is an "outside" power in this part of the world. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that Trump would have US forces retreat from Asia and hand over the security of the region to regional powers.

Second, Trump has prioritised US relations with China above all else. China is both a challenge and a power to deal with. His tweet about the idea of a G2 - Group of Two - set the cat among

Asian pigeons. He would like the war in Europe to end more or less on Russia's terms, thereby further promoting the implicit view that the three Big Powers are entitled to their spheres of influence and security. These approaches have implications for India.

Finally, many in India and overseas, especially in Europe, have interpreted the NSS as a statement of American retrenchment. This particular conclusion is a misinterpretation of Trump's worldview and exaggerates the possibility of American retrenchment.

Consider the fact that nowhere in the NSS is there any statement proposing retrenchment as far as the real projection of American power worldwide is concerned, namely, the US military bases overseas. There is no suggestion in the NSS that these would be shut down or that there would be any significant draw-down in the number of US troops stationed abroad.

There are, as of now, over 1,60,000 US troops stationed in over 100 countries worldwide at 750 military sites. The most important overseas stations of US armed forces are in the 'occupied' countries of Germany, Japan, Italy and Korea (countries occupied by the US in the Second World War), member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and in the 'client' states of West Asia, especially Bahrain and Kuwait.

The annual cost of maintaining these bases has been estimated variously as being between \$50 billion and \$60 billion. The NSS says nothing about reducing the number of troops or bases but is emphatic that there has to be a greater "burden-sharing". The US wants NATO

members, Japan, Korea and Gulf states to increase their defence spending by partly financing the presence of US armed forces on their territories.

Neither President Trump nor any other American President since the Second World War has ever said that there is any longer any reason for the US forces to be stationed in other countries.

While these forces are present in limited numbers in many countries, including in India, thanks to bilateral agreements, the fact is that the larger presence in some countries is linked to the outcome of the Second World War. US troops remain stationed in all the countries the US 'liberated' and 'occupied' at the end of the war.

Trump's NSS has not called for a retreat or a retrenchment from these territories. It merely asks these countries to pay up for the maintenance of the US forces they host. It is the classic mafia-style act of demanding 'protection money' for the 'security' offered against potential threats from other Big Powers.

So, think about this - the US is willing to allow China and Russia to be powerful military machines in Europe and Asia so that the European and Asian neighbours of Russia and China would seek protection from these regional hegemonies from the global hegemon, the United States. In what way is this US retrenchment?

This will be Trump's legacy and going forward, the 2020s will be defined by how the world and the US respond to what can best be described as Trumpism.

(Sanjay Baru is a senior journalist)

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Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj- Ambassador of Peace

Transforming Lives through Meditation, Ethical Living & Selfless Service



By Dr. Renee Mehrra

Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj is an internationally renowned spiritual teacher, an ambassador of peace, scientist, and an acclaimed author, offering a compelling vision for global harmony and oneness. He is the head of Science of Spirituality (www.sos.org), a nonprofit, non-denominational organization that focuses on personal transformation through meditation, ethical living and selfless service under his spiritual guidance. Science of Spirituality has a special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2013, and also maintains a presence as a club with the United Nations Staff Recreational Council. The organization's global outreach is extensive with over 3400 centers worldwide. It regularly responds to natural disasters with financial assistance, food, clothing, and volunteer relief workers. In addition, it sponsors blood drives, annual free eye clinics, and provides medical resources to needy communities.

Born in India and educated as a scientist in the United States, Sant Rajinder Singh Ji has a keen understanding of both mysticism and science. He embodies a lifelong commitment to inner and outer peace, bridging science and spirituality, and sharing to a global audience the timeless spiritual wisdom in a clear, logical, and accessible manner.

Those who have had the privilege of attending his inspirational talks experience a profound sense of calm, joy, and quietude that lingers long after his programs have concluded. In today's world of strife and stress, the powerful impact of his teachings helps cultivate a more positive and compassionate outlook on life, making individuals understand that challenges can be turned into opportunities for their spiritual growth. His simple, non-denominational meditation technique empowers people to find their center and cultivate inner resilience for a more harmonious and meaningful existence.

A prolific author, Sant Rajinder Singh Ji's publications include books in fifty languages, among them are; Inner



Sant Rajinder Singh ji Maharaj

and Outer Peace through Meditation, Meditation as Medication for the Soul, Spark of the Divine, and Building Bridges through Meditation. Since 2020, Global Meditation in Place has been streamed every Sunday at 10 am EST featuring his weekly talks and meditation sessions that help to nurture one's spirit, and foster spiritual growth. His unwavering dedication to the human unity movement has led to his global efforts to help humanity transcend racial, cultural, religious and economic differences. He regularly convenes International Human Unity Conferences in India to bring civic, social, religious, and spiritual leaders together to share their views on integrating human unity into their communities.

In his various keynote addresses around the world, including at academic and medical institutions, United Nations, US Coast Guard Academy, and the National Institute of Health, Sant Rajinder Singh Ji outlines a sustainable blueprint for world peace, successful leadership and social transformation through meditation that leads to inner peace paving the way to building bridges of outer peace and unity in the world.

A strong advocate for conscious living, and eco-friendly lifestyle, he has promoted Veggie Fest, one of North America's largest vegetarian and vegan lifestyle festivals in Chicagoland. Take the Vegetarian Challenge," and Take the Meditation Challenge initiatives underscore the importance of responsible consumption and production, and address environmental and health concerns. These represent a significant contribution to the Sustainable Developmental Goals of the United Nations particularly those related to Good Health and Well Being (SDG 3) and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12).

As founder of 24 Darshan Academy K-12 schools across India and South America Sant Rajinder Singh Ji has been tirelessly cultivating a generation of peacemakers for tomorrow, enhancing their spiritual quotient and making them embrace universal values of truthfulness, non-



Sant Rajinder Singh Ji is being felicitated by former President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee , 2016

violence, interconnectedness, and respect for all.

Sant Rajinder Singh Ji has been felicitated and honored for his global efforts toward unity and peace from international and national leaders. These accolades include recognition by the former President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Award from the President of the State of Mexico, Extraordinary Grand Cross Award by the Governor of Quindío, Colombia, US Congressional Citations, Exemplary Service to Humanity from New York State and New Jersey, Peace Award by the UN-NGO community & Interfaith Center of New York, Distinguished Leadership Award for Peace and Spirituality, Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago, and many more...

Sant Rajinder Singh Ji's message of inclusion, and personal transformation through spirituality and meditation has profoundly impacted global efforts to promote human unity, dismantle the walls of racial prejudice, bias and intolerance, and foster an environment that contributes to a better and more peaceful world. In his words: "True happiness comes when we connect with the source of joy within us: our soul and God."

This holiday season, let us all embark on an introspective journey of self-discovery and unwrap the priceless gifts of joy and inner bliss that await us, and embody the change we want to see on earth.

(Dr. Renee Mehrra is an Award-winning Broadcaster and Civic Leader)

National Alliance of Indian Organizations is recognized at Grand BAPS Celebration in Jodhpur, India



The National Alliance of Indian Organizations (NAIO) Founder Trustee Naveen Shah being honored with a Pagri at BAPS in Jodhpur on December 25, 2025.

DECEMBER 25, 2025

JODHPUR (TIP): The National Alliance of Indian Organizations (NAIO) - a national umbrella organization dedicated to bringing together Americans of Indian origin across the United States - and its Founder Trustee, Mr. Naveen Shah, were honored during a grand community celebration hosted by BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha in Jodhpur, India.

The prestigious recognition took place on December 25, 2025, during a special celebration marking Christmas Day, symbolizing unity, peace, and global harmony. The event witnessed an extraordinary gathering of over 15,000

attendees, including community leaders, dignitaries, devotees, and members of the Indian diaspora.

During the ceremony, a senior BAPS priest praised the vision and mission of NAIO, stating:

"This endeavor is the beginning of uniting the entire Indian diaspora all over the world, and it gives a strong message of One Voice, One India."

Mr. Shah was honored for his visionary leadership, lifelong commitment to community service, and his instrumental role in establishing NAIO as a unifying platform for Indian American organizations nationwide. Under his leadership, NAIO has emerged as a strong voice promoting collaboration, cultural unity, civic engagement, and empowerment of Americans of Indian origin in the United States.

Expressing his gratitude, Mr. Naveen Shah said he was deeply humbled to receive the honor and emphasized the importance of collective leadership:

"This effort to unite Americans of Indian origin is very much needed at this time. I am truly grateful to my team members Girish Patel, Dr Raj Bhayani, Chintu Patel, Harry Singh Bolla and other members who have joined hands with me to build NAIO into a strong organization dedicated to unity and shared purpose."

Community leaders at the event highlighted that this recognition reflects the growing global impact of Indian American leadership and the strengthening ties between



Naveen Shah receives the blessings from a BAPS priest

India and the Indian diaspora worldwide.

The National Alliance of Indian Organizations (NAIO) continues to advance its mission of connecting diverse Indian American organizations under one platform, fostering shared values, leadership development, cultural pride, and community advancement across the United States.

ABOUT NAIO : The National Alliance of Indian Organizations (NAIO) is a national umbrella organization committed to uniting Americans of Indian origin by fostering collaboration among cultural, professional, business, religious, and community-based organizations. Guided by the vision "Stronger Together," NAIO works to amplify collective impact and strengthen the Indian American voice nationwide.

Xavier University President Ravi Bhooplapur Thanks Dr. Ganesh Bhat and Srimathi Bhat For Their Philanthropic Gift of \$1.5 million

DECEMBER 22, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): Xavier University President Ravi Bhooplapur recently announced a transformative \$1.5 million philanthropic gift from Dr. Ganesh Bhat and Srimathi Bhat to Xavier Foundation Inc.

In recognition of their extraordinary generosity and lifelong commitment to education and service, the auditorium at

Xavier University's new academic campus will be proudly named in their honor.

Dr. Ganesh Bhat, who serves as Chancellor of Xavier University, has been a guiding force in shaping the institution's vision, academic excellence, and global impact. Together with Srimathi Bhat, this remarkable gift reflects their shared belief in empowering future generations of physicians and healthcare leaders.

The newly named auditorium will serve as a centerpiece of the campus, hosting academic ceremonies, guest lectures, conferences, and milestone moments for students and faculty alike, and will stand as a lasting symbol of leadership, philanthropy, and commitment to higher education.

Thank you to Dr. Ganesh Bhat and Srimathi Bhat for your visionary support



Dr. Ganesh Bhat and Srimathi Bhat

and enduring legacy at Xavier University.

LIU AND LAVINE CALL FOR PASSAGE OF THEIR LEGISLATION REQUIRING NY PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO TEACH THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL



Senator John Liu and Assembly Member Charles Lavine

DECEMBER 29, 2025

ALBANY, NY (TIP): On the 5th anniversary of the January 6, 2001 Capitol Insurrection, State Senator John Liu and Assembly Member Charles Lavine are calling for the passage of their legislation to require New York public schools to teach students about the true history of that fateful day.

President Trump has characterized the insurrection that resulted in the deaths of multiple people and injuries to multiple Capitol Police officers as a "day of love" and labeled the rioters as "patriots" and "hostages." On his first day of office, Trump pardoned insurrectionists who were charged or convicted for their role in the attacks, even those convicted of violently assaulting police officers.

The legislation, S6123/ A3966, would require schools to include the instruction of the January 6, 2021 insurrection and its aftermath alongside existing required coursework in civic education and other historical events such as slavery and the Holocaust.

State Senator John Liu stated, "Five years after the Donald Trump-led Capitol insurrection, his administration continues to spin revisionist narratives to gaslight the American people into believing the events of that fateful day were somehow not a violent assault on our democracy. In an age when conspiracy theories are able to inspire and incite such wanton political violence, it is more important than ever that our schools equip the next generation with the truth, free from bias, and without prejudice, in order to protect our democracy."

Assembly Member Charles Lavine stated, "This bill is only necessary due to President Trump's all-out effort to erase the January 6th insurrection, which he personally led, along with many other inglorious moments in our history, from the memory of time. I sincerely hope that Americans of good faith will challenge the administration's attempts to move our nation towards an autocracy by attempting to whitewash parts of our history and instead fulfill our nation's solemn obligation to teach our children the truth. Without it, our struggle to establish a more perfect union and ability to remain, as Lincoln put it, 'earth's last best hope,' is in mortal peril."

Reflecting on Four Years as Manhattan Borough President

As 2025 comes to a close, so too does my tenure as your Manhattan Borough President. It has been a tremendous honor serving Manhattanites these past four years, and I know there is much more to do. Let's continue to make our city affordable, healthy, and green. Together.



By Mark Levine
Photo credit: MTA

Exactly four years ago I walked into the David N. Dinkins Municipal Building for the first time as Manhattan Borough President. On that day-January 1, 2022-New York City recorded more than 50,000 COVID cases in a single day, at the peak of the Omicron wave.

As I come to the end of my term representing this incredible borough, it's remarkable to reflect on how far we've come since that difficult time four years ago. Our concerns have long-since shifted from case counts to average rents, from the positivity rate to the homelessness rate. I'm proud to have used the office of the Manhattan borough president to take on each and everyone one of these evolving challenges.

Our housing affordability crisis has been far and away my top priority. Early in my term my team scoured every corner of Manhattan to identify places to build desperately needed housing. Our Housing Manhattanites report identified sites with capacity for 71,000 new homes; already, approximately 20% of those sites are moving forward. We pushed to convert vacant office buildings into housing, unlocking thousands of new homes in Midtown, and fought to pass City of Yes and the Midtown South rezoning-together unleashing the potential for up to 90,000 new homes citywide. And we revitalized Manhattan's community boards, appointing hundreds of new, diverse members who are prioritizing housing and solving our affordability crisis.

We focused relentlessly on quality-of-life issues in the borough. We helped modernize scaffolding rules to finally rein in the epidemic of sidewalk sheds. We led the charge to address New York City's severe shortage of public bathrooms, with new facilities now opening across all five boroughs. And we have worked tirelessly to fix our broken mental health system so that we can achieve a future where no New Yorker experiencing serious mental illness is left to cycle between the street, to the E.R. and back to the street again.

We also worked to build a healthier and greener Manhattan. Through our Million More Trees initiative, we planted hundreds of trees across the borough, have proposed finally tearing down the FDR South of the Brooklyn Bridge, and have successfully won expansions of curbside composting.

And we backed up our priorities with real capital investments, directing more than \$150 million in capital funding to schools, parks, libraries, cultural institutions, health clinics, housing, and social services across Manhattan.

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

New York State Announces \$6.6 Million Available to Establish 'Clubhouses' Statewide

- **Funding from the FY 2026 State Budget to Establish Eight Programs to Serve Adults with Mental Health Challenges**
- **Member-Driven Support Programs Provide Access to Social Support, Life Skills Training, Employment Resources, and Sense of Community**

DECEMBER 29, 2025

NEW YORK CITY (TIP): The state Office of Mental Health today announced the availability of \$6.6 million to markedly expand a community-based program that is providing crucial services and supports to New Yorkers living with mental health challenges. The funding will establish up to eight new Clubhouses in areas of the state outside of New York City, offering individuals social support, employment resources, and life skills training in a safe environment.

"New Yorkers who utilize Clubhouses can tap into vital support networks and strengthen their ties to the community while pursuing their own goals and dreams," Office of Mental Health Commissioner Dr. Ann Sullivan said. "This program is facilitating educational and vocational opportunities that participants can rely on as they continue their recovery and become more independent. Governor Kathy Hochul's continued focus on expanding community-based programs like Clubhouses is demonstrating our collective resolve to build a stronger, more inclusive mental health system statewide."

New or existing providers can apply for up to \$551,175 annually for programs in rural counties; \$956,765 annually for programs in suburban counties; and \$1.45 million for programs in Erie, Monroe, and Westchester counties, which are considered urban. Funding for the program is over five years, with the goal of making two awards each in the Long Island, Hudson River, Central New York and Western New York regions, but only one in the urban counties.

Clubhouses are voluntary to participants and provide them with structure by focusing them on choice and self-determination. These programs offer collaboration with staff in all aspects of their operations, which fosters transparency, shared ownership, and belonging among participants.

Clubhouses must operate at least five days a week, plus offer routine recreational activities during evenings and weekends, and operate out of their own physical space. These programs are linked to improved quality of life, better self-esteem, lower hospitalization rates, and increased participation in employment.

The FY 2026 Enacted Budget signed by Governor Hochul included \$8 million to establish new clubhouses and Youth Safe Spaces. The funding is part of \$196 million in additional investments in strengthening the continuum of mental health care statewide.

Fountain House Chief Executive Officer Ken Zimmerman said, "We applaud New York State's prioritization of supports for people living with serious mental illness through expanded access to Clubhouses statewide."

Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news

Dr. Hari Shukla Honored with Key to New York City; Joins a Distinguished Lineage of Global Luminaries

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

his groundbreaking immunization strategies, and his pioneering work in neonatal care, which is now standard globally. He also recognized Dr. Shukla for his humanitarian efforts, including disaster relief in India, Haiti, Sri Lanka, and co-founding a free breast cancer clinic for South Asian women. Mayor noted that Dr. Shukla has enrolled over 3000 children in public health insurance

programs and advocated for various social causes. Mayor then presented Dr. Shukla the key to the city for his extraordinary public service and impact on global medical science and community welfare.

Dr. Shukla's professional journey spans decades of clinical excellence. Beyond his medical practice, he has been socially and politically engaged, advocating



Mayor Eric Adams in his speech described Dr. Shukla as "a titan in medicine, a man whose work has changed medical science across the entire globe".

for public health awareness, education, and the wellbeing of immigrant communities. Widely known for his generosity, Dr. Shukla has extended liberal financial assistance to numerous charitable organizations and institutions dedicated to education, healthcare, and cultural promotion-quietly transforming lives far beyond the walls of his clinic.

It may be of special interest to readers of The Indian Panorama that Dr. Shukla now joins a rare and illustrious group of global figures who have received the Key to New York City over the decades. Among past recipients are Nelson Mandela, honored for his historic struggle against apartheid and reconciliation; Mother Teresa, recognized for her selfless service to



Dr. Hari Shukla delivers acceptance speech in which he thanked Mayor Eric Adams for the recognition

humanity's poorest; Pope John Paul II, for his spiritual leadership and message of peace; and Dalai Lama, for championing compassion and non-violence worldwide.

The honor has also been bestowed upon cultural and social icons such as Muhammad Ali, celebrated for both athletic greatness and moral courage, and Oprah Winfrey, recognized for her transformative influence in media, education, and philanthropy. In more recent years, recipients have included Narendra Modi, for strengthening India-U.S. ties; Malala Yousafzai, for her courageous advocacy of girls' education; Angelina Jolie, for her extensive refugee work; Serena Williams,



Mayor Eric Adams poses for a photograph with the family of Dr. Hari Shukla

for excellence in sport and philanthropy; and Jon Bon Jovi, for his commitment to hunger relief and

community service. The City has also honored frontline heroes, including healthcare workers and first responders, for extraordinary service during times of crisis.

By welcoming Dr. Hari Shukla into this distinguished company, New York City affirms that service to humanity-whether on a global stage or in a neighborhood clinic-deserves its highest civic honor. The Indian Panorama warmly congratulates Dr. Shukla on this rare and well-earned recognition.

READ BELOW THE FULL SPEECH OF MAYOR ERIC ADAMS.

"To put the conclusion of the amazing run of being a mayor of this amazing city, I am here today to give the key to the city to Dr Hari Shukla, and you know, just my good friend Fernando Mateo, both of you have made a mark on our city. And I want to first start with Dr Shukla. He's a titan in medicine, a man whose work has changed medical science across the entire globe. When I was reading up on what you have accomplished in the lives that you have saved, every child that you save, that child goes on to have families and contribute to our society, and so you can't just look at what you did in medicine as just saving the life of a family member, but you have really saved the lives of what we will become as the entire Human race, and I cannot thank you enough for helping our children.

A proud Indian American humanitarian and a true New Yorker, Dr Hari, I've said this before, not all heroes wear capes. They wear white hospital gowns, police uniforms- all the other items that we show every day, and you win a lab coat using your skill as a doctor to save our families. And you are a true hero. Born in India, Dr Shukla, pursuing a career in medicine to serve others, he answered the higher calling to help his brothers and sisters in need with his polio research in India, leading to revised immunization strategies in developing nations. Immigrating to the US in 1980 he continued this groundbreaking medical research, from pioneering medical advances that are now the global standard to his work to help premature infants that is now used in the majority of hospitals in United States and throughout the world, helping countless sick infants to being triple board certified in pediatrics, neonatal parent, prenatal medicine and forensic medicine, and serving as a professor at the NYU School of Medicine, Dr Shukla has changed the face of medical science for 60 years, with passion, integrity and scientific curiosity. His dedication to medical science is only matched by his dedication to helping his fellow, brothers and sisters, giving back to his community through his humanitarian work, leading relief efforts in India, Haiti, Sri Lanka, and response to floods, earthquakes and tsunamis, and co-founded a free breast cancer clinic for South Asian women, and helped enroll over 3000 children in public health insurance programs, as well as advocating for gun violence prevention, drug addiction prevention and flood victims through his nonprofit organizations, which included South Asia of New York, incorporation in the new American voters Association. Incorporation. His extraordinary medical work has touched the lives of so many children and families. The children of New York City and the world are healthier, stronger and safer because of him. And to be able to save a child is probably the most God like effort you can ever do, and you've done that, and as we continue to lift up great New Yorkers, I'm just so proud that at the end of my term that I can give you the key to the city for your extraordinary public safety service and for working to better the lives of our precious children, and now for this lasting impact in medicine on the globe, in New York City, it is my honor to present the key to the city of New York, to a New Yorker, a Queens legend. You have opened our hearts, and we're going to give you the key because we want to open your heart with the love and admiration we have for you."



Family and friends of Dr. Hari Shukla with Mayor Eric Adams

2025 has been a Momentous Year for the Consulate: Ambassador Pradhan

BY INDRAJIT S SALUJA

AMBASSADOR BINAYA SRIKANTA PRADHAN, CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA IN NEW YORK, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE INDIAN PANORAMA ON DECEMBER 22, 2025, HIGHLIGHTED SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CONSULATE IN 2025, INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SATELLITE CENTERS IN OHIO, NEW JERSEY, AND BOSTON, EXTENSION OF CONSULAR SERVICES ON WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS, AND IMPROVED VFS SERVICES. THE CONSULATE AS OF NOW HANDLES 11 STATES, WITH PLANS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER TO SIX, ONCE THE BOSTON CONSULATE IS FULLY OPERATIONAL.

HERE ARE EDITED EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW.

TIP: PLEASE SHARE WITH THE READERS OF THE INDIAN PANORAMA YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2025. WHAT YOU DREAMED TO ACHIEVE? WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE? WHAT YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE? AND WHY YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE, IF AT ALL, THAT WAS THE SITUATION, AND WHAT YOU PLAN TO DO IN FUTURE?

CG: It's always a pleasure to speak to you and through you to your viewers and readers. But coming to this year, I would say this is the last week, practically, of the year, 2025 and if I look back, this year has been quite momentous when it comes to the consulate services that we provide to the community. On first of August, we started our satellite centers in three new places in this consular jurisdiction. Now we have a VSF satellite center in Columbus, Ohio. We have one in Edison in New Jersey, and we have one in Boston, in Massachusetts. And if you remember, last year when the prime minister came, he announced that soon we will be having a new consulate in Boston. And I am so happy to say that now we have a consulate functional there. We have a consul general. And I would say in a record period of time, we have got a consulate functional over there. But more importantly, we cater to about 2.4 million strong Indian diaspora from here. And in addition to the Indian diaspora, we also cater to the American friends who go to India for tourism, for business, for meetings, and for various other purposes. So the effort has been to provide seamless, best quality service from here. Last year, we started to open the consulate on Saturdays and Sundays for emergency services, and also on other national holidays. This year, we continue to do that, and we worked with the Indian communities across the consular jurisdiction. We held consular camps in each and every state that we deal with. And now, as I said, from first of August, we not only have the satellite centers, but they are qualitatively different. Now, we signed a new agreement across the country, by the way, by which the VFS, which is our service provider, is now providing qualitatively far superior services. They charge \$19 across the board for whatever service they provide. For \$19 now they are providing improved services in the sense that suppose somebody reaches a VFS center in Edison or in Columbus, Ohio, or in Boston or in New York City, and the applicant has not been able to fill the application, they will help the applicant to fill up the application. If for any reason, the applicant has not got his photographs, or, let us say, photocopies of the documents, then VFS, without charging any additional money, would be

providing photographs, would be providing photocopies of the documents. I am happy that 2025 was a very good year in bringing a qualitative improvement in the services that we provide.

TIP: WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE CONSULATE IN 2025?

CG: I would say, like I said we as a consulate, deal with, not only the Indian diaspora and the consular requirements. We also deal with the businesses and have economic engagement. We deal with political engagement. I would say the year was quite good. We have reached out to, you know, all the states, to the elected leaders at federal level, to the elected leaders at State Assembly and State Senate level. We look at the sub national cooperation. The governor of New Jersey went to India three months back, and that was the second visit in five years. The governor of Connecticut went to India in February 2025 and now in February 2026 the governor of Delaware is going. So, I would say, in the year 2025 we had two governors from our jurisdiction visiting India. It shows the dynamism in the relationship. It shows how the relationship is playing out in a very successful and positive way, even at state to state cooperation level. Because when Governor of Connecticut went to India, he went to different states. He met the chief ministers he met the business communities. He met the investment community, trading community. Same thing happened when the governor of New Jersey went. He took five universities with him, and all these five universities are having significant number of Indian students. So look at the connect. I cannot imagine another such relationship, where we have such strong people to people connect. I would say 2025 was successful in every sense, in terms of our providing qualitatively better services to our diaspora, to our community, the sub national cooperation, as I mentioned about, the visits of the governors, economic engagement have been quite successful. Look at the investment track, whether we are talking about FDI, whether we are talking about alternate venture capital investment. Recently, \$72 billion of investment were announced in last one month only in the artificial intelligence space in India. So we saw Amazon announcing \$35 billion investment. We saw Google announcing \$15 billion investment. We saw Microsoft announcing their biggest investment in Asia when Mr. Satya Nadella met the Prime Minister and spoke about \$17.5 billion of investment. And we also heard about Apple investing. \$72 billion investment, just in AI space. That was the same week when the CEO of Intel met Prime Minister. So I would say the

economic engagement between US and India is quite deep and quite dynamic. I would say 2025, as I see it, was quite successful in my jurisdiction, from economic engagement to community engagement to political engagement. And if you look at the softer side, like our cultural engagement, people to people connect, was quite good.

TIP: HOW DO YOU VIEW THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE INDIAN AMERICANS, THE DIASPORA IN PROMOTING THESE TIES BETWEEN THIS COUNTRY AND INDIA?

CG: This is quite well known now that Indian diaspora takes the lead when it comes to building the relationship, not only in the softer side of culture, people to people contact, but even in critical areas, whether it is investment, whether it is trade, whether it is scientific, technological collaboration, whether it is political engagement. I think, this community has been playing a lead role and leadership from both sides, both in India and the United States. They appreciate that. So that is what you would see that, like I took the names of diaspora members who are leading technology companies having met Prime Minister, you would find the same thing when President Trump was celebrating Diwali, you would find many of the Indian American community people, tech CEOs, you know, being with him. I think you know they play a very critical role in every possible way.

TIP: AND HOW ABOUT THE STUDENTS WHO HAVE COME HERE TO STUDY? THEY ARE A SIZABLE NUMBER, NUMBER ONE, AND ALSO THEY MUST BE CONTRIBUTING A LOT TOWARDS BETTER UNDERSTANDING, BETTER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND THE US. HOW DO YOU VIEW THAT?

CG: The student community is a is a very important community, because when we talk about the diaspora here today, 5.4 million strong Indian diaspora, most of them came here as students. And they have contributed to nation building of this country. Many of them are going back to India and contributing there as well. And even if they are staying here, both as nationals of India or nationals of United States, they are forming very formidable bridges between our two countries. But let us also not forget the remittances India makes for the education of the student population here People.. It is 's to the tune of \$21 to \$26 billion every year. These students become an important part of the American society. People who go back, they become an important part of Indian society.

TIP: AS THEY SAY, IT'S TIME TO RING OUT THE OLD AND RING IN THE NEW , , SO LET US KNOW YOUR MIND. WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO IN 2026?



Ambassador Binaya Srikanta Pradhan candidly answered questions from Prof. Indrajit S Saluja, The Indian Panorama Editor.

CG: The new year 2026, I'm sure would provide us opportunities to intensify our engagement with the community, not only in terms of providing them better services, but also working closely with them for all the objectives, like whether it is promoting cultural collaboration between our two countries, or economic engagement between our two countries, or engaging for scientific and technological advancement, because there are huge complementarities between our two countries and our two economy and scientific communities sitting in New York. When you are dealing with the best of the minds here, whether it is Wall Street, whether it is the universities, whether it is the cultural minds, our job is to find the connect between two sides. Notwithstanding these engagements, the Prime Minister is very mindful about taking care of the Diaspora requirement. So I think you will see in 2026 the consulate having focus on all these things. Through you, I would urge your viewers, your readers, to give their suggestions, give their ideas about how we can improve the services. On the consular side, our effort has been to have zero pendency, whether it is issuing of passports, whether it is issuing of OCI cards, whether it is issuing of visa or any other service, miscellaneous services. And our objective would be to work with the community, with the community groups, community leaders, to provide a service that, you know, people would find hassle free, people friendly, and people would find it accessible. So that is going to be the effort in 2026.

TIP: I WOULD REQUEST YOU TO PLEASE GIVE YOUR MESSAGE FOR THE NEW YEAR TO OUR READERS.

CG: On behalf of the consulate and on my personal behalf, I would wish everybody a Happy New Year. I'm sure the year 2026 is going to bring new dimensions, new opportunities and new success stories of our collaboration, both between our two countries and between our two people. And I am sure the Indian diaspora, the Indian American community, which has been playing a very prominent role in this, would be doing the same. And when it comes to our diaspora here, you know, we would lay special emphasis on friends like you to work with us in making these objectives realities.

Mark Carney's new package to Ukraine has Canadians divided



--->By Prabhjot Singh

DECEMBER 28, 2025

TORONTO (TIP): When Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney rolled out a new economic package for war-torn Ukraine as he and Volodymyr Zelenskyy met briefly at a Halifax-area airport, a chain of reactions, both for and against helping a nation in distress, started.

The two leaders embraced as Carney welcomed Zelenskyy to Canada. Zelenskyy touched down for a brief stop on his way to Florida for planned peace talks with U.S. President Donald Trump this weekend, which he called "very important and very constructive."

Though the "intentions" behind aid or economic packages are seldom a subject of debate, this time the questions are being raised as the quantum of economic assistance offered looks beyond the means of the country that just managed to get its budget for 2025 ratified by the House of Commons by a couple of votes.

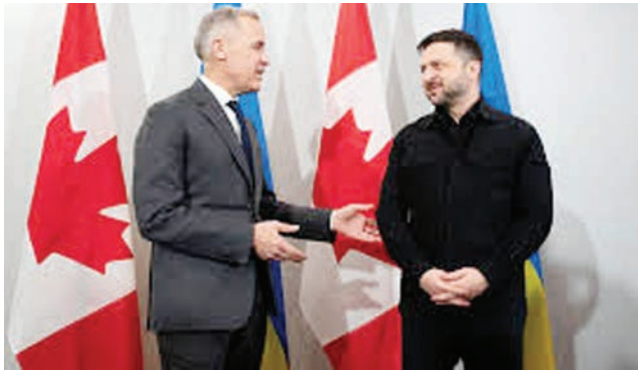
Canada has been a staunch supporter of Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion began in February 2022, committing \$6.5 billion in military support along with humanitarian aid.

The \$2.5 billion that Canada committed to providing aid should enable the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to lend nearly \$10 billion to Ukraine to support reconstruction, the Prime Minister's Office said in a news release. The funding will also be used to guarantee a loan of up to \$322 million from the European Bank to assist Ukraine in reinforcing energy security.

"Canada has committed new support to Ukraine, not only to help end this war, but also to help the Ukrainian people recover and rebuild," said Carney in the statement.

"Canada stands with Ukraine, because their cause—freedom, democracy, sovereignty—is our cause," he said.

The new economic package has evoked mixed reactions. While it may be a little far-fetched to link the revival of speculations that a section of the wealthy, perturbed by the rising tax slabs, including the wealth tax, plans to move out to safer tax havens, there is a certain undercurrent of discontent among average taxpayers over the government's largesse to nations at war.



Volodymyr Zelenskyy met Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney when the latter rolled out a new economic package for war-torn Ukraine, which has the Canadians divided

They hold that with \$2.5 billion in new "offerings" to Ukraine, it is no surprise that the federal government is looking at larger deficits. The 2024 fall statement projected a budget deficit of \$42.2 billion this fiscal year. The 2025 budget pegged the deficit at \$78.3 billion, with deficits exceeding \$50 billion for the next five years. Ultimately, these growing deficits will transform into taxes, direct or indirect, besides accelerating rates of both inflation and unemployment.

Some of the economic erosions may be due to conditions that have deteriorated since last year, but the bulk is from new spending. Overall, higher deficits are translating into more debt. As a result, debt servicing charges as a share of federal revenues are expected to increase from 10.5% last fiscal year to more than 13% by 2029-30.

Nonetheless, given the increases in spending and deficits, the federal government has once again changed its fiscal anchor, which is a target that the government articulates to reassure markets, rating agencies, and the public that its finances remain responsible.

An official communique said that since Russia's unprovoked, unjustified, full-scale invasion, Canada has provided nearly \$22 billion in multifaceted assistance for

Ukraine, including over \$12 billion in direct financial support-making Canada among the largest contributors to Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. As the Ukrainian people endure another winter of Russian aggression, Canada remains steadfast in its support for Ukraine.

Building on Canada's strong support for Ukraine, Mark Carney announced last weekend new measures to support a just and lasting peace. Canada has announced an additional \$2.5 billion commitment for Ukraine, including financing that will enable the International Monetary Fund to lend Ukraine an additional \$8.4 billion as part of an extended financing program, besides Canada's participation in extended and expanded debt service suspension for Ukraine, for up to \$1.5 billion in 2025-26.

Canada's new economic package also includes a loan guarantee of up to \$1.3 billion in 2026 to the World Bank's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to support Ukraine's reconstruction and a loan guarantee of up to \$322 million in 2026 to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to support Ukraine's gas imports and reinforce its energy security.

In Halifax, Carney and Zelenskyy held a bilateral meeting to discuss the latest developments in ongoing peace talks. Mark Carney affirmed Canada's full support for Ukraine.

Since the beginning of 2022, Canada has committed \$6.5 billion in military assistance to Ukraine. This funding will allow Canada to deliver military assistance to Ukraine through 2029.

"The barbarism that we saw overnight—the attack on Kyiv—shows just how important it is that we stand with Ukraine during this difficult time," Carney said.

Zelenskyy thanked Canada for its support and called the new attacks "Russia's answer to our peace efforts" and said it showed that Russian President Vladimir Putin "doesn't want peace."

Zelenskyy also called Putin a "man of war."

Moscow has said the new strike was in response to Ukraine's attacks on "civilian objects" in Russia.

Mark Carney names Mark to head the US Embassy



Mark Wiseman has been named Canada's next Ambassador to the U.S. by Prime Minister Mark Carney —Screen shot: CBS

DECEMBER 22, 2025

TORONTO (TIP): Going by the adage that you trust your own tribesmen more than others has proven true, as Prime Minister Mark Carney has placed his trust in a fellow financial expert, Mark Wiseman, to head the Canadian Embassy in the United States.

Mark Carney, who himself has been a career banker, while announcing the appointment of Wiseman, said, "

"Mark Wiseman brings immense experience, extensive contacts, and deep commitment at this crucial time of transformation of our relationship with the United States. As a core member of our negotiating team, he will help advance the interests of Canadian workers, businesses, and institutions, while building opportunities for both Canada and the United States."

It may be a mere coincidence that while the prime minister made his debut in electoral politics early this year, Mark Wiseman will be making his debut in diplomacy in the second month of the New Year. Once he becomes ambassador on February 15, 2026, Wiseman will be a key contributor to the government's efforts to advance Canada-U.S. priorities, including secure borders, a strengthened trade and investment relationship, and cooperation between Canada and the United States on global challenges.

He will replace Kirsten Hillman, who has decided to retire. Mark Carney praised her for her immense contributions as Canada's Ambassador to the United States. In addition to deepening Canada-U.S. ties, Ambassador Hillman has resolutely defended Canadian values and interests and promoted a stronger future for Canadian workers who depend on stable trade, families who count on a safe and secure border, and businesses that must navigate new global uncertainties.

With a career spanning three decades in law, business, and finance, Wiseman has deep experience with both countries' economies, financial markets, and institutions. He has a strong track record of unlocking new opportunities for Canadians, including as president and chief executive officer of the Canada

Pension Plan Investment Board, as chair of the Board of Directors of the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, and as a current member of the Prime Minister's Council on Canada-U.S. Relations.

Mark Wiseman is a Canadian business executive and investment manager, economic policy leader, and industry-leading expert in alternatives and active equity investments.

Among his board and advisory roles with various organizations, Wiseman has most recently served as senior advisor and chairman of Lazard Canada, on the board of directors of NOVA Chemicals, as chairman of the board of Alter Domus, and as a senior advisor to the Boston Consulting Group. He also recently served as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Alberta Investment Management Corporation from 2020 to 2023. Previously, he was Senior Managing Director at BlackRock, Global Head of Active Equities, Chairman of BlackRock's alternatives business, and Chairman of its Global Investment Committee. He also served on BlackRock's Global Executive Committee.

Before joining BlackRock, Wiseman was President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, where he first served as Senior Vice-President, Private Investment,

and then as Executive Vice-President, before becoming CEO.

Born in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Wiseman holds a Bachelor of Arts from Queen's University as well as a law degree and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Toronto. He was a Fulbright Scholar at Yale University, where he obtained a Master of Laws. He also served as a law clerk to Justice Beverley McLachlin at the Supreme Court of Canada.

He is a dedicated community leader who has served on the board of several nonprofit organizations, including Alpine Canada Alpin, Sinai Health System, the Capital Markets Institute, and the Dean's Advisory Board at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. In 2012, he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of his service.

