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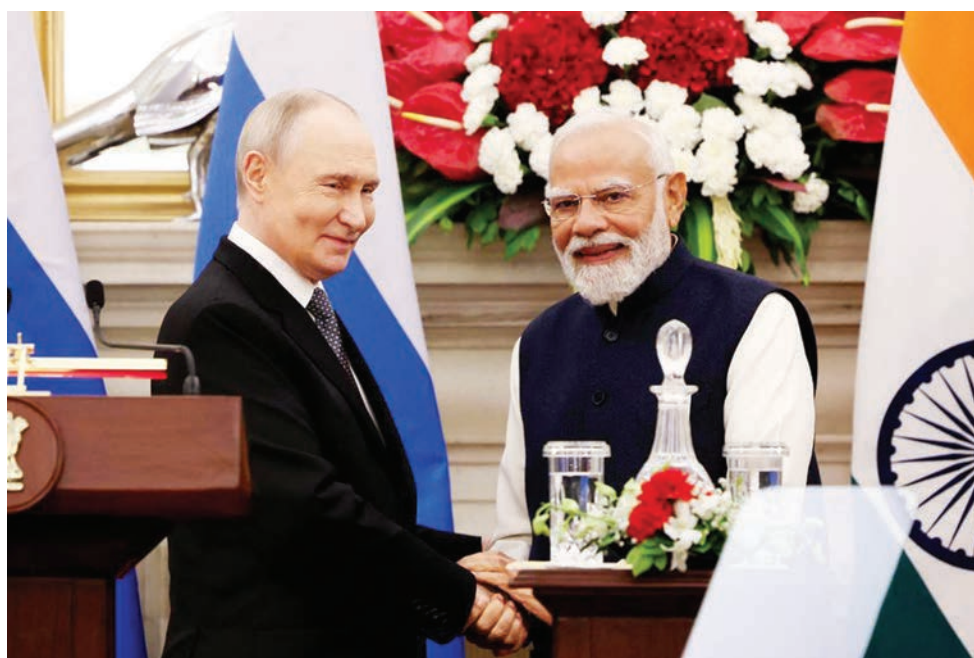
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Modi-Putin summit yields sweeping economic and strategic package



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi shake hands as they attend a presentation of a joint statement after their delegation level talks at Hyderabad House in New Delhi, on December 5, 2025 -Photo Credit: Reuters

DECEMBER 5, 2025

NEW DELHI (TIP): In a display of enduring strategic partnership, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, December 5, sealed a broad agreement aimed at deepening cooperation across trade, energy, defense, mobility, and technology - under a new "Economic Cooperation" umbrella slated to run through 2030.

The accord, unveiled during the two-day 23rd annual summit between India and Russia, comes as both nations face mounting global pressure and shifting geopolitical fault lines - yet signal a clear determination to bolster bilateral ties rather than drift apart.

KEY PILLARS: TRADE, INVESTMENT, ENERGY AND MOBILITY

At the heart of the summit was a comprehensive economic program stretching until 2030. Under the agreement, both countries are

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Grand jury refuses to reindict Letitia James in mortgage fraud case



New York Attorney General Letitia James

File photo

DECEMBER 4, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): A grand jury in Virginia on Thursday, December 4, rejected the Justice Department efforts to charge New York Attorney General Letitia James with mortgage fraud, declining to indict her again after a judge dismissed the charges last week.

The refusal by a grand jury in Norfolk marks a major defeat for President Donald Trump, who has made a priority

of prosecuting James, a longtime foe. As New York attorney general, James brought a civil fraud case against Trump and his real estate empire, which resulted in a verdict that Trump and others in his company had committed fraud.

An official familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly, said "there should be no premature celebrations," implying that the administration could try a third time to obtain an indictment.

In September, Trump pushed out his pick for U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia, Erik S. Siebert, over his decision to not indict James and another of Trump's targets, former FBI director James B. Comey.

He also posted a message on social media demanding that Attorney General Pam Bondi move ahead with the prosecutions.

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Diwali "Power of One" Awards Shine at the United Nations: Four Diplomats Honored for Global Service



The Power of One Award winners -Ambassador Jonathan R. Cohen, Ambassador Dennis Francis, Ambassador Darja Bavda Kure, and Ambassador Magzhan Ilyassov pose for a photograph with the organizers Ranju Batra, Ravi Batra, and guests

DECEMBER 2, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): The spirit of Diwali illuminated the halls of the United Nations on December 2 as four

distinguished diplomats received the Diwali "Power of One" Awards for exceptional service to diplomacy and

CONTD ON PAGE 3

Elon Musk predicts 'war in 5 to 10 years', warns it's 'inevitable'

DECEMBER 2, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): Elon Musk is once again making headlines for his blunt commentary on X, the social media platform he owns.

The tech billionaire, known for offering unfiltered opinions, suggested in a recent post that a major global conflict could occur within the next 5 to 10 years. The remark came in response to a thread discussing nuclear deterrence and its impact on government effectiveness. An X user, Hunter Ash, argued that governments have grown complacent because

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Musk sees a range of potential flashpoints



Andy Singh

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COMMENT

INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS : A
FRIENDSHIP THAT HAS STOOD EVERY
TEST OF TIME

By Indrajit Saluja



The relationship between India and Russia-earlier the Soviet Union-remains one of the most resilient bilateral partnerships in modern international politics. Marked by cordiality, strategic trust, and a deep sense of mutual respect, it is a partnership that has never been transactional, never been opportunistic, and never been shaken by the shifting tides of global politics. If anything, it is a relationship built in crisis, strengthened in adversity, and sustained by consistent political goodwill and people-to-people warmth.

India's tremendous experience of Russian friendship during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War remains the defining chapter of this partnership. When the United States, under President Richard Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, tilted openly toward Pakistan-including dispatching the nuclear-armed Seventh Fleet to the Bay of Bengal in an unmistakable show of intimidation-it was the Soviet Union that firmly stood by India. Moscow not only provided diplomatic cover at the United Nations, vetoing a series of anti-India resolutions pushed by the U.S. and its allies, but also sent its own naval fleet to neutralize the American pressure. The Soviet support was so decisive that many Indian strategic scholars note that but for Moscow's intervention, India may well have lost political ground in Jammu & Kashmir-or at least been forced into an unfavorable ceasefire.

This memory is not lost on New Delhi. Nor has India forgotten the numerous moments at the UN Security Council when Russia's veto ensured India's national interests were protected. In fact, Russia has used its UN veto more than half a dozen times since 1957 specifically in cases involving Kashmir or matters affecting India's security. This steadfastness has shaped India's long-standing diplomatic gratitude, and to this day, the Kremlin remains India's most reliable Great Power supporter in multilateral forums.

India, in return, has neither treated Russia as a legacy friend nor as a dispensable one. Its consistent refusal to join Western sanctions regimes-whether after Crimea in 2014 or during the post-2022 American-led sanctions wave-speaks to New Delhi's clarity: strategic autonomy cannot be compromised for momentary geopolitical fashion. When Washington imposed unprecedented sanctions on Moscow after 2022, India not only maintained its engagement with Russia but expanded its energy ties. At its peak in 2023-24, Russian crude accounted for over 40 percent of India's oil imports-up from just 1 percent in early 2022. Despite immense pressure from the United States, India insisted that what matters is affordability, energy security, and national interest-not Western geopolitical preferences.

India has since moderately reduced

these imports due to tariff changes and commercial dynamics, but the political message remains unmistakable: Russia is a friend India does not abandon.

It is in this context that the red-carpet welcome accorded to President Vladimir Putin in New Delhi on December 4, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal gesture of receiving him on the tarmac, must be understood. Modi's words-describing the partnership as "time-tested" and one that has "greatly benefitted our people"-were not diplomatic niceties but a reiteration of a reality that has defined India's foreign policy for more than seven decades.



India's PM Narendra Modi welcomes Russian President Vladimir Putin on his arrival in Delhi on December 4, 2025

Putin's visit comes at a particularly complex moment in India-U.S. relations. American dissatisfaction over India's long-term purchase of discounted Russian crude was only the beginning. President Trump's return to Washington has been accompanied by what he calls a "fair trade doctrine," under which India now faces among the world's highest tariffs imposed by the United States, especially on key exports such as pharmaceuticals, specialty steel, and certain categories of machinery. Add to this the American unease about India's continued defense posture vis-à-vis Russia, and the picture becomes clear: Indo-U.S. relations are currently undergoing a strain not seen in the last decade.

Yet even in this backdrop, India has chosen not to dilute its strategic engagement with Moscow. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has confirmed that potential Indian purchases of next-generation Russian fighter jets and ballistic missile systems will be a central agenda item during the Modi-Putin talks. While the U.S. may not welcome such deepening defense cooperation, the reality is that nearly 60-70 percent of India's military platforms even today are of Russian origin. Whether it is the Su-30MKI fighters, T-90 tanks, the nuclear submarine Chakra, or the formidable S-400 air defense system, Russia remains India's principal and most dependable weapons supplier. Joint

ventures like BrahMos, the world's fastest supersonic cruise missile, further illustrate the depth of technological and strategic synergy that simply cannot be replicated overnight by any Western partner.

The timing of Putin's visit also reflects a mutual understanding that the global order is in flux. For Russia, India remains one of the few large, independent, and rising powers that has not aligned itself with either the Western bloc or the Sino-Russian axis. For India, Russia remains a crucial pillar in maintaining a multipolar Asia and ensuring that New Delhi retains flexibility in balancing Western partnerships with its own national interests.