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



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Congress flags attack on Christians, writes to PM Modi

Congress MP and general secretary K C Venugopal has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that Christmas celebrations this year were overshadowed by a coordinated wave of intimidation and violence against Christians across BJP-ruled states and urging immediate intervention to ensure such incidents do not recur.

In his letter on Monday, Dec 29, Venugopal said there was an “atmosphere of terror” during the festive period, marked by deliberate attempts to humiliate religious minorities and weaken India’s secular character. He warned that the incidents pointed to a pattern rather than isolated acts of intolerance. The Congress leader cited multiple instances from Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, where mobs allegedly disrupted prayer meetings, vandalised churches and Christmas decorations, and intimidated worshippers. He said women and children were among those targeted, with celebrations turning into scenes of fear. Venugopal also referred to an incident in Palakkad, Kerala, where a mob attacked children, most of them under 15 years, participating in a Christmas carol procession, destroying musical instruments. He said the targeting of children’s religious celebrations reflected a deeper collapse of tolerance and pluralism.

Warning that repeated incidents of moral policing and violent disruptions during New Year festivities had become a pattern, Venugopal said the continued silence of the Prime Minister and the government only emboldened those spreading hatred and violence.

Unnao rape case: Apex court puts on hold HC relief for rape convict Sengar

NEW DELHI/MUSCAT (TIP)

The Supreme Court on Monday stopped the release of former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lawmaker Kuldeep Singh Sengar, staying a Delhi high court’s order last week that had opened the door for him to walk free and noting that the 2017 Unnao rape case convict was found guilty under both the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (Pocso) and the Indian Penal Code.

A special vacation bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and justices J K Maheshwari and Augustine George Masih, which was hearing the Central Bureau of Investigation’s plea challenging the high court order, said that substantial questions of law had arisen in the matter that required consideration.

The apex court also issued notice to Sengar, seeking his response within four weeks on CBI’s plea. It noted that Sengar was also convicted and sentenced in a separate case and was still in custody in that matter.

“In the peculiar circumstances of the case, we stay the operation of the impugned order dated December 23, 2025, passed by the high court. Consequently, the respondent (Sengar) shall not be released from custody pursuant to the said order,” the bench said.

The order was hailed by the survivor, who attempted self-immolation outside the Uttar Pradesh chief minister’s residence in 2018 to bring attention to her case.



“I have got justice from the Supreme Court. I will not rest until he is hanged. I will keep fighting,” she said.

Sengar’s family voiced discontent over the top court’s order. “We have been stripped of our dignity, our peace, and even our basic right to be heard. Still, I hope for justice,” his daughter, Aishwarya Sengar, said in a statement.

Sengar, a strongman politician from the Unnao region of central Uttar Pradesh, has won the assembly elections four times from three different parties, most recently from Bangarmau in 2017 on a BJP ticket.

In 2019, he was convicted under Indian Penal Code Section 376 (rape) and Section 5(c) of the Pocso Act. A year later, he was convicted under IPC Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) over the death of the survivor’s father in custody.

On December 23, the Delhi high court said that Sengar was convicted under Section 5 (C) (aggravated

penetrative sexual assault by a public servant) of the Pocso Act but an elected representative did not fit the definition of a “public servant” under Section 21 of IPC. But the top court differed.

“This definition of public servant (given by the HC) in the context of POCSO is a little bit disturbing. We are worried if a constable or patwari will be a public servant but an elected member of a legislative assembly or council who is accused of such an offence, by this definition, will be exempt,” said the bench. The order was passed on an appeal filed by CBI, led by solicitor general Tushar Mehta, who said, “We are answerable to the victim - a child who was 15 years and 10 months at the time of the incident in June 2017 when Sengar was a member of legislative assembly (MLA) in Uttar Pradesh.”

The court also noted the “peculiar” circumstance as Sengar was already in jail after being convicted in the conspiracy to murder the survivor’s father in police custody. Further, the top court observed that the high court may have glossed over the fact that Sengar stood convicted under section 376 (rape) of IPC.

“The high court was not conscious of section 376(2)(i) under which also he was convicted. The conviction is under two penal statutes - IPC and Pocso -- but HC proceeds on the premise that conviction is only under one statute,” the bench remarked.

“These are some of the best judges we have...but at the same time, we all are prone to committing mistakes,” the bench added.

SC puts its own ruling on Aravalli redefining in abeyance

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Noting that certain clarifications were needed regarding the definition of Aravalli Hills it recently approved, the Supreme Court on Monday, Dec 29, ordered to keep in abeyance its November 20 ruling that was based on a committee’s recommendations.

A three-judge special vacation Bench led by CJI Surya Kant decided to set up a new high-powered committee of domain experts to examine the environmental impact of the recommendations made by the earlier committee. The composition of the new panel has not been announced.

The Bench noted that there had been a significant outcry among environmentalists, who had expressed profound concern about the potential for misinterpretation and improper implementation of the newly adopted definition and this court’s directions. It said, “This public dissent and criticism appear to stem from the perceived ambiguity and lack of clarity in certain terms and directives issued by this court. Consequently, there is a dire need to further probe and clarify to prevent any regulatory gaps that might undermine the ecological integrity of the Aravalli region.”

“While we have no scientific reasons justifying any ex-facie acceptance of the same, it seems prima facie



that both the committee’s report and the judgment of this court have omitted to expressly clarify certain critical issues,” said the Bench, which also included Justice JK Maheshwari and Justice AG Masih.

It said, “In the interim, to subserve the ends of complete justice and in the broader public interest, we deem it necessary to direct that the recommendations submitted by the committee, together with the findings and directions stipulated by this court in its judgment dated November 20, 2025, be kept in abeyance.

“This stay shall remain in effect until the present proceedings reach a state of logical finality, ensuring

that no irreversible administrative or ecological actions are taken based on the current framework.

“We therefore deem it appropriate that prior to the implementation of the committee’s report, or the execution of the directions contained in paragraph 50 of this court’s judgment, a fair, impartial and independent expert opinion must be obtained and considered, after associating all requisite stakeholders. Such a step is essential to resolve critical ambiguities and to provide definitive guidance on issues (relating to the definition of the ‘Aravalli Hills and Ranges’).”

As a matter of abundant caution, the Bench directed that “until further orders, no permission shall be granted for mining, whether it is for new mining leases or renewal of old mining leases, in the Aravalli Hills and Ranges as defined in the FSI (Forest Survey of India) report dated August 25, 2010, without prior permission from this court.”

Issuing a notice to the Centre and governments of Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi, the top court posted the matter for further hearing on January 21, 2026. It urged Attorney General R Venkataramani, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, senior advocate and amicus curiae K Parmeswar and the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to assist it on various issues concerning the hills.

From page 18

Tribunal orders removal of BrahMos CEO over lapses after top scientist complains

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has ordered the removal of Jaiteerth R Joshi as Director General and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of BrahMos Aerospace and directed the Defence Ministry to reconsider the claim of senior scientist Sivasubramaniam Nambi Naidu for the top post. Naidu had challenged Joshi's appointment, alleging procedural lapses. In its order passed on Monday, the Hyderabad bench of the tribunal asked the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to revisit Naidu's claim within four weeks. Until a final decision is taken, the CAT directed that an in-charge arrangement be put in place, explicitly barring the current Director General from holding the charge. The tribunal examined the powers of the Secretary, Defence Research and Development and Chairman, DRDO, observing that while the authority is empowered to approve one of the names recommended by the Selection Committee for the Director General's post, it cannot disregard the complete service records of other scientists empanelled for the position.

Joshi's appointment as DG and CEO of BrahMos Aerospace was challenged by Naidu, a senior DRDO scientist, who alleged unjust supersession and procedural irregularities. Naidu contended that he was seven years senior to Joshi and held the higher rank of Distinguished Scientist, while Joshi was a Scientist 'H' at the time of his appointment. In its verdict, the CAT directed the Defence Ministry and DRDO to remove Joshi from the post, restart the selection process, reconsider the claims of Naidu and other senior scientists, and appoint an interim in-charge for BrahMos Aerospace within four weeks, barring Joshi from holding that role.

KOLKATA (TIP)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee laid the foundation stone for 'Durga Angan', a cultural complex dedicated to Goddess Durga. At the event, she insisted that she was a "true secularist," and dismissed accusations of "appeasement politics."

The BJP, however, hit back sharply and accused Banerjee of misusing land intended for industrial development, calling her "fake" and questioning the lack of tenders and work orders for the project.

Durga Angan is a Rs 261.99 crore project that will come up near Eco Park in Kolkata's New Town area on a 17.28-acre plot. As per the Chief Minister, the complex is a tribute to Unesco's recognition of Durga Puja as a cultural heritage.

"I respect all religions and participate in their festivals because I believe faith belongs to individuals, but festivals belong to everyone," Banerjee said on the occasion. The Chief Minister's statement came in response to repeated allegations from opponents accusing her of engaging in appeasement politics.

Banerjee described herself as a secular leader dedicated to equal respect for all faiths. She told the

Missiles, kamikaze drones part of India's Rs 79k-cr defence push

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The defence acquisition council (DAC) on Monday gave its initial approval to the purchase of military hardware worth Rs 79,000 crore, including beyond-visual-range missiles, loitering munitions (kamikaze drones), long-range rockets, radars, and drone detection and interception systems, to boost the military's combat readiness, the defence ministry said.

The DAC, headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh, also accorded its acceptance of necessity (AoN) for leasing high-altitude long range remotely piloted aircraft systems to boost the navy's capabilities in the vast Indian Ocean region, it added. Under India's defence procurement rules, AoN by the council is the first step towards buying military equipment.

The key proposals cleared by the council — India's apex military procurement body — include the acquisition of indigenous Astra Mk-II beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles to sharpen the precision strike capability of the Indian Air Force, and long-range guided rocket ammunition for the army's Pinaka multiple launch rocket system (MLRS).

"The MoD under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi is working tirelessly to strengthen India's defence preparedness. The decisions taken today will help in enhancing operational capabilities of the armed forces," Singh said on X.

Long-range precision weapons proved effective during Operation Sindoor in May when the Indian military struck terror and military installations in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Between the launch of the operation in the early hours of May 7 and the ceasefire on May 10 evening,



Indian forces bombed nine terror camps in Pakistan and PoK, killing at least 100 terrorists, and IAF struck targets at 13 Pakistani airbases and military installations. Pakistan lost as many as 12 to 13 aircraft, including fighter jets such as US-made F-16s and Chinese-origin JF-17s, to IAF's precision strikes on ground and in the air during Operation Sindoor, launched in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed.

"Astra Mk-II missiles with enhanced range will increase the capability of the IAF's fighter aircraft to neutralise adversary aircraft from long standoff range," the ministry said in a statement. The long-range guided rockets, it added, will enhance the range and accuracy of Pinaka MRLS for effective engagement of high value targets.

The purchase of loitering munitions, or kamikaze drones, also used during Operation Sindoor, low-level light-weight radars and integrated drone detection and interdiction systems for the army was cleared by DAC.

"Loitering munitions will be used for precision strike of tactical targets, whereas low-level light weight radars will detect and track small size, low

flying unmanned aerial systems. The integrated drone detection and interdiction system Mk-II with enhanced range will protect the vital assets of the Indian Army in tactical battle area and hinterland, the defence ministry said.

The hardware cleared for the IAF includes automatic take-off landing recording system, full mission simulator for the light combat aircraft (LCA Mk-1A) and SPICE-1000 long-range guidance kits. "Induction of the automatic take-off landing recording system will fill the gaps in the aerospace safety environment by providing high definition all-weather automatic recording of landing and take-off. The full mission simulator will augment pilot training in a cost effective and safe manner, while SPICE-1000 will enhance long range precision strike capability of the IAF," the ministry said.

The hardware cleared for the navy includes bollard pull tugs to assist warships and submarines in berthing, unberthing, and manoeuvring in confined waters/harbour; and high-frequency software defined radios to boost long-range secured communication.

'I don't appease': Mamata Banerjee's pre-poll temple push, BJP bristles

gathering, "Many people blame me for appeasement politics. I am a true secularist. I believe in the peaceful coexistence of all religions. You can't show me a religion whose celebrations I don't attend."

"Every religion has its cultural practices. How can I disregard any of them? Some people are looting and vandalising. Decisions are being made about who will stay and who will have to leave. I will pray to Goddess Durga to destroy evil," she said.

In her address, the Chief Minister also took a dig at the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in West Bengal, which the ruling Trinamool Congress has vehemently opposed. "What is the link between nationality and voting rights? When someone speaks Bengali, they are denied rooms in hotels. When a person speaks Bengali, they are labelled as Bangladeshi. You are ready to call those who arrived in

2024 citizens, but not those who have lived and died here. We are being patient. But there is a limit. The land of Bangla doesn't bow down. Everyone's voting rights must be preserved," she added.

BJP leaders, however, sharply criticised the timing and process behind the Durga Angan project, which comes just months ahead of the Assembly polls in the state.

Senior party leader Suvendu Adhikari questioned the use of the land and the transparency of the initiative.

"She is doing it on a plot that was meant for industry. She drove away industry and is now doing all this. There was no tender sought. There is no work order. This is all fake. Everyone calls Mamata Banerjee a thief. From today, her new name is fake Chief Minister," he said.

India in history this Week

DECEMBER 26 TO JANUARY 1

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.

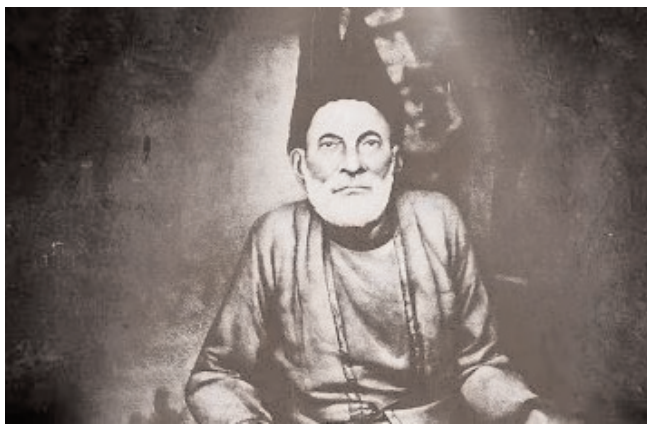
1925 Establishment of Communist Party of India.

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.

27 DECEMBER



1797 Famous Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib was born in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

1861 The first public bid for tea was concluded in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

1911 'Jana Gana Mana' was sung for the first time at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress.

1975 372 people died in the Chasnala coal mine accident in Dhanbad.



2008 'Taare Zameen Par' won the Best Film Award at the V. Shantaram Awards ceremony.

28 DECEMBER



1668 Sambhaji, son of Maratha ruler Shivaji, died

due to imprisonment and torture by Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.

1855 The first session of the Indian National Congress took place in Bombay, in which 72 delegates attended.

1896 Bande Mataram was sung for the first time at the Kolkata session of the Indian National Congress.

1928 The speaking film Melody of Love was screened for the first time in Kolkata.

1984 The Congress won the Lok Sabha elections under the leadership of Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

2000 An illustrated postage stamp of Rs 3 in a set of five postage stamps was released by the Indian Postal Department in honor of the gallantry award winners.



2013 The Aam Aadmi Party formed the government in Delhi with the support of the Congress.

29 DECEMBER

1530 Humayun, son of Mughal emperor Babur succeeded him.

1983 Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar scored a maximum of 236 runs in Test cricket against the West Indies.

1984 The Congress won the parliamentary election with the largest majority in the history of independent India. Telugu emerged as the largest opposition party in the country by winning 28 seats in this election.

1985 Sri Lanka granted citizenship to 43,000 Indians.

1917 Ramanand Sagar, the famous Indian film director and producer of the famous serial 'Ramayana', was born.



1977 The world's largest open air theater 'Drive' opened in Bombay (now Mumbai).

30 DECEMBER

1975 Death of Hindi poet and ghazalkar Dushyant Kumar.

1971 Renowned scientist Vikram Sarabhai died in Trivandrum.



1943 Freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose waved India's independence flag at Port Blair.

1706 Martin, the founder of Puducherry and the first Governor General of the French colony in India, died.

1803 Britain's East India Company controlled Delhi, Agra and Bharuch.

1906 The All India Muslim League was established in Dhaka (now Bangladesh).

31 DECEMBER

1925 Hindi writer Shrilal Shukla was born.

1984 Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister and



Congress President for the first time.

1802 The Maratha ruler Peshwa Bajirao II came under the protection of the British.

1866 Chief Minister of Bihar and freedom fighter Krishna Ballabh Sahai was born.

1926 Renowned Indian writer, historian, best orator and scholar Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade died.

1929 Congress workers led by Mahatma Gandhi started the movement for complete self-rule in Lahore.

01 JANUARY

2001 Calcutta was officially named Kolkata.

1971 Broadcasting of cigarette advertisements on television was banned.

1950 Rahat Indouri, famous Urdu poet and lyricist was born.

2020 India's first Chief of Defense Staff General Bipin Rawat, who took charge (CDS) on 1 January, 2020



2026 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL PAYS TRIBUTE TO FOUNDER ROBERT REDFORD AND HONORS THREE; AMONG THEM: GEETA GANDBHIR

BY MABEL PAIS

Sundance Film Festival (festival.sundance.org) at its 2026 annual fundraiser - CELEBRATING SUNDANCE INSTITUTE: A TRIBUTE TO FOUNDER ROBERT REDFORD will also honor three individuals for their work. This will take place on Friday, January 23, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Deer Valley in Utah.

During the evening, CHLOE ZHAO will receive the annual Trailblazer Award, NIA DACOSTA will be presented with the annual Vanguard Award for Fiction, and GEETA GANDBHIR will receive the annual Vanguard Award Presented for Nonfiction. Additional special guest participants include Amy Redford, Ava DuVernay, Ethan Hawke, David Lowery, Tessa Thompson, and more. The Film Festival (sundance.org) will be held from January 22–February 1, 2026, in person in Park City and Salt Lake City, Utah, with the at-home program available online from January 29–February 1, 2026, for audiences across the country.

The evening will be a meaningful tribute to Sundance Institute's Founder, Robert Redford — his legacy, vision, and enduring mission to support independent storytellers, and the inaugural Robert Redford Luminary Award will be presented to GYULA GAZDAG and ED HARRIS. The annual event enables the nonprofit to raise funds to support artists year-round through labs, intensives, grants, fellowships, a continuum of support, and public programming.

Recognizing an artist's unwavering dedication and notable contributions to the field of independent film, the Sundance Institute Trailblazer Award will be presented to Academy Award-winning filmmaker Chloé Zhao. Previous honorees include Christopher Nolan and James Mangold.

Chloé Zhao is a Beijing-born writer, director, editor, and producer. Her debut feature, 'Songs My Brothers Taught Me' (2015), was supported by the 2012 Sundance Institute Directors and Screenwriters Labs and later premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. Zhao's other films include 'The Rider' (2017), 'Eternals' (2021), and 'Nomadland' (2020), which won three Oscars. Most recently, she directed, co-wrote, and co-edited Focus Features' 'Hamnet' (2025), from the bestselling novel of the same name. Led by her masterful creative vision and collaborative storytelling, the film has earned nine audience awards, as well as Golden Globe and Critics Choice Association nominations for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay. She launched the production company 'Book of Shadows' in 2023 and 'Kodansha Studios' in 2025.

"Sundance Institute was where my journey as a filmmaker truly began, so to be honored with the Trailblazer Award by this community feels like coming home," said Chloé Zhao. "I'm deeply grateful for the support, friendship, and inspiration I've found here over the years, and I feel incredibly lucky to be a part of this



2026 SUNDANCE Honorees, banner. -Credit: sundance.org.

empathetic and fearless community of storytellers."

The annual Vanguard Awards honor emerging artists whose work highlights the art of storytelling and creative independence in both fiction and nonfiction. The Vanguard Award for Fiction will be presented to Nia DaCosta, director of 'Hedda' (2025), and the Vanguard Award for Nonfiction will go to 'Geeta Gandbhir,' director of 'The Perfect Neighbor' (2025). Previous honorees include Sean Wang, Julian Brave NoiseCat, Emily Kassie, Celine Song, Maite Alberdi, Ryan Coogler, W. Kamau Bell, Nikyatu Jusu, Siân Heder, Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, Radha Blank, Lulu Wang, Boots Riley, Dee Rees, Marielle Heller, Damien Chazelle, Benh Zeitlin, and many more.

Nia DaCosta wrote, directed, and produced Hedda, which was released this fall. Previously, DaCosta directed and co-wrote 'The Marvels' (2023), 'Candyman' (2021), and 'Little Woods' (2018), her debut feature supported by the 2015 Sundance Institute Directors and Screenwriters Labs. Her next film, '28 Years Later: The Bone Temple,' will be released in theaters on January 16, 2026.

"It is such an honor to be receiving the Vanguard Award from the Sundance Film Festival," said Nia DaCosta. "It's also incredibly fitting because all of the qualities of creative independence and intentional storytelling I am being recognized for are things I learned there, on the mountain during the Sundance Institute labs with Bob Redford, Michelle Satter, and their wonderful team. I can't wait to accept this award, but most importantly I cannot wait to celebrate Bob, the Festival, and all of the amazing filmmakers in Park City next year."

Director Geeta Gandbhir is an Emmy, Independent Spirit, and Peabody Award-winning filmmaker. Her documentary 'The Perfect Neighbor' (Netflix) premiered in the U.S. Documentary Competition category at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival and won the juried Directing Award: U.S. Documentary. As a director, her other recent credits include 'Katrina: Come Hell and High Water' (2025), 'Eyes on the

Prize' (2025), 'The Devil Is Busy' (2024), 'How We Get Free' (2023), 'Born in Synanon' (2023), and 'Lowndes County and the Road to Black Power' (2022).

"For many years, the Sundance Film Festival has been a guiding light for me — a place where bold, uncompromising stories find their home," said Geeta Gandbhir. "The Festival has always embodied the kind of filmmaking I strive for: courageous, deeply human, and unafraid to confront difficult truths. What has meant the most to me is how the Festival continues to build community — one that not only celebrates artistic excellence but actively uplifts underrepresented voices and filmmakers who challenge the status quo. As someone whose work is rooted in justice, empathy, and the power of storytelling to spark change, being recognized with the Vanguard Award is profoundly meaningful. I'm deeply honored to be part of this community and this legacy of truth-telling and transformation."

TICKETS

2026 Sundance Film Festival Single Film Tickets for in-person screenings are available @ (festival.sundance.org/tickets/in-person) and online screenings go on sale January 14 at 10 a.m. MT. Visit the Sundance Film Festival website for more information @ festival.sundance.org.

SUNDANCE INSTITUTE (SUNDANCE.ORG)

As a champion and curator of independent stories, the nonprofit Sundance Institute provides and preserves the space for artists across storytelling media to create and thrive. Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, the Institute's signature labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally.

Sundance Collab (collab.sundance.org), a digital community platform, brings a global cohort of working artists together to learn from Sundance Institute advisors and connect with each other in a creative space, developing and sharing works in

progress. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences and artists to ignite new ideas, discover original voices, and build a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Through the Sundance Institute artist programs, Sundance Collab has supported such projects as 'Beasts of the Southern Wild,' 'The Big Sick,' 'Bottle Rocket,' 'Boys Don't Cry,' 'Boys State,' 'Call Me by Your Name,' 'Clemency,' 'CODA,' 'Didi (??),' and many more.

Through year-round artist programs, the Institute also nurtured the early careers of such artists as Paul Thomas Anderson, Gregg Araki, Darren Aronofsky, Lisa Cholodenko, Nia DaCosta, Ryan Coogler, The Daniels, Robert Eggers, Rick Famuyiwa, David Gordon Green, Sterlin Harjo, Marielle Heller, Miranda July, Nikyatu Jusu, James Mangold, Lulu Wang, and Chloé Zhao and more.

Join Sundance Institute on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X, and Bluesky.

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL®

The Sundance Film Festival, a program of the nonprofit Sundance Institute, is the preeminent gathering of original storytellers and audiences seeking new voices and fresh perspectives. Since 1985, hundreds of films launched at the Festival have gone on to gain critical acclaim and reach new audiences worldwide.

The Festival has introduced some of the most groundbreaking films and episodic works of the past three decades, including 'Kiss of the Spider Woman,' 'Prime Minister,' 'Pee-wee as Himself,' 'Didi (??),' 'A Real Pain,' 'Daughters,' 'Thelma,' 'Will & Harper,' 'Past Lives,' '20 Days in Mariupol,' 'The Eternal Memory,' 'Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie,' 'A Thousand and One,' 'Pretty Baby: Brooke Shields,' 'Rye Lane,' 'Navalny,' 'Fire of Love,' 'Flee,' 'CODA,' 'Passing,' 'Summer of Soul' (...Or, 'When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised'), 'Minari,' 'Clemency,' 'Never Rarely Sometimes Always,' 'Zola,' 'O.J.: Made in America,' 'The Big Sick,' 'Little Miss Sunshine,' 'An Inconvenient Truth,' 'Napoleon Dynamite,' 'Hedwig and the Angry Inch,' 'Reservoir Dogs,' 'sex, lies, and videotape' and many more.

The program consists of fiction and nonfiction features and short films, series and episodic content, innovative storytelling, and performances, as well as conversations and other events. The 2026 Festival will be held January 22–February 1, 2026, in Park City and Salt Lake City, Utah, and online January 29–February 1, 2026, across the country.

Be a part of the Festival at festival.sundance.org and follow the Festival on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X, and Bluesky.

For more information, visit festival.sundance.org.

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

FILMS OF NOTE

BY MABEL PAIS



Seymour Hersh. -Credit: netflix.com

COVER UP

“Brilliant and damning... In refracting more than 50 years of crime and conspiracy through the prism of Hersh’s career as an investigative reporter, COVER-UP is also the deepest and most damning film that Poitras has ever made about truth in America — and the power to control it... A rare and unmistakably urgent documentary.” – David Ehrlich, IndieWire

“Riveting... Grips the attention from the opening frames... Explores the extraordinary career of Hersh, who is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest investigative journalists in American history (except perhaps by those whose misdeeds he has exposed)... The film includes audio of President Nixon snarling about Hersh in conversation with his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger. In one of the White House tapes, Nixon grouches, ‘The son of a bitch is a son of a bitch. But he’s usually right, isn’t he?’” – Matthew Carey, Deadline

“Enthralling... Captures how uncovering corruption is always a mountain to climb.” – Owen Gleiberman, Variety

DIRS: Laura Poitras & Mark Obenhaus; Prod: Yoni Golijov, Olivia Streisand, Laura Poitras & Mark Obenhaus; 2025; USA; Doc Feature; Rated: R; 1h 57m;

Pulitzer-winning investigative reporter Seymour M. Hersh was first to uncover the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War; multiple illegal CIA covert operations (including domestic spying and conducting experiments on Americans), and the U.S. Army torturing prisoners at Abu Ghraib in Iraq.

Oscar®-winning filmmaker Poitras (CITIZEN FOUR) and Emmy®-winning filmmaker Obenhaus trace the history of Hersh’s courageous, iconoclastic reporting (much of which was initially met with skepticism by mainstream outlets), his deep reservoir of sources inside government agencies, and his run-ins with politicians and editors.

At a time when freedom of the press is increasingly in jeopardy and self-censorship by major media is

prevalent, COVER-UP is a reminder of the critical role hard-hitting investigative reporting plays in a democracy.

COVER-UP premiered at the 2025 Venice International Film Festival, and was also screened at Telluride, Toronto, New York and London Film Festivals.

Screening Platform: A Netflix release.

ON HEALING LAND, BIRDS PERCH

DIR; Naja Pham Lockwood; 44m

Director Naja Pham Lockwood, who escaped from Vietnam in 1975 at the end of the Vietnam War and now makes Utah her home, has directed a short documentary.

‘On Healing Land, Birds Perch’ looks at the traumas of the Vietnam War through the lens of one of the most iconic Pulitzer Prize winning photographs which defined the Vietnam War called Saigon Execution. The film searches out the children of those involved in the photo and through a Vietnamese and Vietnamese American perspective takes us on a journey where healing is possible.

SEEDS

Shortlisted for the 2026 Academy Award® for Documentary Feature Film

WINNER – U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Prize, 2025 Sundance Film Festival

NOMINEE – Truer Than Fiction Award, 2026 Film Independent Spirit Awards

“Nine years in the making, [SEEDS is] as patient and persevering as the Black farmers it documents. A languid, loving portrait of Black farmers in the South, SEEDS is a mixture of celebration and lament. Family farming has been endangered, but for African American farmers, the land—holding onto it, cultivating it—is even more precarious and precious.” – Lisa Kennedy, Variety

“Quietly stunning... Brittany Shyne constructs an empathetic



Russian school teacher. -Credit: docnyc.net

portrait of Black agrarian life while also revealing threats to its survival. Not a journalistic investigation but a poetic contemplation that recalls Garrett Bradley’s TIME and RaMell Ross’ HALE COUNTY THIS MORNING, THIS EVENING. In the early 20th century, Black farmers owned 16 millions acres of land; today that number has shrunk to roughly a million. With SEEDS, Shyne helps spotlights the farmer, the mature and the budding, fighting to protect what remains.” – Lovia Gyarkye, The Hollywood Reporter

DIR: Brittany Shyne; Exec Prod: Maida Lynn, Tessa Thompson; Prod: Danielle Varga, Sabrina Schmidt Gordon, Brittany Shyne; USA; 2025; 2h 5m;

Interweaving the stories of three Black generational farmers to create a collective and intimate portrait of farming today, SEEDS is a moving and powerful exploration of their lives, joys and struggles as well as the fragility of legacy and owning land. With remarkable intimacy, the film documents their everyday lives - cotton harvesting, chasing cows, dealing with broken machinery and financial precarities. The camera relishes simple moments - conversations through car windows, candy from grandma’s purse as it captures moments of warmth, joy and fulfillment - turning them into striking vignettes that honor the families’ connection to the land and each other.

But the sobering reality underscores the urgency of their story. Black farmers owned 16 million acres of land in 1910 but today, that number has dwindled to a fraction. The farmers in the community struggle to access funding that white farmers nearby seem to secure with ease. Through these inter-generational stories, we see the cycles of inequity and embedded racism that persist to this present day, and the signs of hope and renewal with younger generations of farmers. SEEDS emphasizes how human beings are innately tied to our foundational roots, roots which carry our ancestral memories - somber, bitter, and sweet.

RELEASE: U.S. Theatrical Premiere at Film Forum Friday, January 16

MR. NOBODY AGAINST PUTIN

“An unseen human angle on an ongoing conflict.” - Variety

“A horrifying blueprint for authoritarianism.” - Reel News Daily

“This is one of the few documentaries that genuinely deserves adjectives like ‘brave’ and ‘daring’ - Cinema Daily US

DIR: David Borenstein and Pavel (Pasha) Talankin; Prod: Helle Faber; Exec Prods: Radovan Sibrt & Alzbeta Karaskova; Russian; 1h 30m

In a remote Russian mining town, a primary school teacher covertly documents the state’s transformation of classrooms into recruitment grounds for war. Tasked with filming “patriotic education” sessions, he turns the lens on the indoctrination of youth, capturing moments of coerced loyalty and silent dissent. This intimate documentary offers a rare, unfiltered glimpse into the erosion of truth and the resilience of those who dare to resist, even at great personal cost.

HOOPS, HOPES AND DREAMS

DIR: Glenn Kaino; Rating: PG; 20m

‘Hoops, Hopes & Dreams’ is a short documentary that explores how basketball has been a tool for connection, organizing, and community participation.

Directed by artist and filmmaker Glenn Kaino, the documentary reveals a lesser-known aspect of the Civil Rights Movement, showing how Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other activists used basketball to reach young people, build trust, and bring communities together. This influence was seen in President Barack Obama’s campaign, where basketball once again became a bridge linking generations, cultures, and coalitions through shared experience.

Blending archival footage, animation, and interviews, the film invites viewers to reflect on the importance of sports as a space for leadership, conversation, and civic engagement. Featured in the film are Ambassador Andrew Young, NBA legend Jerry West, journalist Jemele Hill, Michael Strautmanis from The Obama Foundation, and Reginald L. Love, a former Duke basketball player and aide to President Obama.

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

YOUNG ARTISTS EXPLORE POWER OF CREATIVITY AS TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

BY MABEL PAIS

“CAREER DAY: ART AS ACTIVISM” introduces young artists to the power of creativity as a tool for social change. Through hands-on master classes led by industry professionals, students will explore how art can challenge injustice, amplify community voices and inspire action. These sessions empower the next generation to use their talents not just to perform — but to make an impact.

On January 10, 2026, NJPAC young artists can register for up to two master classes. With 25 spots available in each session, students have the option to sign up for one or two sessions in both the morning and the afternoon.

During the 12 to 1PM break, resource tables will be available with information on colleges specializing in the arts, and career pathways within these fields.

In addition, a photographer will be available in the afternoon for professional headshots; advance registration is required.



Youth Career Day

-Credit : njpac.org

REGISTRATION

Register, required, at docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScwyOB32yOr_3vH1aAhGmQYYlkBshJSQu0TOekSwf-is8sMtQ/viewform

SCHEDULE

10 – 10:30AM

Opening Remarks with Newark Councilman Dupré “Doitall” Kelly

Councilman Kelly, former member of the hip hop group Lords of the Underground, will share his inspiring journey from rapper to public servant.

10:30AM – 12PM

The Spoken Word

Facilitated by Mia X

(Recommended for Theater and Hip Hop students)

Mia X, the City of Newark’s inaugural Poet Laureate, will show young artists how to amplify their voices through the spoken word.

OR

10:30AM – 12PM

Music with a Message

Facilitated by Dr. Melanie Hill

(Recommended for ‘Band Together’ and ‘TD Jazz for Teens’ students)

Dr. Melanie Hill, a writer, violinist and assistant professor at Rutgers University,

will explore the intersection of music and storytelling.

12 – 1PM

Lunch Break (Pizza)

Resource Tables: Information on schools and careers in film and TV

Professional headshots by photographer Norman DeShong

1 – 3PM

Your Platform: Social Media

Facilitated by Tehsuan Glover

(Recommended for all disciplines)

Tehsuan Glover, spoken word artist and editor-in-chief of ‘The Newark Times,’ will demonstrate how to use social media for art and to effect change.

OR

1 – 3PM | Telling Your Story Through The Lens (Documentary Filmmaking)

Facilitated by Nicole Costa

(Recommended for all disciplines)

Nicole Costa, an award-winning cinematographer, will demonstrate how to use a camera to tell a story that sparks change.

12 – 4PM | Professional Headshots

Photographer Norman DeShong

EXPERIENCE THE HEALING POWER OF POETRY



(left) Reginald Dwayne Betts and Carl Phillips.

-Credit : njpac.org

BY MABEL PAIS

Words carry weight and meaning ... they can also be a salve for trauma and pain. Experience the Healing Power of Poetry, an unforgettable virtual reading and conversation. Literary giants Reginald Dwayne Betts and Carl Phillips will explore poetry as a radical tool for wellness and collective care. These thoughtful poets will share their perspectives on how writing can foster solace and restoration. Some themes that will be explored include poetry’s role in accelerating emotional healing. How does the transcendence of language impact a reader and writer’s well-being?

WHAT: HEALING POWER OF POETRY

WHEN: January 13, 2026 @ 6:30PM

WHERE: Zoom

COST: Free

This is a NJPAC-DODGE POETRY collaboration.

NJYC TO HOLD AUDITIONS FOR GRADES 3-12 IN JANUARY 2026 FOR SELECT ENSEMBLES



Youth auditioning.

Credit: whartonarts.org

BY MABEL PAIS

The New Jersey Youth Chorus (NJYC), a program of Wharton Arts, will hold mid-year auditions for select ensembles in January 2026 for singers in grades 3–12. Auditions provide young vocalists with the opportunity to join a vibrant choral community rooted in musical excellence, collaboration, and belonging.

“At NJYC, singing is just the beginning,” said Trish Joyce, Founder and Director. “Through music, we cultivate connection, teamwork, and a deep sense of belonging, and our directors are excited to welcome new singers into our choral family.”

Throughout the season, NJYC choristers participate in exceptional performance and educational opportunities at the local, regional, and national levels. Highlights this season include:

Life of Song Festival in Washington, DC, for Sola Voce and Cor Amici

“The Vocal Edge” Middle School Boys Festival

“Together We Sing” Festival for

Primo Coro

Collaboration with the Maplewood Glee Club for Camerata

Performance of the National Anthem for the New York Mets, featuring all NJYC choirs

Choral Festival at Carnegie Hall for Camerata

Sing a Mile High Festival in Denver, Colorado, for Sola Voce and Cor Amici

REGISTRATION

To register for an audition for NJYC’s Primo Coro, Cor Amici, Sola Voce, and Camerata, visit [NJYC.org](https://www.njyc.org).

For more information, call (973) 998-5670 or email info@njyc.org.

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

Indian-origin man wins race discrimination claim against KFC franchise manager in UK

December 28, 2025

LONDON (TIP) : An Indian man who accused his manager at a KFC franchise outlet in south-east London of wrongful dismissal and race discrimination has won nearly 67,000 pounds in compensation after a tribunal ruled in his favor.

Madhesh Ravichandran, from Tamil Nadu, told an employment tribunal hearing that his Sri Lankan Tamil boss discriminated against him and used references such as "slave" and "Indians are fraudsters" directed at him.

In details from the hearing published this week, tribunal judge Paul Abbott upheld Ravichandran's claim of wrongful dismissal and race discrimination against Nexus Foods Limited.

"The complaints of direct race discrimination are well-founded and succeed," reads the judgment.

"We have found on the facts that the claimant was subjected to the less favorable treatments... his holiday request was refused because he was Indian and [restaurant manager] Kajan wished to prioritize requests from Sri Lankan Tamil colleagues, and he was referred to as a 'shit' and a 'slave' which is self-evidently less favorable treatment because of his race," it notes.



Madhesh Ravichandran, from Tamil Nadu who accused his manager at a KFC franchise outlet in south-east London of wrongful dismissal and race discrimination has won nearly 67,000 pounds in compensation after a tribunal ruled in his favor.

Ravichandran began work at the West Wickham outlet of KFC in January 2023 following his interview with Kajan, whom he reported directly.