How America views this visit-and how it interprets the outcomes of the Modi-Putin dialogue-will be closely watched by the rest of the world. Washington has historically viewed India-Russia engagement through the lens of its own geopolitical struggles, whether during the Cold War or in the current era of great-power rivalry with China and Russia. But the United States must accept an essential truth: India does not believe in exclusive relationships. New Delhi's global partnerships are guided by sovereignty, strategic autonomy, and the pursuit of a balanced multipolar order-not by pressure tactics or ideological camps.

India will continue to deepen ties with the United States in trade, technology, education, and defense interoperability. But that will not come at the cost of its historic and strategic relationship with Russia.

In fact, Putin's 2025 visit may well become the moment India-Russia relations receive a fresh infusion of energy. Aside from defense ties, both sides are exploring expansion in the North-South Transport Corridor, cooperation in civil nuclear energy, space technology, and new investments in the Russian Far East-a region where India has already pledged significant economic participation. Cultural and educational exchanges, too, are likely to rise as Moscow views India as a long-term partner in the emerging non-West-led economic order.

What remains certain is that Putin's visit will strengthen-not merely symbolize-the India-Russia partnership. In an era when alliances shift overnight and global politics is defined by volatility, the India-Russia relationship remains a model of consistency and trust. It has weathered wars, sanctions, diplomatic storms, and vast changes in leadership on both sides. And it has emerged stronger each time.

As the world watches Modi and Putin meet once again, the message is unmistakable: there are friendships in global diplomacy that are built not on convenience, but on conviction-and the India-Russia partnership is one of them.

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Diwali "Power of One" Awards Shine at the United Nations: Four Diplomats Honored for Global Service

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multilateral engagement. The ceremony recognized Ambassador Jonathan R. Cohen (USA), Dennis Francis (Trinidad & Tobago), Darja Bavda Kuret (Slovenia), and Magzhan Ilyassov (Kazakhstan) for their sustained contributions toward peace, dialogue, and international cooperation.



Ranju Batra, Chair, Diwali Foundation USA speaks about her 7 year odyssey to get the USPS issue the Diwali Stamp

The presence of Lakshmi Puri, the first "Power of the One" awardee, added meaning and grace to the awards ceremony.

The awards are organized by Diwali Foundation USA, under the leadership of its Chair, Ranju Batra, whose tireless advocacy has elevated Diwali onto global institutional platforms, including the UN. This year's ceremony was hosted by the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations, reflecting the Foundation's collaborative approach with diplomatic missions that champion cultural understanding as a tool for global harmony.

The awards were co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Andorra, Armenia, Belarus, Chile, El Salvador, Eritrea, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Zambia, and the National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs.



India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Parvathaneni Harish spoke about the need and resolve to work together and find solutions to end conflicts.

A MISSION ROOTED IN LIGHT

The "Power of One" Awards were created to celebrate individuals whose diplomatic service exemplifies the Diwali ideal—light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and unity in diversity. At the United Nations,



Ravi Batra conducted the ceremony of presentation of awards where multilateralism meets daily tests, the awards highlight the vital role played by individual diplomats in advancing the UN Charter's ideals.

The honorees represented different regions of the world but shared common traits: commitment to dialogue, ability to build consensus, and dedication to peaceful solutions. Each award citation spoke to years of diplomatic leadership on peace processes, regional security, humanitarian relief, and institutional reform.

THE DIWALI STAMP: SEVEN YEARS OF PERSEVERANCE

The awards' story is inseparable from the movement that sparked them: the long, determined campaign to secure official recognition for Diwali through a U.S. postal stamp. For seven years, Ranju Batra led an unprecedented grassroots effort to persuade the United States Postal Service to issue a Diwali commemorative stamp. The campaign galvanized a nationwide coalition across faiths, ethnicities, and political lines—uniting community organizations, interfaith leaders, and lawmakers behind a single message: Diwali is not merely a festival, but a global symbol of hope and renewal, deserving national recognition.

That perseverance bore fruit when the Diwali stamp entered public life, placing a cherished cultural and spiritual emblem into everyday American usage. The stamp was celebrated widely as a victory not for one community, but for America's pluralism.

GERMINATION OF "POWER OF ONE"

In a poignant turn of events, the Power of One awards themselves were born at the United Nations when diplomats honored Ranju Batra for her relentless pursuit of the Diwali stamp. That recognition—by ambassadors and envoys at the UN—was the seed from which the awards grew.



A view of the appreciative gathering
Photos: Rob Klein & Mohammed Jaffer

At that event, colleagues and diplomats saluted what they described as her "heroic struggle" to translate a community aspiration into national policy. Not long afterward, the Diwali Foundation USA institutionalized that inspiration into an annual award that would, in turn, recognize diplomats who embody the same spirit of persistence, bridge-building, and public service.

Speaking at the ceremony, Ranju Batra, Chair of Diwali Foundation USA, said:

"The Power of One is not an idea; it is action. It is the belief that a single voice, when guided by purpose, can awaken institutions and move nations. When diplomats are honored here tonight, we are also honoring the principle that peace is built one conversation at a time."

She added that the Diwali stamp journey was "proof that ordinary citizens can achieve extraordinary outcomes when they refuse to give up."

Ravi Batra, Chair of the National Advisory Council for South Asian Affairs, emphasized diplomacy's human dimension, stating:

"We created the Power of One Awards to recognize those who quietly make the world safer and fairer—often far from headlines. Diplomats are the first responders to conflict and the architects of peace."



Glimpses of superb Bharat Natyam performance

He also highlighted the organizers' philosophy: "Diwali is a global language of light, and diplomacy is its daily practice."

Over the years, the Power of One Awards have recognized a growing roster of senior diplomats and public servants from across continents—Europe, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Americas—each selected for impact at the United Nations and in their regions. The breadth of awardees reflects the Foundation's guiding belief: peace has many accents but one purpose.

As UN diplomats gathered for the awards, Diwali's enduring metaphor resonated: light expands when shared. The Power of One, the organizers insist, is not about solitary heroism; it is about courage that spreads.

With each passing year, the Power of One Awards are becoming a fixture in the UN's cultural calendar, amplifying stories of principled diplomacy. The Diwali Foundation USA plans to expand youth outreach, academic partnerships, and interfaith programming, ensuring that Diwali's message reaches classrooms, community centers, and council chambers alike.

For The Indian Panorama, the ceremony stands as testimony that the Indian diaspora's cultural energy can move global institutions—quietly, persistently, and with grace.

ABOUT DIWALI FOUNDATION USA

Diwali Foundation USA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting Diwali as a universal festival of light, peace, and unity. It led the nationwide movement for the Diwali stamp and founded the Power of One Awards to honor excellence in diplomacy and public service.

INDIAN AMERICAN, GNDU ALUMNUS, ATTORNEY JASPREET SINGH APPOINTED TO NEW JERSEY TRANSITION COUNCIL



Attorney Jaspreet Singh is the first Sikh to be appointed

DECEMBER 1, 2025

NEW YORK / PATIALA (TIP) : Guru Nanak Dev University, on November 29, celebrated the appointment of its distinguished alumnus and current Professor of Eminence, Jaspreet Singh, an attorney based in the US, in the Transition Advisory Council of the US state of New Jersey. He is the only Sikh and first Punjabi immigrant to be inducted into the incoming administration's core advisory structure.

The Transition Advisory Council has been constituted by Governor-Elect of New Jersey, Mikie Sherrill, to guide key governance, policy and administrative priorities as she prepares to assume office. Jaspreet Singh, who migrated to the USA decades ago, and has risen to prominence in the local community in New Jersey, has expertise in immigration law. "His inclusion signals strong recognition of his professional expertise, public service, and community leadership in the United States," said VC Prof Karamjeet Singh, who had conferred him the position of Professor of Eminence at the GNDU. Jaspreet Singh studied law at the university and also donated Rs 3 crore to set up the Guru Nanak Chair at university.

Prof Karamjeet said that New Jersey is home to some of the world's most respected academic and research institutions, including Ivy League Princeton University, historically associated with Albert Einstein. "The appointment of a GNDU alumnus to such an important policy body underscores the global impact and excellence of GNDU graduates. This is a proud moment for Guru Nanak Dev University and for Punjab. The appointment of our alumnus, Attorney Jaspreet Singh, as the only Sikh in New Jersey's incoming administration, reflects the university's growing global footprint and its ability to nurture leaders who excel internationally with integrity and vision," he said.

Indian American Scholar Gurpreet Dhillon named Nebraska business administration college dean

DECEMBER 2, 2025

OMAHA (TIP) : The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) has named Indian American scholar Gurpreet S. Dhillon, the next dean of the College of Business Administration (CBA), effective Jan. 12, 2026.

A Panjab University graduate, Dhillon currently serves as the G. Brint Ryan Endowed Chair of AI and Cybersecurity at the University of North Texas. The appointment is pending approval by the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, according to a university release.

With more than two decades of international leadership and research experience, Dhillon says his vision is to shape a business school that redefines the connection between business, technology, and society. In a world increasingly defined by AI, cybersecurity, and global change, he aims "to foster an innovative, multidisciplinary environment that prepares students to navigate the challenges of a digital economy with skill, integrity, and purpose."

"Dr. Dhillon brings a rare blend of scholarly distinction, innovative vision, and global leadership," said Phil He, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. "His work at the intersection of business, technology, and society, combined with his commitment to community and workforce development,



Gurpreet S. Dhillon has been named as the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) next dean of the College of Business Administration (CBA), effective Jan. 12, 2026.

positions him exceptionally well to advance UNO's metropolitan mission."

"UNO's metropolitan mission and its commitments to access, innovation, and community engagement align deeply with my professional values," said Dhillon.

"Business education must prepare students to lead in an era defined by digital transformation, global interdependence, and rapid technological change," he said. "I look forward to working with faculty, staff, students, and community partners to create opportunities that elevate both the region and our graduates."

Over the past two decades, Dhillon has held academic appointments and leadership roles across the United States, Europe, and Asia, building a distinguished record in business education, research leadership, and multidisciplinary innovation.

He Earned a PhD in Information Systems from the London School of Economics and an Honorary Doctorate from Örebro University, Sweden.

A Biology and Chemistry graduate from Panjab University Honors School, India, he also has an Operations Management degree from Punjabi University, India.

Dhillon has authored more than a dozen books, including a best-selling graduate textbook on cybersecurity and published over 100 research papers across top-tier academic journals.

His research has featured in national and international media outlets including The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, USA Today, CNN, NBC News, and NPR.

Recognized among the top 2% of researchers in his discipline by Stanford University, Dhillon is ranked in the top 0.05% of global scholars by Scholar GPS. He holds the No. 29 global ranking in Information Security for career-long scholarly impact.

Dhillon succeeds Interim Dean Steve Schulz, who has led the college for the past year.

19-year-old Sikh student wins fight against Ambulance Victoria's beard policy

DECEMBER 1, 2025

MELBOURNE (TIP): A 19-year-old Sikh paramedic student, Prabhjeet Gill of Monash University in Australia, won a case against Ambulance Victoria. He was asked to shave off his beard before the first day of his on-the-job training to meet PPE-mask requirements.

After he filed a formal complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission, Ambulance Victoria revised its policy to allow cultural or religious beards.

Gill had requested permission to use the "Singh Thattha method," an alternative for bearded individuals that allows them to wear a medical mask with the help of an elastic band.

Unwilling to compromise, the student accused Ambulance Victoria of "discrimination on the grounds of race and religion" and lodged a complaint with Australian Human Rights Commission. The case drew widespread attention.

Gill said the beard was "part of his identity," and that having to shave would undermine his religious beliefs.

In a letter to the commission on November 24, Ambulance Victoria acknowledged the concerns raised by the student and Ambulance Victoria's failure to adopt his preferred method of mask fitting. "Perhaps unbeknownst to Mr Gill, Ambulance Victoria has reconsidered its position regarding the 'Singh Thattha' method of mask fitting for PPE (personal protective equipment) and has recently engaged with Monash Health to assist with this method of mask fitting upon request by an AV employee," the statement said.



After Prabhjeet Gill filed a formal complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission, Ambulance Victoria revised its policy to allow cultural or religious beards

Photo : LinkedIn

Indian-origin man charged with criminally negligent homicide after crash kills two in US

DECEMBER 3, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP) : An Indian-origin man who entered the US illegally three years ago has been charged with homicide after two persons were killed when a semi-truck he was driving collided with their car.

Rajinder Kumar, 32, has been charged with criminally negligent homicide and reckless endangering. William Micah Carter, 25, and Jennifer Lynn Lower, 24, were killed in the road accident.

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has lodged an arrest detainer for Kumar.

The Oregon State Police said its officers responded to a two-vehicle crash in Deschutes County on the night of November 24.

Preliminary investigation indicated that a freightliner commercial motor vehicle and trailer operated by Kumar was stopped in a jackknifed position, blocking both lanes of travel. A car being driven by Carter struck the trailer of the freightliner as it was stopped perpendicular to the lanes of travel at highway speeds.

Both Carter and Lower were declared dead at the scene while Kumar was reportedly uninjured.

"The highway was impacted for approximately seven hours during the on-scene investigation. Dark conditions and a lack of active emergency warning equipment is being considered a primary contributor to the crash," The Oregon State Police said. Kumar was arrested for Criminally Negligent Homicide and Reckless Endangering and lodged in the Deschutes County Jail.



Rajinder Kumar has been charged with homicide after two persons were killed when a semi-truck he was driving collided with their car.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Mamta Singh is the first Indian American elected to public office in Jersey City

DECEMBER 4, 2025

TRENTON, NJ (TIP): Mamta Singh has made history in Jersey City, becoming the first Indian American ever elected to public office in one of the United States' most prominent Indian American hubs.

Singh won a Council At-Large seat, marking a breakthrough moment for a community that has long been central to the city's identity but had never held a seat in the City Hall.

Her election came during a night of sweeping political shifts, with reformist James Solomon winning the mayoral runoff.

Singh has strong roots in grassroots organizing and nonprofit leadership. She is the founder of JCFamilies, one of Jersey City's most active community groups working with women, children, and working parents. She also launched Indians In Jersey City, an organization that supports immigrant families and keeps Indian cultural traditions alive



Mamta Singh won a Council At-Large seat, marking a breakthrough moment for a community that has long been central to the New Jersey city's identity but had never held a seat in the City Hall.

through festivals, gatherings, and community forums.

Her work over the years turned her into a trusted figure within the diaspora,

helping new immigrants navigate schools, services, and the broader challenges of settling into American city life.

HER POLITICAL CAMPAIGN

Running on James Solomon's 'Team Solomon' slate alongside Rolando Lavarro and Michael Griffin, Singh campaigned on stabilizing property taxes, improving recreation opportunities for young people, and strengthening support systems for working families. Her message of representation and community-focused governance resonated widely, especially among Indian American families who have lived in the city for decades without political visibility.

Jersey City is home to tens of thousands of Indian Americans, making it one of the largest Indian American population centers in the country. Despite this demographic strength, the community had never elected one of its own until now.

INDIAN-ORIGIN AMAN SANGER, 25, BECOMES SILICON VALLEY'S YOUNGEST BILLIONAIRE AS CURSOR'S VALUATION SOARS



Aman Sanger, the 25-year-old co-founder of the AI-powered coding platform Cursor has become one of the youngest self-made billionaires in the technology industry.

NOVEMBER 29, 2025

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP) : Aman Sanger, the 25-year-old co-founder of the AI-powered coding platform Cursor, is back in the global spotlight after his company's valuation climbed to an estimated \$29.3 billion following a major funding round announced this month. The raise, reported to be about \$2.3 billion, has made Sanger one of the youngest self-made billionaires in the technology industry.

Sanger co-founded Anysphere-the company that created Cursor-in 2022 with three fellow MIT graduates: Michael Truell, Sualeh Asif, and Arvid Lunnemark. The team began building Cursor out of their MIT dorm rooms, aiming to rethink how software is written in an era increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence.

Cursor uses large language models to generate, edit, and debug code from natural-language prompts, allowing developers to move faster and automate routine engineering tasks. The platform has seen rapid adoption worldwide, with industry reports suggesting it crossed \$100 million in annual recurring revenue within just over a year of launch. Several outlets now estimate that the company is approaching \$1 billion in annualized revenue.

The latest funding round drew investment from global heavyweights, including Nvidia, Google, Accel, and Andreessen Horowitz. Based on publicly reported shareholdings, Sanger's roughly 4.5 percent stake places his personal net worth at more than \$1.3 billion.

In recent interviews, Sanger has said that despite the soaring valuation, the company remains focused on reinvention and rapid iteration, noting that the pace of competition in AI demands constant vigilance.

With Cursor's meteoric rise, Sanger and his co-founders-Truell, Asif, and Lunnemark-have emerged as the newest faces of Silicon Valley's AI boom, and their next moves are being closely watched across the global tech industry.

Indian American Geospatial Specialist Siddharth "Sid" Pandey joins Penn State GEMS board

NOVEMBER 28, 2025

PENNSYLVANIA: Penn State University's College of Earth and Mineral Sciences has appointed Indian American geospatial specialist Siddharth "Sid" Pandey to the Graduates of Earth and Mineral Sciences (GEMS) board of directors for a three-year term.



Siddharth "Sid" Pandey has been appointed to the Graduates of Earth and Mineral Sciences (GEMS) board of directors for a three-year term.

Composed of 16 members - 15 plus the immediate past president, the GEMS board provides leadership and programming opportunities for the GEMS Alumni Society.

Pandey joins the board with Quentin Lawson-Parchment, office engineer at Promatech Inc, also appointed as a new member, according to a university release.

Pandey earned his bachelor's degree in geography in 2014. He also received a Master of Professional Studies degree in geographic information systems (GIS) from the University of Maryland.

Currently a manager at Deloitte & Touche LLP in the location intelligence practice, Pandey has more than 10 years of experience helping organizations make data-driven decisions with solutions leveraging geospatial data and technology.

He also serves on the board of directors for the Geospatial Professional Network (GPN) and previously served a 3-year term on the GPN's Vanguard Cabinet.

He was recognized in 2018 in the xyHt magazine's "40 Under 40" list of remarkable geospatial professionals. Geospatial World named him one of its "50 Rising Stars" in the geospatial industry in 2021 and he was listed in xyHt magazine's "22 Young Geospatial Professionals to Watch in 2022."

He was one of the GPN's Young Professional of the Year award recipients in 2022 and most recently, the GPN Leadership Award in 2023.

"This opportunity aligns perfectly with my passion for advancing the geospatial industry, supporting emerging professionals and my dedication to fostering a vibrant and engaged alumni community," Pandey said.

"Joining the GEMS Board allows me to give back to the institution that played a pivotal role in my career and also enables me to contribute to the success and growth of current and future students in the field."

Indian American Assistant Professor Udit Gupta gets Cornell research grant to reduce energy use in AI industries

DECEMBER 3, 2025

NEW YORK (TIP): Udit Gupta, an Indian American assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering at Cornell Tech, has received an inaugural AI and Climate Fast Grant to explore strategies to reduce energy use in AI industries and to integrate AI in environmental research.