After facing months of problems, matters came to a head in July of that year when his boss attempted to make Ravichandran work excessive hours on a

shift and handed in his notice.

Judge Abbott said he accepted the evidence that his decision followed "Kajan's persistent efforts" to make him work "excessive hours". During follow up calls, Kajan was said to have become "racially abusive and threatening" towards Ravichandran.

"This racial abuse from a manager had, we find, the purpose and the effect of violating the claimant's dignity," reads the judgment.

The tribunal concluded that Ravichandran was "summarily dismissed" whilst serving out his notice and was denied his statutory right to one week's notice.

"It was not asserted by the respondent that the claimant had done anything to entitle it to dismiss the claimant without notice. The claimant was, therefore, wrongfully dismissed and is entitled to be paid one week's pay in lieu of notice," it states.

As part of the remedy from the findings of the tribunal hearing held in September, Ravichandran was granted a compensatory sum of 62,690 pounds, with additional payments in lieu of holiday pay and employment related particulars taking the total to around 66,800 pounds.

The tribunal also directed Nexus Foods Limited to implement a "training program for all employees concerning discrimination in the workplace, such program to include training for managers on appropriate handling of grievances in this regard" within six months of the judgment.

Twenty-year-old Indian-origin student shot dead near University of Toronto



Shivank Avasthi has been shot dead near the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC), with authorities probing the case as a homicide, officials said.

DECEMBER 26, 2025

TORONTO (TIP) : A 20-year-old Indian doctoral student has been shot dead near the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC), with authorities probing the case as a homicide, officials said.

The shooting took place on Tuesday, December 23, and the Toronto police on Wednesday, December 24, identified the victim as Shivank Avasthi, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

Police were called to the area of Highland Creek Trail and Old Kingston Road at about 3:30 pm on Tuesday for a report of an injured person lying on the ground. Duty Inspector Jeff Allington told reporters near the scene on Tuesday night.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian-origin human rights Singapore based lawyer M Ravi found dead

DECEMBER 24, 2025

SINGAPORE (TIP) : An Indian-origin former lawyer, M Ravi, widely known for representing death row inmates, including Malaysians, in Singapore, has died on Wednesday at 56.

He was found dead in the early hours of December 24, according to a report by The Straits Times. The police are investigating a case of unnatural death, said the daily report.

Ravi, whose full name was Ravi Madasamy, was born in 1969 and was a lawyer for more than 25 years.

He had also been in the news over his conduct and was an advocate for the LGBTQ community and supported the abolition of the death penalty. Ravi was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2006.

Lawyer Eugene Thuraisingam, who had previously served as Ravi's counsel, said that he "was a man who stood up for and fought hard in court for what he believed in".

"He was dedicated to his pro bono work and deeply cared for his clients," the Channel News Asia quoted Thuraisingam as saying.

"He was a friend and he will be deeply



M Ravi, widely known for representing death row inmates, including Malaysians, in Singapore, has died on Wednesday, December 24

missed by all in the legal fraternity."

According to the Encyclopedia of Singapore Tamils, an online resource, Ravi was a graduate of the National University of Singapore and Cardiff University and was called to the Bar in 1996. He founded his own law firm, M Ravi Law, in 2019.

In 2023, he was recognized for his human rights work

by the International Bar Association, receiving its "Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Legal Practitioner to Human Rights".

The organization, according to the Channel report, praised Ravi for his "extraordinary dedication to defending human rights and advocating for the decriminalization of homosexuality and the abolition of the death penalty in the Republic of Singapore".

Thirty-three offences - including murder, drug trafficking, terrorism, use of firearms and kidnapping - warrant the death penalty under Singaporean law. Ravi had several brushes with the law, being fined for disorderly behavior in 2004.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

22-year-old Indian-origin student arrested in US for arson, terrorist threat



Manojh Sai Lella, a senior at the University of Texas at Dallas, was arrested on Monday, December 22, by Frisco police on charges of arson and terroristic threat against family members

DECEMBER 27, 2025

HOUSTON (TIP) : A 22-year-old Indian-origin student has been arrested in the US on charges of arson and terroristic threat against family members, according to official records.

Manojh Sai Lella, a senior at the University of Texas at Dallas, was arrested by Frisco police on Monday.

Police responded to Lella's home after family members reported a mental health episode and alleged threats. Authorities said he allegedly tried to set the home on fire several days earlier.

Lella faces arson with intent of damaging a habitat or place of worship, a first-degree felony, and terroristic threat of a family/household member, a Class A misdemeanor. Police stressed there is no evidence of a threat to a place of worship. Bond was set at USD 100,000 and USD 3,500, respectively, according to the documents.

Indian American internist Padmaja Patel named to the Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee

DECEMBER 24, 2025

AUSTIN, TX (TIP): Dr. Padmaja Patel, a board-certified Indian American internist specializing in lifestyle medicine and healthcare transformation strategies, has been named to the Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee by Gov. Greg Abbott.

Dr. Patel, who is the president of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) and Chief Medical Officer of Nudj Health, an ACLM-certified Lifestyle Treatment Program, was appointed to the committee for a term set to expire Sept. 1, 2029.

The Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee was established to develop nutritional guidelines for residents of the state.

Dr. Patel is a member of the American Medical Association, American College of Physicians, and the American Association of Physician Leaders.

Additionally, she is the president of Midland Quality Alliance, founding chair of the ACLM clinical practice and quality committee, a board member for Healthy City Midland, and a member of the Primary Care Collaborative.

She has served as a member of the professional advisory council for the National Quality Forum and as a member of the Endorsement and



Dr. Padmaja Patel has been named to the Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee by Gov. Greg Abbott

Maintenance Committee for the Partnership for Quality Measurement.

Dr. Patel received a premedical degree from Vitthalbhai Patel & Rajratna P. T. Patel Science College and a Doctor of Medicine in Internal Medicine from the University of Missouri.

A pioneer in the field of Lifestyle Medicine (LM), Patel has developed innovative care delivery models. Her work includes designing an office-based intensive cardiac rehabilitation program for physicians.

Dr. Patel has successfully delivered LM-

based ITLC programs for chronic disease remission in both in-person and virtual settings. She is a strong advocate for LM integration within health systems across the patient care continuum and in employee and population health.

Her efforts to integrate lifestyle medicine into employee health have resulted in significant cost savings. She has also held the position of lifestyle medicine Medical Director at Wellvana, a national value-based healthcare organization, and as Vice President of the World Lifestyle Medicine Organization.

Dr. Patel has been awarded the prestigious title of Fellow of ACLM in recognition of her remarkable contributions to the field of Lifestyle Medicine. Additionally, she has been honored with the 2023 AMWA Inspire Award, which acknowledges her as a source of inspiration for others through her dedication to healthcare, compassionate treatment of patients, leadership, advocacy, and community service.

Dr. Patel is also a co-founder of Healthy City, a non-profit organization aimed at raising awareness of the benefits of plant-based nutrition and lifestyle medicine within her community.

Indian American oncologist Shikhar Mehrotra wins Medical University of South Carolina's Impact award



Shikhar Mehrotra has received the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) President's Values in Action (VIA) 2025 Impact award for his groundbreaking work in immunotherapy and its significant impact on cancer patients.

DECEMBER 26, 2025

COLUMBIA, SC (TIP): Indian American oncologist Shikhar Mehrotra has received the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) President's Values in Action (VIA) 2025 Impact award for his groundbreaking work in immunotherapy and its significant impact on cancer patients.

Mehrotra received the 2025 Impact Award from MUSC President David J. Cole and his spouse Kathy Cole at a ceremony last month, according to a university release.

Impact awards are not given annually but, instead, are given only when a nominee rises to a level that deserves this recognition. Besim Ogretmen, who nominated his colleague for Innovation, spoke of Mehrotra in the highest terms.

"He's respected with not only the MUSC family but also with national and international immunologists. I learn every day from Shikhar, and this is so well-deserved. So, thank you Shikhar for everything you do for MUSC."

Mehrotra expressed his gratitude for the consistent support he has felt at MUSC. "You all have been very supportive and very helpful all through this journey. There are highs and lows in this profession, which we all know, but I think we have kept with it because of the great support system that we have created here at MUSC."

VIA Award honorees each receive a certificate, a keepsake, an engraved brick on the Charleston Medical District Greenway and a monetary award.

Mehrotra competed his PhD in Immunology in India and post-doctoral fellowship at University of Connecticut Health Center. His research group focuses on understanding T cell biology for improving immunotherapy of cancer.

His lab is testing several strategies by understanding the overlap that exists between the immune cell signaling pathways and cellular metabolic state associated with it, as well as working to combine strategies where targeting kinases with checkpoint blockade could enhance effectiveness of ACT.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Two Telangana women, on US job hunt, killed in California car crash



Pullakhandu Meghana and Kadiyala Bhavana from Garla mandal in Mahabubabad district had gone to the US for higher studies -Images via GoFundMe

PARMINDER AUJLA

DECEMBER 29, 2025

SACRAMENTO (TIP): A car accident in California has claimed the lives of two young women from Telangana, Pullakhandam Meghana Rani and Kadiyala Bhavana, both 24, who were pursuing their dreams in the US. The accident occurred while they were returning from a trip with friends. The incident has left their families and community in shock.

Meghana, affectionately known as Chikki, and Bhavana were close friends and roommates in California. They had recently completed their Master's degrees and were seeking employment opportunities.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Thirty Indian origin arrested for illegally operating semi-trucks



30 Indian nationals living in the United States without legal status and operating semi-trucks with commercial driver's licenses were arrested by the U.S. Border Patrol agents

DECEMBER 24, 2025

EL CENTRO, CA (TIP): U.S. Border Patrol agents have arrested 30 Indian nationals living in the United States without legal status after discovering they were operating semi-trucks with commercial driver's licenses, authorities said this week.

The arrests were part of a broader immigration enforcement effort in California's El Centro Sector, where agents apprehended 49 undocumented immigrants between November 23 and December 12, 2025, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The individuals were stopped at immigration checkpoints and during highway inspections while driving commercial vehicles.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

10 Indians confirmed dead after joining Russian army, 4 still missing, says man searching for brother

Among them, three were from Punjab, and the other seven were from Uttar Pradesh and Jammu



Jagdeep Singh had gone to Russia and other places but could not find any trace of them.

DECEMBER 29, 2025

NEW YORK / NEW DELHI (TIP): Ten Indian youths who had gone abroad to earn a livelihood and later joined the Russian army have been confirmed dead. Among them, three were from Punjab, and the other seven were from Uttar Pradesh and Jammu. To search for these youths, Jagdeep Singh had gone to Russia and other places, but could not find any trace of them.

Returning to India, Jagdeep presented all the documents to Rajya Sabha member Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal's office, which confirmed the deaths of these young men as per the Russian army. The parents of these deceased youths had been waiting for their children to return safely.

According to Jagdeep, the 10 Indians confirmed dead include Tejpal Singh from Amritsar,

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

DEFINING MOMENTS OF INDIA IN 2025

The year the nation recalibrated its power, priorities and purpose

2025, despite having had only two Assembly elections, was a year dominated by electoral politics. As the year draws to a close, it is safe to say that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) not only regained the ground it appeared to have lost after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, but also reasserted its command over the electoral narrative.

Running parallel to this electoral dominance, however, was a persistent unease over democratic processes, with allegations of “vote manipulation” raised by the Opposition Congress and concerns around electoral roll revisions.

Before the dawn of another year, let's have a look at the biggest headline-grabbing episodes of Indian politics in 2025.

Saffron wave from Delhi to Bihar

The BJP returned to power in the national capital in February after 27 years. Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was confined to 22 seats while the BJP won 48 seats in the 70-member Assembly. Later, Shalimar Bagh MLA Rekha Gupta took oath as the Chief Minister of Delhi.

Another electoral victory greeted the BJP-led NDA alliance in Bihar where Nitish Kumar managed to overcome both anti-incumbency and several ‘suspicions’ regarding his deteriorating health and was sworn in as the Chief Minister of the State for the tenth time.

The election results came as a big wake-up call for the Opposition Mahagathbandhan alliance which was restricted to just 35 seats in the 243-member Assembly, with the Congress proving to be the weakest link in the alliance.

The BJP emerged as the single-largest party with 89 seats followed by the JD(U) that won 85 seats.

As of now, the NDA is in power in 18 States and two Union Territories, excluding Manipur which is under the President's rule.

Rahul pushes back with ‘vote chori’ charge

The allegations surrounding the integrity of the election process in India is not new. The Congress and its alliance partners have raised concerns on use of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and have demanded a return to ballot paper on several occasions. This year, however, Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi took the allegations further and accused the Election Commission of India (ECI) of colluding with the ruling BJP and allegedly favouring it.

Rahul held high-profile press conferences presenting “proof of voter manipulation” in several Lok Sabha seats and the Haryana Assembly polls.



His claims sent shock waves from Haryana to Brazil, quite literally, as Rahul claimed a Brazilian model's photograph was used 22 times in 10 booths in the Rai Assembly constituency during the 2024 Haryana elections.

At the same time, the ECI conducted Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in several poll-bound States. The process began from Bihar, leading to Opposition parties accusing the poll body and the BJP of conducting ‘NRC in disguise’.

Karnataka and ‘breakfast table conversations’

After a lot of noise over change of guard in Karnataka, two breakfast meetings saved the Congress government from a public fallout, at least

for now.

Following a bunch of round-trips to Delhi, as per Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar, there are no differences between them and the party high command has chalked out an agreement to be followed by both the leaders.

The Chief Minister has expressed confidence that the party leadership supported him to complete his full five-year term.

The Opposition BJP raked up the issue in the State Assembly and said political uncertainty over the top post was affecting the State's development.

The speculation was fuelled by a rumoured “power-sharing” pact between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar when the government was formed in 2023.

India retaliates to terror

The year also saw two ghastly terror attacks in India — the Pahalgam attack in April and the Delhi Red Fort blast that happened in November.

The Pahalgam attack which claimed the lives of 26 civilians led to India retaliating with Operation Sindoor, a precise, retaliatory military operation in May 2025 against terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). In the following days, border tensions escalated between the neighbouring country until a ceasefire was called on May 10.

The ‘ceasefire’ worked as fodder for the Opposition as US President Donald Trump claimed that he brokered the India-Pakistan ceasefire by threatening the countries of snapping trade

ties with them.

Legislature in limelight

Several Bills were passed by both the Houses of Parliament during different sessions with far reaching consequences for the laymen. Of these, the Waqf (Amendment) Act passed by Parliament in April and the VB-G RAM G Bill during the Winter session made the most noise.

The ruling BJP-led NDA has hailed the law as a step towards transparency and empowerment for backward Muslims and women in the community, while the Opposition has criticised it, alleging that it infringes upon the rights of Muslims.

The VB-G RAM G Act, which will replace the 20-year-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), guarantees 125 days of rural wage employment every year. The Opposition strongly protested the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the MGNREGA, and said that the government was putting the financial burden on States.

Parliament also witnessed the sudden resignation of Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar in July. Dhankhar's unceremonious departure was largely attributed to him pre-empting the government's moves on the removal of High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma.

C P Radhakrishnan was sworn-in as the new Vice President in September.

Governor vs govt in Tamil Nadu

M K Stalin-led Tamil Nadu government and Governor R N Ravi remained at loggerheads with each other throughout the year.

After the Supreme Court's verdict on April 8, 2025 in the matter involving Bills vis-a-vis the Governor, the Tamil Nadu government notified 10 Bills (on April 12, 2025 in the government gazette).

The court had held that the Bills sent to the President by Governor Ravi following re-adoption by the Tamil Nadu Assembly were deemed to have been accorded assent. Later, the Supreme Court, however, in its advisory opinion in the matter of Presidential reference said that there cannot be deemed assent to Bills.

Tariffs, Taliban and thaw with China

As India-Pakistan hostilities reached an all-time high in recent years, India warmed up its stance on Taliban and assured of restoring the status of its mission in the capital of Afghanistan to that of an embassy along with restarting supporting development projects in the conflict-ravaged country.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar hosted the Foreign Minister of the Taliban regime in Kabul, Amir Khan Muttaqi, in October this year. Afghanistan, too, promised India that no group or individual would be allowed to use its territory against India.

India-US ties, on the other hand, mostly remained tense as Washington imposed 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods, citing unfair trade practices and Russia oil imports. US is India's largest export destination and the steep tariffs have strained the Modi-Trump bonhomie. Both the countries are yet to



reach a trade deal.

China and India relations, meanwhile, witnessed a period of thaw as Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited China after a gap of seven years and met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the 25th Shanghai Co-operation Organisation meeting in September.

The two sides took a series of measures to repair the ties, including the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and the resumption of direct India-China flights.

As India enters 2026, four States and a Union Territory — West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Puducherry — await Assembly polls amid the chaos of SIR. It will be interesting to note whether the Opposition will manage to overcome the defeats of this year to leave a mark on the electoral landscape or the ruling party will further tighten its grip. But, above the electoral battles, the unresolved unease over democratic institutions and federal balance needs serious consideration.



2025 Supreme Court Review: Key judgments on women's reservation, presidential reference, constitutional rights

The year 2025 proved to be a landmark one for the Supreme Court of India. As the nation grappled with social change, governance debates, and questions of constitutional authority, the apex court delivered a series of rulings that left an enduring imprint on Indian law, politics, and society. From clarifying the powers of the President and Governors, to advancing women's representation in legal institutions, to reinforcing fundamental rights, the Court's judgments reflected a careful balancing of tradition, equity, and constitutional principles.

Presidential Reference on Assent Powers: Upholding Institutional Independence

In November, the Supreme Court issued its advisory opinion on a Presidential Reference regarding the powers of the President and Governors to grant assent to bills passed by state legislatures. The Court clarified that no fixed timeline can be imposed on the President or Governors for assenting to legislation, holding that the concept of "deemed assent" was incompatible with the Constitution's basic structure.

The judgment was a strong reaffirmation of the separation of powers, ensuring that constitutional authorities retain independent discretion without being coerced by deadlines or political pressure. Legal analysts hailed this opinion as an important milestone in safeguarding federal balance and the deliberative processes of democracy.

Women's Reservation in State Bar Councils: Advancing Gender Equity

Another socially transformative ruling came in the form of a mandate for 30 percent representation of women in State Bar Councils. The Court ordered that 20 percent of seats be filled through elections, with 10 percent through co-option by existing council members.

This judgment addressed the stark under-representation of women in legal governing bodies, and was widely celebrated as a progressive step toward substantive equality. Advocates argued that it would not only empower female legal professionals but also reshape decision-making and policy formulation in India's legal institutions.

Balancing Culture and Environment: Firecracker Regulations

Ahead of Diwali, the Court modified earlier restrictions on firecrackers in the Delhi-NCR region, allowing licenced traders to sell NEERI-certified "green crackers" under regulated conditions. This ruling demonstrated the Court's



nuanced approach, balancing environmental concerns with cultural and religious practices, and underscored its role as a mediator between social values and ecological responsibility.

Tribunal Reforms Act: Protecting Judicial Independence

In a pivotal judgment on administrative law, the Supreme Court struck down key provisions of the Tribunal Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Act, 2021, reiterating that tribunals must remain insulated from executive interference. By safeguarding the impartiality of adjudicatory bodies outside regular courts, the Court reinforced a core tenet of constitutional governance: that justice institutions must operate free from

undue influence to maintain public trust.

Criminal Justice: Upholding the Standard of Proof

The apex court also delivered a critical criminal law judgment in the Nithari serial killings case. Reversing the conviction of Surendra Koli, the Court underscored that suspicion cannot replace proof beyond reasonable doubt. The ruling reaffirmed that convictions must be anchored in solid evidence, not expediency or public sentiment, emphasizing the judiciary's role as a guardian of fair trial and due process.

Judicial Service Eligibility: Emphasizing Practical Experience

In 2025, the Court reinstated the requirement of three years of practical



legal practice for candidates seeking judicial service, emphasizing that courtroom experience is essential for competent adjudication. This decision reinforced professional standards in the judiciary and highlighted the importance of experience in administering justice effectively.

Animal Welfare and Public Safety: Stray Dog Sterilization

Demonstrating sensitivity to public health and animal welfare, the Court directed that sterilized, vaccinated, and dewormed stray dogs should be returned to their locality, rather than confined indefinitely in shelters. Exceptions applied to aggressive or rabies-suspected animals. This judgment reflected a balanced approach to rights, safety, and humane treatment.

2025 in Retrospect: Constitutional Rights, Social Justice, and Judicial Oversight

Taken together, the Supreme Court's 2025 judgments reflect a judiciary conscious of its constitutional mandate, social responsibilities, and role in governance. Whether clarifying presidential powers, promoting gender equality, or protecting fundamental rights, the Court consistently reinforced principles of democracy, fairness, and institutional integrity.

Legal scholars have described the year's rulings as a demonstration of judicial foresight—where courts did not merely interpret law, but actively shaped the contours of governance, justice, and social equity.

2025 will be remembered as a year when the Supreme Court not only clarified legal ambiguities but also advanced the cause of social justice, gender equity, and constitutional safeguards, reaffirming its position as the guardian of India's democratic framework.

2025 in the Shadow of Fear: The Deadliest Terror Attacks That Shook India

In 2025, India's vibrant life was punctuated by moments of tragedy that reminded the nation of the persistent threat of terrorism. The year saw attacks that claimed lives, challenged security agencies, and left a deep emotional scar on the country. From scenic tourist valleys to the heart of the national capital, terror struck indiscriminately, leaving families, communities, and the nation to grapple with loss, grief, and the urgent need for heightened vigilance.

This feature revisits the deadliest terror incidents of 2025, exploring the events, the human stories behind them, and their long-lasting implications.

Pahalgam Massacre: Innocence Shattered in the Valley

On a bright spring afternoon of 22 April 2025, the picturesque Baisaran Valley in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, became the site of unimaginable horror. The valley, known for its rolling meadows, pony rides, and tourist gatherings, was suddenly invaded by armed militants. Witnesses later described the terrifying moments when automatic gunfire ripped through the tranquil air, turning laughter and leisure into panic and chaos.

By the end of the assault, 26 civilians had been killed and over 20 injured. Most victims were tourists - newlyweds, families, and foreign visitors. A local pony operator, who reportedly tried to protect visitors, also lost his life. Survivors recounted the attackers asking victims about their religion before shooting, adding a chilling psychological layer to the brutality.

The militant group The Resistance Front (TRF), allegedly linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba, initially claimed responsibility but later denied involvement. The attack sparked nationwide outrage, highlighting gaps in tourist security in conflict-prone regions and prompting questions about intelligence lapses.

Aftermath and Response

The federal government acted swiftly. Security forces launched extensive counter-terror operations, conducting raids and detaining over 175 suspects. Homes of suspected militants were demolished, while border and internal security were tightened to prevent further attacks. In a diplomatic move, the government temporarily suspended visas for Pakistani nationals, signaling serious concern over cross-border militant involvement.

The tragedy also resonated internationally. Multilateral forums, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, condemned the attack



and called for collective action against terrorism, reflecting the global implications of local violence.

Red Fort Car Bombing: Terror Strikes the Capital

Less than seven months later, India witnessed another shocking attack - this time in its capital, New Delhi. On 10 November 2025, a car laden with explosives detonated near the Red Fort Metro Station, one of the city's most iconic landmarks. The blast killed 15 people and injured more than 20, leaving debris scattered across streets and damaging nearby buildings.

Investigators revealed that the attack was carefully planned to strike during peak hours, ensuring maximum casualties. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) swiftly took charge, arresting several suspects linked to the plot. Among them was Yasir Ahmad

Dar, alleged to have pledged himself to a suicide mission, along with others reportedly affiliated with extremist networks across northern India.

The Red Fort bombing prompted urgent debates on urban security preparedness. Lawmakers, security analysts, and civil society highlighted the need for enhanced surveillance, rapid emergency response, and intelligence integration to prevent attacks in densely populated areas. Internationally, the blast drew condemnation from world leaders, including the United States, which praised India's methodical investigation and response.

Other Violent Incidents: Insurgency and Extremism

While Pahalgam and Red Fort were the deadliest attacks, other incidents underscored the multiplicity of

security challenges in India. In Bijapur district, Chhattisgarh, Maoist insurgents detonated an improvised explosive device targeting a security convoy, killing eight personnel and a civilian driver in January 2025. This internal insurgency highlighted that terrorism in India is not only transnational but also deeply domestic, rooted in longstanding socio-political grievances.

Collectively, these incidents exposed vulnerabilities across urban and rural India, prompting the government to reassess counter-terror strategies, resource allocation, and rapid response mechanisms.

The Human Toll: Grief and Resilience

The deadliest attacks of 2025 were not just statistics; they represented human lives, families, and dreams abruptly ended. In Pahalgam, parents mourned children, spouses lost partners on their honeymoon, and communities grappled with trauma. In Delhi, ordinary commuters, workers, and passersby became victims in an attack that shattered the sense of safety in the capital.

Yet, amid the grief, stories of courage and resilience emerged. Locals who assisted the injured, citizens who volunteered for relief, and communities that organized vigils and memorials displayed the nation's ability to unite in the face of terror.

National Reflection and Security Lessons

The attacks of 2025 prompted a national introspection on security and preparedness. Authorities enhanced urban surveillance, intelligence sharing, and coordination between central and state agencies. Public awareness campaigns encouraged citizens to remain vigilant and report suspicious activities.

Furthermore, the incidents influenced diplomatic engagement, with India emphasizing the need to combat cross-border terrorism through international cooperation while balancing domestic policy and civil liberties.

Looking Forward

While 2025 will be remembered for these tragic attacks, it is also a testament to India's resilience and resolve. The year underscored that terrorism, in its many forms, remains a potent threat, but collective vigilance, intelligence, and community solidarity can mitigate its impact.

As India moves forward, the lessons of Pahalgam, Red Fort, and other attacks will continue to shape national security policy, urban preparedness, and public consciousness, ensuring that while terror may strike, the spirit of the nation endures unbroken.

Remembering the icons we lost in 2025 — India's cultural & artistic giants

They shaped our imagination, our language of emotions, our collective memory. In 2025, India paused repeatedly to mourn, to remember, and to honor those whose lives left an indelible imprint on its cultural soul.

The year 2025 will be remembered as one of profound transition—not merely for political churn or social change, but for the quiet departures of giants who had long been part of India's everyday life. Actors whose faces felt familiar as family, singers whose voices became emotional landmarks, creators who shaped how India spoke to itself—many took their final bow this year.

What united these losses was not just fame, but enduring relevance. These were figures who had outlived trends, crossed generations, and remained woven into India's shared consciousness. Their passing marked the end of eras and the beginning of reflection.

Dharmendra (1935-2025): The Eternal He-Man with a Gentle Soul

For over six decades, Dharmendra stood tall as one of Hindi cinema's most enduring leading men. Dubbed the "He-Man" of Bollywood, he embodied rugged masculinity—but beneath the brawn lay an actor of extraordinary emotional sensitivity.

From the rebellious passion of Phool Aur Patthar to the stoic righteousness of Satyakam, from the thunderous camaraderie of Sholay to the playful warmth of Chupke Chupke, Dharmendra moved effortlessly between intensity and tenderness. He represented an India that was idealistic yet grounded, heroic yet humane.

In his later years, Dharmendra became less a star and more a living institution—a bridge between cinema's golden age and its modern reinventions. His death in November 2025 prompted tributes that cut across generations, languages, and ideologies. For many, he was not just an actor—but a reminder of cinema's moral heart.

Manoj Kumar (1937-2025): Cinema's Conscience Keeper

Known eternally as "Bharat Kumar," Manoj Kumar redefined patriotism on screen—not through spectacle, but through quiet conviction. At a time when nationalism was still finding its post-Independence voice, his films spoke directly to the nation's conscience.

Upkar, Purab Aur Pachhim, Roti Kapda Aur Makaan—these were not merely films, but cultural statements. Manoj Kumar believed cinema had a responsibility to society, and his body of work reflected that belief with unwavering clarity.

His passing in April 2025 felt symbolic, coming at a time when India was once again debating ideas of nationhood,



identity, and belonging. His films remain a reminder that patriotism, at its strongest, is rooted in empathy and social justice.

Kamini Kaushal (1927-2025): A Pioneer Who Refused to Fade

Kamini Kaushal belonged to an era when women on screen were expected to vanish after marriage. She quietly—and resolutely—defied that norm.

From her historic debut in Neecha Nagar to her continued presence in cinema across decades, Kamini Kaushal embodied dignity, restraint, and inner strength. She aged on screen with grace at a time when roles for older women were scarce—and often stereotyped.

Her passing closed a rare chapter of Indian cinema: that of an actress who had witnessed—and participated in—its journey from pre-Independence realism to contemporary storytelling.

Asrani (1941-2025): Laughter That Outlived the Punchline

Comedy in Indian cinema has often been underestimated. Asrani proved it



could be immortal.

Whether as the unforgettable jailer in Sholay or the gentle disruptor in Hrishikesh Mukherjee classics like Guddi and Chupke Chupke, Asrani possessed a rare gift—he could make audiences laugh without malice, satire without cruelty.

His death in October 2025 felt deeply personal to viewers who had grown up repeating his dialogues, often without remembering when they first heard them. His legacy is laughter that never felt dated—and kindness that never felt forced.

Satish Shah (1952-2025): Wit, Warmth, and the Middle-Class Mirror

Few actors captured the quirks of India's urban middle class as sharply as Satish Shah. With impeccable comic timing and observational humour, he made everyday absurdities unforgettable.

For a generation, he will forever remain Indravadan Sarabhai—opinionated, sarcastic, and oddly lovable. Yet his career stretched far

beyond sitcom fame, encompassing theatre, cinema, and voice work.

Satish Shah's death marked the loss of an actor who made intelligence funny and humor thoughtful—a rare balance in popular entertainment.

Zubeen Garg (1972-2025): The Voice of a Region, the Sound of a Generation

Zubeen Garg was not just a singer—he was a cultural movement. From Assam to Bollywood, his voice carried emotion, defiance, and deep-rooted identity.

Equally at home singing soulful Bollywood numbers and Assamese folk-inspired compositions, Zubeen represented a generation of artists who refused to be boxed into one language or geography.

His sudden passing in September 2025 sent shockwaves across the Northeast and beyond, highlighting how deeply regional voices have shaped India's national cultural fabric.

Pankaj Dheer (1956-2025): The Warrior with a Tragic Grace

To millions, Pankaj Dheer will always be Karna—the noble warrior wronged by fate. His portrayal in Mahabharat was marked by dignity, restraint, and quiet pain.

Beyond mythological television, Dheer worked steadily in films and serials, embodying authority figures with moral complexity. His death in October 2025 reminded audiences of an era when television characters were written—and performed—with epic gravitas.

Mukul Dev (1971-2025): The Actor Who Thrived in the Shadows

Mukul Dev never chased stardom—yet he never went unnoticed. With a commanding screen presence and understated intensity, he excelled in supporting roles that elevated entire narratives. From action dramas to comedies, he brought credibility and depth, often becoming the emotional anchor of the story. His untimely death in May 2025 was widely mourned within the industry, a reminder of how essential character actors are to Indian cinema's ecosystem.

Piyush Pandey (1955-2025): The Man Who Taught Brands to Speak Human

Few individuals shaped India's emotional vocabulary as profoundly as Piyush Pandey. Through advertising, he taught brands to speak the language of people—not markets.

His campaigns blended humour, nostalgia, social insight, and storytelling, often reflecting India back to itself with warmth and honesty. His passing in 2025 was mourned not just by advertisers, but by anyone who had ever smiled at a commercial that felt deeply personal.

2025 in Indian Cinema: Blockbusters, Brave Voices and a Year of Creative Contrasts

The year 2025 proved to be one of the most dynamic in the recent history of Indian cinema - a year where massive box-office success collided with bold, socially conscious storytelling, and where audiences were invited to both cheer and reflect. Indian filmgoers flocked to theatres for spectacle and yearned for substance from the screen. What emerged was a cinematic landscape defined not by uniformity but by its contrasts: grand narratives and quiet truths, patriotic fervor and marginal voices, commercial polish and artistic risk.

In 2025, Indian cinema expanded its reach - not just in terms of box-office records, but also in cultural conversation. The stories that dominated our screens reflected a nation grappling with identity, pride and the lived realities of its people.

Dhurandhar: A Spectacle of Patriotism

No discussion of Indian cinema in 2025 can begin without acknowledging Dhurandhar - a film that became a paradigm of mainstream success and cultural resonance.

Directed by Aditya Dhar and boasting an ensemble cast that includes Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, Arjun Rampal and Sara Arjun, Dhurandhar turned the spy thriller into a nationwide event. With its taut pacing, high-octane action sequences and sweeping production values, the film skillfully blended entertainment with echoes of real historical events like the Kandahar hijack, the Parliament attack, and the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

But what truly set Dhurandhar apart was its phenomenal box-office performance. Opening to strong collections and holding steady through weeks of release, it didn't just dominate market share - it shattered records. By mid-December, industry trackers reported that Dhurandhar had collected over ₹870 crore worldwide, making it one of the biggest Indian films of the year. Along the way it surpassed the lifetime totals of films such as Kantara: A Legend - Chapter 1 and cemented its place in the upper echelon of Indian cinematic earnings. Audiences across age groups responded not just to its star power and action set pieces, but to the film's emotional undercurrents - a mix of loyalty, sacrifice and national pride that struck a chord in a year of broader social introspection.

Critics acknowledged the film's technical mastery - the slick editing, immersive cinematography, and an expansive soundscape - while also debating the ideological contours of its narrative. Some saw in Dhurandhar a celebration of courage and resolve; others cautioned against simplistic narratives of nationalism. Regardless of interpretation, the film became a cultural flashpoint, setting the tone for how cinema and national identity intersect in



contemporary India.

Homebound: The Power of Human Stories

In stark contrast to Dhurandhar's explosive scale stood Homebound, a film that operated on intimacy and empathy rather than spectacle. Directed by Neeraj Ghaywan and chosen as India's official entry for the Oscars, Homebound was named by critics and audiences alike as one of the most socially resonant films of the year.

At its heart, Homebound is a story about friendship, aspiration and the structural inequalities that shape Indian society. It follows two protagonists - one Dalit, one Muslim - as they navigate the obstacles that caste, class and systemic bias place in their paths. The power of the film lies not in plot twists or larger-than-life heroics, but in its observational, humane storytelling. Its characters are fully realized, their motivations clear, their struggles reflective of many real lives in contemporary India.

Shot with a deliberate eye for realism, the film uses its visuals to contrast spaces of privilege and marginalization, showing not only geographic divides but emotional ones. The performances - particularly from the two leads - are quietly potent, grounding the narrative in lived experience rather than cinematic artifice.

Homebound resonated at international

film festivals from Venice to Toronto to Berlin, where audiences praised its sensitivity, depth and universality. In a year dominated by thunderous entertainment, it emerged as a reminder that cinema's greatest strength is its ability to make us see ourselves in the stories of others.

A Year of Diversity: Film Beyond the Blockbuster

The year's cinematic offerings were not limited to these two poles of blockbuster spectacle and hard-hitting social drama. Across the country, filmmakers in every language and genre produced work that expanded the language of Indian cinema.

Chhaava, starring Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna, stood out as a historical epic, sweeping audiences into its richly detailed portrayal of valor and legacy. The film grossed over Rs 800 crore globally, affirming that historical narratives remain powerful engines for both emotion and box-office returns.

On a different register, Saiyaara, released in July, defied conventional expectations to become the highest-grossing Indian romantic film of all time. Its emotional storytelling, paired with a captivating musical score, proved that romance - when anchored in fresh performances and a thoughtful script - still has a dedicated and vast audience. Cinema in 2025 also saw the rise of genre diversity, with films like the animated

Mahavatar Narsimha appealing to family audiences, the action-packed War 2 delivering mass thrills, and regional hits like Coolie (Tamil) making significant dents at the global box office. The year's highest grossing films reflected this diversity: from Kantara: A Legend - Chapter 1 to Lokah Chapter One: Chandra and They Call Him OG, audiences celebrated stories from different regions, languages and cinematic traditions, proving yet again that Indian cinema is pan-Indian, not monolithic.

Independent and Critical Favorites: Beyond the Conventional Frame

Beyond the financial metrics, 2025's critical conversation was animated by films that challenged narrative norms and foregrounded marginalized voices. Among these:

Humans in the Loop - a sci-fi drama that used artificial intelligence as a lens to explore human agency and inequity.

Jugnuma - a genre-blending tale of caste, capitalism and the supernatural set in the Uttarakhand hills.

Dhadak 2 - a mainstream romance that tested familiar formulas with its commentary on caste barriers.

The Mehta Boys - a heartfelt dramedy directed by Boman Irani, centering family dynamics and generational tensions.

Nishanchi, from Anurag Kashyap, embraced experimental storytelling and genre subversion.

The Great Shamsuddin Family offered a warm, inclusive portrait of Muslim family life that resonated widely across streaming audiences.

These films - each distinct in tone and intent - demonstrated that Indian cinema's future lies not just in bigger budgets or star casts, but in storytelling that reaches deeper into lived experience.

The Gender, Genre, and Narrative Landscape

One of the more intriguing currents in 2025 was the resurgence of certain traditional tropes even as new ones emerged. Films like Saiyaara and Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat saw the familiar - sometimes problematic - "spoilt man child" archetype return to prominence in romantic narratives. While these films drew strong box-office numbers, they also sparked debate about gender dynamics, representation and audience desire for both nostalgia and progress.

At the same time, films like Homebound and Humans in the Loop illustrated a keen interest in narratives that move beyond provinces of the self, asking not only "What entertains?" but "What transforms?" The dual currents of spectacle and introspection - sometimes at odds, sometimes complementary - made 2025's cinematic dialogue richer and harder to pigeonhole.

Newsmakers of 2025: Faces who defined India

Every year brings a set of personalities whose actions, achievements, controversies, or resilience leave a lasting imprint on the nation. In 2025, India witnessed political shifts, cultural milestones, sporting triumphs, and social movements that captured headlines and public imagination. From stalwarts consolidating power to rising stars challenging the status quo, these individuals shaped national discourse and became the defining newsmakers of the year.

POLITICAL TITANS AND GAME CHANGERS

Narendra Modi - Steering India Through Turbulent Times

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dominated headlines throughout 2025. The Lok Sabha elections, which resulted in a redefined political landscape, tested both his leadership and the ruling party's organizational strength. The elections were marked by new alliances, shifting vote banks, and youth engagement, and Modi's campaign strategy, combining mass outreach with digital mobilization, proved decisive.

Beyond elections, the Prime Minister's management of national security crises, including the Pahalgam massacre and the Red Fort car bombing, showcased a balancing act between diplomatic restraint and domestic action. His speeches emphasized unity and resilience, reinforcing his image as a decisive yet composed leader. Policy measures in renewable energy, digital governance, and infrastructure expansion also kept him in constant media focus.

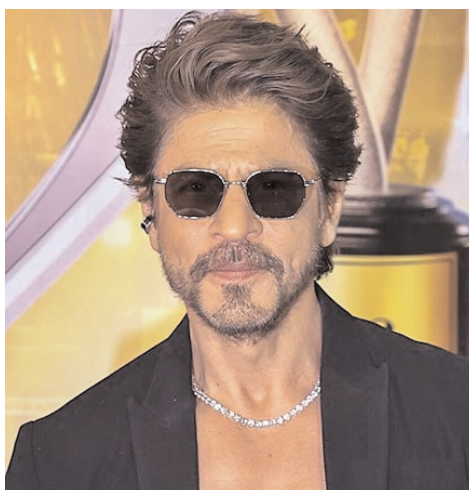
Rahul Gandhi - The Opposition Voice

Rahul Gandhi, former Congress President and prominent leader of the opposition, emerged as one of the most vocal and active political figures of 2025. He played a critical role during the Lok Sabha elections, articulating the Congress party's vision and critiquing government policies on employment, agrarian distress, and democratic accountability.

Post-elections, Rahul Gandhi continued to influence the national conversation, focusing on democratic reforms, women's reservation in legislatures, and social welfare measures. His speeches in Parliament, combined with media engagements and social campaigns, kept him consistently in the public eye, making him a central figure in debates over governance and policy. His efforts to revitalize grassroots politics and connect with youth voters reinforced his status as a key newsmaker of the year.

Mallikarjun Kharge - Strategic Opposition Leader

As leader of the opposition in Parliament, Mallikarjun Kharge complemented Rahul Gandhi's activism by steering legislative debates, holding the government accountable, and



highlighting policy gaps. His calm but assertive approach to parliamentary oversight earned him respect and media attention throughout the year.

Smriti Irani - Championing Social and Educational Initiatives

Union Minister Smriti Irani gained widespread recognition in 2025 for her work in women's empowerment, education reform, and skill development initiatives. From launching innovative digital education programs to advocating for safety measures for women across states, her proactive approach made her a consistent feature in national headlines.

ENTERTAINMENT ICONS

Alia Bhatt - Redefining Contemporary Cinema

Alia Bhatt had a breakthrough year, starring in films that blended social messaging with mainstream appeal, tackling themes such as mental health, gender equality, and urban isolation. Beyond acting, she made waves as a

producer, supporting independent cinema and creating opportunities for emerging filmmakers. Her social advocacy, particularly in raising awareness about women's safety and mental health, cemented her status as a newsmaker beyond the silver screen.

Shah Rukh Khan - Global Ambassador of Indian Cinema

SRK continued to be a focal point in entertainment news, with international collaborations and strategic business ventures drawing media attention. His philanthropic work, including educational and health initiatives, coupled with high-profile appearances at global events, kept him relevant in both film and social discourse.

Rashmika Mandanna - The Pan-Indian Star

Rashmika's 2025 releases, including 'Cocktail 2' and other high-profile romantic comedies, cemented her status as one of India's most bankable stars. She emerged as a youth icon, with her interviews, brand endorsements, and

social media presence generating significant media coverage.

SPORTS STARS - TRIUMPHS AND GLORY

Virat Kohli - The Cricketing Maestro

Virat Kohli remained in the headlines for his leadership in domestic and international cricket. His focus on mentoring young talent, coupled with spectacular performances in high-stakes tournaments, ensured his position as one of India's most influential sports figures.

PV Sindhu - Bringing Glory to Indian Badminton

PV Sindhu continued her remarkable run on the global stage, winning medals at world championships and inspiring a new generation of athletes. Her dedication, combined with advocacy for women in sports, made her a symbol of national pride.

Neeraj Chopra - The Javelin Phenomenon

Neeraj Chopra's consistency and

record-breaking performances in athletics kept him in the news throughout 2025. His commitment to training and representing India internationally highlighted the growing stature of Indian athletes on the world stage.

BUSINESS LEADERS AND ENTREPRENEURS

Ratan Tata - The Philanthropic Visionary

Even in 2025, late Ratan Tata made headlines for philanthropic initiatives and mentoring young entrepreneurs, particularly in sectors like sustainability, healthcare, and technology innovation. His voice carried moral authority, blending business acumen with social responsibility.

Mukesh Ambani - Expanding the Corporate Footprint

Mukesh Ambani remained central in business news due to Reliance Industries' expansion into renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and consumer tech. Ambani's strategic partnerships, both domestic and international, reflected India's growing corporate influence globally.

Byju Raveendran - Revolutionizing Education Technology

Byju continued to innovate in edtech, expanding learning platforms for students across India and abroad. International collaborations and initiatives to bridge digital education gaps kept him prominently in the news.

SOCIAL ACTIVISTS AND THOUGHT LEADERS

Medha Patkar - Environmental and Social Advocacy

Patkar remained active in campaigning against displacement due to industrial and infrastructure projects, advocating for the rights of marginalized communities. Her involvement in nationwide environmental movements drew media attention and public support.

Kiran Bedi - Law Enforcement and Public Safety Initiatives

The former IPS officer maintained a visible presence in media discussions on police reforms, women's safety, and governance accountability, further establishing her as a respected public intellectual.

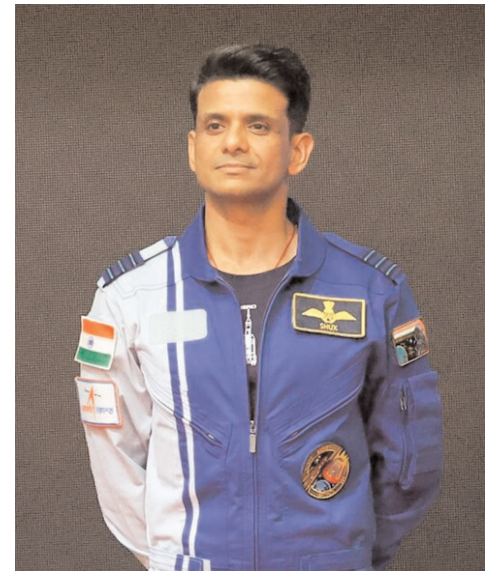
Faye D'Souza - Journalism with a Purpose

Faye D'Souza continued to challenge societal and political narratives through fearless reporting. Her investigative journalism on social justice issues kept her at the forefront of media discourse.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND HEALTH PIONEERS

Dr. Gagandeep Kang - Public Health Leadership

Dr. Kang's research and policy contributions in vaccine development and public health continued to influence India's approach to health crises. Her work on community immunization and disease prevention kept her in the public eye.



Shubhanshu Shukla

A group captain and test pilot with the Indian Air Force (IAF) and gaganyatri (astronaut) with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). In July 2025 Shukla became the first ISRO astronaut to visit the International Space Station (ISS) while participating in Axiom Mission 4, a privately organised spaceflight. He is the second Indian to travel to space, following Rakesh Sharma's flight in 1984.

CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC ICONS

Anish Kapoor - International Artistic Influence

Kapoor's 2025 exhibitions, blending traditional Indian motifs with contemporary art, made waves globally, reinforcing India's cultural influence in

the art world.

Zoya Akhtar - Filmmaking for Social Change

Akhtar received accolades for films addressing gender, class, and societal challenges, making her a leading figure in socially conscious cinema.

Raghu Dixit - Music as Activism

Through cross-cultural performances and social messaging in his music, Dixit remained a prominent cultural voice in 2025.

EMERGING FACES

2025 also saw young innovators, activists, and artists making headlines:

- Aarav Mehta: Climate activist leading nationwide youth initiatives.
- Ananya Singh: Health-tech

entrepreneur gaining recognition for digital healthcare innovations.

- Ishan Kapoor: Independent filmmaker whose socially relevant narratives gained national and international attention.

REFLECTIONS ON THE YEAR

The newsmakers of 2025 represent India's diversity - politics, sports, entertainment, science, and social activism. Some shaped public opinion, some inspired change, and others became symbols of accountability and courage. The inclusion of Rahul Gandhi as a central opposition leader highlights the balance of political forces shaping discourse. As India prepares for 2026, these individuals embody stories of resilience, influence, and aspiration, and will continue to shape the narratives that define the nation.

Tragedies that shook India in 2025

From deadly stampedes and terror attacks to plane crashes, floods and industrial disasters, 2025 saw hundreds of deaths across India. Here are the major tragedies that shook India to the core this year.

2025: A Year Of Death And Disaster For India

Hundreds of lives were lost in several incidents across India, including stampedes, natural disasters, accidents, and terror attacks. Incidents like the Maha Kumbh Mela stampede, the Pahalgam terror attack, the Air India crash, the Delhi blast and others have shaken the nation to the core. Some tragic incidents also exposed negligence and mismanagement, while others were acts of sudden violence or unleashed by nature. These incidents have left deep scars on communities and raised urgent questions about safety, preparedness and accountability.

Maha Kumbh Mela Stampede

At least 30 people were killed, while 60 others were injured at the world's largest religious gathering of Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on January 29, 2025. Thousands of pilgrims had gathered to take a holy dip in the Sangam on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya, one of the most auspicious days of the Hindu calendar. The 45-day-long festival witnessed over 660 million pilgrims in total.

New Delhi Railway Station Stampede

At least 18 people were killed, and 15 were injured in a stampede at New Delhi Railway Station late on February 15. The incident occurred after a sudden surge of passengers waiting to board trains to Prayagraj for the ongoing Maha Kumbh. Severe overcrowding on platforms 12 and 14 led to panic and chaos, resulting in one of the deadliest crowd crushes at the station in recent years.

Telangana Tunnel Collapse

On 22 February, in Telangana's Nagarkurnool district, a section of the Srisailem Left Bank Canal tunnel under construction collapsed, trapping workers inside. Rescue teams fought hazardous conditions in an attempt to reach those buried under debris. The accident claimed the lives of at least eight workers, highlighting serious concerns over safety standards at major infrastructure worksites.

Bengaluru Stampede

On June 4, 2025, Bengaluru's IPL victory celebrations turned tragic when a massive crowd crush occurred near the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium. Over two lakh fans gathered for the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) felicitations, leading to chaos. Asphyxia claimed the lives of 11 people, while many others were injured. The tragedy highlighted the dangers of severe



overcrowding and poor crowd control during the victory event.

Air India Flight 171 Crash

In one of the deadliest plane crashes in history, London-bound Air India Flight 171, carrying 242 people onboard, crashed moments after taking off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad on June 12. The Boeing 787 Dreamliner crash resulted in the death of 241 people on board, leaving only one survivor. Other casualties were also reported on the ground at the site of the crash, bringing the total death toll to 260. The

investigation into the incident is still underway.

Telangana Chemical Factory Explosion

A massive explosion occurred at Sigachi Industries Limited in Pashamylaram, Sangareddy district, on June 30, killing 54 people and leaving eight missing. The blast, which flattened a three-story production building, was likely triggered by the ignition of a combustible dust cloud in a confined area. A technical committee cited gross negligence, including the use of untrained staff and outdated machinery, as primary causes.

Uttarkashi Flash Flood

On August 5, a devastating cloudburst (later suspected to be a glacial lake outburst) hit Dharali and Harsil villages in Uttarkashi. The resulting flash floods along the Kheer Ganga river claimed at least 5 lives, with over 50 people – including 11 Army personnel – missing. The deluge destroyed nearly 30 homes and 20 hotels. A massive rescue operation involving the Army, NDRF, and SDRF successfully evacuated over 400 people.

Kishtwar Flash Flood

On August 14, a massive cloudburst struck Chasoti village in Kishtwar, Jammu and Kashmir, killing at least 50 people and injuring 100 others. The disaster occurred midday when a large number of people had gathered for the Machail Mata yatra, catching a large gathering of pilgrims off guard. A massive rescue operation was launched involving the Army, NDRF, and SDRF to locate the missing and provide medical aid to survivors in the remote region.

Karur Stampede

On September 27, a tragic stampede occurred during a political rally for the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) party, founded by actor-turned-politician Vijay. The incident took place at Velusampuram in Karur district, Tamil Nadu, when large sections of the crowd surged towards Vijay in an attempt to catch a glimpse of his convoy after his arrival was delayed by nearly seven hours, leading to a stampede and crowd mismanagement. In the incident, 41 people were killed while over 100 others were injured.

Nowgam Explosion

At least nine people were killed, and 29 were injured after a blast at Nowgam Police Station in Jammu and Kashmir, which was investigating the "white-collar" Faridabad terror module, late November 14. The accidental explosion occurred when personnel were extracting samples from the cache of explosives, the officials said.

Goa Nightclub Fire

On December 6, a massive blaze erupted at the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Arpora, North Goa, killing 25 people. Following the incident, the nightclub's owners, Gaurav and Saurav Luthra, fled to Thailand. Investigators revealed that the venue lacked mandatory fire safety equipment and had no proper emergency exits on either the ground floor or the deck, despite hosting a large number of patrons. The fire left people trapped, with little chance to escape. The police have said that the Luthra brothers were aware of the safety lapses but went ahead with the event regardless. The brothers arrested in Delhi on December 16, after being deported from Bangkok, are now facing trial.

India at the end of 2025: A nation in transition

As 2025 draws to a close, India stands at a complex and consequential crossroads. It is a country more visible on the global stage than ever before, more confident in asserting its interests, and yet deeply engaged in internal debates about growth, equity, institutions, and identity. The year did not offer neat resolutions, but it revealed clear trajectories-economic ambition, strategic assertiveness, technological acceleration, and a society in constant conversation with itself.

Economy: Growth with Uneven Ground Realities

By the end of 2025, India remained one of the world's fastest-growing major economies. Strong performance in services, sustained infrastructure spending, and steady foreign investment reinforced India's position as a global growth engine. Manufacturing showed gradual gains under production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes, particularly in electronics, defense, and renewable energy components.

However, the economic picture was not without stress. Job creation lagged behind aspirations, especially for youth and urban migrants. Inflationary pressures, though moderated compared to earlier years, continued to affect food and fuel prices. Small and medium enterprises faced credit and demand challenges, while farmers remained vocal about income security and MSP guarantees.

India ended 2025 economically resilient but socially uneven-a country growing fast, yet negotiating how that growth is distributed.

Politics and Governance: Strong State, Loud Democracy

Politically, 2025 underscored the dominance of the central executive, alongside an opposition still searching for cohesion. Governance emphasised efficiency, delivery, and national security, while critics raised concerns about institutional autonomy, federal balance, and civil liberties.

Parliamentary disruptions, legal battles involving political leaders, and frequent Centre-State confrontations revealed a democracy under stress-but not in retreat. Elections remained competitive, voter participation stayed high, and courts continued to play an active role in arbitrating power disputes.

India at the end of 2025 was governed assertively, debated intensely, and watched closely-at home and abroad.

Foreign Policy: Strategic Autonomy in Practice

On the global stage, India emerged as a pivotal power rather than a peripheral one. It maintained strategic autonomy amid global conflicts, refusing rigid alignment while deepening partnerships with the US, Europe, Japan, and Australia. Simultaneously, India sustained engagement with Russia and strengthened ties across the Global South. India's leadership role in multilateral forums, advocacy for Global South



interests, and expanding diplomatic footprint in Africa, West Asia, and the Indo-Pacific enhanced its stature. Yet, this assertiveness also invited scrutiny-particularly over human rights discourse, trade protectionism, and neutrality in global conflicts.

By the end of 2025, India was not just participating in global order-it was shaping debates within it.

Technology and Digital India: Acceleration with Anxiety

India's digital transformation deepened significantly in 2025. Expansion of digital public infrastructure, fintech innovation, and AI adoption positioned India as a global technology hub beyond traditional outsourcing. Start-ups in deep tech,

defence technology, and climate solutions gained international attention.

At the same time, concerns grew around data privacy, misinformation, AI-generated deepfakes, and digital regulation. Government efforts to tighten oversight sparked debates over free speech versus security. The digital revolution moved faster than the social consensus around it.

India closed 2025 as a digital powerhouse-innovative, ambitious, but still defining its ethical guardrails.

Society and Culture: Assertion, Anxiety and Identity

Socially, India in 2025 was expressive and polarised. Debates around religion, history, language, gender, and

representation frequently dominated public discourse. Cultural production-films, books, digital content-often became political flashpoints, reflecting a society deeply engaged with questions of identity.

Youth aspirations were high, but anxiety about employment, education, and global competitiveness persisted. Civil society remained active, though increasingly cautious. Protest movements continued, signalling democratic engagement even as the boundaries of dissent were contested.

India at the end of 2025 was confident in identity, yet restless in cohesion.

Defense and Security: Preparedness and Projection

India's defense posture strengthened further in 2025. Indigenous defense production expanded, border infrastructure improved, and military modernization continued. India remained alert on its northern borders while expanding naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

Counterterrorism and internal security remained priorities, with technology playing a growing role in surveillance and intelligence. Critics cautioned against over-securitization, while supporters saw preparedness as essential in an unstable world.

Soft Power: Influence Beyond Borders

Culturally and diplomatically, India's soft power expanded. Yoga, cinema, cuisine, spirituality, and diaspora influence continued to shape global perceptions. Indian professionals, students, and entrepreneurs remained highly visible across global institutions.

However, international narratives increasingly portrayed India as a country of contrasts-economic opportunity alongside democratic debate, cultural confidence alongside internal contention.

India's Place in the World at the End of 2025

By December 2025, India stood firmly as:

- A top-tier global economy-in-the-making
- A swing power in geopolitics
- A technology-driven society
- A democracy under intense self-examination

India was neither a finished success story nor a cautionary tale. It was, instead, a nation in motion-reshaping itself while being reshaped by global forces.

The Final Assessment

India at the end of 2025 was strong, ambitious, and unsettled. Its greatest asset remained its scale-of people, ideas, markets, and debate. Its greatest challenge lay in ensuring that growth, power, and voice remained inclusive.

2025 did not resolve India's contradictions. It sharpened them. And in doing so, it revealed a country not retreating from the future, but actively wrestling with how to enter it on its own terms.

How India managed tariffs, conflicts, and diplomatic wins

A Year That Tested India's Strategic Nerves

If 2024 was about electoral continuity and economic consolidation, 2025 unfolded as a year of sustained external pressure for India. Trade frictions with the United States, unresolved security concerns on both the eastern and western fronts, instability across West Asia, and diplomatic sensitivities in the immediate neighbourhood combined to create an unusually volatile foreign policy landscape.

For New Delhi, the challenge was not merely responding to multiple shocks, but doing so without compromising strategic autonomy at a time when economic nationalism and geopolitical polarisation were on the rise.

The US Tariff Shock: Strategic Convergence Meets Trade Reality

The year's first major jolt came from Washington. Selective US tariffs on Indian exports, driven by domestic industrial policy priorities, underlined a persistent reality of India-US relations: strategic alignment does not automatically translate into economic harmony. India resisted retaliatory escalation, opting instead for quiet negotiations through institutional channels while accelerating efforts to diversify exports and strengthen domestic manufacturing. The episode reinforced a policy consensus in New Delhi-economic resilience is essential to sustaining geopolitical partnerships.

Eastern Front: Managing China Without Normalisation

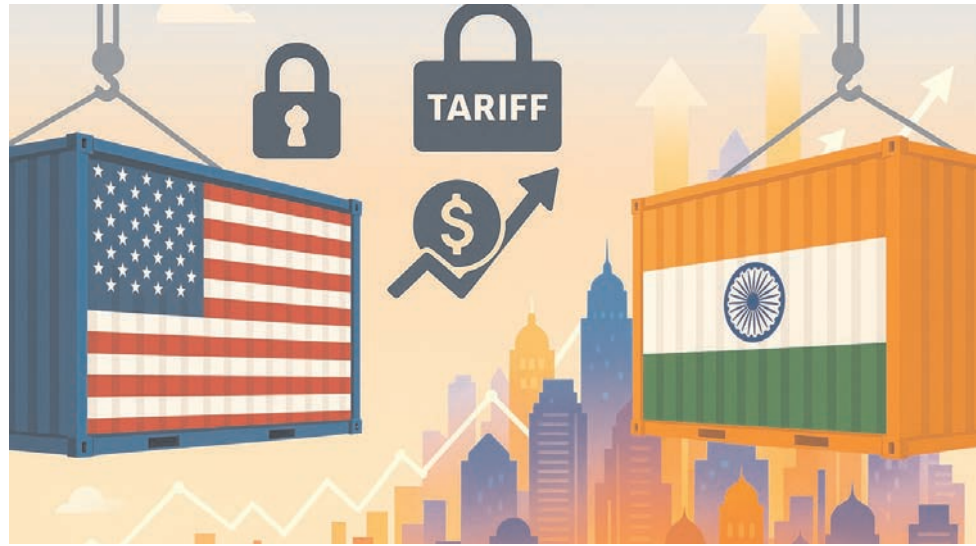
Along the Line of Actual Control, China remained India's most complex strategic challenge. While 2025 did not witness a major military escalation, disengagement remained partial and trust elusive. India continued to balance dialogue with deterrence-maintaining military readiness, expanding border infrastructure, and deepening partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. The objective was stability without strategic vulnerability.

Western Front: Pakistan, Operation Sindoor, and Controlled Escalation

Relations with Pakistan in 2025 were defined by measured firmness rather than rhetorical escalation. Cross-border security challenges persisted, punctuated by targeted incidents that tested India's red lines.

The turning point came with Operation Sindoor, a calibrated military response following a major terror-linked provocation traced across the border. The operation, limited in scope and duration, was designed to signal deterrence without triggering broader escalation.

New Delhi coupled the operation with diplomatic outreach, briefing key global



partners to frame its actions as defensive and proportionate. Pakistan's response remained contained, reflecting both international pressure and its own internal constraints. Operation Sindoor

reinforced a pattern that has gradually emerged in India's Pakistan policy: swift retaliation, tight political control, and rapid diplomatic engagement to prevent escalation.

Bangladesh: Managing Friction Through Engagement

India-Bangladesh relations experienced periodic strain in 2025, shaped by domestic political churn in Dhaka and sensitivities over border management, trade imbalances, and political rhetoric.

India avoided public confrontation, relying instead on institutional dialogue and continued cooperation on connectivity, energy, and security. The continuation of cross-border infrastructure and power-sharing projects underlined New Delhi's preference for stability through engagement, even amid political uncertainty.

West Asia: Diplomacy Amid Regional Firestorms

West Asia remained a volatile theatre, with ongoing conflict posing risks to India's energy security, diaspora, and trade routes. New Delhi navigated a careful balance-maintaining close ties with Israel while deepening partnerships with Gulf states and consistently advocating de-escalation and humanitarian access.

Evacuation efforts and energy diplomacy showcased India's growing capacity to act as a responsible stakeholder without becoming entangled in regional rivalries.

Global South and Multilateral Outreach

As traditional multilateral institutions struggled, India strengthened its engagement with the Global South on development finance, digital public infrastructure, and climate equity. This outreach reinforced India's image as a problem-solver rather than a bloc-builder.

Strategic Autonomy, Reinterpreted

By the end of 2025, India's foreign policy reflected a recalibrated understanding of strategic autonomy-calibrated alignment rather than equidistance. New Delhi worked closely with the US where interests converged, managed tensions with China, dealt firmly with Pakistan, and prioritised neighbourhood stability.

The Takeaway from 2025

The defining feature of India's foreign policy in 2025 was discipline. Faced with tariffs, border tensions, terrorism, and global conflict, New Delhi avoided knee-jerk reactions. Instead, it relied on proportional responses, steady diplomacy, and strategic patience.

In an increasingly fragmented world, India did not seek headline-grabbing victories-but ensured that its core interests were protected. That quiet confidence defined India's diplomatic year.

India's Economy in 2025: Reform, resilience and realignment

In a year marked by trade disruptions, geopolitical conflict, and slowing global demand, India's economic story in 2025 was defined less by speed and more by steadiness. While several major economies struggled to maintain momentum, India remained an outlier-growing consistently, though not spectacularly, and prioritizing macroeconomic balance over short-term acceleration. The overarching objective was clear: protect growth, preserve credibility, and prepare the ground for the next investment cycle.

GDP and Economic Growth

India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2025 remained among the highest for large economies, broadly in the mid-to-high growth range, despite adverse global conditions. This performance was driven primarily by domestic demand, with government capital expenditure and services-led growth playing a central role. However, the structure of growth revealed important nuances:

Public investment, particularly in infrastructure, transport, and energy, continued to act as the main growth engine. Services, including finance, IT-enabled services, logistics, and tourism, remained resilient and contributed significantly to GDP expansion. Manufacturing growth, while positive, was uneven-strong in electronics and pharmaceuticals, weaker in labour-intensive sectors. Exports faced pressure from global slowdown and trade protectionism, limiting their contribution to overall growth.

In effect, India's GDP growth in 2025 was robust but concentrated, raising questions about sustainability unless private investment and employment broadened the base.

Consumption Patterns

Private consumption-the largest component of GDP-recovered gradually through 2025. Urban consumption showed relative strength, supported by services employment and credit availability. Rural demand, however, remained sensitive to food inflation, weather patterns, and income volatility.

This divergence shaped policy thinking. Rather than aggressive stimulus, the government focused on targeted support and income smoothing, using welfare delivery systems and rural infrastructure spending to stabilise demand.

Investment: Public Push, Private Pause

Gross capital formation remained a mixed picture. Government-led capital expenditure sustained momentum, reinforcing its role as a counter-cyclical driver of GDP growth. Highways, rail corridors, renewable energy projects, and digital infrastructure continued to



attract public investment. Private investment, however, remained cautious. Factors included:

- Global uncertainty and weak export demand
- Lingering excess capacity in some sectors
- Higher borrowing costs and risk aversion

This divergence highlighted a central feature of India's 2025 growth model: the state continued to lead, while the private sector waited for clearer signals.

Fiscal Policy and Growth Trade-offs

Fiscal policy in 2025 sought to strike a delicate balance between supporting growth and maintaining macroeconomic discipline. While infrastructure spending was protected, the government resisted broad-based fiscal expansion.

The fiscal strategy reflected a conscious choice: credibility over populism. Policymakers appeared willing to accept slightly lower growth in exchange for long-term stability, investor confidence, and manageable debt

dynamics.

Inflation, Interest Rates, and Real Growth

Inflation dynamics had a direct bearing on real GDP growth. While headline inflation remained largely within tolerance levels, volatility in food prices periodically eroded purchasing power.

The Reserve Bank of India's cautious monetary stance meant that real growth was driven more by productivity and demand fundamentals than by monetary easing. This reinforced the quality of growth, even if it limited short-term acceleration.

Manufacturing and GDP Composition

Manufacturing's contribution to GDP improved marginally in 2025, aided by electronics, pharmaceuticals, and capital goods. Production-linked incentive schemes supported output, but structural constraints prevented a dramatic shift in GDP composition.

The year underscored a hard reality: manufacturing-led GDP transformation

is a medium-term project, not an annual outcome.

External Sector and Growth Constraints

Net exports were a drag on GDP growth for much of 2025. Trade disruptions, tariff shocks, and weak global demand constrained export performance, while imports-especially energy and technology-remained elevated.

Rather than chasing export-led growth at all costs, India adjusted its strategy toward selective integration and strategic trade alignment, accepting short-term trade-offs to protect long-term resilience.

Employment Elasticity of Growth: The Missing Link

One of the most critical insights from 2025 was the weak employment elasticity of GDP growth. Despite strong aggregate numbers, job creation did not scale proportionately.

This reinforced a growing consensus among economists: headline GDP growth alone is no longer a sufficient indicator of economic health. Productivity, labour absorption, and income growth matter as much as output expansion.

Digital Economy and Measurement Shifts

India's expanding digital economy also complicated traditional GDP measurement. Digital payments, platform-based services, and data-driven businesses continued to grow, often faster than legacy sectors.

While this strengthened productivity and efficiency, it also highlighted the need for better economic metrics to capture new forms of value creation.

What GDP Growth in 2025 Signified

India's GDP growth in 2025 told a story of controlled momentum. The economy grew steadily, avoided shocks, and preserved macroeconomic stability-but it also revealed structural limits.

The year confirmed three enduring truths:

- Domestic demand is India's greatest strength
- Public investment cannot substitute private investment indefinitely
- Growth without jobs is politically and socially incomplete

The Economic Meaning of 2025

India's economy in 2025 did not chase record-breaking GDP numbers. Instead, it focused on durability-ensuring that growth was defensible in a volatile world.

In doing so, India signalled a shift from recovery economics to recalibration economics. The next phase-faster, broader, and more inclusive growth-will depend on how effectively the lessons of 2025 are translated into action.

India's Sporting Landscape In 2025: Progress, Pride and a Vision for the Future

Indian sport in 2025 emerged as a powerful story of progress, pride and possibility. From the Indian women's cricket team conquering the world at last to Neeraj Chopra breaching the elusive 90-metre barrier; from para-athletes delivering record performances on home soil to traditional sports like kho kho reclaiming global attention, the year reflected a sporting ecosystem coming of age. Whether at packed stadiums or frozen lakes, on world championship podiums or grassroots tracks, Indian athletes reflected growing depth, confidence and ambition. Together, these achievements made 2025 a landmark year that reinforced India's emergence as a diverse, resilient and increasingly influential sporting nation.

Women lead the way in cricket

After years of near-misses and heartbreak, the Indian women's cricket team finally scaled the summit in 2025. On November 3, Harmanpreet Kaur's side claimed its maiden world title, defeating Australia in a high-pressure semi-final before overcoming South Africa in the final at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai.

The historic triumph triggered nationwide celebrations and marked a defining moment for Indian cricket. Beyond the silverware, the victory is widely viewed as a catalyst capable of reshaping perceptions, investment and ambition in women's cricket across the country.

Men's cricket: Triumphs and turbulence

The men's teams experienced a year of mixed fortunes. The ODI side lifted its third Champions Trophy, defeating New Zealand in the final in Dubai, while the T20 team clinched the Asia Cup with a win over Pakistan, also in Dubai.

The red-ball season proved far more challenging. India endured a shock 0-2 home Test series whitewash at the hands of South Africa, a result that triggered intense debate and scrutiny over the batters' ability to counter spin.

Football shows signs of progress

Indian football registered quiet but meaningful gains in 2025. The U-17 men's team qualified for the AFC Under-17 Asian Cup 2026, while the senior women's team secured direct qualification for the AFC Women's Asian Cup. Adding to the momentum, the women's U-20 side qualified for the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup for the first time in two decades, underlining gradual progress in the women's development pathway.

Neeraj Chopra breaks the barrier

For years, the 90-metre mark loomed as Neeraj Chopra's unfinished business. In 2025, India's Olympic champion finally erased that question, registering a



personal best throw of 90.23 metres at the Doha Diamond League.

Later in the year, Chopra fulfilled another ambition by hosting the Neeraj Chopra Classic in Bengaluru. The event drew over 14,000 spectators to the Sree Kanteerava Stadium, where Chopra won gold, reinforcing both his stature and the growing appeal of athletics in India.

Para sports and global aspirations

India strengthened its credentials as a global sporting nation by hosting its first World Para Athletics Championships. Competing at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Indian athletes delivered a record haul of 22 medals — six gold, nine silver and seven bronze — finishing 10th overall.

The successful hosting and performance boosted India's reputation as a destination for major sporting events, particularly with a bid for the 2036 Olympics in mind and the 2030 Commonwealth Games already awarded to Ahmedabad.

Chess continues its golden run

Indian chess added another landmark to its extraordinary rise. Nineteen-year-old Divya Deshmukh defeated Koneru Humpy in an all-Indian final of the FIDE

Women's World Cup to clinch the title.

The victory marked India's first-ever triumph in the tournament and was capped by Divya achieving her Grandmaster norm, further strengthening India's presence at the top of world chess.

Boxing delivers on the world stage

Indian boxing enjoyed one of its most successful years at the global level. Jaismine Lamboria claimed gold in the women's 57 kg category at the 2025 World Boxing Championships in Liverpool.

The campaign was further bolstered by Nupur, who secured silver in the +80 kg division, making it one of India's strongest performances in the history of the championships.

Badminton: Revival, record-breaking feats

Lakshya Sen ended a challenging phase by winning the Australian Open Super 500 title, defeating Japan's Yushi Tanaka in the final. It was his first title of the year, following a runner-up finish at the Hong Kong Super 500.

In para-badminton, Indian shuttlers delivered their best-ever performance at the Asian Para-Badminton Championships in Thailand, collecting an impressive 27 medals, including four

gold.

Hockey's mixed fortunes

Indian hockey experienced contrasting outcomes. The men's team ended an eight-year wait by winning the Asia Cup, securing qualification for the 2026 World Cup. However, concerns emerged during the FIH Pro League, where a poor European leg saw India finish eighth out of nine teams, narrowly avoiding relegation. The women's team endured a difficult year, suffering eight consecutive defeats and dropping to the Nations Cup.

At the junior level, the men reached the semi-finals of the FIH Junior World Cup in Chennai before a heavy defeat to Germany, while the junior women exited early despite winning two of their three group matches.

Ice Hockey: Defying odds on frozen ground

India's women's ice hockey team scripted history at the 2025 Asia Cup in the UAE by winning a bronze medal. Facing scepticism and open taunts — including being told to "go home" — the team responded on the ice.

Training on frozen lakes and makeshift rinks in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh, their podium finish stood as a testament to resilience and belief, inspiring young girls from remote regions to imagine themselves in the sport.

Animesh Kujur is India's fastest man

From village tracks in Jharkhand to international qualification, Animesh Kujur's rise captured attention in 2025. He broke the national 100-metre record and earned qualification for the World Athletics Championships. His breakthrough season pushed Indian sprinting into global conversations and reshaped expectations around speed, preparation and grassroots talent.

Kho Kho shines on the world stage

In January 2025, India delivered a clean sweep at the Kho Kho World Cup, with both the men's and women's teams winning their respective titles. Dominant throughout the tournament, the teams showcased lightning-fast reflexes, tactical brilliance and cohesive teamwork.

The victories renewed global attention on a sport deeply rooted in Indian tradition.

Blind cricket sets a benchmark

The inaugural Women's T20 World Cup for the Blind concluded with India emerging as unbeaten champions. The team combined fearless batting, disciplined bowling and sharp fielding throughout a dominant campaign.

Their triumph strengthened the case for inclusive sport and wider recognition for athletes with disabilities.

Trump's return & other events that defined 2025

Donald Trump's return to power, a ceasefire in Gaza and massive investments in artificial intelligence: Here are 10 events that defined 2025.

Trump returns

A protectionist offensive. Mass deportations of undocumented immigrants. Dismantling entire sections of the federal government.

Since his return to the White House for a second term in January, Republican President Donald Trump has targeted adversaries, deployed the National Guard in Democrat-voting cities, worked to intimidate the media and fought against diversity and inclusion programs.

He has also launched extensive diplomatic efforts, with mixed results.

And polls suggest Americans are increasingly disgruntled on economic issues — particularly the cost of living.

Stinging defeats in local elections have put his party in a delicate position for midterm elections due next autumn.

A ceasefire in Gaza

US pressure led to a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, two years after a devastating war began in the Gaza Strip.

The truce allowed for the return to Israel of the last surviving hostages and most of the bodies of the deceased, in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners.

It also enabled an increased flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, although still nowhere near enough to meet the territory's needs, according to the UN and humanitarian NGOs.

But negotiating the next steps in Trump's peace plan — particularly the disarmament of Hamas — is proving delicate.

Israel has carried out several deadly airstrikes in Gaza in recent weeks, which it claims were in retaliation for Hamas attacks.

Regional tensions also persist, with continuing Israeli strikes on Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon.

Israel, with the help of the US, also launched raids against Iran's nuclear facilities during a 12-day war in June.

In September, Israel targeted Hamas officials in an unprecedented attack in Qatar.

Unsuccessful talks in Ukraine

Trump's arrival in the White House energised efforts to end the war in Ukraine, sparked by Russia's full invasion in 2022.

Trump's sympathies have flipped repeatedly between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, with Kyiv fearing it could be forced into a deal on Moscow's terms.

In February, Trump berated Zelensky in the Oval Office, accusing him of risking World War III and disrespecting the American people.

As direct Russia-Ukraine talks led nowhere, Trump in August hosted Putin for a high-stakes summit in Alaska that ended early, leaving Washington accusing



Moscow of not being serious about ending the war.

Trump later hit Russia with his first major package of sanctions.

However, international negotiations did take place in late November based on a draft US plan, the initial version of which was considered by Kyiv and its European allies to be largely favourable to Moscow.

Russian forces, meanwhile, slowly drove forward at massive human and financial cost to both sides, and they battered

Ukrainian cities with record numbers of missiles and drones.

Global trade war

Trump imposed waves of tariffs on imports and on entire industries deemed strategic — such as steel, aluminium and copper — sparking a trade dispute that shook the global economy. As targeted countries considered or implemented retaliatory measures, tough negotiations led to many deals, including with the



European Union and China.

In their own backyard, US officials are still negotiating with Mexico but talks with Canada were suspended after a Canadian province funded an ad criticizing the tariffs. Under pressure to lower the cost of living for Americans, Trump decided in mid-November to cancel tariffs on some food products, such as imported coffee and beef.

Afghanistan-Pakistan conflict

In the early hours of 9 October 2025, Pakistan carried out airstrikes in Kabul, Khost, Jalalabad, and Paktika, targeting the Pakistani Taliban (TTP). The group's leader, Noor Wali Mehsud, an internationally designated terrorist, was the main target of the attack in Kabul, which occurred in Abdul Haq Square. However, the TTP released an unverified audio recording, purportedly of Mehsud, in which he states that he is alive.

On the night from 11 to 12 October, the Afghan Taliban launched an attack on multiple Pakistani military posts along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in retaliation for the Pakistani airstrikes. Following the attack, the Taliban's Ministry of Defense announced the conclusion of their operation. However, Pakistani officials rejected the Taliban's ceasefire declaration and continued their offensive, which was confirmed by a Taliban spokesman, noting that clashes persisted into the morning of 12 October.