He is one of eight Cornell research team chosen to receive an inaugural round of \$10,000 to \$25,000 grant funding to support research at the intersection of AI and climate science under The 2030 Project: A Cornell Climate Initiative, according to a media release.

Recent work by Cornell Engineering researchers found that at the current rate of AI growth, by 2030, AI would contribute between 24 million and 44 million metric tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere and use between 731 million and 1.125 billion cubic meters of water.

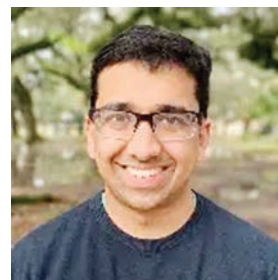
The Cornell AI Initiative, launched in 2022, is a university-wide radical collaboration that seeks to inform basic research into AI and to leverage AI and machine learning technologies to solve problems across many fields.

Gupta seeks to improve the sustainability, efficiency and scalability of AI with "EcoGPT," a generative AI interface that will enable users to parlay minimally slower AI response times into smaller carbon footprints.

"Industry benchmarks show that relaxing output generation by small delays - even a couple hundred milliseconds - can improve overall system throughput and energy efficiency by 2.5 times, highlighting a steep trade-off between lowered response times and system efficiency," Gupta said. "Our EcoGPT user studies will produce the first quantitative dataset on user preferences for 'green AI,' providing companies with the empirical evidence needed to design practical and sustainable service tiers."

His research lies at the intersection of computer architecture, systems, machine learning, and environmental sustainability. He focuses on co-designing solutions across the computing stack - including applications, algorithms, systems, architecture, circuits, and devices - to enhance the performance, efficiency, and sustainability of emerging technologies.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



Udit Gupta is one of eight Cornell research team chosen to receive an inaugural round of \$10,000 to \$25,000 grant funding to support research at the intersection of AI and climate science under The 2030 Project: A Cornell Climate Initiative

Classical Music Concert at Hindu Center Draws Enthusiastic Response



Parth, Pihu and Sonali offered a devotional prayer



Raj Dhingra sang Vande Mataram



Vidushi Kasturi Bandopadhyay held the audience spellbound with her graceful and melodious singing

**BY STAFF REPORTER
DECEMBER 3, 2025**

NEW YORK (TIP) : A serene and soulful evening of Indian classical music unfolded at the Hindu Center on Kissena Boulevard, Flushing, on Sunday, November 23, 2025, as the Sriniketan Foundation presented "A Divine Evening of Classical Music and Cultural Legacy." Organized by the Foundation's Founder and President, Vidushi Purnima Desai, the concert brought together acclaimed artists and an appreciative audience for a memorable cultural experience.

The event opened with a devotional prayer by young students Parth, Pihu and Sonali, whose disciplined performance set a reverent tone for the evening. This was followed by a stirring rendition of Vande Mataram, the iconic ode to the motherland penned by Bankim Chandra Chatterji. The piece, rendered by Raj Dhingra, moved the audience to rise in collective respect, creating an atmosphere of solemn dignity that paved the way for the classical presentations to follow.

The first major performance of the evening featured noted vocalist Vidushi Kasturi Bandopadhyay, who presented bhajans and semi-classical compositions including thumri and dadra. Drawing from ragas such as Kafi and Khamaj, she offered a delicate blend of grace, emotion and technical finesse. Her evocative interpretation and expressive voice held the audience spellbound.

A highlight of the program was the sitar-sarod jugalbandi by Supratik Sengupta and Soumya Chakravarty. Performing Raag Rageshwari set to the 10-beat Jhaptal, the two instrumentalists engaged in a dynamic musical dialogue. Their interplay-at times competitive, at times complementary-produced a vibrant tapestry of melody, showcasing the depth of Indian classical string traditions.

Providing sensitive support throughout the evening, harmonium artist Anirban Chakraborty lent melodic structure and emotional nuance to each performance, while tabla maestro Mir Naqibul Islam drew admiration for his impeccable rhythm, clarity and expressive accompaniment. His control over tempo and mood gave each composition an added dimension, earning repeated appreciation from the gathering.

The event was conceived and executed under the



The sitar-sarod jugalbandi by Supratik Sengupta and Soumya Chakravarty evoked repeated applause of the audience



Rohit Pandya introducing Vidushi Purnima Desai



Thanksgiving by Vidushi Purnima Desai

guidance of Vidushi Purnima Desai, a respected cultural figure hailing from Kolkata, a city renowned for its contributions to Indian arts and literature. Desai organized the program as a free offering to the community, aligning the presentation of classical

music with the sanctity of the temple setting-an aspect many attendees described as particularly meaningful.

The Foundation's cultural mission was also supported by Tejal Desai, daughter of Purnima Desai, whose quiet yet impactful role included coordinating reception arrangements and ensuring a warm and organized welcome for attendees. Volunteers including Devendrabhai and Vidyaben were acknowledged for their dedication and courteous assistance.

Rohit and Meena Pandya, long associated with the cultural initiatives of the Sriniketan Foundation, expressed gratitude for being invited to document and share the significance of the evening. They described the concert as not only a musical event but also a celebration of heritage, devotion and community spirit.

The audience left the Hindu Center with a sense of enrichment, many remarking on the rare opportunity to witness such an array of classical talent within a spiritually charged environment. The concert marked yet another milestone in Sriniketan Foundation's ongoing efforts to promote and preserve Indian classical arts in the diaspora community.



Time to honor the artists



Bhavana Reddy's Students Shine at International Center for Kuchipudi Dance Annual Showcase in Philadelphia

DECEMBER 3, 2025

PHILADELPHIA (TIP): West Chester East High School Auditorium was the setting for the Annual Student Showcase of the International Center for Kuchipudi Dance (ICKD) on November 29, 2025. The event showcased Kuchipudi's grace, skill, and tradition, which are the principal characteristics of this ancient Indian classical dance.

Piyush Singh, Head of Press and Culture, Indian Consulate in New York, formally opened the event and was accompanied by prominent members of the arts and culture community in the greater Philadelphia area.

Founded by the world-renowned Kuchipudi virtuoso, Bhavana Reddy, the International Centre for Kuchipudi Dance is an institution, fostering a community for Kuchipudi. As the daughter of Padma Bhushan Awardees Drs. Raja and Radha Reddy, she is continuing the Reddy family's illustrious legacy. Students from states such as Texas, California, Arizona, Illinois and Pennsylvania showcased their hard work and dedication and delivered an entertaining performance filled with traditional Kuchipudi pieces.

Through virtual training with Bhavana Reddy over the last few years, her students came together to attend intensive rehearsals with her in Philadelphia this month and create the outstanding show they presented. The works presented



Lighting the lamp. Consul Piyush Singh and Bhavana Reddy lit the traditional lamp and offered prayers to Nataraja



The Guru, Bhavana Reddy, also gave a performance



A captivating performance by Bhavana Reddy's students



Consul Piyush Singh with the performers who were presented certificates

during the performance Mandooka Sabdam, Jathiswaram, Annamacharya Keerthana, Jathikattu and Rajashri Sabdam and the institution continues to

grow, building upon the teachings of her gurus.

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India's Russia ties shield its interests

Russia didn't support China in UNSC after revocation of Art 370.



By Asoke Mukerji

The 23rd India-Russia summit on December 4-5 is a watershed moment for the two countries' "special and privileged partnership." The resilience of the summit mechanism demonstrates the high degree of trust between the two, enabling them to navigate India-Russia relations in an increasingly turbulent world.

The focus of the bilateral partnership is mutually beneficial cooperation. Defense and energy initiatives agreed upon during the previous summits have contributed to India's national interests. During Op Sindoor in May, the jointly manufactured Su-30MKI aircraft and BrahMos missiles, as well as the S-400 air defense system purchased from Russia in 2018, played a critical role in India's robust response to cross-border terrorism. Russian-built stealth frigates inducted into the Navy in the western Indian Ocean protect key sea lanes transporting India's trade through the Suez Canal. AK-203 rifles are being manufactured through a joint venture in Amethi for the Army. The summit is expected to enhance such cooperation.

While the fate of Russian oil exports to India dominates the headlines, the focus will be on energy joint investments, which provides a long-term sustainable framework for strategic cooperation. These include Indian investments in Russia's oilfields and Russian investments in India's oil-refining sector. Russia is the only country that has invested with technology in India's nuclear energy sector after the 2008 Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal. The Kudankulam NPP in Tamil Nadu provides 2000 MW of power to Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karnataka and Kerala. The summit is expected to consider the proposal for Russian collaboration in the manufacture of small modular reactors in India.

Two-way trade until March 2025 stood at \$68.7 billion, of which Russian oil exports were valued at \$63.8



Indian PM Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin in New Delhi, December 4, 2025

billion. Diversification of bilateral trade is needed to achieve the proposed target of \$100 billion by 2030. The negotiation of a Eurasian Economic Union-India Free Trade Agreement, which began in August 2025, and the use of national currencies to finance bilateral trade and investment are two options. A decision to allow a designated Indian commercial bank to operate in Russia along the lines of Russia's Sberbank, which has been operating in India since 2010, will provide support for bilateral economic relations. This includes integrating opportunities for digital economic cooperation and a future India-Russia digital corridor.

India's partnership with Russia (and Iran) in connectivity projects in Eurasia is hostage to unilateral western sanctions on Russia, Iran and some Indian entities. This has prevented connectivity to boost economic relations.

At the same time, the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor has become functional, providing another

connectivity route linking India to Russia's Far East and the Arctic. Maritime cooperation has become a new dimension of India-Russia strategic partnership. President Putin was the only P5 leader who attended the online UNSC meeting on maritime security chaired by PM Modi in August 2021. In November 2025, connectivity, skill development, shipbuilding and the blue economy were identified as priorities for cooperation.

The number of Indians studying medicine in Russia has grown from 19,700 in 2019 to over 31,000 in 2024. The two sides are negotiating a labor mobility agreement for the employment of Indian workers in Russia. A holistic framework for educational, cultural, tourism and youth cooperation, proposed in 2020 as the Ganga-Volga Dialogue initiative, needs to be revived.

Russia has endorsed India becoming a permanent member of a reformed UN Security Council (UNSC). This requires an amendment of the UN Charter, overcoming the veto power of the P5, to make the UN more effective and meet India's call for "reformed multilateralism".

Until that happens, Russia's strategic partnership with India would play a role in safeguarding India's core interests. This was evident in August 2019 after the revocation of Article 370, when Russia did not support China's attempt to revive the "India-Pak Question" in the UNSC.

Putin proposed the "indivisible security" of Eurasia in June 2024 as the fulcrum of a multipolar world order. Today, as the US and China are forging a "spheres-of-influence" based G-2, engaging with Russia on how to sustain indivisible security in a multipolar Asia should be a priority for India.

(Asoke Mukerji is a retired Indian diplomat)

Russia balancing China with the India pivot

Moscow needs partners who will support it in shaping the global system



By Nivedita Kapoor

Russian President Vladimir Putin is in New Delhi on a state visit for the 23rd India-Russia summit. Amid an ongoing war and an unstable world order, what does the special and privileged strategic partnership mean for Russia today? A look at Russian official documents offers a hint.

The 2021 National Security Strategy of Russia marked a small but significant change in its foreign policy objectives. It noted the development of a strategic partnership with China and India in the same sentence, unlike previous versions when the point about India came after China. The latest foreign policy concept, released in 2023, repeated this trend, mentioning China and India together in the subheading on regional tracks for Russian priorities.

This seemingly minor change pointed to a deeper concern in the Russian administration about the rise of China. While relations with the rising power had never been better, the asymmetries in the partnership were all too visible. Russia's recognition of this imbalance pointed to how it sought to address it - by strengthening ties with India.

But Russia's policy choices subverted its intentions, as the war with Ukraine in 2022 made China the most promising partner to replace the loss of European markets (except in oil trade). The situation revealed the skewed nature of Russia's broader engagement with the Asia-Pacific. Trade with China soared to \$244.8 billion last year, making it Russia's leading trade partner, constituting over a third of its foreign trade turnover, with India a distant second at 8.8%.

With an economy under stress and resources directed



Bonhomie: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Tianjin on September 1, 2025 -File Photo : ANI

to executing its war, Russia now faces the challenge of reducing its over-dependence on China. The cost is not just economic but also geopolitical, where China's influence across Eurasia has been expanding. While the strategic value Beijing and Moscow have for each remains high, providing a strong basis to their relationship, the fact that China, as a power, is today in a different league is not lost on anyone.

In this situation, it is not surprising that the need to further the partnership with India acquires a renewed logic for Russia, providing an opportunity to balance its pivot to the East, vital for its foreign policy ambitions. The visit offers a chance to use Russia's strengths to diversify economic ties in areas like agriculture, infrastructure, shipbuilding, space and nuclear energy. Longer-term sustenance of bilateral ties necessitates

the continuation of defense-export contracts, maintenance of energy ties and identification of new areas of economic cooperation. Moscow seeks to secure Indian support for its multilateral agenda in non-western institutions, and also to reduce the prospects of one power dominating their functioning.

This bilateral agenda serves another purpose - that of underpinning the Russian worldview about itself, which reflects in its foreign policy. Since 2022, Moscow has positioned itself as aligned with the non-western world, where it occupies a key position in an emerging multipolar order. The Russian narrative of the decline of the West rests on the extent to which the non-western world pursues an independent foreign policy, wherein Russia is a valued partner, reflecting its reach in the Global South.

The other dominant worldviews currently guiding foreign policy - Russia as an anti-colonial power, a conservative civilizational-state espousing traditional values and a Eurasian power - all require recognition from the external world towards whom this narrative is directed. Without a strong backing from India, these Russian attempts to reorder its status in the international system would receive a setback.

Moscow's self-identification as a great power, which paradoxically can no longer shape the contours of a new world order on its own, entails building partnerships with those who will have a role in shaping the evolving international system. In this pursuit, the role of India as one of the leading candidates cannot be denied.

(Nivedita Kapoor is Assistant Professor, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, Higher School of Economics, Moscow.)

Trump-MbS summit - \$1 trillion among friends

The exceptional amity heralds new domains of strategic cooperation, with the potential to anchor bilateral, regional and global developments in a more consequential manner



By Mahesh Sachdev

As adrenaline-high at the Saudi-American Summit last week demonstrated, the 80-year-old bilateral alliance remains perhaps the oldest transactional deal still going strong. It predates the establishment of post-Second World War global architectures such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Bretton Woods Institutions. It was conceived as a secret "oil-for-security" strategic partnership signed on Valentine's Day 1945 between U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rehman al-Saud on the USS Quincy in the Suez Canal Area. Originally intended to last 60 years, it was renewed in 2005.

Thanks to the exceptional amity between U.S. President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), this arrangement is currently being reset to the new domains of strategic cooperation, with the potential to anchor bilateral, regional and global developments in a more consequential manner.

THE TRAJECTORY OF TIES

During the past 80 years, U.S.-Saudi ties have not always had smooth sailing. First, thanks to shale technology, the U.S. has become the world's largest producer of crude and a significant exporter. While this has reduced the commercial content of the relationship, the U.S.'s exports have remained steady, leading to a decline in the bilateral merchandise trade and a balance swinging in America's favor. As Saudi Arabia's trading partner, the U.S. now ranks below China and India.

Historically, the ties came under strain during the Ramadan War of 1973, when Saudi Arabia joined an Arab oil embargo. In the mid-1980s, the Saudis surprised the Americans by buying intermediate-range ballistic missiles from China, a country they did not even recognize then. There have been tensions as the American military supplies were staunch during the Yemen war, affecting Saudi offensive and defensive capabilities against the Houthis.

The assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi commentator working with The Washington Post, in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018 jolted ties, and the Biden presidency initially decided to keep MbS at arm's-length. The friction pushed the Saudis into diversifying their ties with China and Russia.

In December 2022, China's President Xi Jinping visited Riyadh and held three separate summits with the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Arab and Muslim countries, respectively. Later, Beijing also facilitated the resumption of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Since late 2023, the U.S. support for Israel's brutal military campaign in Gaza has also made it difficult for Riyadh to turn a new page in bilateral ties.

The Saudis have resisted U.S. pressure to formally recognize Israel, pre-conditioning it on the creation of a pathway to Palestinian statehood, which Israel has ruled out.

NEW CONTOURS UNDER THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

There has been a positive sea change in bilateral ties since Mr. Trump took over the U.S. presidency this year. His first visit of his second term abroad was to Saudi Arabia in May 2025, where an agreement to supply \$142 billion worth of military equipment was secured. The new contours of this new relationship were in evidence at the no-holds-barred state visit. It included a moving guard of honor, a fly-past, a private lunch and a 300-guest banquet, both hosted by Mr. Trump, who also attended the investment forum at which deals worth \$270 billion were signed.

On his part, MbS readily agreed to raise the promised Saudi investments in the U.S. economy from \$600 billion to \$1 trillion without a fixed time frame. The amount is nearly as big as the country's GDP and the entire corpus of the Kingdom's Public Investment Fund (PIF), which



'The evident MbS-Trump bonhomie during the White House Summit signals the U.S. reclaiming primacy in Riyadh'

-Photo Credit: AFP

already has 40% of its foreign investments in the U.S. economy. The groundbreaking Strategic Defense Agreement was signed, formally designating Saudi Arabia as a "major non-NATO ally" and committing the U.S. to actively assist Saudi Arabia if it came under an attack.

The two sides also made tangible progress towards collaboration in civil nuclear energy and the supply of state-of-the-art Artificial Intelligence (AI) chips. Given the Trumpian propensity for "truthful hyperbole" and Saudi economic stringency, observers are skeptical about all key promises made during the visit being fully realized.

Moreover, the bilateral differences on basic issues such as the global oil glut, Riyadh-Tel Aviv reconciliation, Iran, and the Kingdom's drive towards strategic autonomy were papered over during the Summit, which was conspicuous by the absence of any final communiqué. The visit can, nevertheless, be considered as a qualified bilateral success, particularly as it managed to bury the past ghost issues.

The robust revival of the U.S.-Saudi ties in Trump 2.0 is bound to have a regional impact. Under MbS, Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's largest economy, has abandoned its low-key diplomatic profile, adopting a more assertive and visible pursuit of national interests. This process has accelerated after the two-year-long Israeli military campaign that has subdued Iran, the Kingdom's long-standing rival in the region and the Islamic world.

MbS has already persuaded Mr. Trump to drop sanctions against Syria's new regime and has asked for stronger American intervention to end the Sudanese civil war. Even the Iranian President has sought the MbS facilitation of the resumption of nuclear talks with Washington. The robust endorsement by the White House during the recent visit would further empower MbS, who at 40 years could be around for decades, making him an indispensable, long-term U.S. interlocutor as the region's geopolitical architecture gets reconfigured.