A new pope

Robert Francis Prevost, aged 69, became the first American pope on May 8 following the death of his predecessor Francis, whom he had long advised.

White smoke rose above the Sistine Chapel to announce the election of the 267th head of the Catholic Church after a less-than-24-hour conclave.

He has followed in the footsteps of his Argentine predecessor by focusing on the poor, migrants and the environment.

He has also offered reassurances to conservative circles by ruling out — at least in the short term — the ordination of women as deacons and the recognition of same-sex marriage.

Gen Z uprisings

Mass movements spearheaded by the under-30s arose across Asia, Africa and Latin America to fight against poor living standards, social media censorship and elite corruption.

They enjoyed mixed success — in Morocco, for example, the government promised social reforms but more than 2,000 protesters now face prosecution.

In other countries, the protests transformed into a broader challenge to power after they were violently repressed.

But Nepal's Maoist Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina were forced from office.

Young people featured prominently in post-election protests in Tanzania, which were brutally suppressed.

The pirate flag from the manga "One Piece" (a skull and crossbones wearing a straw hat) is often displayed by protesters and has spread on social media to become a symbol of the fight against oppression across continents.

AI boom

Technology giants and investors have spent ever-increasing sums to finance the rapid growth of AI.

AI-related spending is expected to reach roughly \$1.5 trillion in 2025 and \$2 trillion next year, according to US advisory firm Gartner.

The market's enthusiasm briefly drove chip giant Nvidia's valuation beyond \$5 trillion.

But the markets fear a speculative bubble around the technology.

And there are broader concerns.

The technology stands accused of fuelling misinformation, copyright lawsuits are mushrooming, and many companies have cited AI adoption as an explanation for mass layoffs.

OpenAI faces a lawsuit from the parents of a California teenager who killed himself, alleging its chatbot ChatGPT offered advice on how to carry out his plan.

The company said it had strengthened its parental controls, while California has enacted legislation regulating chatbots.

A spectacular Louvre heist

On October 19, thieves dressed in workers' vests used a furniture ladder to get into the Louvre Museum in Paris.

They fled on scooters with Crown



Jewels valued at 88 million euros (\$102 million) though they dropped a diamond-encrusted crown on the way.

The audacious heist made headlines worldwide and sparked a debate over security at the world's most-visited museum.

Three men suspected of being part of the raid were charged and jailed, but the stolen treasures have not been recovered.

US strikes anger Venezuela

Washington has deployed a significant military presence off the coast of Latin America since August, officially to combat drug trafficking bound for the United States.

More than 20 strikes have been carried out in recent weeks in the Caribbean and the Pacific against vessels the US says are suspected of transporting drugs, leaving several dozen people dead.

The US Justice Department insists the strikes were "lawful" and rejected accusations by a senior UN official that they were "extrajudicial".

The campaign has sharply escalated regional tensions, especially with Venezuela, which views the attacks as a pretext to topple President Nicolas Maduro and seize the country's oil reserves. Washington accuses Maduro of heading a cartel, and US authorities are offering a \$50 million reward for his capture.

Record-breaking weather

While Vietnam had deadly floods, powerful storms lashed the Caribbean and the Philippines.

Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, more deadly and more destructive due to climate change fuelled by human activity, according to scientists. Hurricane Melissa, one of the most powerful ever to hit the Caribbean, devastated entire regions of Jamaica and flooded Haiti and Cuba.

In Southeast Asia, the Philippines was struck by Typhoons Ragasa, Kalmaegi and Fung-wong within the space of two months, while Vietnam



was devastated by storms, floods and landslides.

Temperatures soared and wildfires intensified in Europe, with a record number of hectares burnt during the summer.

The French Mediterranean coast experienced its worst fire in 50 years.

In the United States, fires sparked by lightning led to the closure of the North Rim of the famous Grand Canyon in mid-July for the remainder of the tourist season.



The year dissent and angst triggered mass protests worldwide

The year 2025 witnessed a powerful resurgence of mass protests and popular movements across the globe as millions of people hit the streets to vent their anger over economic hardships, political instability, governance failures, social injustice, and breakdown of democratic rights. The protests marked a global pattern of civic unrest shaped by inflation, unemployment, and inequality.

Several common factors fuelled protests worldwide, including economic pressure amid rising prices of food, fuel, and housing. Besides, political discontent amid declining trust in political institutions and leaders and mobilisation of youth also sparked demonstrations.

Gen Z-led protests in Nepal brought 1st female PM in power

The protests in Nepal turned out to be the most significant, as tens of thousands of citizens, mostly Gen Z youths, fed up by political instability since the 2008 abolition of the monarchy, staged mass demonstrations demanding political reform, accountability, and economic justice. The simmering anger and public frustration reached a tipping point after a ban on social media, and protests erupted in Kathmandu and other major cities. The protests by students, workers, professionals, and civil society groups were largely peaceful but massive, demanding an end to corruption, electoral reforms, better employment opportunities, and accountability from political leaders.

In less than 48 hours, protesters forced the overthrow of the government.

Prime Minister KP Oli resigned on Sept. 9. Nepal got its first female prime minister in Sushila Karki, who was also the country's first female chief justice. Her appointment came after online polls on the chat portal Discord saw thousands supporting her, citing her record of taking on the corrupt and elite.

Mass anti-corruption protests forced Bulgaria PM to resign

Bulgaria's Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov resigned after mass street protests over the government's economic policies and failure to tackle corruption. Tens of thousands of Bulgarians had rallied in the capital, Sofia, and dozens of other towns and cities across the country in the latest in a series of rolling demonstrations giving vent to the public's growing frustration.

Protesters chanted "Resign" and held up "I'm fed up!" signs featuring caricatures of politicians.

Millions join mass 'No Kings' anti-Trump protests

'No Kings' protests took place across the US opposing President Donald Trump's alleged one-man rule and accusations that the president is behaving more like a monarch than an elected official. Millions joined more than 2,500 demonstrations



calling for limits to presidential power as protesters accused the Trump administration of authoritarian policies like immigration crackdowns and mass firings of federal workers, besides attacks on the media and judicial independence. Protesters carried signs that read, "No crowns, No kings." The protesters decried immigration detentions carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and the Trump administration's aggressive slashing of federal education

resources and environmental protections, among other concerns.

Republicans dismissed the protests as 'Hate America' rallies.

'Unite the Kingdom' protesters flood London streets

UK's far-right activist Tommy Robinson drew a massive crowd, said to be in six figures, in his anti-immigrant 'Unite the Kingdom' rally, marking the discontent against the government on the

immigrants and asylum issues in the country. Tens of thousands of people marched, leading to sporadic clashes with police. The marchers came for what was called a "festival of free speech", but the speeches at the event were largely racist conspiracy theories and anti-Muslim comments. Robinson told the crowd that migrants had more rights in court than the "British public, the people that built this nation."

Some speakers, including far-right politicians from Europe, also addressed the rally. French politician Eric Zemmour said, "We are both subject to the same process of the great replacement of our European people by peoples coming from the south and of Muslim culture, you and we are being colonised by our former colonies."

Elon Musk also joined by video and criticised the UK government. "What I see happening here is a destruction of Britain, initially a slow erosion, but rapidly increasing erosion of Britain with massive uncontrolled migration," he said.

Participants in the march carried St George's flags and the union jack and chanted, "We want our country back." Some protesters held placards saying "stop the boats," "send them home," and "enough is enough, save our children."

Counter-protesters carried signs that read "Refugees welcome" and "Smash the far right," while chanting "Stand up, fight back."

Peeved locals hit the streets against 'overtourism'

Thousands of citizens took to the streets of cities in southern Europe to demonstrate against 'overtourism', firing water pistols at shop windows and setting off smoke in Barcelona, where the main protest took place. "Your holidays, my misery," protesters chanted in the streets of Barcelona while holding up banners emblazoned with slogans such as "mass tourism kills the city" and "their greed brings us ruin".

Protesters in Portugal and Italy also argued that uncontrolled tourism was sending housing prices soaring and forcing people out of their neighbourhoods.

Protests over Gaza conflict

Mass protests were held across the world against the Gaza War and the hardships faced by Palestinians amid a shortage of food, essentials and medicines, but ended after the ceasefire came into effect.

How social media and technology changed protests

Technology and social media played a major role in most mass protests across the globe. They helped in online mobilisation, livestreaming of demonstrations and citizen journalism as digital platforms reduced reliance on traditional leadership.

2025: The year of wars, tariff, turmoil

The year 2025 turned out to be quite eventful as the world witnessed several instances that were never even thought to be probable. The year brought some respite from war as the armed conflict in Gaza finally ended, and Palestinians look ahead at resuming life and look ahead to the reconstruction of the ruins left behind by the conflict triggered by the highly audacious and highly disastrous attack by Hamas on Israel that wiped out the top leadership of the group.

The Trump 2.0 era begins; tariffs trigger turmoil in global economy

The year began with Donald J. Trump starting his second term in the White House after a sweeping victory and unleashing mayhem with his bombastic statements and tariffs against several countries, just as he had promised in his campaign. Trump revelled in success as several nations, big and small, buckled and surrendered to his diktats, except a few, including India and China, and indulged in brazen self-adoration. The impact of the tariff war led to the weakening of dollar, and prices of precious metals reaching record highs due to currency fluctuations.

Israel-Iran War (June 2025)

The age-old hostilities between Israel and Iran erupted into an explicit military conflict. Israel launched an aerial offensive on June 13 against Iranian nuclear and military sites, targeting Tehran's military leadership and nuclear ambitions. Iran retaliated by attacking Israel with ballistic missiles and drones. The US too entered the war, with its bombers conducting strategic strikes on key Iranian nuclear enrichment facilities. The conflict lasted for 12 days, and a ceasefire was announced on June 24.

Israel-Hamas Ceasefire (October 2025)

A ceasefire was finally brokered between Israel and Hamas by the US and came into effect on October 10, bringing a pause to the intense violence and humanitarian crisis. It was a big relief for civilians in Gaza who had endured fear, displacement, and severe shortages of food, water, and medical care. The delivery of aid resumed, and the security threats on all sides were reduced, lowering the risk to civilians living near the conflict zone. However, issues like the disarmament of Hamas, political control in Gaza, and security concerns are among the key grievances that remain unresolved, and uncertainty continues about how long the calm will last. However, the ceasefire was important as it saved further loss of lives, allowed humanitarian access, and reinforced the need for a lasting and just peace.

Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Conflict (October 2025)

In October 2025, clashes erupted between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the deadliest since the Taliban's return to



power in 2021. A series of ground and aerial attacks unfolded from October 11-19 after tensions escalated over militant activity and cross-border security operations. On the intervening night of October 11-12, Taliban fighters reportedly attacked multiple Pakistani military posts. Pakistan's military claimed its troops killed over 200 Taliban and affiliated fighters while it lost 23 soldiers. Islamabad said it conducted a series of precision airstrikes and raids on Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan positions in Afghan territory in response and triggered militant retaliation and cross-border exchanges.

The major border crossings at Torkham and Chaman were closed consequently, severely affecting trade and causing economic disruption on both sides that led to price hike for essential goods. Both governments agreed to a temporary ceasefire on October 15 after prodding by regional mediators including Qatar and Turkey. Islamabad demands that Kabul crack down on Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other militant groups allegedly operating from Afghan soil.

Mutual distrust remains high, as unresolved security concerns and counter narratives on border sovereignty continue to fuel one of South Asia's most volatile frontiers. Pakistan

claims the Durand Line as the official international boundary, but Afghanistan questions its legitimacy.

The mountainous and porous border makes monitoring hard and allows armed groups to move between the two countries. Pakistan accuses militant groups based in Afghanistan of carrying out attacks on its territory, while Kabul blames Islamabad for sheltering insurgent groups that destabilise Afghanistan.

Renewed conflict between Thailand-Cambodia (July 24-28)

Armed clashes between Thailand and Cambodia along the disputed border zones marked the most violent episode between the two nations in over a decade. The conflict due to historical territorial disputes arising out of the colonial-era demarcation resulted in several deaths and massive displacement of the civilian populations. A ceasefire was reached on July 28 after negotiations in Malaysia in the presence of ASEAN and international mediators, but the flare-up once again highlighted the potential for conflicts to reignite in South Asia.

Congo War, and other protracted conflicts

Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo witnessed one of the most volatile theatres of conflict in Africa after the

rebel group M23 launched an offensive to capture Goma, the strategic capital of North Kivu province. The offensive by M23, which was supported by Rwandan forces, in late January marked a significant escalation in the decades-long conflict over land, ethnicity, and mineral wealth, especially in minerals critical to global tech supply chains. A peace agreement brokered by the US was signed in Washington in December, but fighting continued in many regions. However, the wars in Ukraine, Sudan, and Myanmar did not see any pause and still continue. President Donald Trump, who used to claim that he would end the Russia-Ukraine War within a day of assuming office failed miserably and vented his ire at Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who persistently stuck to his stance and terms for ending the war and did not yield even after US threats of more severe sanctions. Trump envoys are still continuing their efforts without much success till now.

The Arab-Islamic Summit in Doha (September 2025)

After Israel launched airstrikes targeting the Hamas leadership in Qatar, a summit of Arab and Islamic states was convened on September 15, 2025, in Doha, Qatar. The Israeli airstrike on September 9 targeted a venue where Hamas negotiators were meeting. The summit brought together leaders from the Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation to coordinate responses to Israeli actions and demand a cessation of hostilities. They called for better Arab-Islamic cooperation to confront external threats and promote stability and reiterated support for Palestinian rights and peaceful conflict resolution efforts.

Saudi-Pakistan Strategic Defence Pact (September 2025)

In a major shift, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed a strategic defence agreement in September 2025 which was widely viewed as a response to certain gaps in security guarantees amid global strategic changes following reduced US involvement in regional conflicts. It aimed to deepen military cooperation, joint training, and collective defence mechanisms. The pact reflected the anxieties among regional powers about the shifting priorities in the US foreign policy.

A War Without an Endgame

Nearly four years after Russian troops crossed into Ukraine, 2025 confirmed what much of the world had begun to accept quietly: the Russia-Ukraine conflict is no longer a crisis waiting for resolution, but a protracted war reshaping global politics, economics, and security calculations. The year did not deliver a decisive military breakthrough for either side. Instead, it entrenched stalemate—on the battlefield and at the negotiating table—turning the conflict into a defining feature of the international order.

Notable persons who passed away this year

Charlie Kirk, Pope Francis, Hulk Hogan, Diogo Jota have died this year. The demise of the notable persons have left indelible impact on the society as well as grabbing worldwide headlines. A look back at some of the most notable figures who died this year, from Jane Goodall to Hulk Hogan.

Pope Francis, 88 years old

“How much harm the women and men of the Church do when they erect walls,” Francis said late in life. “Rigidity is a sin that often enters into clerics.”

The first Latin American pontiff shunned much of the papacy’s pomp, softened Catholic attitudes towards homosexuality, and put more women in senior roles than any predecessor. More than 250,000 people attended his funeral in April, according to the Vatican.

The Aga Khan, 88

Karim Al Husseini, the fourth Aga Khan, died in February. The wealthy racehorse owner was the hereditary spiritual leader of 15 million Ismaili Muslims.

Jane Goodall, 91

The global activist, who turned her childhood love of primates into a lifelong quest to protect the environment, died in October.

Jim Lovell, 97

Commander of Apollo 13, NASA's failed 1970 mission to the Moon that was immortalised in a film starring Tom Hanks.

James Watson, 97

Biologist whose discovery of the structure of DNA ushered in the age of genetics.

Robert Redford, 89

Hollywood’s quintessential leading man starred in “The Sting”, “Out of Africa” and “All the President’s Men”. As the founder of the annual Sundance Film Festival, he was also an influential supporter of independent cinema. He died in September.

Diane Keaton, 79

The star of movies "The French Connection" and "Unforgiven" retired from acting some 20 years ago. He, his wife Betsy Arakawa and one of their dogs were found dead in their home in February. Hackman, who was in an advanced state of Alzheimer's, died of heart disease and other factors likely days after Arakawa, his primary caregiver, died of a rare virus spread by mice, according to autopsy results.

David Lynch, 78

The writer and director made haunting movies "The Elephant Man" and "Mulholland Drive," as well as the TV series "Twin Peaks", a surrealist murder mystery. He died in January.

Claudia Cardinale, 87



The Tunisian-born star of Italian cinema featured in Federico Fellini's "8-1/2" and Sergio Leone's "Once Upon a Time in the West". She died in September.

Val Kilmer, 65

Known for playing Iceman in “Top Gun”, Jim Morrison in “The Doors” and Bruce Wayne in “Batman Forever”, the actor died of pneumonia in April. He had been in poor health for years due to throat cancer.

Terence Stamp, 87

Terence Stamp was on the verge of becoming a tantric sex teacher at an ashram in India when, in 1977, he heard that he was being considered for the "Superman" film. "I was on the night flight the next day," Stamp later recalled.

Rob Reiner, 78

The director of "When Harry Met Sally" and "The Princess Bride" was found dead with his wife Michele, 68, in their Los Angeles home in December. Their son Nick Reiner has been charged with two counts of first-degree murder over the stabbings.

George Foreman, 76

The heavyweight boxing champion lost his first title to Muhammad Ali in their famous 1974 fight in Kinshasa – “The Rumble in the Jungle”.

Hulk Hogan, 71

The bleach-blond, mahogany-tanned behemoth became the face of professional wrestling in the 1980s, helping transform the mock combat sport from a seedy spectacle into family-friendly entertainment worth billions of dollars. He died in July.

Diogo Jota, 28

The Portuguese soccer player died in July when the Lamborghini he was in



veered off the road and burst into flames. Just one month earlier, he had lifted the Premier League trophy for Liverpool.

Nicola Pietrangeli, 92

Pietrangeli, Italy’s greatest tennis player before Jannik Sinner, was a master on clay.

Tom Stoppard, 88

The Czech-born British playwright dazzled with verbal gymnastics. He died in November.

Mario Vargas Llosa, 89

A leading light in Latin American fiction, the Peruvian author and would-be president won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2010. He died in April.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 87

Kenyan author whose sharp critique of post-independence elites led to prison and exile.

Frederick Forsyth, 86

Author of the bestselling novel “The Day of the Jackal”.

Jilly Cooper, 88

British author whose 1980s bestsellers were a blend of sex, satire and class-based snobbery.

Ozzy Osbourne, 76

The co-founder of the Beach Boys created some of rock’s most enduring songs, “Wouldn’t It Be Nice” and “Good Vibrations”. He died in June.

Brian Wilson, 82

The co-founder of the Beach Boys created some of rock’s most enduring songs, “Wouldn’t It Be Nice” and “Good Vibrations”. He died in June.

Roberta Flack, 88

Her covers of ballads "The First Time

Ever I Saw Your Face" and "Killing Me Softly with His Song" topped the charts in the 1970s. She died in February.

Jimmy Cliff, 81

The Jamaican singer, who along with Bob Marley brought reggae to a global audience, died in November.

Giorgio Armani, 91

For the Italian designer, who died in September, elegance meant simplicity. That principle would produce bestselling minimalist suits and turn his eponymous brand into a conglomerate worth billions of dollars.

Eddie Jordan, 76

Charismatic Irish entrepreneur whose team gave driver Michael Schumacher his Formula One debut in 1991.

Frederick Smith, 80

He started the global delivery company FedEx with 14 small planes in 1973. By the time he resigned as CEO in 2022, FedEx operated some 700 aircraft and 86,000 vehicles.

Dick Cheney, 84

One of the most powerful vice presidents in U.S. history, Cheney was a driving force behind the invasion of Iraq in 2003. He died in November.

Charlie Kirk, 31

The political activist and vociferous debater was credited with building Donald Trump's base among younger voters. His assassination in September set off a pro-Trump crackdown affecting more than 600 Americans.

Muhammadu Buhari, 82

As president of Nigeria, Buhari led Africa's most populous country from 2015 to 2023. His time in office was blighted by Nigeria's first recession in a generation, militant attacks on oilfields, and repeated hospital stays for an undisclosed illness.

Virginia Giuffre, 41

One of the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's most prominent accusers, Giuffre died by suicide in April, her family said. She had also accused Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, brother of Britain's King Charles, of sexually abusing her. Andrew denies the claim.

Fauja Singh, 113

When Fauja Singh, the world’s most celebrated centenarian marathon runner, passed away in 2025, it marked the end of a life that had come to symbolise human resilience, quiet discipline, and the defiance of age itself. Widely known as the Turbaned Tornado, Singh was not merely an athlete; he was a cultural phenomenon who rewrote society’s assumptions about ageing, fitness, and purpose. In a year dominated by wars, elections, and economic recalibration, his death stood out for a different reason—it reminded the world that extraordinary impact does not require loud power, only sustained will.

Natural disasters that shook the world

By the end of 2025, one reality had become impossible to ignore: natural disasters were no longer isolated shocks but a continuous global condition. From devastating floods and powerful earthquakes to record-breaking heatwaves, wildfires, cyclones, and droughts, the year unfolded as a relentless sequence of environmental crises. What distinguished 2025 was not just the scale of destruction, but the frequency, overlap, and geographic spread of disasters, leaving nations with little time to recover before the next calamity struck.

Floods: Water at Its Most Destructive

Floods emerged as the most widespread disaster of 2025, affecting multiple continents simultaneously.

The South Asia Monsoon Floods (2025) inundated vast stretches of India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. Erratic rainfall and swollen rivers displaced millions, destroyed standing crops, and crippled rural economies. In many regions, embankments failed and urban drainage systems proved inadequate for extreme rainfall patterns.

In China, the Yangtze River Basin Floods (2025) submerged parts of central provinces, disrupting manufacturing hubs and agriculture alike. Authorities battled overflowing tributaries as cities struggled to contain floodwaters.

Africa faced its own crisis with the East Africa Floods (2025), affecting Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Abnormally heavy rains turned dry riverbeds into torrents, wiping out settlements and worsening food insecurity in regions already vulnerable to climate stress.

Even Europe was not spared. The Danube-Elbe Floods (2025) affected Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic, flooding historic towns and exposing the limits of flood-control infrastructure in developed economies. In South America, the Rio Grande do Sul Floods (2025) in Brazil caused repeated inundation, damaging homes, roads, and farmland.

Earthquakes: Sudden Destruction

Earthquakes in 2025 struck without warning, leaving destruction that will take years to reverse. The Afghanistan-Tajikistan Earthquake (2025) devastated mountainous regions, triggering landslides that buried villages and cut off rescue routes. Poor infrastructure and rugged terrain magnified casualties.

In Iran, the Central Plateau Earthquake (2025) damaged historic cities and residential zones, once again highlighting the vulnerability of seismic regions with ageing construction. Across the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Chile Coastal Earthquake (2025) and the Guerrero Earthquake in Mexico (2025) caused widespread structural damage and prompted tsunami alerts, reinforcing how seismic risk remains a constant threat for coastal populations.

Heatwaves: The Silent Killer of 2025



While floods and earthquakes produced dramatic visuals, heatwaves were among the deadliest disasters of the year. The South Asia Mega Heatwave (2025) pushed temperatures across India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh beyond survivable limits for extended periods. Hospitals reported spikes in heatstroke cases, power grids faltered under peak demand, and water shortages intensified urban stress.

Europe faced its own crisis with the Southern Europe Heatwave (2025),

affecting Italy, Spain, Greece, and the Balkans. Combined with drought conditions, extreme heat fuelled wildfires and disrupted tourism and agriculture. The Middle East Extreme Heat Event (2025) further underscored how rising temperatures are turning cities into heat traps, straining water and energy systems.

Wildfires: Landscapes Turned to Ash

Wildfires scorched millions of hectares across the globe in 2025.

The Mediterranean Wildfires (2025) ravaged Greece, Spain, Italy, and southern France, forcing evacuations and destroying homes and forests. In the United States, the California Fire Season (2025) saw multiple large blazes, producing hazardous air quality and mass displacement.

Australia endured another punishing season with the Australian Bushfires (2025), while the Amazon Basin Fires (2025) in Brazil and Bolivia reignited global concern over deforestation, biodiversity loss, and carbon emissions. These fires were not just environmental disasters but economic and public health crises.

Cyclones, Hurricanes, and Coastal Storms

Oceans warmed by climate change powered stronger storms in 2025.

The Cyclone Remal (Bay of Bengal, 2025) battered coastal India and Bangladesh, causing flooding, infrastructure damage, and large-scale evacuations. In the Atlantic, Hurricane Beryl (2025) struck Caribbean islands with destructive winds and storm surges, while the Typhoon Gaemi (2025) hit parts of East Asia, bringing intense rainfall and coastal flooding.

For low-lying coastal and island communities, these storms reinforced a harsh reality: rebuilding is becoming a recurring exercise, not a one-time recovery.

Droughts: Slow-Motion Humanitarian Crises

While sudden disasters dominated headlines, droughts unfolded quietly but relentlessly. The Horn of Africa Drought (2025) persisted across Somalia, Ethiopia, and neighbouring regions, devastating agriculture and deepening hunger. In South America, the Southern South America Drought (2025) affected Argentina and Uruguay, reducing crop yields and hydropower output.

These slow-onset disasters proved just as damaging as sudden ones, driving migration, economic distress, and conflict over scarce resources.

Landslides and Glacial Threats

In mountainous regions, climate change manifested in dangerous new ways. The Himalayan Landslides (2025) in India and Nepal were triggered by intense rainfall and unstable slopes, destroying villages and blocking highways. Meanwhile, Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) in the Himalayas and Andes (2025) sent sudden torrents downstream, catching communities off guard and highlighting growing risks in high-altitude regions.

Across floods, fires, heatwaves, storms, and droughts, climate change emerged as the common denominator. Rising temperatures intensified rainfall, prolonged dry spells, warmed oceans, and expanded wildfire seasons. Scientists repeatedly warned that many of these events would have been unlikely-or less severe-without human-driven warming.

The rise of AI: From hype to industrial-scale reality

In 2025, artificial intelligence ceased to be a futuristic narrative reserved for science fiction or tech blogs. It became something tangible, measurable, and, above all, an industrial reality that demanded attention from governments, enterprises, and investors alike. AI was no longer a matter of "if" or "maybe someday"; it was already reshaping economies, powering decision-making, and exposing the limits of infrastructure, labor, and capital.

This was the year that AI stopped being a purely digital story and became a question of supply, governance, and scale. The conversation shifted from what AI could do to how much the world could actually build, power, regulate, and afford.

Demand Explodes, Supply Strains

By 2025, the appetite for AI was voracious. Enterprises across industries sought to integrate AI into core operations; governments pursued AI for public services, defense, and regulation; investors funneled capital into startups and research at an unprecedented pace. The question of demand had been answered years ago—everyone wanted AI.

Instead, the constraint shifted to supply. Compute power, semiconductors, electricity, skilled talent, physical infrastructure, and high-quality training data emerged as binding limitations. AI was no longer a lightweight software layer floating in the cloud. It had become an industrial-scale system, measured in megawatts of electricity, thousands of GPUs, and billions of dollars in capital investment.

By the end of 2025, it was clear that AI was a resource-intensive enterprise—an ecosystem that required the world itself to keep pace with its ambition.

Capital Chases Infrastructure

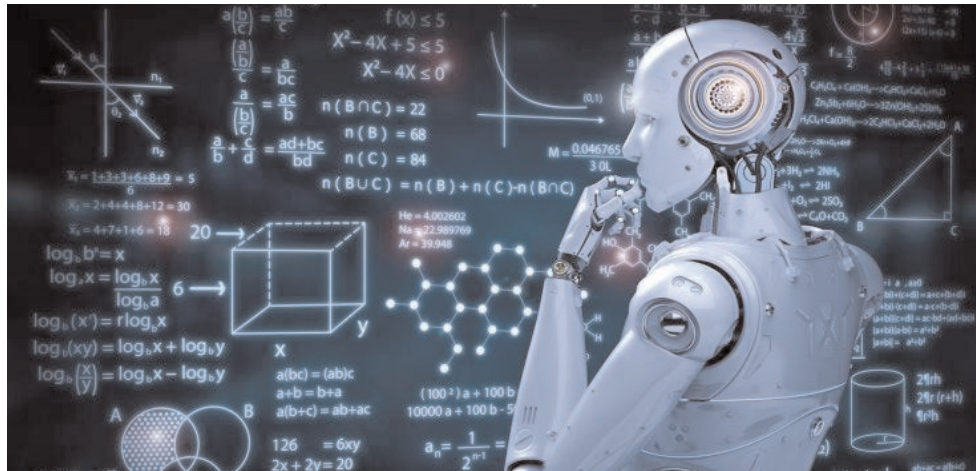
Global private investment in AI reached a record \$103.4 billion in 2024, according to the Stanford AI Index 2025. Early indications suggest that 2025 modestly surpassed this figure, but the more critical story was where this capital was flowing.

Nearly 60% of AI investment—\$58.62 billion—was devoted to infrastructure rather than software applications, experimentation, or research. Cloud providers alone reported \$180 billion in capital expenditure, with 30-35% tied directly to AI-related hardware. Data centers, networking infrastructure, cooling systems, and semiconductor supply agreements became the core assets defining competitive advantage, rather than algorithms alone.

AI investment had evolved from a software-centric model to an industrial model, where growth depended as much on real-world resources as on digital innovation. The question was no longer "Will AI be adopted?" but "Can the physical world keep up with AI's appetite?"

Revenue Surges, But Profitability Lags

Generative AI emerged as a mature



business category in 2025. Global revenue reached \$67.2 billion, up sharply from \$44.8 billion in 2024, with 72% of revenue coming from enterprise customers. Companies were no longer experimenting on the margins; they were embedding AI into workflows for finance, supply chain, human resources, and research.

Enterprise AI startups mirrored this industrial evolution. Median annual recurring revenue reached \$3.1 million in the first year, nearly double that of non-AI software companies. Demand was robust and sustained. Yet profitability remained uneven. Subscription pricing and usage-based models often failed to cover the astronomical costs of compute, infrastructure, and talent, highlighting a defining economic reality: AI companies were supply-constrained, not demand-constrained.

As OpenAI CEO Sam Altman remarked, "Additional compute can be monetized immediately. The bottleneck is building the infrastructure fast enough."

The Concentration of Power: Chips, Compute, and Risk

Training frontier AI models required 15,000-25,000 advanced GPUs per run, with costs ranging from \$120 million to \$450 million. This unprecedented scale created concentration risk, where a handful of companies controlled the most advanced AI capabilities.

More than 92% of cutting-edge training relied on chips produced by just two manufacturers, creating systemic dependence on supply chains, geopolitics, and export policies. AI progress, in 2025, was tightly coupled to semiconductors, energy grids, and long-term investment strategies. Success was not merely about ideas or talent—it was about access to industrial-scale resources.

Energy and the Physical Limits of Scaling

AI's energy footprint became impossible to ignore. In 2025, global data centers consumed approximately 460 terawatt-hours of electricity, with AI workloads accounting for roughly 23%—nearly double their share just three years prior. Individual AI-focused facilities required 250-500 megawatts of continuous power, comparable to the electricity needs of 200,000-400,000 U.S. households.

These energy demands created bottlenecks. Power grids were stressed, new construction faced delays due to permitting and community resistance, and cities had to reconcile AI expansion with existing infrastructure needs. Projections suggested that by 2030, AI-driven data center electricity consumption could exceed 1,000 TWh annually, underscoring the fact that energy and physical space had become the binding constraint on AI growth.

Enterprise Adoption and the Talent Bottleneck

Adoption of AI across enterprises accelerated sharply in 2025. By mid-year, 42% of U.S. firms reported active AI use, up from 26% in 2023, while adoption among large enterprises exceeded 68%.

Yet the story of workforce disruption was nuanced. Fewer than 5% of firms reported net job losses due to AI, while 37% indicated task redistribution, shifting employees toward oversight, integration, and decision-making roles. The real bottleneck was human talent.

Job postings requiring machine learning, statistics, and advanced mathematics outnumbered qualified candidates by 3.5 to 1. Median salaries for AI researchers rose 18.7% year-over-year, reflecting the intensity of demand. In 2025, the human brain became a scarce resource, as much as silicon or power.

From AGI to Superintelligence: Changing the Conversation

The conversation around AI increasingly moved away from artificial general intelligence (AGI) toward the broader and more nebulous notion of superintelligence.

Even as systems performed valuable work across dozens of domains, defining AGI remained elusive. Enterprises and investors were less concerned with whether AI could become "conscious" and more focused on practical capabilities: reasoning, planning, language comprehension, and integration into complex workflows.

Beyond Language: World Models and New Architectures

Large language models powered over 90% of commercial AI applications, but their limitations were increasingly visible. Hallucinations ranged from 3-5% in structured tasks to 20-30% in open-ended reasoning.

Data availability emerged as a binding constraint. Training datasets were no longer growing in step with model capacity, prompting labs to rely on synthetic data, reinforcement learning, and fine-tuning. Investment in world models and Joint Embedding Predictive Architectures (JEPA) surged by approximately 40% year-over-year, particularly in robotics and autonomous systems.

The message was clear: language alone would not sustain the next generation of AI.

Agents, Embodiment, and Physical Intelligence

By 2025, roughly 30% of enterprise AI systems incorporated agentic behavior, enabling multi-step planning, tool use, and autonomous decision-making. In logistics, manufacturing, and transportation, AI agents delivered 15-30% improvements in efficiency or safety, though human oversight remained essential.

Robotics and autonomous systems highlighted the gap between digital intelligence and physical reality, emphasizing the importance of embodiment, sensor integration, and real-world reliability.

Wearables, Smart Glasses, and the Next Interface

2025 also saw AI integrate into wearables and smart glasses. Unlike previous years' spectacle-driven experiments, the focus shifted to utility: real-time translation, navigation, object recognition, and contextual assistance.

The convergence of AI with vision, perception, and embodiment suggested that the next human-machine interface would be sensory and interactive, not just textual.

Platform Competition and Market Dynamics

ChatGPT maintained over 180 million monthly active users, while OpenAI's enterprise API grew faster than consumer adoption. Google's Gemini focused on deep ecosystem integration, and Anthropic's Claude emerged as an enterprise-focused alternative prioritizing reliability and safety.

The competition in 2025 was no longer about demonstration—it was about infrastructure control, trust, and governance.

Regulation, Governance, and Sovereign AI

Regulatory efforts accelerated. In the U.S., the lack of federal AI legislation shifted responsibility to the states, with over 30 states proposing bills targeting automated decision-making, employment screening, election integrity, and consumer protection.

Globally, nations pursued sovereign AI policies, aiming to control data, compute, and model deployment. While regulation addressed legitimate concerns, fragmentation increased complexity for multinational AI deployments.

Hollywood: Hits and misses of 2025

By the end of 2025, Hollywood had proven once again that it is a land of unpredictability—where billion-dollar blockbusters coexist with high-profile flops, and where innovation often trumps legacy. This was a year defined not just by box office receipts, but by changing audience behavior, technological evolution, and the collision of streaming and theaters.

The cinematic landscape of 2025 reflected a broader truth: brand names alone no longer guarantee success, and audiences increasingly demanded originality, emotional resonance, and cultural relevance alongside spectacle.

This yearender explores the biggest hits, notable misses, and the trends that shaped the global film industry in 2025.

The Year's Biggest Hits

Spider-Man: Beyond the Multiverse - \$1.4 Billion

Sony-Marvel's Spider-Man: Beyond the Multiverse was the undisputed blockbuster of the year. Combining multiverse storytelling with stunning visual effects, the film captivated audiences worldwide, earning \$1.4 billion globally. Critics praised its daring narrative and the interplay between legacy characters and new heroes. The film showcased a key lesson for Hollywood in 2025: franchise fatigue can be overcome with creativity. Audiences were willing to invest in years of prior lore—but only when presented with a fresh, emotionally compelling story.

Neon Horizon - \$320 Million

In a year dominated by sequels, Neon Horizon, a sci-fi epic by independent studio Luma Pictures, was a standout original success. With a budget of \$60 million, it earned \$320 million worldwide—a testament to the appetite for intelligent, high-concept storytelling.

Critics lauded its world-building and character depth, and audiences embraced its narrative complexity. This success highlighted the power of streaming synergy, as the film's simultaneous release on multiple platforms amplified its reach.

DreamWorks' Cosmic Adventures - \$580 Million

Animation continued to shine. DreamWorks' Cosmic Adventures combined breathtaking visuals with humor and heart, earning \$580 million globally. Its cross-generational appeal reinforced that animation remains a reliable investment, capable of attracting both families and adult audiences. Pixar followed with Tale of Two Worlds, which similarly thrived at both theaters and streaming platforms, cementing the ongoing blending of traditional box office and digital releases.

John Wick: Chapter 6 - \$520 Million

Keanu Reeves returned in John Wick:



Chapter 6, a high-octane action thriller that exceeded box office expectations. With a global total of \$520 million, the film proved that star-driven, franchise continuity still resonates, especially when paired with stylistic action sequences and a loyal fanbase.

Oppenheimer 2: Atomic Shadows - \$480 Million

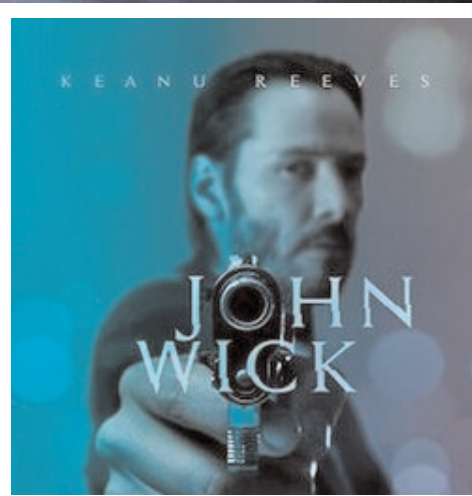
Christopher Nolan's Oppenheimer 2: Atomic Shadows was the year's critical darling, combining historical drama with Nolan's signature narrative complexity. While its \$480 million revenue paled compared to multibillion-dollar blockbusters, it demonstrated that intellectual ambition and cinematic craft can still attract a wide audience, particularly in North America and Europe.

High-Profile Flops

Not every studio gamble paid off. Several films, despite massive budgets and star power, failed to resonate with audiences.