While the visit was silent on global issues, there are signs of subterranean bilateral coordination. Although oil has largely disappeared as the driver for bilateral economic synergy, the Saudi economy continues to be highly dependent on oil export revenues. Moreover, as recent U.S. sanctions against the two Russian oil majors demonstrated, Washington intends to continue its dominance of the global oil market. Both Saudis and

Americans want the oil price to be at a moderate, sustainable level. The concerted American actions on sanctions against Iran, Venezuela and two Russian oil majors can only help stem the emerging supply-side oil glut, shore up the price and create market space for higher exports by both Saudi Arabia and the U.S. For the U.S., reinforced ties with Saudi Arabia would also stave off the recent encroachments by China and Russia on its turf, and complement its regional Pax Americana.

IMPACT ON INDIA

The Washington Summit does have several implications for India. First, it may provide advanced U.S. military equipment access to Pakistan, with which Riyadh concluded a strategic mutual defense agreement in September 2025, apparently with the U.S. nod-and-wink.

Second, although India, as the world's third-largest oil importer, would prefer oil prices to be low, moderation and stability in the oil market may still be preferable as it navigates for alternative sources to Russian supplies.

Third, soaring Saudi ambitions for its post-oil Vision-2030, such as AI data centers, may create economic opportunities for India.

Fourth, curbing China's foray into Saudi Arabia may open the door wider for India. India also needs to prioritize entering into a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, the emerging modus vivendi with Israel may also facilitate the work on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, which transits through Saudi Arabia. At a different level, White House's differential treatment of MbS shows that its single-minded pursuit of economic transactions continues to trump all previous qualms, such as human rights and proliferation concerns, may light India's pathway to an economic peace with the Americans.

The evident MbS-Trump bonhomie during the White House Summit signals the U.S. reclaiming primacy in Riyadh. The locus of the relationship has, nevertheless, shifted from the past "oil-for-security" paradigm. As the new, more nebulous drivers congeal and Saudi Arabia asserts its sovereign autonomy, the alliance enters an uncharted territory. While much may remain unaltered, it would, nevertheless, be fascinating to watch its progression.

(Mahesh Sachdev is a retired Indian Ambassador, specializing in the Arab world and oil issues)

Europe is holding the line against Trump's and Putin's plans for Ukraine. But it won't be able to for ever



By Martin Kettle

In the 21st-century imbalance of power, Europe and Nato have neither the arms nor the wealth to impel Russia or the US to take its peace settlement seriously

The failure of this week's peace talks between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff fits into a now well-established pattern of standoffs on Ukraine during Trump's second term. But the dynamic that produced these talks may be becoming more entrenched. The US and Russian interests driving the process have not changed, while the conflict on the ground is intensifying. The lack of progress this week means there will be another attempt to end the war soon, and perhaps another after that, until, one day, there is some kind of US-backed deal to halt the conflict on terms broadly favoring Russia.

The geopolitical algorithm driving this effort is too consistent to ignore. It has been repeated ever since Trump re-entered the White House in January. On the campaign trail, Trump had claimed he could stop the war in a day. That was never going to happen. But from 12 February onwards, when Trump first talked directly to Putin about Ukraine, the intention and approach have not altered. There is no reason to suppose they will do so now. Indeed, Tuesday's impasse may spur them on again.

The internal logic of the interactions that have brought us to this point is familiar by now. Trump refuses to give arms to Ukraine. Instead he attempts a bilateral deal with Putin to stop the war at Ukraine's territorial expense. Russia bombs Ukraine and makes attritional battlefield progress. Ukraine and its other allies mobilize to challenge any emerging pro-Russian deal. The US rebalances its plans to take account of the objections. Talks take place. Putin says no deal. The war continues, but so does the diplomacy.

As this process repeats itself, as it will, one of two things will happen. Either the process will be recognized as achieving nothing, or some aspect of it will be changed to make an outcome more likely. The first option, abandonment of the process, is a possibility, but this would mean humiliation for Trump. It would also mean the war would intensify and become more lethal, destructive and destabilizing. Pressures to stop it would thus recur, leading to the resumption of the US diplomatic effort, but from a weaker position than today.

The second option, the alteration or bypassing of some aspect of the process, therefore seems more likely. This inevitably places Nato and Europe firmly in the crosshairs of Moscow, in particular, and also of Washington. It explains why the Kremlin hinted yesterday that there were still agreements worth making - agreements, in other words, between Russia and the US, from which Europe is excluded. Putin could not be clearer that he sees Europe as Trump's weak link. "Europe is preventing the US administration



Russian President Vladimir Putin, presidential envoy Kirill Dmitriev and foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov attend a meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner at the Kremlin in Moscow, December 2, 2025.

Credit / VCG

from achieving peace on Ukraine," he said before the talks with Witkoff this week. "They are on the side of war," he said a little later. "Russia does not intend to fight Europe, but if Europe starts, we are ready right now."

Some of this is nonsense. But Putin's key insight is right. Europe - more accurately Nato minus the US - is indeed managing to frustrate Trump from making the kind of deal with Putin that he wants. The Nato allies' consistent dedication to this task has not been widely celebrated, for fear of provoking Trump, but it is impossible to miss. The effort has been intense, from the moment that Trump and JD Vance publicly abused Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his Oval Office visit on 28 February. It has also been more or less successful.

This so-called "coalition of the willing" has the power to wound US-Russia plans, but it lacks the power to shape them. The coalition involves most European nations, plus Canada, all of whom have committed to material support for postwar Ukraine. Its aims have been pursued ad hoc, and partly within Nato, as in yesterday's foreign ministers' meeting at Nato HQ in Brussels, from which the US secretary of state Marco Rubio was conspicuously absent.

Either way, the European scramble on Ukraine's behalf has repeatedly managed to hold the line against Trump and Putin. It did so again this week when the Witkoff plan was tweaked

before the Putin meeting. Hugging Zelenskyy closer has been a key part of this effort ever since the Oval Office disaster. It would be surprising if Zelenskyy was not being intensively advised and consulted by the allies at almost every turn. I would bet that, if we ever get access to a log of his messages, memos, meetings and travels, we will find that Keir Starmer's national security adviser, Jonathan Powell, plays a big role in this effort.

Yet this cannot and will not continue indefinitely. The central problem for both Ukraine and Europe is that the 21st-century imbalance of power is turned against them. In this new imbalance, Europe and Nato have not enough arms, power or wealth to leverage an alternative peace settlement that Russia and the US are compelled to take seriously or accept. The postwar idea of the west may not be dead, but it is in intensive care. European and some American surgeons are battling with all the skill at their disposal to keep it alive. The truth, though, is that Trump could very easily pull the plug tomorrow.

If that were to happen, the danger of Russian troops eventually marching down Whitehall might remain remote. But the threat to Kyiv's main street, Khreshchatyk, would undoubtedly increase. Whether Trump grasps this, or cares, is hard to say. It is not impossible that an effective Ukrainian government, whether headed by Zelenskyy or not, could continue to function and win the financial and

military support of international backers to begin reconstruction. Much would depend on whether the west's frozen Russian assets, worth £253bn, ended up in Kyiv or are returned to Moscow.

Either way, Nato could then prove to be yesterday's solution to tomorrow's threat. The Nato nations would all still have their weapons and armed forces. They would retain their commitment to an independent Ukraine and to their common values. They would also continue to possess what the London-based historian Georgios Varouxakis, author of the widely praised *The West: The History of an Idea*, calls their "capacity for self-criticism and self-correction". But the strategic self-correction required of Europe in the absence of a fully committed US partner would be arduous, and could involve a price tag that few European nations and voters would be willing to pay.

It may not be true, yet, that Trump's US has reached a fateful fork in the road, where it decides to choose between Europe and Ukraine on the one hand, and Russia on the other. But that place and that moment are getting closer than at any time since 1945. The looming tragedy is that history has conferred upon Europe a role in support of Ukraine that it is ultimately unable to fulfil to anything like the degree required.

(Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist)



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SCAN ME

Supreme Court hands Trump victory in fight over Texas congressional map

The Supreme Court cleared the way for a voting map in Texas that could allow Republicans to win up to five additional seats in the House

DECEMBER 4, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): The Supreme Court on Thursday, December 4, handed President Donald Trump and Republicans a major political victory by clearing the way for a new Texas congressional map that was drawn in the hope of flipping up to five House seats to the GOP.

"The District Court improperly inserted itself into an active primary campaign, causing much confusion and upsetting the delicate federal-state balance in elections," the court said in an unsigned order that put a lower court decision on hold.

Justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas and Neil M. Gorsuch wrote a separate concurrence.

The court's three liberal justices strenuously objected. Justice Elena

Kagan, writing for the liberals, wrote, that Thursday's order "disserves the millions of Texans whom the District Court found were assigned to their new districts based on their race."

The order marks the latest development in a high-stakes battle between Republican and Democratic states that are seeking partisan advantage ahead of the 2026 midterms. The states are taking the unusual step of redistricting congressional seats at the halfway point between the U.S. Census Bureau's nationwide surveys of the population, which occur every 10 years.

Trump sparked the fight when he pushed Texas Republicans to redraw the state's congressional boundaries as part of a bid to help the GOP maintain its narrow, five-seat advantage in the U.S. House during the contests next year.

Candidates have until Dec. 8 to file to run in next year's races in Texas. The legal fight has upended planning about which districts candidates in both parties plan to compete in.

A divided panel of federal judges found last month that the new map improperly discriminated against Black and Latino residents. It ordered the state to revert to a map drawn in 2021 that is more favorable to Democrats. Republican officials in Texas quickly asked the Supreme Court to overturn that ruling.

Alito, who is the high court's representative responsible for addressing emergency cases from the region, placed a temporary pause on the lower-court order Friday to give the justices more time to weigh Texas's appeal.

Texas's recent congressional map



The Supreme Court on Thursday, December 4, cleared the way for a new Texas congressional map that was drawn in the hope of flipping up to five House seats to the GOP.

battle began during the summer after the Trump administration's Justice Department sent a letter to the state threatening to sue. It said a handful of congressional districts that paired groups of Black and Latino voters to form a voting majority were unconstitutional.

Amiwala Celebrates Evening of Action With Nearly 100 Volunteers



Amiwala Celebrates Evening of Action With Nearly 100 Volunteers on December 3, 2025 Screenshot

DECEMBER 4, 2025

SKOKIE, IL (TIP): Congressional candidate Bushra Amiwala welcomed nearly a hundred volunteers into Bushra for Congress headquarters on Tuesday, December 2 night to celebrate the momentum her campaign has built so far.

It was the largest volunteer gathering any candidate in the district has held to date.

"Look around this room. Every age, race, gender, ethnic background and geographic part of the district is represented," Amiwala, an elected school board member, told the crowd. "Every single person in this room has a story. Everyone here has a direct tie to our district and to our movement. That is the type of people-powered campaign we are running. It is relationship-driven. It is built on policy and solutions. I cannot do this alone, and I'm so grateful that all of you are with me."

Amiwala was joined by Miracle Jenkins, a former IL-09 candidate and lead organizer for Bernie Sanders. Jenkins recently endorsed Amiwala for Congress.

"I'm happy to endorse Bushra," Jenkins told the attendees. "Bushra understands,

much like Zohran Mamdani, that the core issue of our day is affordability. It's making sure that young Americans like ourselves are able to buy a home. We're not here to pursue half measures. We're here to pass aggressive policies that move America forward."

Attendees enjoyed dinner from Pita Inn and cupcakes courtesy of Kinza's Cakes. The event marked the beginning of major phonebanking, textbanking and canvassing drives to engage voters across the district.

"Bushra understands the challenges of our generation like no other candidate does," said Evan Arvizu. "Right now we're facing the worst housing shortage in our nation's history. We're on the precipice of climate catastrophe and millions of people are losing their health insurance. No one is better equipped to take on these issues than Bushra."

Everyone present at the event had the opportunity to register for volunteering opportunities with the campaign. To view upcoming activities and get involved, click here.

(Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news)

USCIS Increases Screening and Vetting by Shortening Some EAD Validity Periods

DECEMBER 4, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): USCIS announced a Policy Manual update that reduces the maximum validity period for certain Employment Authorization Documents (EADs). USCIS stated the goal is to require more frequent vetting of individuals applying for authorization to work in the United States.

Under this update, USCIS stated that the maximum validity period for certain initial and renewal EADs will be reduced from 5 years to 18 months for specific categories, including refugees, asylees, individuals granted withholding of removal, and certain applicants with pending cases (such as pending asylum or adjustment of status). USCIS indicated the change affects EAD applications pending or filed on or after December 5, 2025.

USCIS also stated that, under H.R. 1 (Public Law 119-21, signed July 4, 2025), certain TPS- and parole-related EAD categories may be limited to one year, or to the end date of the authorized parole period or TPS duration-whichever is shorter-depending on the category and filing date. USCIS indicated these requirements apply to Form I-765 applications pending or filed on or after July 12, 2025.

What this means for EAD applicants

For many applicants, this may mean shorter EAD cards and more frequent renewals than in prior years. If you rely on an EAD for ongoing employment, it is important to plan ahead to reduce the risk of a work authorization gap.

WHAT TO DO NOW

Check your current EAD expiration date and plan early for renewal.

Keep copies of your prior approvals and filing history organized.

If you are unsure whether your category is impacted, speak with immigration counsel to confirm how the rule applies to your situation.



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

PROJECT FAQ UNDER BLOG

Q1. Which EAD categories are included in the 18-month maximum?

USCIS stated the reduced maximum validity period applies to specific categories, including refugees, asylees, individuals granted withholding of removal, and certain applicants with pending cases (such as pending asylum or adjustment of status), for EAD applications pending or filed on or after Dec. 5, 2025.

Q2. Is USCIS saying all EADs will be only 18 months now?

No. USCIS described changes for certain categories. Different validity period limits may apply to certain TPS- and parole-related categories under H.R. 1, depending on the category and filing date.

Q3. Could this lead to more frequent renewals?

Yes. Shorter validity periods generally mean some applicants may need to renew their EADs more often.

USCIS link:
<https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/uscis-increases-screening-vetting-of-alien-workers>

CONTACT INFORMATION : If you or your family members have any questions about how immigration and nationality laws in the United States may affect you, or if you want to access additional information about immigration and nationality laws in the United States or Canada, please do not hesitate to contact the immigration and nationality lawyers at NPZ Law Group. You can reach us by emailing info@visaserve.com or by calling 551-276-1864 extension 104. We also invite you to visit our website at www.visaserve.com for more information.

(Source: Visaserve)

Donald Trump Gets Court Win Over National Guard Deployment in DC



National Guard patrol in front of the Washington Monument on the National Mall -Credit: AP

DECEMBER 4, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP): A federal appeals court on Thursday, December 4, granted President Donald Trump a temporary victory in his bid to keep National Guard troops stationed in Washington, halting a lower court ruling that would have forced their withdrawal in the coming days, says a Newsweek report.

In a brief order, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit lifted an injunction requiring the troops to leave the capital by December 11.

The move allows Trump to continue a deployment he launched this summer and expanded after the November 26 shooting of two National Guard members near the White House. The

order came in a lawsuit filed by District of Columbia Attorney General Brian Schwab, who argues the president has overstepped his authority by using the Guard for domestic policing.

Newsweek reached out to Schwab's office for comment via email and the Department of Justice via its contact form on Thursday afternoon.

WHY IT MATTERS

Thursday's ruling is the latest in a back-and-forth between the courts, the Trump administration, and its critics in recent months over federal deployments to cities around the country. The president has argued that federalizing the National Guard is necessary to tackle rising crime, including in Washington, D.C., despite local leaders insisting figures have been on the decline.

Appeals Court Judges Patricia Millett, an Obama appointee, and Trump appointees Gregory Katsas and Neomi Rao, granted the Trump administration's plea for an administrative stay, pending any further orders by the court. The order said this was not to be taken as a ruling on the merits of Cobb's motion.

For the Trump administration, this allows the current operation to continue in Washington, D.C., which in part is aiding in its immigration crackdown.

(Source: Newsweek)

Maryland House speaker steps down from role where she made history



Adrienne A. Jones was the first Black person and first woman to lead the Maryland House of Delegates. She said it's time for a new generation to lead.

DECEMBER 4, 2025

ANNAPOLIS (TIP): Maryland House Speaker Adrienne A. Jones (D-Baltimore County) on Thursday, December 4, said she will step down from her leadership position, marking the end of an era where she made history in 2019 as the state's first Black woman to serve in the role.

"When elected Speaker, I never intended this to be forever," Jones said in a statement, where she pointed to changing seasons in her life as the reason for her departure. "I wanted to help build the next generation of House leaders and prepare them for the challenges in front of us as a State. Now is that time - and I look forward to seeing this mighty House of Delegates continue to grow."

The New York Times sues Pentagon



NEW YORK (TIP): The New York Times sued the Pentagon on Thursday, December 4, accusing the department of infringing on the constitutional rights of journalists with the press restrictions it imposed earlier this year. Those restrictions seek to "restrict journalists' ability to do what journalists have always done—ask questions of government employees and gather information to report stories that take the public beyond official pronouncements," the newspaper argued. Most of the Pentagon press corps turned in their badges and walked out two months ago instead of signing on to the new policy, which threatens to revoke the credentials of journalists who seek and report information not approved for public release by the department.

The Pentagon, meanwhile, held a press briefing on Tuesday, September 2, with those who did agree to the restrictions—a group that included far-right influencer Laura Loomer and former Republican lawmaker Matt Gaetz, who withdrew his bid to become Trump's attorney general last year over sexual misconduct allegations, which he has denied. Gaetz, who now hosts a show on the right-wing One America News Network, wore his old congressional

jacket to the press briefing, which had his former title of "representative" stitched on the front above his name.

On Thursday, SitRep spoke with Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth, a combat veteran who sits on the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations committees. Duckworth is calling for more answers from the administration on the Sept. 2 strikes and access to video of the incident. Adm. Bradley briefed the chairs and ranking members of the Armed Services and Intelligence committees in each chamber, but Duckworth said that information needs to be made available to all members of Congress.

Based on what she's learned so far, Duckworth said she believes that the Sept. 2 strike was "illegal." The survivors of the initial strike were "in the water clinging to debris," she said, dismissing the administration's reported justification that they were continuing the mission.

That "goes against every international law of warfare" and "even the most basic ethics class you got as a young officer in the military," Duckworth said.

When asked whether Hegseth was likely to be held accountable over this controversy and Signalgate, Duckworth said it depends on how Trump calculates this. "This is all about Donald Trump's personal self-preservation—deciding whether or not this is now too much and Hegseth needs to go. But Hegseth is also supremely good at sucking up to Donald Trump and throwing other people under the bus, which is what he's doing with the admiral [Bradley] at this point," she said.

Board of Public Works Approves More than \$779 Million for Projects Across Maryland



Treasurer Derek E. Davis, Governor Wes Moore, and Comptroller Brooke E. Lierman

DECEMBER 3, 2025

ANNAPOLIS, MD. (TIP):

Comptroller Brooke E. Lierman joined Governor Wes Moore and Treasurer Derek E. Davis in approving more than 70 initiatives representing a total expenditure of more than \$779 million during a Board of Public Works meeting on Wednesday.

The approvals included awarding a five-year contract, at the request of the State Board of Elections, to Tenex Software Solutions of Tampa, Fla., for implementation of a statewide elections pollbook solution. The new, modernized solution will be utilized by Maryland voters starting in 2028, with options to extend through 2034.