Eternal Reign - \$75 Million (Budget: \$200 Million)

One of 2025's most anticipated releases, Eternal Reign, starring a leading Hollywood superstar, grossed less than half of its production budget. Critics cited weak scripting, pacing issues, and over-reliance on CGI spectacle. Social media buzz prior to release turned skeptical, highlighting how audience sentiment now moves faster than traditional marketing campaigns.



Transformers: Omega Protocol - \$180 Million (Budget: \$250 Million)

Even franchise titans were not immune to fatigue. The latest Transformers installment underperformed, signaling that repetitive storytelling without innovation can alienate audiences, even when global merchandising and nostalgia are leveraged.

Fast & Furious 14 - \$220 Million (Budget: \$260 Million)

The Fast & Furious franchise, which once guaranteed box office gold, saw declining returns. Analysts noted that audiences were tiring of over-the-top stunts and formulaic narratives, and streaming alternatives had also siphoned attention away from theaters.

Streaming Flops

The rise of streaming platforms brought new challenges. Several mid-budget originals on Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ failed to find an audience, demonstrating that algorithmic placement does not guarantee cultural impact. Success in streaming required not just access, but viral marketing, influencer support, and social media traction.

Trends That Defined Hollywood

Franchise Innovation Is Key

Multiverse narratives, genre-blending, and time-jump storytelling became tools to refresh legacy franchises. Studios that innovated creatively, such as Marvel and Star Wars, thrived. Those relying on formula alone struggled.

Streaming-THEATER Balance

Hybrid releases dominated. Films like Neon Horizon and Tale of Two Worlds showed the power of simultaneous theater and streaming releases, while other projects demonstrated that poor timing or inadequate marketing could cannibalize box office revenue.

Diversity and Global Stories

Stories from underrepresented communities achieved both critical acclaim and commercial success. South Korean thrillers, Bollywood-Hollywood collaborations, and European auteur films broke into global consciousness, signaling a more inclusive, globally conscious industry.

Technology as Storytelling Tool

AI-assisted VFX, volumetric capture, and real-time rendering accelerated production. However, over-reliance on spectacle sometimes backfired when storytelling took a backseat, producing visually impressive but narratively hollow films.

Social Media Influence

Platforms like X, TikTok, and Instagram shaped success in real time. Early reactions could boost or sink a film within days, forcing studios to adopt aggressive marketing, pre-screenings, and influencer engagement strategies.

Stars of the Year

Rising Talent: Young actors from streaming originals captured global attention, particularly in sci-fi and fantasy.

Veteran Comebacks: Leonardo DiCaprio, Scarlett Johansson, and Denzel Washington delivered critical and commercial hits.

Directorial Innovation: Filmmakers experimenting with interactive storytelling, AI-assisted scripts, and hybrid genres became cultural focal points.

Looking Ahead: Lessons for 2026

- Innovation outweighs legacy: Creative risk-taking can revitalize franchises.
- Original content matters: Smaller films can break out if marketed strategically.
- Hybrid releases are here to stay: Streaming and theater releases must be carefully timed.
- Social media shapes narratives: Early public opinion can make or break a film.
- Technology supports, not substitutes, storytelling: Visual spectacle is no longer sufficient alone.

Hollywood in 2025 reinforced the delicate balance between business and art. While blockbusters captured headlines, original content, diversity, and technology-driven innovation proved that audiences value authenticity and novelty.

2025 Nobel Laureates: Innovators, Humanists and Champions of Peace

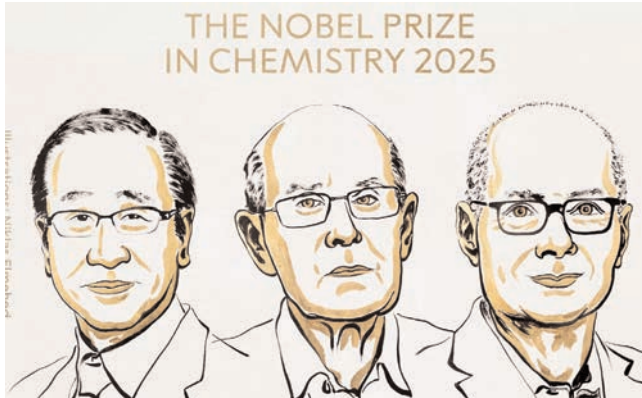
The Nobel Prizes have once again honored individuals whose work represents some of the most transformative ideas of our time. Announced between early October and mid-October 2025, the laureates in all six Nobel categories — Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, Peace, and Economic Sciences — exemplify scientific ingenuity, literary vision, moral courage, and global responsibility.

Physics: Macroscopic Quantum Phenomena



The 2025 Nobel Prize in Physics was jointly awarded to John Clarke, Michel H. Devoret, and John M. Martinis for their discovery of macroscopic quantum mechanical tunnelling and energy quantisation in electric circuits. Their work bridges the enigmatic behavior of quantum mechanics — usually confined to microscopic particles — with systems large enough to be engineered and observed in the laboratory. This breakthrough deepens our understanding of quantum systems and lays a foundation for the next generation of quantum technologies.

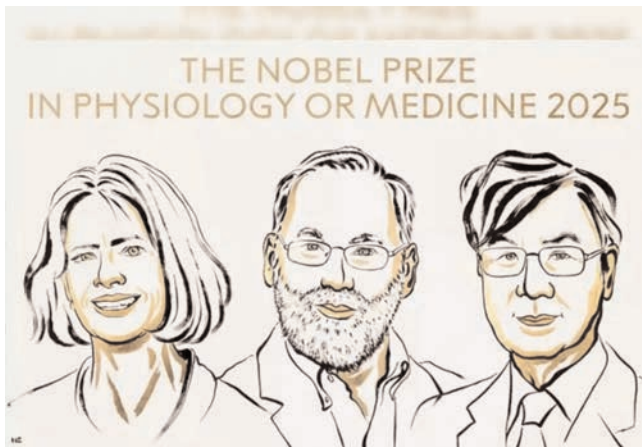
Chemistry: Metal-Organic Frameworks



The 2025 Nobel Prize in Chemistry recognised Susumu Kitagawa, Richard Robson, and Omar M. Yaghi for the development of metal-organic frameworks (MOFs). These are novel materials composed of metal ions and organic linkers that form vast porous structures. MOFs can capture greenhouse gases, filter pollutants, harvest water from arid air, and catalyse chemical reactions more efficiently — making them crucial tools in tackling climate change and resource scarcity. Their work showcases how chemistry can design materials with profound environmental and industrial impact.

Physiology or Medicine: Immune System Balance

The 2025 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Mary E. Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell, and Shimon Sakaguchi for their discoveries concerning peripheral immune tolerance. Their research revealed how the immune system prevents harmful self-attacks



by balancing activation and suppression, insights that have reshaped immunology and opened new therapeutic avenues for autoimmune diseases and cancer.

Literature: A Visionary Voice Amid Modern Angst



Hungarian novelist László Krasznahorkai received the 2025 Nobel Prize in Literature for his compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art. Known for his dense and philosophical prose, Krasznahorkai's work probes existential uncertainty, societal decay, and the human spirit's resilience — giving readers both aesthetic depth and moral challenge.

Peace: Champion of Democracy and Human Rights



The 2025 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to María Corina Machado of Venezuela for her tireless work promoting democratic rights and her struggle for a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy. The Norwegian Nobel Committee

recognised Machado as a courageous civilian leader whose advocacy for free elections, representative government, and human dignity embodies the enduring values of peace amid difficult political conditions.

Economic Sciences: Understanding Growth, Innovation



The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2025 went to Joel Mokyr, Philippe Aghion, and Peter Howitt for their contributions to understanding innovation-driven economic growth. Their theories illuminate how technological progress, creative destruction, and institutional environments interact to produce long-term prosperity — providing policymakers with frameworks to promote inclusive, sustainable economies.

How the Nobel Laureates Are Chosen

The selection process for the Nobel Prizes is one of the most rigorous in the world. It involves months of confidential research, nominations, and evaluation by committees of leading experts.

Step-by-Step Selection Process:

- **Nominations:** Qualified individuals, including previous laureates, university professors, and selected institutions, nominate candidates.
- **Evaluation:** The Nobel Committees study the nominations, review research, and consult with experts.
- **Decision:** The respective academies or committees vote to determine the winner(s).
- **Announcement:** The results are made public in early October.
- **Award Ceremony:** The prizes are formally presented on 10th December, the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death.

Significance of the Nobel Prize

The Nobel Prize is not merely an award; it is a symbol of human progress, compassion, and creativity. Its significance lies in its power to:

- **Encourage innovation:** It motivates scientists, thinkers, and peacebuilders to continue pushing boundaries.
- **Recognize global impact:** It honors efforts that have made lasting positive changes in the world.
- **Inspire future generations:** Young researchers and writers often see laureates as role models.
- **Promote peace and cooperation:** The Peace Prize especially plays a crucial role in acknowledging movements and individuals striving for global harmony.

2025: India's year of controversies

Some years are remembered for milestones. Others are remembered for movements. 2025 will be remembered for arguments-persistent, loud and unavoidable. Across politics, entertainment and sports, India spent the year questioning authority, intent, freedom and fairness. What unfolded was not a series of isolated flashpoints, but a continuous churn in which every controversy fed the next, amplified by social media and the 24/7 news cycle.

From electoral integrity battles and high-stakes political reunions to sudden constitutional exits and corruption allegations, 2025 witnessed controversies that reshaped India's political discourse, tested democratic institutions, and triggered intense debate across Parliament, states, and public platforms.

Electoral rows, surprise alliances, resignations, and land scams defined 2025, a year marked by sharp polarisation, scrutiny and questions over institutional credibility in Indian politics.

What happened: From August 2025 onwards, a major political controversy erupted over alleged irregularities in India's electoral process, popularly termed as "vote chori". Opposition parties accused the Election Commission of India (ECI) of facilitating large-scale manipulation through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The allegations linked voter deletions to the outcomes of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and upcoming state assembly polls, with the BJP also being named in the charges.

Consequences: The controversy triggered nationwide protests, legal challenges, and intense political debate. In states such as Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, lakhs of voters reportedly found their names missing from electoral rolls, raising fears of mass disenfranchisement.

Impact: Public trust in the electoral process came under strain, with civil society groups calling the exercise a "de facto NRC". The issue dominated Parliament, election rallies and social media, becoming a flashpoint ahead of crucial elections.

Uddhav-Raj Thackeray reunion sparks political backlash

What happened: Estranged cousins Uddhav Thackeray (Shiv Sena-UBT) and Raj Thackeray (MNS) formally reunited, ending a 20-year political rift that began in 2005. The alliance was announced ahead of the Mumbai civic polls, marking a significant shift in Maharashtra politics.

Consequences: The reunion drew sharp reactions from the ruling alliance, with BJP leaders openly mocking the tie-up. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis dismissed the alliance as politically irrelevant, saying its importance was exaggerated.

SIR row deepens 'vote theft' debate

What happened: The 2025 SIR exercise became one of the most contentious political issues of the year. While the ECI described it as voter-list "purification", opposition parties alleged mass deletion of legitimate voters, branding it "vote chori".

Consequences: In Bihar alone, nearly 65 lakh names were removed from draft rolls, with a net reduction of 44-47 lakh voters. Similar large-scale deletions were reported in Tamil Nadu and other states.

Impact: The exercise intensified fears of systematic voter suppression, particularly among marginalised communities. It also raised constitutional questions about electoral fairness and democratic participation.

Solution/Govt response: The ECI reiterated that revisions were conducted under constitutional provisions and allowed claims and objections. However, opposition parties continue to demand a rollback and judicial oversight.

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar's sudden resignation

What happened: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar



resigned on July 21, 2025—two years before the end of his term—citing health concerns. The resignation came on the first day of Parliament's Monsoon Session and was accepted immediately by President Droupadi Murmu.

Consequences: The abrupt timing fuelled speculation of political reasons behind the move, with insiders pointing to Dhankhar's strained relationship with the government and his frequent confrontations with the opposition and judiciary.

Impact: The resignation created a constitutional and political vacuum, sparking debates over institutional independence and the role of the Vice President as Rajya Sabha Chairperson.

Ajit Pawar's son land deal controversy

What happened: A land deal in Pune's Mundhwa area involving Amadea Enterprises LLP, co-owned by Parth Pawar, son of Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, came under scrutiny. The firm allegedly purchased 40-43 acres of government land worth up to Rs 1,800 crore for about Rs 300 crore, with claims of stamp duty evasion and procedural violations.

Consequences: Arrests, suspensions of revenue officials, and multiple probes followed. While an initial committee did not name Parth Pawar directly, public outrage led to the formation of a new high-level panel.

India-Pakistan 'No Handshake' and Asia Cup Conduct

The 2025 Asia Cup became a flashpoint when the customary post-match handshake was skipped between India and Pakistan, highlighting diplomatic tensions bleeding into cricketing tradition. The tournament also saw players from both sides fined and sanctioned under the ICC code of conduct for provocative gestures and political statements on the field, a rare but striking demonstration of how geopolitics can cloud sporting goodwill and sportsmanship.

Messi India Tour Chaos and Fan Outrage

Lionel Messi's highly anticipated "GOAT Tour" stop in Kolkata descended into chaos when frustrated fans stormed the pitch and hurled objects after feeling short-changed by the brief duration of his appearance. The incident spurred public apologies and promises of



enquiry from local authorities, illustrating how even superstar-led events can backfire without effective crowd management and clear expectations.

Deepika Padukone and the 8-hour work debate

Deepika Padukone found herself in the middle of a heated debate after her shocking exit from Sandeep Reddy Vanga's 'Spirit' over specific working conditions, including a request for an eight-hour workday. Several celebrities came forward to directly and indirectly weigh in on the need for a structured shift in the industry after the 'Chennai Express' actress allegedly demanded fixed working hours in the film industry. In another development, Deepika was also dropped from the Prabhas starrer 'Kalki 2898 AD,' with the makers mentioning that they decided to part ways with Deepika after "careful consideration," adding that a film like Kalki deserves a higher level of "commitment."

Karisma Kapoor-Priya Sachdev legal battle

Following the demise of Karisma Kapoor's former husband, Sunjay Kapur, in June this year, several concerns were raised about key documents related to his assets and even his post-mortem report. Karisma Kapoor's children sought an interim injunction to restrain Priya Kapur from dealing with or alienating Sunjay Kapur's assets. Karisma Kapoor and Sunjay Kapur were married from 2003 to 2016 and share two children. Sunjay later married Priya Sachdev Kapur. On the other hand, Sunjay Kapur's mother, Rani Kapur, also challenged the will, arguing that it was inconsistent with her son's conduct.

Saif Ali Khan stabbing incident

In January this year, actor Saif Ali Khan suffered a knife attack during an alleged robbery attempt when the accused Shariful Islam, also known as Shehzad, broke into the actor's Bandra residence. During the incident, Khan was severely injured, suffering damage to his thoracic spine and other body parts. The actor was rushed to Lilavati Hospital, where he was treated for five days before being discharged on January 21. In connection with the case, Mumbai's Bandra Police said they filed a 1000-page chargesheet, including several pieces of evidence.

Biggest controversies that rocked the world

If 2025 proved anything on the global stage, it was that controversy had become a permanent feature of international life. From wars and elections to culture wars, technology and celebrity scandals, the year was marked by moments that shook governments, divided societies and redrew geopolitical fault lines. Across continents, public trust was tested, institutions were challenged, and the meaning of power itself was debated.

Geopolitics: A World on Edge

The most defining controversies of 2025 unfolded in the realm of geopolitics. The Russia-Ukraine conflict, now well into its fourth year, continued to polarise global opinion. Western military aid to Kyiv intensified early in the year, while Moscow accused NATO of turning Ukraine into a proxy battlefield. Allegations of war crimes, attacks on civilian infrastructure and the use of advanced drone and AI-assisted warfare kept the conflict at the centre of global outrage.

In the Middle East, the aftermath of the Gaza war remained deeply contentious. Israel's military operations, humanitarian access to Gaza, and the staggering civilian toll dominated international forums throughout 2025. Protests erupted across Europe, North America and Latin America, while governments struggled to balance domestic pressure with diplomatic alliances. The role of the United States, accusations of double standards in international law, and divisions within the United Nations made the crisis one of the year's most emotionally charged controversies.

Meanwhile, tensions between China and Taiwan escalated further in 2025. Large-scale Chinese military drills around Taiwan drew sharp reactions from Washington and its allies, prompting fears of a broader Indo-Pacific conflict. Beijing insisted the exercises were internal matters, while critics accused China of coercive diplomacy. The controversy exposed deep fractures in global security architecture.

Elections, Democracy and Legitimacy

2025 was also a turbulent year for democracies. In the United States, the early months of President Donald Trump's second term were marked by fierce controversy. Policy reversals, sweeping executive orders, aggressive trade tariffs, and sharp rhetoric against political opponents reignited fears of democratic backsliding. Protests and court challenges followed several decisions, keeping America politically polarized and globally scrutinized.

In Europe, democracy faced its own crises. Several countries saw mass protests against governments accused of eroding judicial independence, press freedom or minority rights. In France, pension reforms and immigration policies triggered sustained street unrest. In Germany, far-right parties gained



ground in regional elections, prompting widespread debate over the future of liberal democracy in Europe.

Across parts of Africa and Latin America, disputed elections and constitutional amendments sparked allegations of power grabs. In some cases, opposition leaders were jailed or barred from contesting, leading to international condemnation and sanctions debates.

Economy and Trade Wars

Global economics produced some of the year's sharpest controversies. The US-led tariff escalations against China and other trading partners in 2025 sent shockwaves through global markets. Supporters argued the measures protected domestic industries; critics warned of inflation, supply chain disruptions and a new era of economic nationalism.

The cost-of-living crisis remained a major source of public anger worldwide. From housing shortages in Europe and Canada to fuel and food price protests in parts of Africa and South America, governments faced mounting pressure over inequality. The growing gap between corporate profits and household incomes became a recurring theme in protests and political campaigns.

Technology, AI and the Crisis of Truth

Few issues generated as much global anxiety in 2025 as technology. The



explosive growth of artificial intelligence sparked controversy over job losses, surveillance, and the erosion of truth itself. AI-generated deepfakes—some involving political leaders and public figures—went viral during elections and protests, forcing governments to scramble for regulatory responses.

Big Tech companies came under fire over data privacy, algorithmic bias and monopoly power. In the United States and Europe, antitrust cases and parliamentary hearings dominated headlines. Critics accused tech giants of shaping public opinion without accountability; companies countered that

regulation risked stifling innovation.

Climate, Activism and Environmental Conflict

Climate change remained an arena of constant controversy. Extreme weather events—heatwaves, floods and wildfires—triggered renewed debates over climate responsibility and preparedness. Climate activists staged disruptive protests across major cities, blocking roads and targeting cultural landmarks to draw attention to what they called government inaction.

These tactics divided public opinion. Supporters praised the urgency; critics accused activists of alienating ordinary citizens. Meanwhile, developing nations accused wealthy countries of failing to meet climate finance commitments, reviving long-standing North-South tensions.

Culture Wars and Free Speech Battles

Cultural controversies crossed borders in 2025. Universities in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia remained battlegrounds over free speech, identity politics and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Campus protests, disciplinary actions against students and faculty, and donor pressure sparked debates over academic freedom.

The entertainment industry was no stranger to controversy either. Hollywood faced renewed accusations over representation, labour practices and creative censorship. Several high-profile films and artists became flashpoints for debates on race, gender, sexuality and political messaging, often amplified by social media outrage cycles.

Sports: Beyond the Playing Field

Global sport reflected the world's divisions. The Paris 2024 Olympic legacy continued to spark debate in 2025 over cost overruns, athlete welfare and environmental impact. Football governing bodies faced criticism over corruption allegations, controversial refereeing decisions and the influence of authoritarian states through sports investments. Athletes increasingly used their platforms to speak on political and social issues, drawing both praise and backlash. Sports arenas became spaces for protest as much as performance.

A World in Permanent Dispute

What made 2025 distinctive was not just the scale of controversy, but its interconnectedness. Wars influenced elections, technology reshaped politics, and culture wars spilled into diplomacy. Outrage travelled faster than facts, and trust—whether in governments, media or institutions—remained fragile.

As the year closed, one truth stood out: the world in 2025 was not merely divided—it was in constant negotiation with itself.

The controversies of 2025 revealed a global order under strain, where power was questioned, narratives contested, and certainty elusive. Whether these tensions lead to reform or rupture will shape the years to come.

United States at the end of 2025: A superpower strong abroad, strained within

As 2025 comes to a close, the United States finds itself both dominant and divided—still the world's most powerful nation, yet internally unsettled and externally contested. The year underscored America's enduring strengths in economy, technology and military power, while also exposing deep political polarisation, social anxiety and questions about the future of its democratic institutions.

Politics and Governance: Power Amid Polarisation

By the end of 2025, American politics remained sharply polarised. President Donald Trump's second term, which began in January 2025, set a confrontational tone both domestically and internationally. A flurry of executive orders on immigration, trade, climate policy and federal bureaucracy triggered immediate legal challenges, keeping the judiciary deeply involved in governance.

Congress remained divided and combative, with legislative gridlock on key issues such as immigration reform, healthcare costs and gun legislation. Political rhetoric grew harsher, and trust between institutions weakened. Yet, the system continued to function—courts ruled independently, states asserted their rights, and civil society remained vocal.

The US ended 2025 politically powerful but deeply fractured, with governance increasingly shaped by executive authority and judicial intervention.

Economy: Resilient Growth Amid Tariff Wars

Economically, the United States remained a global heavyweight in 2025. Strong consumer spending, technological innovation and energy production helped sustain growth. Wall Street closed the year near record highs, driven by artificial intelligence, defence, and energy stocks.

However, the year was also defined by trade tensions and tariffs. In early 2025, the Trump administration expanded tariffs on Chinese goods, particularly in technology, machinery, and consumer electronics, arguing that these measures protected domestic industries and intellectual property. Additional tariffs were imposed on certain imports from the European Union, Canada, and Mexico, targeting steel, aluminium, and select agricultural products.

The measures provoked sharp criticism from trading partners, who accused the US of economic coercion. Markets experienced volatility as global supply chains adjusted, and corporations passed costs to consumers. Domestically, manufacturing sectors benefitted modestly, while import-dependent industries and retailers faced price pressures. Economists warned that sustained tariffs risked inflationary spikes and slower growth in trade-dependent regions.

Beneath these headline numbers lay persistent structural issues: income inequality widened, housing affordability worsened, and student debt remained a generational burden. Labor unrest surfaced intermittently, particularly in manufacturing, logistics, and the public sector.

America ended 2025 economically robust but navigating the complexities of protectionism and global trade disputes.

Foreign Policy: Assertive, Transactional, and Controversial

On the global stage, the United States in 2025 was assertive but controversial. Washington remained the central military and diplomatic force backing Ukraine, even as public fatigue with prolonged conflict grew. Relations with NATO allies oscillated between



reassurance and tension, reflecting Trump's transactional approach to alliances.

Trade policy also became a tool of geopolitics. Tariffs on China and selective trade barriers against European allies were intertwined with negotiations on technology transfer, rare earth minerals, and defense supply chains. Allies and rivals alike closely monitored US moves, recognizing that trade policy had become an extension of American strategic influence.

In the Middle East, the US continued to support Israel amid international criticism over humanitarian concerns in Gaza. Relations with China remained strained, marked by military posturing in the Indo-Pacific and ongoing technology restrictions. Taiwan emerged as a key flashpoint, with Washington reiterating support while urging restraint.

Tech and Innovation: Leadership with Ethical Dilemmas

The United States ended 2025 as the world's leading technology powerhouse. American companies dominated the global artificial intelligence race, shaping everything from defense and finance to healthcare and entertainment. Silicon Valley, once written off as politically out of touch, reasserted its centrality to economic growth.

AI also triggered widespread anxiety. Concerns over job displacement, surveillance, misinformation, and deepfakes intensified. Congressional hearings grilled Big Tech executives over monopoly power, data privacy, and political influence, though comprehensive regulation remained elusive. America led the tech future while struggling to govern it.

Society and Culture: Identity, Inequality, and Unrest

Socially, the United States in 2025 remained deeply divided along political, racial, and cultural lines. Immigration crackdowns, controversial education policies, and debates over reproductive rights intensified public discourse. University campuses became battlegrounds over free speech, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and identity politics, often drawing national attention.

Gun violence, policing, and civil rights remained key flashpoints. Protests—sometimes peaceful, sometimes confrontational—continued to shape the public sphere, reflecting both democratic engagement and social strain.

Unmatched Power, Expanding Commitments

Militarily, the United States in 2025 remained unrivalled. Defence spending rose, focusing on space, cyber warfare, and AI-enabled systems. The US maintained a global military footprint, reinforcing deterrence in Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific. Critics questioned the sustainability of multiple global commitments amid domestic challenges, including veterans' welfare and military recruitment.

Soft Power: Influence Under Scrutiny

America's soft power remained vast but contested. Hollywood, higher education, innovation, and the dollar continued to shape global culture and economics. International perceptions were increasingly complex, influenced by internal unrest, trade policies, and foreign interventions. America remained indispensable but no longer unchallenged.

The United States' Place in the World at the End of 2025

By December 2025, the United States stood as:

- The world's foremost military and economic power
- A technological superpower
- A democracy under internal strain
- A global leader wielding trade and tariffs as instruments of influence

America's leadership remained firm, but global trust and predictability were tested by aggressive tariffs, domestic unrest, and foreign policy assertiveness.

The United States at the end of 2025 was powerful, influential, and unsettled. Its economy thrived under growth and protectionist measures, but inequality and social divisions persisted. Its foreign policy was bold yet polarising, while technology leadership created both opportunity and ethical dilemmas.

2025 revealed an America still shaping the world while wrestling intensely with its own internal contradictions. The nation's future influence will depend on how it balances power, governance, and global responsibility in a rapidly changing world.

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TRUMP AND PUTIN SPEAK BEFORE ZELENSKIY MEETING

Shortly before Zelenskiy and his delegation arrived at Trump's Florida residence, Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke in a call described as "productive" by the U.S. president and "friendly" by Kremlin foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov.

Ushakov, in Moscow, said Putin told Trump a 60-day ceasefire proposed by the European Union and Ukraine would prolong the war. The Kremlin aide also said Ukraine needs to make a decision regarding the Donbas "without further delay."

Trump said he and Putin spoke for more than two hours. He said the Russian president pledged to help rebuild Ukraine, including by supplying cheap energy. "Russia wants to see Ukraine succeed," Trump said. "It sounds a little strange."

As Trump praised Putin, Zelenskiy tilted his head and smiled. Trump said he would call Putin again following the meeting with Zelenskiy.

The Kremlin expressed support for Trump's negotiations. "The whole world appreciates President Trump and his team's peace efforts," Kirill Dmitriev, Putin's special envoy, posted on X on Dec 29 after Trump's talks with Zelenskiy.

U.S. negotiators have also proposed shared control over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant. Power line repairs have begun there after another local ceasefire brokered by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the agency said. Negotiators, Trump said, have made progress on deciding the fate of the plant, which can "start up almost immediately."

Trump says US and Ukraine 'a lot closer' on peace deal but 'thorny issues' remain

PALM BEACH (TIP)

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday that he and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy were "getting a lot closer, maybe very close" to an agreement to end the war in Ukraine, while acknowledging that the fate of the Donbas region remains a key unresolved issue.

The two leaders spoke at a joint news conference after meeting at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida on Sunday afternoon. Both leaders reported progress on two of the most contentious issues in peace talks - security guarantees for Ukraine and the division of eastern Ukraine's Donbas region that Russia has sought to capture.

Both Trump and Zelenskiy offered few details and did not provide a deadline for completing a peace deal, although Trump said it will be clear "in a few weeks" whether negotiations to end the war will succeed. He said a few "thorny issues" around territory must be resolved.

Zelenskiy said an agreement on security guarantees for Ukraine has been reached. Trump was slightly more cautious, saying that they were 95% of the way to such an agreement, and that he expected European countries to "take over a big part" of that effort with U.S. backing.

French President Emmanuel Macron, in an X post published after Trump met with Zelenskiy, said progress was made



on security guarantees. Macron said countries in the so-called "Coalition of the Willing" would meet in Paris in early January to finalise their "concrete contributions."

Zelenskiy has said previously that he hopes to soften a U.S. proposal for Ukrainian forces to withdraw completely from Donbas, a Russian demand that would mean ceding some territory held by Ukrainian forces. While Moscow insists on getting all of Donbas, Kyiv wants the map frozen at current battle lines.

Both Trump and Zelenskiy said on Sunday the future of the Donbas had not been settled, though the U.S. president said discussions are "moving in the right direction." The United States, seeking a compromise, has proposed a

free economic zone if Ukraine leaves the area, although it remains unclear how that zone would function in practical terms.

"It's unresolved, but it's getting a lot closer. That's a very tough issue," Trump said.

Nor did the leaders offer much insight into what agreements they had reached on providing security for Ukraine after the war ends, something Zelenskiy described Sunday as "the key milestone in achieving a lasting peace."

Russia has said any foreign troop deployment in Ukraine is unacceptable.

Zelenskiy said any peace agreement would have to be approved by Ukraine's parliament, or by a referendum. Trump said he would be willing to speak to parliament if that would secure the deal.

Netanyahu meets Trump as Gaza ceasefire approaches crossroad

JERUSALEM (TIP)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump will meet Monday to discuss the ceasefire in Gaza, whose troubled opening months are stoking concern that regional fighting could resume in the new year.

Trump is to host Netanyahu, his most frequent foreign guest, at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida after hearing complaints from Arab and Muslim partners about continuing Israeli military strikes in the war-shattered and now-divided Palestinian enclave, as well as in Lebanon and Syria.

Israel says it's fending off fresh threats by armed Islamist groups. Chief among these is Hamas, which triggered the two-year conflict in the Gaza Strip and agreed to the truce and a full hostage release — but not to surrender weapons as demanded by Trump's internationally endorsed 20-point peace plan. The group has said it might be willing to integrate

into the military of a future Palestinian state.

In Lebanon, Israel has been hitting Hezbollah and accusing the Beirut government of lagging in its promise to prevent the militia from rearming and regrouping at the border.

Netanyahu's goal in the Trump talks will be to "strengthen, preserve and safeguard the achievements of the war and thus ensure that the offensive capabilities that we denied our enemies won't be restored," said Guy Levy, a Netanyahu spokesman.

Trump has been highly supportive of Israel even as it faced censure elsewhere over the Gazan carnage. When Netanyahu took the war to Iran — the sponsor of Hamas and Hezbollah — in June, US strategic bombers joined Israel's air force in the assault on its nuclear facilities.

But the president has shown impatience with questions of when and



how his Gaza plan can move to the reconstruction and reconciliation stages, known as Phase 2.

Israelis, meanwhile, are bracing for more war. A poll by the Israel Democracy Institute think-tank found that 71% of the public believe there will be a flare-up with Hezbollah in the coming year. Sixty-nine percent see it happening with Iran, and 53% with Hamas.

"No one is arguing that the status quo is sustainable in the long term, nor

desirable," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, said.

Trump is expected soon to name fellow global leaders to a "Board of Peace" to oversee the interim administration of post-war Gaza. Formation of an International Stabilization Force, also known as ISF, consisting of troops from other countries, should soon follow.

Yet Israeli and US officials privately acknowledge arguing over whether Israel should withdraw troops and tanks from parts of the 53% of the territory it still holds, and hand them over to the ISF, even as Hamas remains armed and defiant in the rest. It's also unclear whether the ISF would be willing and able to confront Hamas, which is branded a terrorist group in the West.

Another sticking point has been over Hamas' failure to return the body of the last of the some 250 people it seized during the Oct. 7, 2023 shock invasion of southern Israel.

Six Islamic State militants and 3 police officers killed in clash in northwest Turkey

Islamic State militants clashed with police in northwest Turkey on Monday, Dec 29, leaving three police officers and six militants dead, Turkey's interior minister said. At least eight other police officers and a night guard were wounded.

The shooting occurred in Elmali district in Yalova province, south of Istanbul, as police stormed a house where the militants were hiding.

Special forces from neighboring Bursa province were dispatched to reinforce the operation. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said the operation in Yalova was one out of more than 100 simultaneous raids carried out against IS suspects in 15 provinces across the country.

The operation in Yalova was carried out with "great care" because women and children were inside the house where the militants were located, Yerlikaya said. All five women and six children were safely evacuated from the house, he said. All of the militants were Turkish nationals, the minister told reporters.

The operation began at around 2 a.m. local time and was officially completed at 9:40 a.m., he added.

Meanwhile, the Yalova Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation, assigning five prosecutors to lead the probe, Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said on the X social media platform.

He said five people have been taken into custody as part of the investigation, without providing further information on the suspects.

BANGKOK (TIP)

Thailand's army accused Cambodia on Monday of violating a newly signed ceasefire agreement, reached after weeks of deadly border clashes, by flying more than 250 drones over its territory.

The Southeast Asian neighbours agreed to the "immediate" ceasefire on Saturday, pledging to end renewed border clashes that killed dozens of people and displaced more than a million this month.

But the fresh allegation from Bangkok and its threat to reconsider releasing Cambodian soldiers held by Thailand left a sustained truce in doubt, even as their foreign ministers wrapped up two days of talks hosted by China.

The Thai army said on Monday, Dec 29, "more than 250 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were detected flying from the Cambodian side, intruding into Thailand's sovereign territory" on Sunday night, according to a statement.

"Such actions constitute provocation and a violation of measures aimed at reducing tensions, which are

North Korea says it tested long-range cruise missiles

SEOUL (TIP)

North Korea said on Monday, Dec 29, it fired long-range strategic cruise missiles into the sea to test the country's nuclear deterrence, days after it showed apparent progress in the construction of its first nuclear-powered submarine.

Sunday's launches were the latest weapons display by North Korea ahead of its planned ruling Workers' Party congress early next year. Keen outside attention on the congress, the first of its kind in five years, will be on whether North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will establish new priorities in relations with the US and respond to Washington's calls to resume long-dormant talks.

The official Korean Central News Agency reported that Kim expressed "great satisfaction" over Sunday's launches, which occurred off the country's west coast. It said Kim noted that testing the reliability of North Korea's nuclear deterrence and demonstrating its might are "just a responsible exercise of the right to self-defence and war deterrence" in the face of external security threats. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it was aware of several cruise missile launches made from North Korea's capital region on Sunday morning. It said South Korea maintains a readiness to repel any potential North Korean provocations through its alliance with the United States.

UN Security Council resolutions prohibit North Korea from launches involving its huge stockpile of ballistic missiles. Its cruise missile tests are not banned, but they still pose a threat to the



US and South Korea because they are highly manoeuvrable and fly at low altitudes to avoid radar detection. Analysts say North Korea would aim to use cruise missiles to strike US warships and aircraft carriers in the event of conflict.

Last week, North Korea test-launched new anti-air missiles off its east coast and displayed photos showing a largely-completed hull of a developmental nuclear-powered submarine. North Korea implied it would arm the submarine with nuclear missiles.

A nuclear-powered submarine is among a slew of sophisticated weapons systems that Kim has vowed to introduce to cope with what he describes as US-led security threats. Some experts say North Korea's recent alignment with

Russia -- including sending thousands of troops and military equipment to support President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine -- may have helped it to receive crucial technologies in return.

North Korea has focussed on weapons-testing activities to expand its nuclear arsenal since Kim's high-stakes nuclear diplomacy with US President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019.

But in an apparent response to Trump's repeated outreach, Kim suggested in September that he could return to talks if the US drops "its delusional obsession with denuclearisation" of North Korea. Experts say Kim might think his enlarged nuclear arsenal would give him greater leverage to wrest concessions in potential talks with Trump.

Thai army accuses Cambodia of violating truce with over 250 drones



Sokhonn described the drone incident as "a small issue related to flying drones seen by both sides along the border line".

He said on Cambodian state television on Monday that the two sides had discussed the issue and agreed to investigate and "resolve it immediately".

Thai army spokesman Winthai Suvaree said in a statement the drone activity reflected "provocative actions" and a "hostile stance toward Thailand", which could affect the security of military personnel and civilians in border areas.

Thailand's army "may need to reconsider its decision regarding the release of 18 Cambodian soldiers, depending on the situation and the behaviour observed", it said.

Several family members of soldiers held by Thailand for six months had little faith they would be released, even before Bangkok raised fresh doubts.

Heng Socheat, the wife of a soldier, told AFP on Monday she worried the Thai military might renege on its pledge.

"Until my husband arrives home, then I will believe them," she said.

inconsistent with the Joint Statement agreed" during a bilateral border committee meeting on Saturday, it said.

The reignited fighting this month spread to nearly every border province on both sides, shattering an earlier truce for which US President Donald Trump took credit.

Under the truce pact signed on Saturday, Cambodia and Thailand agreed to cease fire, freeze troop movements and cooperate on demining efforts and combatting cybercrime.

They also agreed to allow civilians living in border areas to return home as soon as possible, while Thailand was to return 18 Cambodian soldiers captured in July within 72 hours, if the ceasefire held.

- 'Small issue' -

Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak

Bangladesh ramps up rhetoric, Indian agencies push back

Bangladesh on Dec 28 sharpened its rhetoric against India, with Dhaka accusing New Delhi of spreading a “misleading narrative” on the condition of minorities in the country and the Bangladeshi police claiming that suspects in the murder of radical student leader Sharif Osman Hadi had fled to Meghalaya, an allegation rejected by security agencies in the northeastern state.

The neighbouring country’s foreign ministry, in a statement, contended there was a “selective and unfair bias” in certain quarters in India whereby “isolated incidents are amplified, misrepresented and propagated to incite common Indians against Bangladesh, its diplomatic missions and other establishments in India”. The spreading of “misleading narratives” has the potential to undermine “good neighbourly relations and mutual trust”, it said.

The statement came days after ministry of external affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal flagged “unremitting hostility against minorities in Bangladesh” in the wake of the December 18 lynching of Dipu Chandra Das, who was beaten to death by a mob after being accused of blasphemy. Bangladesh’s foreign ministry said Jaiswal’s comments “do not reflect the facts” and rejected “inaccurate, exaggerated, or motivated narratives that misrepresent Bangladesh’s longstanding tradition of communal harmony”.

Was advised to hide in bunker during Op Sindoor: Pak Prez Zardari

ISLAMABAD (TIP)

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has revealed that he was advised to “hide in a bunker” when India launched Operation Sindoor in May.

Zardari made the revelation while speaking at an event in Larkana, Sindh province, to mark the 18th death anniversary of his wife and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was assassinated in a gun and bomb attack in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007.

“My military secretary came to me and said, ‘Sir, the war has started. Let’s go to a bunker.’ I had actually told him four days earlier that a war was going to happen... I said, ‘If martyrdom is to come, it will come here. Leaders don’t die in bunkers. They die on the battlefield. They don’t die sitting in bunkers,’” he said on Saturday.

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians. The strikes triggered four days of intense clashes between the two countries and ended with an understanding to stop the military actions on May 10.

“Pakistan desires peace but remains fully prepared to defend itself,” Zardari said, while making claims about what he called Pakistan’s “decisive stance” during the four-day conflict.

President Zardari also praised army chief Asim Munir for what he called a “befitting reply to India” in the armed



conflict in May.

Meanwhile, Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has admitted that India attacked its Nur Khan airbase in the early hours of May 10, in possibly a first-time admission eight months after the conflict.

Dar also said Islamabad did not request mediation between Pakistan and India during the May conflict but claimed that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan expressed a desire to speak with New Delhi.

“As many as 79 of 80 drones sent by India were intercepted within 36 hours. India then made the mistake of

attacking the Nur Khan airbase in the early hours of May 10, prompting Pakistan’s retaliatory operation,” Dar, who is also the foreign minister, said while outlining Pakistan’s diplomatic engagements in 2025.

Dar said that on May 10, US Secretary of State Rubio called him at around 8.17 am, in which he conveyed that India was ready for a ceasefire and asked whether Pakistan would agree. “I said we never wanted to go to war,” Dar added.

He further said Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal later contacted him seeking permission to speak with India and “subsequently confirmed that a ceasefire had been agreed.”

Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh’s first female prime minister and one of its most formidable political figures, died on Tuesday, December 30, 2025, after days of battling an illness. She was 80. Her party announced the tragic news of demise on its social media page, saying she passed away at around 6 am this morning, right after the Fajr prayers.

“We pray for the forgiveness of her soul and request everyone to offer prayers for her departed soul,” the BNP said in a post on its Facebook page.

Khaleda Zia, born in Jalpaiguri, then part of the undivided Dinajpur district of British India, went on to make history in 1991 when she became Bangladesh’s first woman prime minister. The daughter of Iskandar and Taiyaba Majumder, she led the country after the restoration of parliamentary democracy and served a second term from 2001 to 2006.

She is survived by her elder son, Tarique Rahman, along with his wife Zubaida Rahman and their daughter Zaima Rahman. Tarique returned to Bangladesh on December 25 after spending 17 years in exile and is currently the BNP’s acting chairman. He is also a frontrunner in upcoming Bangladesh elections. Her younger son, Arafat Rahman Koko, passed away



several years ago in Malaysia.

However, her political journey began not by choice but by tragedy. She entered public life after the assassination of her husband, Ziaur Rahman, who served as Bangladesh’s president from 1977 to 1981 and founded the BNP in 1978. Rahman was killed in a military coup in 1981.

Khaleda Zia dies at 80: Widowed by a coup, she went on to rule Bangladesh twice

In the years that followed, Zia emerged as a key figure in the movement against military rule. She played a central role in mobilising opposition to the regime of military dictator Hussain Muhammad Ershad, who was finally ousted in 1990.

Her principal political rival through much of her career was Sheikh Hasina, leader of the Awami League. The two women dominated Bangladesh’s politics for decades, with their rivalry shaping elections, governments, and street politics alike.

Zia had been unwell for years, with her health steadily deteriorating. She frequently travelled abroad for medical treatment and, most recently, had returned to Dhaka in May this year after undergoing care in the United Kingdom.

According to her doctors cited by Reuters news agency, Zia had been battling multiple health issues, including advanced cirrhosis of the liver, arthritis, diabetes, and chest and heart-related problems.

Her failing health had also shaped the final phase of her political life. In 2018,

she was jailed following a corruption conviction, a case she said was politically motivated. Two years later, in 2020, the Awami League government led by her long-time rival Sheikh Hasina suspended her prison sentence on medical grounds, placing her under house arrest and barring her from travelling abroad or taking part in politics.

It was only after Hasina’s ouster from power that those restrictions eased. In early January this year, Bangladesh’s interim government allowed Zia to travel overseas for treatment, after her earlier requests had reportedly been rejected at least 18 times by the Awami league.

Even after stepping back from active politics due to illness, Zia remained entangled in legal battles. She consistently described the corruption cases against her as politically driven.

In January 2025, the Supreme Court acquitted her in the last remaining corruption case. The verdict would have cleared the way for her to contest the general election scheduled for February.

Sikh History This Week

DECEMBER 26 TO JANUARY 1

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.

29th December



1705 Battle of Muktsar. The Battle of Khidrane Dee Dhab took place in 1705, following the siege of Anandpur. In 1704, Anandpur was under an extended siege by the allied forces of the Mughals and the hill chiefs. The forty deserters from Anandpur lived in the Majha region in Punjab. A woman, Bhag Kaur (also known as Mai Bhago) who also lived in the village, convinced the deserters to fight with her at Khidrane Dee Dhab, where they fought and died under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, who blessed them for their service and the place, later, was renamed as Muktsar, literally meaning The Pool of Liberation.

1923 Sadha Singh of Pandoori Nijjaran dies during the trail.

30th December



1734 Mata Sahib Kaur sent a Hukamnama for Bhai Mann Singh Ji.

1922 Second meeting of Babbars at Jassowal, Dec. 20-31, to decide the reformation of the Jholichuks.

31st December



1612 Guru Hargobind left Amritsar for Delhi where he was taken into and sent to Gwalior.

1925 Haji Mohamad Maskeen offered a "Choor" for Sri Darbar Sahib.

1929 Congress Convention at Amritsar ignored by the Sikhs.

1958 Gurudwara Amendment Bill passed.

1st January

1806 Maharaja Ranjit Singh, under the advise of Kapurthala's Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, signed a friendship treaty with the British. The signatories to this treaty were Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Fateh Singh, and Lord Lake. Under the treaty Maharaja Ranjit Singh accepted not to help Holkar and British agreed to respect territories of Lahore Darbar. Jaswant Rao Holkar left Amritsar disappointed.

1806 The Marathas and the Sikhs were the only people who offered stiff resistance to the British and the Afghans. While the Maharaja Ranjeet Singh was



consolidating his powers, many political events were taking place around him. On the one hand he had to mediate a quarrel between the chiefs of Patiala and Nabha and on the other hand he had to save the face of Jawant Rao Holkar, the Maratha (Marhatta) chief, who had set his sights on whole India. The British had clashed with the Marathas and had inflicted heavy defeats upon them. They had first taken over Delhi and Agra, defeated Scindia (a Marhatta chief), and driven out the remaining Marhatta chief Jaswant Rao Holkar. Holkar and his Rohilla ally, Amir Khan, after having failed to obtain any support from the Malwa chiefs, moved to Amritsar. They were being followed by the British commandar, Lord Lake. He had been persuing Holkar and encamped himself on the banks of Beas. While Holkar appealed to Maharaja Ranjeet Singh for help in driving the British back, the British commander made it known to the Maharaja that doing so would extend the Anglo-Marathan hostilities to his domain (Punjab). It created a big problem for the Maharaja. The Sikh Maharaja could not afford to make his state the theatre of war between the Marhattas and the British. That is why he offered to mediate in this treaty. The Sikh signatories guaranteed that the Holkar's army would leave and they will have nothing to do with them. They allowed Holkar to take whatever possessions he had and recross the Sutlej without being harrassed. This was a smart political move on the part of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. It saved his kingdom from unnecessary bloodshed. It also saved the British face. They really did not want to fight the Sikh ruler.

Check obesity: Have heavy breakfast, light dinner, quit smoking

You can prevent obesity and related health problems like diabetes, hypertension and hormonal disorders by changing a few lifestyle habits. Stop smoking, eat right at the right time, have a balanced diet and meditate, suggest experts.

Here's a detailed list of the lifestyle changes to make to keep obesity away:

- **Eat healthy:** A balanced diet should be a healthy mix of carbohydrates, proteins and fats. It should include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, low fat dairy and nuts to take care of minerals, vitamins, antioxidants, fibre and probiotics.
- **Eat right:** Have a healthy breakfast. This is the time when your muscles are absolutely depleted and hungry after a 10-hour fast since dinner. Eating well in the morning helps you revitalise your muscles and prevents excess calorie intake in the second half of the day. A light breakfast like cereals, milk with honey and nuts would suffice. Lunch: Pick up a piece of fruit, handful of soya nut or an oatmeal bar and see the difference for yourself.
- **Pre-workout:** To sustain throughout the workout and to get the maximum out of it, it is mandatory to fuel your system with the right kind of food like fruits, nuts and eggs.
- **Post-workout:** Feed your hungry muscles after 30-45 minutes of your workout with fruits and proteins.
- **At night:** Most people skip their meals due to their busy schedules and tend to gorge during dinner which is the main culprit of added on calories and feeling of sluggishness throughout the day. The trick is to keep the dinner light with soups, salads, lean meat and yoghurt.
- **During parties:** It is wise to opt for salads, veggies, barbecued or roasted snacks rather than fried snacks and creamy dishes.
- **Drink water:** Drinking water at regular intervals helps in better digestion and also keeps the body hydrated. This leads to better metabolism and subsequent weight loss.
- **Get active:** Physical inactivity raises the risk of



obesity. Exercise renders cells more sensitive to insulin. A mere brisk walk makes the difference. An ideal workout designed by a health professional is a suitable mix of resistance and aerobic training for optimum muscle building along with weight loss.

- **Eliminate stress:** Lower metabolic rate leads to weight accumulation and thereby tendency towards obesity. Physical activity, socialising, meditation, enjoying music, nature and time with children and pets – all keep stress at bay.
- **Sleep well:** It's a well-known fact that when asleep the human body produces growth hormones that increase metabolism and repair tissue. Sleep deprivation not only hampers this bodily activity but also makes the body lethargic and unable to focus on any other physical or mental activity planned during the day.

FOOD CORNER

Nawabi Kesar Koftas

Ingredients

1 tbsp milk, 1/4 cup grated low fat mawa (khoya), 1/2 cup grated paneer (cottage cheese), 1/2 cup boiled, peeled and grated potatoes, 1 tbsp roughly chopped raisins (kismis), 1 tbsp cornflour, 1 tbsp plain flour (maida), 1 tsp finely chopped green chillies, salt to taste, 3/4 cup sliced onions, 1 tbsp broken cashewnuts (kaju), 1 tbsp chopped almonds (badam), 2 tsp coriander (dhania) seeds, 2 tsp cumin seeds (jeera), 1 tbsp poppy seeds (khus-khus), 2 tsp aniseeds (vilayati saunf), 2 tbsp freshly grated coconut, 2 tsp chopped ginger (adrak), 1 tsp chopped green chillies, 4 whole dry kashmiri red chillies, broken into pieces, 2 cardamoms, 2 cloves (laung / lavang), a small stick of cinnamon (dalchini), 6 curry leaves (kadi patta), salt to taste, 1 tbsp oil, 4 tbsp tomato puree, 1/2 tsp dried fenugreek leaves (kasuri methi) salt to taste, 1/4 cup fresh cream,

Method

- Combine the saffron and milk in a small bowl and mix well. Combine all the ingredients along with the saffron-milk mixture in a deep bowl and mix well. Divide the mixture into 8 equal portions and shape each portion into a ball.
- Heat the oil in a deep non-stick kadhai and deep-fry, a few koftas at a time, on a medium flame till they turn golden brown in colour from all sides.
- Drain on an absorbent paper and keep aside.
- Heat the oil in a deep non-stick pan, add the prepared paste and sauté on a medium flame for 5 minutes. Add the tomato purée, mix well and cook on a medium flame for 2 to 3 minutes, while stirring continuously. Add ½ cup of water, dried fenugreek leaves and salt, mix well and cook on a medium flame for 3 minutes, while stirring occasionally. Lower the flame, add the fresh cream, mix well and cook on a medium flame for 1 minute, while stirring occasionally.



Habits that build stronger bonds in a relationship, as per psychology

These days, with busy work schedules and constant distractions, relationships often don't get the attention they deserve. It's not always the grand gestures that keep love strong, but the small, everyday habits that partners build together.

These simple actions create comfort, trust, and a sense of stability—making the bond feel safe and lasting over time.

Tell your partner why they matter

Everyone wants to feel appreciated. Taking time to tell your partner why you value them—for their care, patience, or just being there—makes a big difference.

It shows that you choose them every day, not just sometimes. Saying this often gives your partner confidence and makes them feel loved. Over time, it helps build trust and closeness.



Stay calm in arguments

Fights happen in every relationship, but how you handle them matters most. Staying calm, avoiding harsh words, and listening carefully can stop small problems from getting worse. Handling emotions

well helps both partners feel understood. It also makes it easier to solve problems together without hurting each other.

Notice the good things

It's easy to notice mistakes, but looking for the good keeps a relationship positive. Saying thank you, giving a compliment, or noticing small efforts shows respect and care. This encourages partners to continue supporting each other. Over time, it makes the relationship more hopeful and happy.

Talk about boundaries

Boundaries are about respect, not distance. Talking openly about personal space, comfort, and limits prevents misunderstandings. Knowing each other's boundaries makes living together easier. It also helps both partners feel respected while keeping their independence.

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Driverless robotaxis are going global, but the self-driving dream still hits bumps

Humans have been obsessed with self-driving cars since time immemorial. In films, the fascination dates to 1927. *Metropolis*, a silent feature deemed both silly and the first of its kind science fiction epic, imagined a futuristic city where sleek, automated vehicles traversed along elevated highways in a highly coordinated fashion. As they say, if you can imagine it then you can make it and so, humankind too, has been on a mission to make them ever since. It was not easy. It took a lot of time. But finally, we seem to be getting there.

Earlier in the year, when Alphabet and Google CEO Sundar Pichai took the stage of I/O, to give the developer community a sneak-peek into all the AI his company was preparing to unleash on the world, he left the keynote with one very personal anecdote. He told everybody about the time when his parents were visiting him in San Francisco. The first thing they wanted to do was to ride in a Waymo. Pichai had obviously used Waymo taxis before but watching his father, who is in his 80s, being totally amazed by self-driving technology made him see the progress in a whole new light, he admitted.

If you can read between the lines, this was all the assurance that anybody needed, that the “future” has officially moved from the laboratory to the curb. Not just in San Francisco, but even if you live in Beijing, Phoenix, or Abu Dhabi, the sight of a steering wheel spinning by itself is no longer a reason to be spooked and call the cops: it is just how people get to brunch today.

According to the RoboTaxi Global Market Report 2025, the global robotaxi market is growing exponentially, up from \$1.19 billion in 2024 to a projected \$2 billion-plus this year. The increasing penetration of autonomous technology and need for sustainable and eco-friendly travel is a big growth driver. With improvements, scale and affordability pitching in eventually, the market size is expected to grow further, reaching tens or even hundreds of billions of dollars by 2030. Waymo clocked over 20 million miles and 14 million paid rides in 2025 following concerted expansion across Phoenix, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.



ISRO rocket LVM-3 places 6000-kg US satellite – its heaviest – into orbit

In a historic Christmas eve mission, ISRO's heaviest rocket, LVM3-M6, successfully placed a heavy US communication satellite into orbit on Wednesday, a feat described by the space agency chief as a season's gift to the country. The 6,100 kg BlueBird Block-2 satellite is part of a constellation of global Low Earth Orbit (LEO) mission to provide direct-to-mobile connectivity through satellite that would enable 4G and 5G voice and video calls, texts, streaming and data for everyone, everywhere at all times. It was the heaviest satellite to be launched from Indian soil, ISRO said.

ISRO said the LVM3-M6, nicknamed 'Bahubali' for its heavy-lift capability, injected the satellite into its intended orbit in a textbook launch.

LVM3-M6 carried the communication satellite as part of a commercial deal between NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) and US-based AST SpaceMobile (AST and Science, LLC).

NewSpace India is the commercial arm of the ISRO.

On Wednesday, the 43.5 metre tall rocket soared majestically at 8.55 am from the second launch pad here at the end of a 24 hour countdown.

After a flight journey of about 15 minutes, the spacecraft got separated from the launch vehicle and it was successfully placed into the orbit, bringing all-round cheers in the Mission Control Centre here.

On the successful launch, ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said, "I am extremely happy to say that the LVM3M6 Bahubali rocket has successfully placed the Bluebird Block-2 satellite into the intended orbit. Let me congratulate NewSpace India and AST Space Mobile on the outstanding achievement."

The satellite was placed in a 518 km circular orbit against the planned 520 km altitude, he said, describing it as a "textbook launch".

The LVM3 rocket has demonstrated its 100 per cent success rate, he added.

Weighing 6,100 kg, the communication satellite is be the heaviest payload to be placed into the LEO in LVM3 launch



history from Indian soil, the space agency said.

The previous heaviest was the LVM3-M5 Communication Satellite 03, weighing about 4,400 kg, which was successfully launched by ISRO on November 2 in the Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

According to Narayanan, this is the first time ISRO has launched two LVM3 rockets within just 52 days, following the earlier successful mission on November 2.

Addressing his team from the Mission Control Centre post the launch, he thanked them for one of the finest performances of any rocket and said this mission brings India's total to 434 satellites launched for 34 countries.

Apple to skip iPhone 18 in 2026, here is what it may launch instead

In September every year, all eyes in the tech world are fixated on Apple for the launch of the latest iPhones. 2025 was no different as the Cupertino giant not only launched the iPhone 17 series, but also announced the addition of the iPhone Air. Now, as per reports, Apple is planning to add another twist for the iPhone release next year, by reportedly removing the vanilla iPhone 18 from the expected launch in fall 2026.

Now, this may raise eyebrows, particularly for Apple fans, who are always looking to upgrade to the latest iPhone. But the Cupertino giant does seem to have a plan in place. Here is what Apple could launch next year after skipping the iPhone 18. While Apple is reportedly planning to skip the iPhone 18 for 2026, the company still has a big launch planned for the fall event. As per reports, the Cupertino giant is expected to launch the iPhone 18 Pro, iPhone 18 Pro Max, and the first-ever iPhone fold in September 2026.

The iPhone 18 Pro models will come with some notable upgrades compared to the iPhone 17 series. Apple is rumoured to ditch the Dynamic Islands in favour of a punch-hole selfie camera and under-display sensors for Face ID, for a more seamless viewing experience.

On the back, Apple is expected to go more a more unified single-tone design on the rear to replace the two-tone look on the iPhone 17 Pro models.

Under the hood, you can expect the yet-to-be-announced A20 Pro chipset to power the iPhone 18 Pro models, which may bring notable performance upgrades. The two devices are also expected to come with larger batteries, which may make them



heavier compared to their predecessors.

On the camera front, the iPhone 18 Pro models are expected to get variable apertures for the main camera, allowing users to manually adjust the depth of field.

Apple is reportedly set to finally enter the foldable smartphone market with the iPhone fold. As per rumours, the device will have a wide form factor, similar to the original Pixel fold. The foldable iPhone is said to come with a 5.25-inch cover display and a 7.6-inch inner display. Both screens are said to be AMOLED panels.

The iPhone fold will likely come with a total of four cameras, including two selfie shooters for each display. The device is expected to be powered by the A20 Pro chipset, the same as the iPhone 18 Pro models.

Lockheed Martin pitches C-130Js as 'best' choice for IAF's tactical airlift requirement, plans production hub in India

MARIETTA(TIP)

As India prepares to procure up to 80 military transport planes, US aerospace major Lockheed Martin has pitched its C-130J Super Hercules as the best choice and said the aircraft will provide it a "stronger" heft for tactical airlift among the Quad nations.

If Lockheed Martin gets the opportunity, then it will set up a mega hub in India to produce the "iconic" aircraft, and it will be the first such global facility outside of the US, top officials of the company told PTI.

To date, Lockheed Martin has delivered more than 560 aircraft from the C-130J Super Hercules family, which have accumulated more than three million flight hours. The leading tactical airlift has been serving 28 operators in 23 nations.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) currently operates 12 C-130Js.

Alongside the standard transport variant, Lockheed Martin offers multiple specialised configurations of the C-130J which enable the aircraft to perform intelligence, electronic warfare, and special forces support, search and rescue and command roles. Besides India, the three other Quad member nations — the US, Australia and Japan — have been operating C-130Js.

"The C-130J Super Hercules reflects proven performance and versatility across 20 unique mission sets. It holds 54 world records. Proven in every challenging operational environment, the C-130J's structural durability is the standard for reliability, safety, and excellence," said Patricia Trish Pagan, Vice President, Air Mobility and Maritime Missions at Lockheed Martin.

Pagan said Lockheed Martin is the preferred partner globally because the C-130Js are "built to deliver and built to last", adding the aircraft will be the "best option for India".

In 2022, the IAF issued a Request for Information (RFI) to purchase medium transport aircraft (MTA) to replace its ageing fleet of Soviet-era AN-32 and IL-76 planes.

The IAF plans to procure around 80 military transport aircraft, and the multi-billion-dollar procurement is likely to be cleared by the Defence Acquisition Council in the next few weeks. Brazilian plane maker Embraer's KC-390 Millennium aircraft and Airbus Defence and Space's A-400M plane are also in the race for the MTA programme.

The US defence major has partnered with Tata Advanced Systems to bid for the C-130J Super Hercules programme.

Currently, Lockheed Martin is in the process of incorporating new innovations into the C-130Js, including the Distributed Aperture System (DAS) that is a key component



onboard the F-35 Lightning combat jets.

The DAS is a spherical sensor suite with six infrared cameras providing rigorous situational awareness, missile warning and night vision for pilots.

"We have a proven global track record, deep Indian collaboration experience, possess a robust supply-chain to include an extensive network of Indian suppliers, and the ability to set up a capability to benefit India, the globe and regional security," Pagan said.

Roderick McLean, Vice President, Sustainment Operations at Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, said the MTA programme can impart a "new strategic value" to the India-US partnership as it will allow both sides to strengthen defence industrial base.

McLean also asserted that there is no tactical airlift plane in history that matches the relevance and versatility of the C-130Js, as it has benefited from over 70 years of innovation and new features like artificial intelligence are being incorporated.

"We are doing a lot on connectivity to be able to connect systems from seabed up to space. We are looking at all of the connectivity systems that we have and how do we bring those systems into the C-130Js and how do we make them available to meet the needs of the IAF and others around the world," he said. "The value the C-130Js provide is not only what it does today, but it is what it will be able to do in the future through continuous innovation and also allow the IAF to partner with Lockheed Martin to leverage the strength of the company," he added.

Adani plans Rs 1.8 lakh-crore defence spend to boost indigenous military capabilities

Adani Group plans to invest Rs 1.8 lakh crore next year in defence manufacturing, with a focus on strengthening capabilities in unmanned and autonomous systems as well as advanced guided weapons as it looks to play a stealth anchor role in India's future warfare capabilities, sources said.

Adani Defence & Aerospace in 2025 transitioned from extended planning cycles to rapid deployment with some of its military hardware being used in Operation Sindoor.

Next year, it will invest in unmanned and autonomous systems, advanced guided weapons, sensors and electronics, AI-enabled multi-domain operations, and scaled-up maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) and training infrastructure, company sources said.

Autonomous systems across air, sea and land domains are unmanned platforms that use sensors, software and secure networks to operate with minimal human intervention, expanding military reach while reducing risk to personnel.

In the air, they include UAVs that conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, communications relay and precision-support missions with long endurance. At sea, unmanned surface and underwater vehicles perform tasks such as maritime surveillance, anti-submarine warfare and mine countermeasures over wide areas. On land, unmanned ground vehicles support logistics, reconnaissance, explosive ordnance disposal and perimeter security.

U.S. holds top spot as Taiwan's largest bank debtor for 41st straight quarter

TAIPEI (TIP)

The United States remains the top debtor of Taiwan banks for the 41st straight quarter. This means the U.S. owes more money to Taiwanese banks than any other country. According to a report by Focus Taiwan, this trend has continued for more than ten years without any change at the top spot.

Citing data released by the central bank, the report shows that the money Taiwanese banks have tied up in the U.S. grew by USD 4.03 billion. This is an increase of 2.07 per cent from the end of June. By the end of September, the total amount reached USD 198.896 billion. The report noted that Hsieh Jen-chun, who is the deputy head of the central bank's Department of Financial Inspection,



said the growth happened because banks put more money into U.S. securities and lending.

On the other hand, Luxembourg is now

the second-largest debtor to Taiwan's banks. It took the second spot away from China. Exposure to Luxembourg rose by USD 2.72 billion to reach USD 50.77 billion at the end of September. Hsieh said the increase happened because Taiwanese banks put more funds into trust assets in that European country. This is the third quarter in a row that the money kept in Luxembourg has grown.

China fell to the third spot on the list. Even though the money tied up in China rose by about USD 1.07 billion to reach USD 49.56 billion, it is now less than Luxembourg. Hsieh noted that exposure to China stays between USD 40 billion and USD 50 billion. He said that this is due to "concerns about that country's economic outlook." He also mentioned that there is "caution over Taiwan's

Financial Supervisory Commission restrictions on lending and investments in China."

Total international claims by Taiwanese banks also went up. These claims include things like loans, investments, and deposits. They rose by 3.48 per cent from the previous quarter to reach USD 670.8 billion. This growth comes from more lending to the global nonbank private sector.

Australia is the fourth-largest debtor with USD 42.14 billion. Other major nations on the list are Japan, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, Singapore, France, and Vietnam. The top 10 debtor nations together account for USD 496.0 billion. This makes up about 73.95 per cent of all the international money held by Taiwan's banks.

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - DEC 29 TO JAN 04, 2025

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



ARIES

Ganesha says that the people of Aries will get good news related to career business, exam competition, etc. by the end of this week. If you have been looking for a job for a long time, then your wish can be fulfilled this week. At the beginning of the week, there will be an opportunity to participate in religious and social programs. More time for women will be spent in worship etc. In the second half of the week, there will be a need to avoid fatigue, laziness, and seasonal diseases. During this time, if you do not take advantage of the opportunity in life, then you will have to wait for it for a long time. Seniors will appreciate your work in the field and juniors will give full support. Businessmen will also get the expected profit opportunities. People associated with politics can get a big position, praise, and respect. There will be intensity in love relations and mutual trust will increase. Sweetness will remain in married life.



TAURUS

Ganesha says that at the beginning of the week for the people of the Taurus zodiac, enthusiasm and enthusiasm will remain within you regarding your work and business, etc. During this time, you will be able to achieve desired success in your field of work. During this, you will get an opportunity to participate in any festival, etc. A meeting with a dear person is also possible, but in the second half of the week, some problems related to life may trouble you. During this time, domestic concerns will become a major cause of your problems. Transfer of employed people to an unwanted place can cause stress. During this, you will need to keep restraint in your speech and behavior. During this, be especially careful of secret enemies. Married life will remain happy with sour-sweet disputes.



GEMINI

Ganesha says that at the beginning of the week for the people of Gemini, you should avoid any kind of negligence in your workplace. At the same time be careful with your opponents, as they may try to disrupt your plans. In the middle of the week, some domestic problem can cause you stress, in solving which an influential person can play a big role. During

this, avoid unnecessary controversy and do not give importance to small things. In the second half of the week, the mind will be happy if the work goes on normally. During this, there will be the communication of new enthusiasm in the business class. There will be unexpected profit in business. The money trapped in the market may suddenly come out. Love relations will be normal. There will be opportunities to spend a pleasant time with the love partner.



CANCER

Ganesha says that the people of the Cancer zodiac should rely on their strength and capability instead of relying on others this week. At the beginning of the week, the mind will be a little upset due to not getting the help of colleagues or dear ones on time. However, by the middle of the week, the solution to your problems will slowly emerge. In such a situation, during this time, the employed class should try to maintain good relations with their seniors and juniors, etc. The second half of the week will prove to be auspicious as compared to the first half. During this, your enthusiasm and valor will increase and you will get opportunities to participate in religious-social programs. Love relations will be strong and mutual trust will increase. Your family members may seal your love for marriage. Sweetness will remain in married life.



LEO

Ganesha says that this week has brought auspiciousness and good fortune for the Leo zodiac sign, but don't try to lose consciousness by getting excited, otherwise your work may get spoiled. Take care of decorum even while joking with close friends and dear ones and do not insult anyone even by mistake, otherwise, there may be a rift in the relationship made. At the beginning of the week, the percentage of success will be increased if any work is done with understanding. During this, you will have a sigh of relief due to the solution to long-standing problems. You will get the desired profit in business. People engaged in the preparation for examination competitions will get good news. If you were thinking of proposing to someone, then it may be possible for you to become your thing.



VIRGO

Ganesha says that the people of Virgo will need to manage their time and energy this week. At the beginning of the week, you may have an extra work burden. Along with this, domestic problems can also trouble

you. In such a situation, while solving any confusion or taking any major decision, do not ignore the opinion of your well-wishers, otherwise, your problems may increase instead of solving them. While facing any challenge, keep in mind that when there are no good days then bad days will also not last long. In the second half of the week, the hindrances in your life will happen gradually. During this, you will get the full support and cooperation of close friends and family members. Even in business, although slow, progress will be seen. There is a need to increase the ping in a love affair, otherwise, there is a possibility of social stigma. In difficult times, your life partner will stand by your side like a shadow. Take full care of your health.



LIBRA

Ganesha says that the people of the Libra zodiac will get full support of good luck at the beginning of the week. During this, enthusiasm and confidence will remain within you, with the help of which you will be able to complete your work properly and on time. People associated with politics can get a big position or a big responsibility this week. Respect will increase in society. In the middle of the week, some domestic problems may become a major cause of your concern, but you will eventually be able to find solutions to them at your discretion. In terms of business, this week will prove to be favorable for you. There are chances of great achievement in the field. There are full chances of transfer or promotion at the desired place. By the end of the week, there will be an atmosphere of happiness in the house if there is any good news from the child's side. Love relations will be intense. Traveling to a religious place is possible with the spouse. Health will be normal.



SCORPIO

Ganesha says that the people of the Scorpio zodiac will have a lot of need to control their speech and behavior this week. Bear in mind that you are the only one who can make things or break them. In such a situation, avoid getting angry and take any decision very carefully. Avoid disclosing your plans before implementing them in the workplace, otherwise, your opponents may create obstacles in them. If you do business in partnership or are thinking of doing it, then move forward by clarifying the situation regarding all things related to money and work. If there is a way to settle the matters related to the court-court, then do not miss doing so, otherwise, you may have to wait for a long time to resolve the dispute. Take special care of your health and belongings while traveling in the second half of the week. To

strengthen the love relationship, do not ignore the feelings and needs of your love partner. Your spouse will provide you with strength in difficult times.



SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says that this week has brought a lot of auspiciousness and good luck for the people of Sagittarius. This week, the mind will be happy if the planned work is completed on time. Good news will be received in the job and business. There are chances of profit from money investments made in the past. These days, the time is going favorable from the point of view of new investment, but do not forget to take the advice of your well-wishers before investing money in any scheme. Amid all these successes, do not show arrogance even by mistake in conversation or behavior with others. Give them due respect. People associated with politics can get a big position or responsibility. Students engaged in examination competitions will get good news. If you were thinking of proposing your love in front of someone, doing so will make your point. At the same time, there will be intensity in the love affair going on in the East. Married life will remain happy.



CAPRICORN

Ganesha says that this week the natives of Capricorn will have to take full care not to do any work in haste. In such a situation, this week, avoid making any decision related to your career or business in haste or by getting carried away by emotions, otherwise, your work may also get spoiled. At the beginning of the week, there will be activism in religious-social works. There are chances of transfer etc. of the employed class. If things are not in your favor then you should avoid losing your temper in any case, otherwise, you will lose whatever achievement you have. Walk in harmony with seniors and juniors in the workplace. There is a need to avoid unnecessary debate. Businessmen should avoid excessively trusting or depending on others while expanding their business. Take steps in a love affair by whispering and avoiding demonstrating it. Avoid ignoring the feelings of your spouse and take time out for them.



AQUARIUS

Ganesha says that at the beginning of the week when additional sources of income will be created for the people of Aquarius, more money can be spent on the purchase of things related to material comforts. At the beginning of the week itself, long or short-distance

CONTD ON PAGE 61

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : DEC 29, 2025 TO JAN 4, 2026 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

DECEMBER 29

Ganesha says your efficiency and persistence enable you to exceed expectations and maintain an advantage over others, but you must control your occasional tendency to behave stubbornly and jealously. Nowadays, your ability to manage important duties may determine your ability to progress professionally. Be extremely careful while lending money, and take extra care of your jewelry and other valuables. A tremendous asset to you would be your life partner. This person can add comfort and joy to your daily existence.

DECEMBER 30

Ganesha says people respect you for your ability to make quick decisions, but you need to rein in your sometimes moody and reckless behavior. Your commitment to work can make your boss think highly of you. At the end of the year, some people can also go on a foreign trip. Throughout the year, your partner can cooperate and show his love and affection. Although you may not have received the expected financial reward for your efforts, seniority and respect are yours.

DECEMBER 31

Ganesha says even if you have a genuine heart for your friends, you need to learn to curb your sometimes moody, overbearing, and jealous behavior. Today, you can enjoy making new friends and exploring new places. May you have the energy and creativity to tackle any issue with conviction and dedication. To strengthen your relationship, engage in activities that you both find enjoyable. Your family can support you and show you love and affection. Your main inspiration can come from your beloved.

JANUARY 1

Ganesha says you work hard, are dedicated, and have excellent control over your work. Try to avoid getting into any new joint venture or business partnership today. Although they can be very attractive, partnerships are not advised for the first six months. A new romance can emerge from the social gathering. You may have some tension and anxiety regarding the health of your parents. You should exercise utmost care before signing any financial agreement or any new contract.

JANUARY 2

Ganesha says you are incredibly talented, and at such a young age, you manage to juggle a lot of responsibilities. You are courageous as well as fearless. A completely new phase of your career may begin for you, which will not be particularly creative but is expected to give good financial returns. In spite of your inconsistent behavior at times, your spouse can be very friendly and show you all their love and affection. Attending social events and traveling can lead to long-lasting relationships.

JANUARY 3

Ganesha says that although you have a pleasant personality, you need to curb your sometimes aggressive, irritable, and spendthrift behavior. Today, you can see new efforts and plans being fruitful for your benefit. You may start a new partnership and earn money from various sources. Support from colleagues and co-workers can boost both your confidence and morale. Your spouse can be an especially important source of emotional support.



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

JANUARY 4

Ganesha says you have a deep appreciation for art and literature; You need to curb your reckless, jealous, and stubborn behavior sometimes. The extra work that you do in your free time can be the main reason for the increase in your income. In the last quarter of the year, some may hear wedding bells, while others may seek romance to keep them in the right state of mind and a good mood. Peace may prevail at home, and family members may extend their full support and cooperation.

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CONTD FROM PAGE 60

travel is possible in connection with the work. During this time, you will get the support of both your seniors and juniors, but in the second half of the week, you will have to avoid any kind of misunderstanding in your professional or personal relationship. During this, it would be better to leave your ego and make a decision according to the situation. While solving domestic problems, do not make the mistake of ignoring the feelings of your family members and the advice of your seniors. In the second half of the week, the mind may remain a little upset if the planned work is not completed on time. This week there can be distance or estrangement with the love partner. In removing this a female friend can play an important role. Traveling to a religious place is possible with the



spouse.
PISCES

Ganesha says that this week is auspicious for the people of Pisces. At the beginning of the week, you will be seen getting the full support of luck. During this time harmony will be established with

your higher officials and you will be able to get a transfer or promotion at your desired place. You will also have a major contribution to the important achievement of a particular project. This week will prove to be very auspicious for businessmen in terms of profit. With the help of well-wishers, there will be opportunities to

take the business forward. Good news will also be received in family matters. Auspicious programs will be planned at home. On getting any good news related to the child side, there will be an atmosphere of happiness in the house. This week is going to be normal in terms of soundness.

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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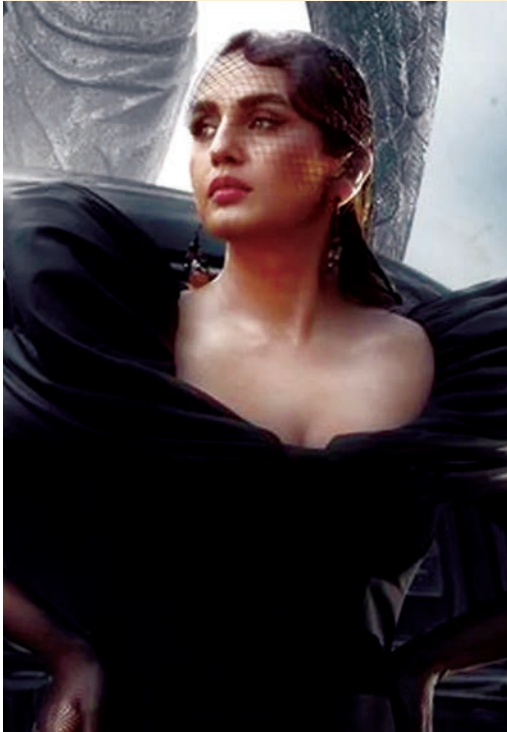
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World Famous Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla



Nastur Bejan Daruwalla



Huma Qureshi is Elizabeth in Yash's Toxic

The first look of Huma Qureshi as Elizabeth in the highly anticipated film *Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups* has been officially revealed. The film, led by Rocking Star Yash and directed by Geetu Mohandas, is slated for a wide theatrical release on March 19, 2026, coinciding with several regional festivals. Qureshi's introduction into the project has generated considerable interest across the industry.

Depicted in a graveyard setting with weathered tombstones and stone angels, Qureshi's character is presented with a striking visual style. Wearing an off-shoulder black ensemble beside a vintage car, her presence is described as both elegant and foreboding, signalling a complex role within the film's gothic landscape.

Huma Qureshi's career to date includes a diverse range of performances across films and series, with a reputation for tackling demanding and unconventional roles. Her involvement in *Toxic* is seen as a continuation of her career trajectory, pushing boundaries and defying genre expectations.

Director Geetu Mohandas spoke about the casting challenge, stating, "Casting for this role was perhaps the trickiest. The character demanded a performer with high octane caliber and an undeniable presence. From the moment Huma entered my frame, I witnessed that she possessed something rare. She carried an effortless sophistication and intensity that immediately brought the character of Elizabeth alive for me. Huma is an actor who questions, probes, and challenges the artistic interpretation of a role and that dialogue became an essential part of our creative journey. She has always been known as a powerhouse of talent, but this performance will mark as a turning point for the arrival of an undeniable, commanding new presence on celluloid."

Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera: Kartik-Ananya's film fails to impress

Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday's film *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera* was released in theaters on December 25, Christmas Day. Due to the holiday release, the film was expected to have a strong opening. However, Ranveer Singh's film *Dhurandhar* has created such a storm at the box office that new releases are struggling to find their footing. Even after three weeks of its release, *Dhurandhar*'s earnings remain consistently strong.

Ranveer Singh's *Dhurandhar* performed brilliantly on its 23rd day of release, earning approximately Rs 20.50 crore. With this earning, the film has entered the list of the top 10 highest-grossing films in India. The tremendous momentum of *Dhurandhar* has directly impacted Kartik and Ananya's film, which is not performing as expected.

According to box office tracker Sacnilk, *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera* Tu Meri did not show any significant growth on its third day. The film earned only Rs 5.25 crore on its third day. Despite being a Saturday, there was no increase in the film's collection, whereas weekend earnings usually see a surge. By Sunday morning at 10 AM, the film had earned only Rs 0.24 crore, which is a worrying figure.

Interestingly, the film earned approximately the same amount, Rs 5.25 crore, on its second day as well. This



means there was no difference in the collection between the second and third days. In comparison, *Dhurandhar* earned almost four times more during the same period, clearly indicating that Ranveer Singh's film is currently the audience's first choice. Due to *Dhurandhar*'s strong hold, other films are receiving fewer viewers.

According to reports, the budget of *Tu*

Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri is said to be around Rs 90 crore. Therefore, the coming days will be crucial for the film. If the film is to recover its costs, it will have to perform better at the box office in the next few days. However, amidst the tough competition from *Dhurandhar* and Hollywood films, the path ahead for Kartik and Ananya's film does not look easy.

Alia Bhatt's Alpha postponed to avoid clash with Salman's Battle of Galwan

Yash Raj Films has decided to delay the release of its upcoming spy thriller *Alpha*, which was previously scheduled for April 17, 2026. The decision was made to prevent a direct clash with *Battle of Galwan*, an anticipated war drama starring Salman Khan that is slated for release around the same time. The postponement was confirmed on Saturday morning by trade analyst Taran Adarsh on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter).

The announcement marks the second time that *Alpha* has been postponed. The film was initially intended for a Christmas 2025 release but was delayed due to the need for additional time in post-production. Extensive visual effects work reportedly required more time, prompting the first schedule change. Trade analyst Taran Adarsh said, "The industry insider has claimed that *Alpha*, starring Alia Bhatt and Sharvari, will not be released in April 2026 to avoid clashing with Salman Khan's war drama, *Battle of Galwan*."

Confirming the latest development, Taran Adarsh wrote, "'#BreakingNews... ALPHA AVOIDS



CLASH WITH BATTLE OF GALWAN - YRF TO DECIDE ON A NEW DATE... #AdityaChopra steps aside for #SalmanKhan, moving *Alpha* from its previously announced release date of April 17, 2026, to avoid a direct clash with *BattleOfGalwan*. #YRF had locked

April 17, 2026, for *Alpha*, but the makers will now announce a new release date after assessing the theatrical release calendar over the next couple of months," Taran Adarsh wrote on X (formerly Twitter) on Saturday morning.'

Anaconda: This Jack Black-Paul Rudd film isn't good, but it's making people laugh until they snort

If there's one actor who can commit to absolute chaos and still make it work, it's Jack Black. And in case you somehow missed it, yes — he's starring in the latest Anaconda movie. Paired with Paul Rudd, the casting alone feels like a joke.

Set up as a survival thriller with a comedic edge, Anaconda unfolds in the depths of the Amazon rainforest. The film follows four friends — Doug McCallister (Jack Black), Griff (Paul Rudd), Kenny (Steve Zahn), and Claire (Thandiwe Newton) — who venture into the wilderness hoping to rediscover their love for filmmaking. What begins as a creative escape quickly turns into a fight for survival when a deadly anaconda begins stalking them through the jungle.

While the premise sounds intense, audience reactions suggest the film leans far more into absurdity than suspense, and viewers seem to be very aware of that.

Early reviews paint Anaconda as a film that doesn't pretend to be prestige cinema. One viewer summed it up bluntly: "If you only see one movie in which a man sits on another man's back in order to pee on a third man, make it this one."

Others admit the film doesn't always work, but still manages to land unexpected laughs. "This movie was generally not good, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't cackle laughing when it turned out the pig strapped to Jack Black's back was also still alive." There's also a recurring theme in reactions: nostalgia. "It gives early 2000s comedy vibes which is fine. Critics will



hate it but I bet it finds a following."

Some viewers felt the film's chaotic energy works best with a crowd. "Way better movie to see in theatres, this would be awful on a plane/at home/etc."

Others appreciated the movie's honesty about what it is—and what it isn't. "Oh, it's really not a good movie at all BUT it knows what it is and is very honest about what it is sooooo....it's fine?"



Sydney Sweeney says she wants to do films that 'save people's lives', calls The Housemaid 'dream project'

Sydney Sweeney wants to make films that "save people's lives." In a recent interview with the BBC, the 28-year-old said she wants her movies to have an "impact." This year, she starred in The Housemaid and the biopic Christy. Both films address domestic violence, which she thinks is a "prevalent" topic.

The Euphoria star takes a "lot of care" when playing such roles. "Being able to have a film that's on a more commercial level talk about a very difficult topic is important," she told the outlet. Addressing her latest thriller, based on Freida McFadden's best-selling novel of the same name, Sweeney said she is a "huge fan of the book" and loves "all the characters" in it. Calling the film a "dream project," Sweeney admitted that she loves "complex, juicy, crazy, twisted stories." In The Housemaid, she stars opposite Amanda Seyfried and Brandon Sklenar. Their characters, Nina and Andrew Winchester, hire the Echo Valley star's character, Millie Calloway, as a live-in house help.

Seyfried likened herself to Sweeney, saying, "There's a similarity between us that is uncanny, and it's really fun to work with people [who] are doing life in a similar way, have similar ideals about the job and life."

Brigitte Bardot dies at 91: What is the French cinema icon's net worth?

Brigitte Bardot, the screen siren whose portrayals of free-spirited ingenues made her the pride of France before she turned her back on movie sardom in 1973 to become an animal rights activist, has died at 91, according to French media and The Associated Press.

She died at her residence in Saint Tropez, her foundation said in a statement. "The Brigitte Bardot Foundation announces with immense sadness the death of its founder and president, Madame Brigitte Bardot, a world-renowned actress and singer, who chose to abandon her prestigious career to dedicate her life and energy to animal welfare and her foundation," read the statement, as reported by NBC News.

Bardot rose to international fame with performances in And God Created Woman, The Truth, and Viva Maria!, the latter earning her a BAFTA nomination. She later stepped away from acting to become a leading animal

rights advocate, declaring in 1973, "I gave my youth and beauty to men; I give my wisdom and experience to animals," as reported by The Mirror US.

Throughout her lifetime, Bardot amassed a substantial fortune, estimated between \$65 million and \$100 million, through her celebrated film roles, modeling contracts, and valuable property investments, according to Express US. During the 1960s, Bardot ranked among the world's highest-paid actresses, earning \$350,000 for Viva Maria!, about \$3.66 million in today's dollars. Her 1966 memoir, Initiales B.B., reportedly generated an additional \$4 million.

Her primary residence, La Madrague, in Saint Tropez, purchased in 1958, has been valued at no less than \$23 million. She also owned Le Castelet, a medieval hillside property near Cannes that was listed for sale in 2020 at around \$6.5 million, as per The Mirror US.



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Margashirsha Purnima (December 4, 2025) is a highly auspicious Hindu full moon day dedicated to worshipping Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva, and Goddess Annapurna, known for its spiritual benefits, especially for charity (Daan) and holy dips, making it ideal for spiritual practices and fulfilling desires. Also called Dattatreya Jayanti, it's believed that actions performed on this day yield 32 times greater results, earning it the name "Battisi Purnima," and rituals like Satyanarayan Puja and river bathing bring immense merit and prosperity.

Margashirsha Purnima holds a great religious and spiritual significance in Hindu religion. Devotees offer prayers to Lord Vishnu and Moon God on this auspicious day. This Purnima will be observed as Margashirsha Purnima and this is going to be celebrated by all the Lord Vishnu devotees with immense happiness, and devotion. Satyanarayan fast will be observed on this auspicious day of Purnima.

The day holds great religious and spiritual significance among Hindus. The month of Margashirsha is dedicated to the worship of Lord Krishna. It is believed that Satyuga, the golden age, began during this month. The scriptures refer to this month as "Maasoonam Margashirshoham," emphasizing its auspiciousness. Devotees consider this day as an opportunity to visit holy places, take a holy bath in the Ganga river, and seek blessings from Lord Krishna by visiting various temples dedicated to him.

Margashirsha Purnima is considered a spiritually significant period for individuals aiming for spiritual awakening and enlightenment. The day of Purnima, when the moon is in its full form, is believed to have a positive impact on both the body and the mind. It is believed that the power of meditation and other spiritual practices becomes more effective during this time, allowing spiritual seekers to deepen their practice and establish a stronger connection with their inner selves.

On Margashirsha Purnima, there is a great significance associated with worshipping Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu is believed to have taken the Matsya Avatar, the fish incarnation, on this day. Therefore, it is highly auspicious to worship both Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu on this sacred day.

Rituals

MORNING RITUALS: Start the day by rising early in the morning, then taking a holy bath, and wearing clean clothes. Afterwards, worship Lord Vishnu by offering a lamp or diya in front of his statue. Recite the Vishnu Sahasranama and offer flowers, fruits, sweets, and incense sticks to the Lord.

FASTING: Observing a fast for the entire day is an important aspect of Margashirsha Purnima. During the fast, consume only fruits, milk, and water. This fast is believed to purify the mind and body, bringing calmness and peace to the devotee.

VRAT KATHA: In the evening, recite the Margashirsha Purnima Vrat Katha, which narrates the story of Matsya Avatar, Lord Vishnu's incarnation. Listen

Margashirsha Purnima: The sacred full moon of divine awakening



to the story with complete dedication and offer Lord Vishnu's aarti. Break the fast by consuming the prasada offered to Lord Vishnu.

WORSHIPPING LORD SHIVA: To worship Lord Shiva on this day, offer honey, milk, flowers, and incense sticks to the Shiva Lingam. Seek blessings from Lord Shiva and express your devotion through prayers and offerings.

Margashirsha Purnima Vrat

Hindus observe Margashirsha Purnima Vrat, a significant ritual, during the auspicious month of Margashirsha. In 2023, Margashirsha Purnima falls on December 26th. People believe that observing this Vrat with utmost devotion brings prosperity, happiness, and good health to the devotees.

To perform this Vrat, the devotee needs to wake up early in the morning, take a bath, and wear clean clothes. Then, they need to worship Lord Vishnu and light a diya or lamp in front of his idol. The devotee should offer flowers, fruits, sweets, and incense sticks to the deity and chant the Vishnu Sahasranama.

After the puja, the devotee should observe a fast throughout the day and only consume fruits, milk, and water. People also believe that this Vrat helps cleanse the body and mind. And, also assists the devotee in attaining peace and tranquility.

During the evening, the devotee should perform the Margashirsha Purnima Vrat Katha. It narrates the story of Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Matsya Avatar. The devotee should listen to the story with utmost devotion and perform the

aarti of Lord Vishnu.

Finally, the devotee should break the fast by consuming the prasada offered to Lord Vishnu during the puja. They should distribute the prasada to family members, friends, and the needy.

People believe that observing the Margashirsha Purnima Vrat brings immense benefits to the devotee. The benefits include the fulfillment of wishes, removal of obstacles, and spiritual upliftment. It is also believed to bestow the devotee with a long and healthy life.

Worshipping Shiva on Margashirsha Purnima

People consider Margashirsha Purnima, an auspicious day to worship Lord Shiva. This day holds great significance in the Hindu religion and is celebrated with great devotion and enthusiasm. People believe that on this day, Lord Shiva blesses his devotees and fulfills their wishes. Devotees worship Lord Shiva by performing various rituals and offering prayers. People also believe that worshipping Lord Shiva on Margashirsha Purnima brings peace, prosperity, and good fortune. People say that worshipping Lord Shiva on this day helps remove obstacles and negativity from one's life. Hence, bringing in positivity and good luck.

People attribute the significance of Margashirsha Purnima in astrology to the alignment of stars and planets on this day. People believe that the positive energy emanating from the celestial bodies makes the day auspicious and beneficial for worship. Devotees usually observe a fast on Margashirsha

Purnima. And, also perform puja in the evening, offering milk, honey, and Bilva leaves to Lord Shiva. They chant mantras and hymns dedicated to Lord Shiva, seeking his blessings and guidance.

Benefits of Worshipping Shiva

Margashirsha Purnima holds immense significance for worshipping Lord Shiva. Devotees of Shiva believe that this day brings immense blessings and good fortune to those who offer their prayers and devotion to Lord Shiva. One of the primary benefits of worshipping Shiva on Margashirsha Purnima is that it helps in overcoming obstacles and achieving success in life. This auspicious day is believed to be an ideal time for seeking the blessings of Lord Shiva to overcome the challenges and difficulties faced in life.

Additionally, worshipping Shiva on Margashirsha Purnima can help in attaining spiritual growth and enlightenment. Lord Shiva is the embodiment of the highest form of consciousness and devotion to him can lead to inner peace and enlightenment.

Furthermore, offering prayers to Lord Shiva on this day can help in purifying the mind and body, and in seeking forgiveness for any past wrongdoings. This can also lead to the development of positive qualities such as compassion, love, and forgiveness.

Margashirsha Purnima is also believed to be an auspicious time for starting new ventures and projects. Devotees of Shiva believe that seeking his blessings on this day can help in ensuring success and prosperity in new ventures.

Story of a 13-year-old First generation Indian American



Ava's accomplishments reflect leadership, compassion, advocacy, and maturity well beyond her years

At only thirteen years old, Ava Walia has already accomplished what many spend a lifetime striving toward. Born and raised in Nassau County, New York, Ava, who celebrated her thirteenth birthday this July, is the newly crowned National All American Miss Preteen for the National American Miss (NAM) Organization. She holds a historic distinction: the very first generation Indian American from Nassau County to ever earn this national title. Her journey to the crown is impressive, but her story extends far beyond the stage. Ava's accomplishments reflect leadership, compassion, advocacy, and maturity well beyond her years.

Ava's 2025 NAM journey began long before the national spotlight. Earlier that year, she was recognized as Miss Nassau County by National American Miss, a moment that inspired her to set an even higher goal, becoming the National All American Miss Preteen. Her passion for pageantry began not on a big stage, but in 2022 at a small, local community pageant exclusively for Indian girls. That first pageant, deeply rooted in her culture, became a memory she treasures. It was the beginning of a path she never imagined would lead to national recognition.

Fast forward to Thanksgiving week of 2025 in Orlando, Florida, her 2nd year

competing at NAM Nationals. Ava returned home not just with the national crown, but with a remarkable list of achievements in optional competitions. Out of more than one hundred contestants, she was awarded Brand Ambassador, recognizing her as a role model who reflects the values of NAM through leadership, confidence, and her strong social media presence. Ava loves using her platform to empower young girls, share her appearances, and demonstrate what it means to be a "NAM Girl."

One of her proudest accomplishments from the national pageant was earning a Top 5 placement in the prestigious Face of Ashley Rene's modeling campaign. This optional competition, featuring over 300 contestants ages 4 to 13, selects only a handful of girls who embody style, confidence, and the essence of Ashley Rene's brand. Ava was the only first generation Indian American contestant to make the Top 5 this year.

Her success didn't stop there. Ava won National Casual Wear, a style and modeling optional that highlights personality through fashion. She was also awarded Heart of Service for completing more than 6,000 volunteer hours in just three years, along with Golden Achievement in Service for her outstanding dedication to her platform. Among her many placements, Ava ranked Top 5 in Runway, Actress, Spokesmodel, Photogenic, Top Model, and Dream Model. She also earned 1st Runner Up for Miss Congeniality, a title voted on by fellow contestants and one that Ava holds especially close to her heart. But behind every sash, crown, and sparkling moment, there is a mission that guides her, and that mission began with love, heartbreak, and a promise.

A major reason Ava competes in pageants is to amplify her voice. Her platform, Save A Kidney, began as a personal story and transformed into a statewide movement. For Ava, advocacy did not start after she lost her grandfather; it began even before. She knew the power of the sash and chose to use it as a microphone for something

deeply meaningful. Ava comes from a proud Indian family and lives in a joint household of ten, a strong cultural tradition symbolizing unity and togetherness. It used to be eleven before she lost her grandfather, Harjeet, in 2022. He was her best friend, her hero, and the person who inspired her life's purpose.

In 2020, half of Ava's family uprooted their lives and temporarily moved from New York to Indiana so her grandfather could receive a lifesaving liver transplant. Although the transplant was successful, his kidneys failed the following year. He now needed a second transplant, this time for a different organ. But New York has one of the lowest numbers of registered organ donors in the country, and help didn't come in time. Ava's grandfather never received the kidney transplant he needed. That heartbreak became Ava's calling. She transformed her grief into action and created Save A Kidney, originally focusing on kidney disease awareness. But through years of advocacy and meeting other young activists, Ava realized that while kidneys were vital, all organs are important, and all deserve awareness. She expanded her mission to champion organ donation as a whole, speaking for families like hers who didn't get their miracle.

In 2024, Ava became the first Junior Ambassador for Donate Life New York State. That same year, she served at the organization's largest annual fundraising event, An Evening for Good, where she helped raise over \$100,000 alongside committee members. Her ability to inspire donors and rally communities is one of her strongest gifts. But Ava wasn't done. She wanted to create something lasting, something that would educate children, spark empathy, and keep her grandfather's story alive for generations. That dream came to life when she became a published child author. Her book, *Ava and Grandpa Harjeet's Journey*, recounts her grandfather's battle with kidney disease and her perspective as a granddaughter who refuses to let other families experience preventable loss. All profits

from the book benefit Donate Life New York State. Throughout the year, Ava hosts "Meet the Author" events at libraries, schools, Girl Scout troops, Boys & Girls Clubs, and more, sharing her message with the next generation.

Ava's advocacy quickly earned recognition beyond her local community. Political leaders throughout Nassau County, Long Island, and New York State took notice of her passion and activism. In 2024, she partnered with Assemblyman Jake Blumencranz, becoming the first child, and the first first generation Indian American child, to draft and propose legislation related to organ donation. Their bill, the New York Saves Lives Act, aimed to add the Donate Life registry option to all State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) admission applications. Although the bill did not pass, Ava's role in drafting and advocating for it made history. Her efforts continued into 2025, where Ava proudly supported the passage of the HEART Act, legislation that allows multi listing for New Yorkers waiting for organ transplants. Advocacy at this level is rare for adults, yet Ava, at just thirteen, has already contributed to meaningful change in state policy.

Her hard work has earned her more than ten major governmental recognitions, including county citations, town and state citations, senator proclamations, assembly citations, the Office of the Executive citation, and the President's Volunteer Service Gold Award. These acknowledgments have fueled her dream of one day becoming the first female President of the United States, a goal she embraces with confidence and excitement.

Yet despite her extraordinary accomplishments, at her core, Ava is still a normal preteen with a big heart and even bigger dreams. She is a straight A student who takes school very seriously, something her family values immensely.

(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

Former Bangladesh Prime Minister...

party but in fact she was an "important chapter of Bangladesh's history".

Paying tribute to Ms. Zia who passed away at a hospital in Dhaka, Prof. Yunus said, in her demise, Bangladesh has lost a "great guardian" of the nation.

Deposed Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, during whose tenure Khaleda Zia was imprisoned, also conveyed her condolences to BNP's Acting Chairperson Tarique Zia and said, her demise is an "irreparable loss" for the political life of Bangladesh.

PM Modi recalls meeting with Ms. Zia in 2015

"As the first woman Prime Minister of Bangladesh, her important contributions towards the development of Bangladesh as well as India-Bangladesh relations will always be remembered," said Prime Minister Modi, recalling his meeting with Begum Zia in June 2015 when he visited Dhaka for the signing of the historic India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA).

"Our sincerest condolences to her family and all the people of Bangladesh. May the Almighty grant her family the fortitude to bear this tragic loss," PM Modi said. Earlier the Bangladesh Nationalist Party had announced that Ms. Zia passed away at 6 a.m., on Tuesday (December 30), urging everyone to pray for the departed soul.

"Professor Yunus stated that Begum Khaleda Zia was not merely the leader of a political party; she represented an important chapter in the history of Bangladesh. Considering her contributions, her long struggle, and the deep public sentiment towards her, the government declared her a Very, Very Important Person of the State earlier this month," a statement from the press wing of the Chief Adviser.

Mr. Yunus said Ms. Zia was responsible for enhancing education for women in the country that facilitated improving the condition of women in Bangladesh.

"In her political life, she was enormously successful. She never lost an election. From 1991 to 2001, she was elected in five different parliamentary constituencies. She contested from three constituencies and won in all the three seats," said Prof. Yunus who gave credit to Begum Zia for allowing structural adjustments in Bangladesh's economy in the early 1990s.

The statement from Prof. Yunus, described Begum Zia as a "unique symbol of struggle and resistance" for her role during the 16-year long tenure of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina when BNP boycotted the elections of 2014, 2018 and January 2024.

Ms. Zia's last public appearance was on the Armed Forces Day November 21, 2025, an event she has been attending over the decades, as the widow of former Army Chief and President of Bangladesh General Ziaur

Rahman.

This year, however, she appeared in a wheelchair while meeting Prof. Yunus and Army Chief General Waker-uz-Zaman.

She was admitted to the Evercare Hospital of Dhaka on November 23, following lung infection. Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was released from prison hours after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on August 5, 2024. However, Bangladesh Awami League shared the remarks of Ms. Hasina on the passing of Khaleda Zia, long considered to be her rival. "Her contribution is immense as the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh and for the establishment of democracy in Bangladesh. In her death the political life of Bangladesh and the leadership of BNP has suffered an irreparable loss," Hasina said in her condolence message. (Source: The Hindu)

Indian-origin billionaire Jayshree Ullal...

Ullal's achievements have earned her numerous accolades, including Ernst & Young's "Entrepreneur of the Year" award in 2015, Barron's "World's Best CEOs" list in 2018, and Fortune's "Top 20 Business Persons" worldwide in 2019. She also received an Honorary Doctorate in Engineering in 2025.

Ullal's remarkable success sets a powerful example for women entrepreneurs, especially in male-dominated fields like networking and hardware technology.

Nainital: A deep dive into the lake district of the Kumaon Himalayas

Nestled in a pear-shaped valley of the Kumaon Himalayas at an altitude of nearly 2,000 metres, Nainital is among India's most evocative mountain destinations. Built around a pristine natural lake and encircled by forested ridges, the town seamlessly blends mythology, colonial heritage, biodiversity, and contemporary tourism. More than a weekend escape, Nainital is a layered experience—one that unfolds slowly through misty mornings, bustling evenings on Mall Road, and quiet trails through oak and deodar forests.

Naini Lake: The Living Heart of Nainital

At the centre of the town lies Naini Lake, a crescent-shaped freshwater lake that defines Nainital's geography and spirit. The lake is believed to be a sacred site where the left eye (nain) of Goddess Sati fell, making it both a spiritual and natural landmark.

Boating remains the most intimate way to experience the town—rowboats, paddle boats, and yachts glide across shimmering waters reflecting green hills and colonial buildings. Early mornings bring stillness, while evenings light up with reflections of street lamps and hilltop homes. The lake promenade is ideal for slow walks, photography, and absorbing Nainital's relaxed rhythm.

Naina Devi Temple: Faith by the Water

Situated at the northern edge of the lake, the Naina Devi Temple is one of Nainital's most revered shrines. Dedicated to Goddess Naina Devi, this Shakti Peetha draws pilgrims throughout the year and becomes especially vibrant during Navratri. The temple adds a sacred dimension to the town, where devotion and tourism coexist naturally.

Mall Road and the Colonial Core

Running parallel to Naini Lake, Mall Road is Nainital's social and commercial artery. Lined with hotels, cafés, bakeries, bookshops, and souvenir stores, it remains lively from dawn till late evening. The colonial-era facades, lake-facing benches, and street food vendors give Mall Road its timeless charm.

Nearby landmarks such as All Saints' Church, St. John in the Wilderness Church, and heritage bungalows recall Nainital's days as the summer capital of the United Provinces under British rule. The town's old colleges—Sherwood College and St. Joseph's College—continue to lend an intellectual and architectural gravitas to the hill station.

Snow View Point: The Himalayas on Display

One of Nainital's most popular viewpoints, Snow View Point offers breathtaking panoramas of the Nanda Devi, Trishul, and Nanda Kot ranges on clear days. Accessible via a scenic cable



car ride or a motorable road, the viewpoint also houses a small temple and amusements for families. Winter mornings here often reveal snow-clad peaks glowing under soft sunlight.

Naina Peak (China Peak)

Rising to about 2,615 metres, Naina Peak—locally known as China Peak—is the highest point in Nainital. A trek through dense forests leads to sweeping views of the Kumaon Himalayas and distant plains. The route is popular with trekkers, birdwatchers, and photographers seeking quieter encounters with nature.

Tiffin Top (Dorothy's Seat)

Tiffin Top, also known as Dorothy's Seat, is a gentle hike from the town centre. Named after an English artist, this spot offers panoramic views of Nainital and surrounding hills. The open meadow-like setting makes it ideal for picnics, sunrise views, and contemplative pauses.

Eco Cave Gardens

The Eco Cave Gardens showcase a network of interconnected rocky caves and hanging gardens, offering insight into the region's geology and wildlife habitats. The attraction is particularly popular with families and children and adds an educational element to Nainital's tourism offerings.

Raj Bhavan: A Walk Through History

The historic Raj Bhavan, once the Governor's House, stands amid expansive lawns and pine trees. Visitors can explore its colonial architecture and enjoy walking trails, while the adjoining golf course—one of the highest in India—adds to its distinctive appeal.



History This Week

DEC 26 - JAN 1

DECEMBER 26



December 26th - Boxing Day in the United Kingdom and many other countries, a day of gift giving when boxes of food, clothing and other gifts are traditionally given to employees, tradespeople and other service providers.

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.

DECEMBER 27

December 27, 1945 - The International Monetary Fund was established in Washington, D.C.

December 27, 1949 - The Dutch transferred sovereignty of Indonesia to the new United States of Indonesia. The new nation retained a formal association with the Netherlands until 1954, when an independent Republic of Indonesia was formed. Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia. It consists of 13,677 islands along the equator between the Indian and Pacific oceans, and a population of over 150 million.

December 27, 1996 - A genocide trial began concerning the killing of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis in Rwanda. In 1994, a bloody civil war had broken out between the two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. After the Hutu army seized power it had waged a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against the Tutsi population.



Birthday - German astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) was born in Wurttemberg, Germany. Considered the father of modern astronomy, he discovered the elliptical (oval) shape of the orbits in which the earth and other

planets travel around the sun at a speed that varies according to each planet's distance from the sun.

Birthday - French chemist-bacteriologist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) was born in Dole, France. He developed the pasteurization process to kill harmful bacteria with heat and found ways of preventing silkworm disease, anthrax, chicken cholera, and rabies.

Birthday - Actress Marlene Dietrich (1901-1992) was born in Berlin, Germany. She starred in *The Blue Angel*, the first 'talkie' made in Germany. She then moved to Hollywood and starred in films including; *Destry Rides Again*, *Touch of Evil*, *Judgment at Nuremberg* and *Witness for the Prosecution*. In the 1950's she toured the world as a cabaret singer in a stage revue.

DECEMBER 28



December 28, 1947 - Victor Emmanuel III, the last King of Italy, died while in exile in Alexandria, Egypt. He had become king upon the assassination of his father in 1900. Following World War I, he named Benito Mussolini to form a cabinet and then failed to prevent Mussolini's Fascists from seizing power. In 1946, he abdicated and went into exile.

Birthday - Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) the 28th U.S. President was born in Staunton, Virginia (as Thomas Woodrow Wilson). He served two terms from 1912 through 1921. Best remembered for stating, "The world must be made safe for democracy," while asking Congress for a declaration of war against Germany in 1917. Following the death of his first, he married Edith Bolling Galt in 1915. He had suffered a paralytic stroke in 1919 and never regained his health, leading to speculation that his wife was actually running the White House during his illness.

DECEMBER 29

December 29, 1940 - During the Blitz, German aircraft dropped thousands of incendiary bombs on the center of London, causing the worst fire damage since the great fire of 1666. St. Paul's Cathedral survived but eight other Wren churches along with the Guildhall and Old Bailey were badly damaged.



December 29, 1965 - During the Vietnam War, North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh rejected unconditional peace talks offered by the U.S.

December 29, 1989 - Playwright and human rights activist Vaclav Havel was sworn in as president of Czechoslovakia. He had formerly been denounced by Czech Communists as an enemy of the state and had spent five years in jail for his beliefs.

Birthday - Andrew Johnson (1808-1875) the 17th U.S. President was born in Raleigh, North Carolina. He was Abraham Lincoln's vice president and became President upon Lincoln's assassination in 1865. He went on to become the first President impeached by the House of Representatives. He was acquitted in the Senate by a single vote. He later served briefly as a Senator from Tennessee until his death on July 31, 1875.

Birthday - Cellist Pablo Casals (1876-1973) was born in Venrdell, Spain. He was one of the most influential musicians of the 20th Century whose superb ability in playing the cello set new performance standards.

DECEMBER 30



December 30, 1947 - King Michael of Romania was forced to abdicate after the Communists seized power.

December 30, 1988 - President Ronald Reagan and President-elect George Bush were subpoenaed to testify in the trial of Oliver North, a former White House aide implicated in the Iran-Contra affair in which arms were secretly sold to Iran while profits from the sale were diverted to guerrillas trying to topple the Nicaraguan government in South America.

December 30, 1993 - Israel and the Vatican signed an agreement on mutual recognition, seeking to end 2,000 years of unfriendly Christian-Jewish relations.

Birthday - Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was born in Bombay, India. He was a British poet, novelist, short story writer, best known for his children's stories such as *The Jungle Book*.

Birthday - Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo (1884-1948) was born in Tokyo. He led Japan during World War II and was arrested in August 1945 as a war criminal, tried, then hanged in 1948.

DECEMBER 31



December 31, 1971 - Austrian Kurt Waldheim became U.N. Secretary-General following the retirement of U Thant. Waldheim served until 1981 then resumed his career in Austrian politics. In 1986, he ran for the presidency. During the campaign, it was revealed he had likely given false information concerning his military service in the German Army during World War II. He

claimed he left the army in 1942 after being wounded on the Russian Front, but allegations arose that he was actually lieutenant in 1943-44 stationed in the Balkans when Greek Jews were rounded up and sent to Nazi death camps and when atrocities were committed against Yugoslav resistance fighters.

Birthday - George C. Marshall (1880-1959) was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He had genius for organization and served as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army throughout World War II, expanding the Army from 130,000 to 8,300,000 men. He then served as Secretary of State under President Truman and designed the Marshall Plan for the relief of war torn Europe and to halt the spread of Communism.

JANUARY 1

January 1, 1958 - The EEC (European Economic Community) known as the Common Market was formed by Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and The Netherlands in order to remove trade barriers and coordinate trade policies.

January 1, 1959 - Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba after leading a revolution that drove out Dictator Fulgencio Batista. Castro then established a Communist dictatorship.

January 1, 1973 - Britain, Ireland and Denmark became members of the Common Market (EEC).



January 1, 1975 - During the Watergate scandal, former top aides to President Nixon including former Attorney General John Mitchell, Domestic Affairs Advisor John Ehrlichman and Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, were found guilty of obstruction of justice.

January 1, 1979 - China and the U.S. established diplomatic relations, 30 years after the foundation of the People's Republic.

January 1, 1993 - Czechoslovakia broke into separate Czech and Slovak republics.

January 1, 1999 - Eleven European nations began using a new single European currency, the Euro, for electronic financial and business transactions. Participating countries included; Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Birthday - American Patriot Paul Revere (1735-1818) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Best known for his ride on the night of April 18, 1775, warning Americans of British plans to raid Lexington and Concord.

Birthday - Betsy Ross (1752-1836) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was a seamstress credited with helping to originate and sew the Stars and Stripes flag of America in 1776.

England and Australia batters slammed for lack of technique and temperament: 'Test cricket is doomed'

MELBOURNE (TIP)

Greg Chappell has launched a stinging critique of the Ashes' recent batting collapses, arguing that modern Test innings are being surrendered too easily and that the sport is flirting with an identity crisis at its highest level.

Writing in a column on ESPNcricinfo, the former Australia captain framed the issue as a failure of intent and technique rather than a simple case of bowlers being unplayable.

"Two Tests in the series have failed to reach day three, not due to superior skill but a glaring absence of desire. Batters slashed wildly, abandoning technique for bravado, as if playing their 'natural game' excused capitulation," Greg Chappell wrote.

The criticism wasn't limited to a single innings or a single team. Chappell's point was broader: when batting becomes a rush to impose, the craft that makes Test cricket distinct - judgement, patience, and the willingness to suffer - gets pushed aside. In a series as historically loaded as the Ashes, he suggested, that shift carries a cost beyond the scoreboard.

"They let down predecessors who bled for this rivalry; they shortchanged fans who braved the holiday heat; they betrayed their own generation by forsaking cricket's core tenets - playing each ball on merit, scrapping for every run, enduring bruises for the greater good," he added.

Chappell also connected the trend to the influence of white-ball cricket, where power and instant impact are rewarded more consistently than time spent absorbing pressure. That reality, he acknowledged, has changed player instincts and the marketplace around the game. But he argued that claiming to value Test cricket must come with a willingness to do the hard, unglamorous work that keeps innings alive and contests meaningful.

"I get that white-ball cricket has changed the game, and power is valued more in the marketplace today than the ability to absorb pressure, but if the modern player does value Test cricket, as they say, then they must show it by being able to bat



collectively for a minimum of 100 overs in any conditions. If they can't, or won't, do that, then the format is doomed," he wrote.

His benchmark is a direct challenge to dressing rooms raised in an era of relentless scoring. It is also a reminder that Test cricket's appeal is built on resistance as much as dominance: sessions that must be earned, runs that must be fought for, and momentum that can only be sustained through discipline.

Sir Donald Bradman's Australia Test cap to go under hammer

Sir Donald Bradman's Australia Test Cap will go under the hammer next month, according to cricket.com.au. One of Bradman's Baggy Green caps will be auctioned at Lloyds Auctions, with bidding starting at \$1 and closing on January 26, 2026.

The great cricketer Bradman gifted one of his Australian Test caps to a fellow Test cricketer, and since then, it has remained with the family for more than 70 years. The family didn't auction Bradman's Test cap or display it for public sale.

"This is a genuine piece of cricket history that Sir Donald Bradman personally gifted," Lloyds Auctions' Lee Hames said.

"Its uninterrupted family ownership for 75 years and its direct link to 'The Don' make it one of the most important Bradman-related pieces to come to auction," he added.

The cap, which will be auctioned, will draw international interest from private collectors, museums, institutions and fans. Bradman wore that cap during the 1947/48 series against the first Indian team to tour Australia. The series saw Bradman amassing 715 runs from six innings.



Hardik Pandya to make Test comeback?

MUMBAI (TIP)

Former India cricketer Robin Uthappa believes Hardik Pandya could still have a meaningful role to play in Test cricket, suggesting the all-rounder would be an ideal No. 7 option for India if he chooses to return to the red-ball format. Uthappa feels Pandya's current fitness levels and skill set make a Test comeback far from unrealistic, especially in the context of how India have been using their pace-bowling all-rounders.

Expanding on his point, Uthappa noted that India's recent Test combinations show flexibility rather than fixed roles, with players like Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshit Rana and Washington Sundar being used on and off depending on conditions and team balance. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Uthappa argued that Pandya would comfortably fit into this evolving structure if he is willing to take on a controlled workload.

"If Hardik Pandya returns to the No. 7 spot in Tests, it would be wonderful," Uthappa said. "The way he's playing, anything can happen. It's cricket. Never say never. If Hardik decides to play Test cricket, will BCCI ask him not to play? If he says he wants to play and wants to win the World Test Championship, I don't think they would say no."

Uthappa also addressed concerns around Pandya's bowling workload in the longest format, pointing out that modern all-rounders are no longer expected to bowl

marathon spells.

"Are all-rounders bowling 20 overs? Nitish Kumar is not bowling that much. He's bowling around 12 overs. If Hardik bowls 12 to 15 overs per innings, I think he can do it with the way he's fit now, the way he's bowling and batting. It's his own decision," he added.

Pandya last played Test and First-Class cricket in 2018, stepping away from red-ball cricket after struggling with a recurring back injury. Since then, he has focused entirely on white-ball formats, a move that has helped him establish himself as one of India's most important limited-overs players despite intermittent fitness concerns.

India have continued to explore all-round options in Tests, rotating between Reddy, Shardul Thakur, Washington Sundar and even Harshit Rana in specific conditions. Pandya's own Test record, though limited, remains solid, with 532 runs from 11 matches at an average of 31.29 and 17 wickets at 31.05.

Uthappa also framed a possible return as an opportunity for Pandya to "complete cricket," with the World Test Championship being the one major prize missing from his cabinet after multiple ICC white-ball titles. Pandya is expected to next feature in the upcoming T20I series against New Zealand, with him likely to be rested for the ODI leg of the series as a workload management call ahead of the 2026 T20 World Cup.

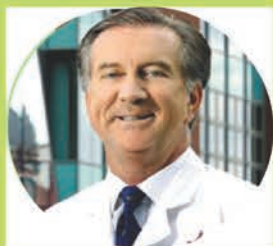




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Best Wishes, Peter



Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



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