The pollbook solution is one of several major technology modernization initiatives being undertaken by the Board of Elections, along with a new voting system for the 2028 election year, a

voter registration database, and a recently-completed campaign finance reporting system.

Comptroller Lierman voted against two requests from the Department of General Services for one-year extensions on two Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan projects, citing the ample time agencies had to encumber the money. The measure passed 2-1.

"As folks know, I have concerns about voting for extensions of funds that should have already been used," Comptroller Lierman said. "We give people a long time and we give our agencies a long time to encumber the money. They did not in these two circumstances."

In all, the Board of Public Works approved 74 items, representing a total State expenditure of \$779,499,054.57, including:

Grant agreements for two recipients for two projects located in two counties with a total value of \$758,142.

Four items awarding \$2,404,798.55 to prime certified small business primes

Four items awarding \$10,146,979.76 to certified minority business enterprise primes

Two items awarding \$1,395,743.06 to Employment Works Program providers

12 items awarded with established participation goals for minority business enterprises.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Dissidence continues for Mark Carney in the Liberal caucus as Steven Guilbeault's replacement is announced



Prime Minister Mark Carney

DECEMBER 1, 2025

OTTAWA (TIP): Problems refuse to die down for Prime Minister Mark Carney even after the British Columbian Premier David Eby offered to talk with Alberta and Ottawa about the new pipeline on the condition that the existing ban on tanker traffic off his province's northern coast remains in place.

Prime Minister Mark Carney and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on November 27 to carry forward their shared missions. While this framework for an agreement will strengthen federal-provincial collaboration in the energy sector to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, unlock the full potential of Alberta's energy resources, and create hundreds of thousands of new high-paying careers for Canadians, it has led to dissidence within the ruling Liberal caucus.

Career environmentalist and Minister Steven Guilbeault did not waste any time quitting his membership of Carney's Cabinet by reiterating his position as a key voice on the environment.

While distancing himself from the Liberal government on the issue of the MOU with the Alberta government, Steven Guilbeault circulated a three-

page letter alleging that much of the policy he worked on "is or is about to be dismantled."

The BC Premier, David Eby, too, has opposed the Alberta-Ottawa deal throughout.

Unmindful of the opposition, Prime Minister Mark Carney has gone ahead and named Marc Miller, a former federal minister who represents a Montreal riding, as the new minister of culture and identity, in place of Steven Guilbeault.

Mark Carney also made a few new appointments, including a couple of changes in his cabinet.

Other changes and appointments include Joël Lightbound, currently Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, who will also serve as Québec Lieutenant.

Also, Julie Aviva Dabrusin retains her

portfolio, with the new title of Minister of the Environment, Climate Change, and Nature.

The Alberta-Ottawa MOU is built on practical solutions: stronger, more effective industrial carbon pricing; major private sector investments in clean technologies; and expanded, responsible energy development for the workers and communities who rely on it.

Under this partnership, Canada and Alberta will collaborate on multiple projects to build Canada's economy and meet growing consumer and industrial energy demands. It will advance the construction of Pathways Plus-the world's largest carbon capture, utilization, and storage project. The project will strengthen Canada's energy sector, reduce emissions, and deliver substantial economic benefits, including more than \$16 billion in GDP and more than 40,000 jobs annually.



--->By Prabhjot Singh

Mayor of Winnipeg felicitates Hiren Shah for his volunteer work

DECEMBER 1, 2025

TORONTO (TIP): Volunteering and social service come naturally to him. Born and brought up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, 45-year-old Hiren Shah lived up to the adage "like father, like son."



Mayor of Winnipeg, Scott Gillingham, presenting to Hiren Shah, the 2025 Mayor's Volunteer Service award.

Emulating his illustrious father, Hemant Shah, a pioneer in promoting Indo-Canadians relations in general and trade partnerships in particular, Hiren has been out to prove that sincerity and loyalty have no substitute in social life.

Though it is a common saying that the Western world follows a "hire and fire" policy in work workplace, Hiren has been successful in proving the opposite.

He started working with McDonald's while he was going to school at the age of 15. Since then, he has continued working with one of the world's largest fast food enterprises and risen to be its

director for franchise owner operators. For almost 30 years, he has still going strong with his first employer, a rare achievement in the Canadian context. He has done the Indo-Canadian community proud with his commitment and social work.

Recently, he was felicitated by the Mayor of Winnipeg, Scott Gillingham, for his volunteer work.

"I am humbled to share that this year I have been a recipient of the 2025 Mayor's Volunteer Service award (Winnipeg) through Volunteer Manitoba. Giving back to my community has been an important part of my life for many years. Whether through the Ronald McDonald House, Winnipeg Kinsmen or the St Boniface Hospital Foundation, Natasha Shah (wife) and I are passionate about helping raise funds for causes near and dear to our hearts.

"The award is in recognition of our passion for people and commitment to making our community a better place every day in any way possible," adds Hiren Shah. You name an activity, and Shahs - Hiren and Natasha - are part of it.

Hiren serves on the Ronald McDonald House's golf tournament board, which plans, coordinates and executes an annual fundraiser, and has also supported the Champions for Families program. He is also associated with the Winnipeg Kinsmen in 2018, and through his work with both the Kinsmen and Ronald McDonald House, he has helped direct funds to non-profits like Agape Table Soup Kitchen and Rainbow Resource Centre.

In the role of the vice-president of service with Winnipeg Kinsmen, he has had the honor to support various other non-profits, such as Special Olympics, Winnipeg Harvest, Toba Centre, Bruce Oake Recovery Centre, and so much more. Hiren approaches every experience with humility, respect, and dignity, leaving a lasting impression that inspires others to pay it forward and embrace the power of community.

(Prabhjot Singh is a Toronto based senior journalist. He writes on sports, politics and culture. He can be reached at prabhjot416@gmail.com)

Former Canadian MP Ruby Dhalla honored with 'Dhee Punjab Di' award in Phagwara

She was honored in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the promotion of Punjabi language, culture and global representation of the Punjabi community



Ruby Dhalla honored with the 'Dhee Punjab Di' Award.

DECEMBER 1, 2025

NEW YORK / PHAGWARA (TIP): Former Canadian Member of Parliament Ruby Dhalla was honored with the prestigious 'Dhee Punjab Di' Award during a special ceremony held in Phagwara on Sunday, November 30, 2025.

The award was presented by the Punjabi Kala and Sahit Centre and Sangeet Darpan in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the promotion of Punjabi language, culture and global representation of the Punjabi community.

Speaking at the event, Principal Gurmeet Singh Palahi, president of the Punjabi Columnist Journalist Manch (Regd.), said that the Punjabi diaspora across the world has achieved remarkable success through dedication and hard work in various fields. He noted that Ruby stands out as an inspiring example among these achievers, having been elected four times as a Member of Parliament on the ticket of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Dr Akshita Gupta, Commissioner of Phagwara Municipal Corporation, congratulated Dhalla on receiving the award and commended her for bringing honor to women at an international level.

Expressing gratitude, Ruby said she felt proud to have dedicated her life to social service through politics, always prioritizing the welfare of Punjabis as well as the people of Canada. She stated that she has consistently advocated for the rights of the needy, the elderly and all those who face challenges and marginalization in society.

She was honored with a commemorative memento, a traditional robe of honor (siropa) and a set of books by the Punjabi Kala and Sahit Centre. Members of the Banga Road Market Association also presented her with a special honor.

Loans to get cheaper, RBI trims policy interest rate by 25 basis points to 5.25%

Shrugging off concerns over the depreciation of rupee, the RBI has cut interest rate by 25 basis points to 5.25 per cent in a bid to further bolster economic growth, which rose to a six-quarter high of 8.2 per cent in the second quarter of the current financial year.

The development is expected to make advances, including housing, auto and commercial loans cheaper.

Announcing the fifth bi-monthly monetary policy for the current fiscal, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has unanimously decided to cut the short-term lending rate or repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25 per cent with a neutral stance.

The rate cut comes on the back of the consumer price index (CPI) based headline retail inflation ruling below the 2 per cent lower band mandated by the government for the last three months.

India's retail inflation dropped to a historic low of 0.25 per cent in October 2025, marking the lowest level since the Consumer Price Index (CPI) series was introduced. Besides, the Indian economy has clocked better-than-expected GDP growth of 8.2 per cent in the second quarter.

However, the rupee declined to historic low and crossed 90 against a dollar earlier this week making imports costlier, raising fears of rise in inflation. Rupee has depreciated by about 5 per cent so far this year.

The RBI has sharply raised growth projection to 7.3 per cent from earlier 6.8 per cent for the current financial year.

'Insecure' govt asking foreign leaders not to meet LoP: Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI (TIP)

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said visiting foreign dignitaries were being discouraged from meeting him, a practice he described as a mark of the government's "insecurity".

Speaking to reporters in the Parliament complex, Gandhi said successive governments, from the Vajpayee era to the Manmohan Singh years, had upheld the norm of ensuring that the LoP met foreign leaders. He claimed that this convention was being quietly abandoned.

"The government does not represent India alone. Meetings with the Opposition leader offer an alternative viewpoint and reflect the democratic character of the country. But during my visits abroad as well as when high-level delegations travel to India, subtle signals are sent that the Opposition leader should be kept off their schedule," alleged Gandhi.

Gandhi argued that the reluctance to facilitate these interactions stemmed from the ruling dispensation's own sense of vulnerability. Without naming the Russian President, he said the pattern was consistent irrespective of who was visiting the country.

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said it was "deeply unusual" and ran counter to the long-standing norms. She said the established protocol required foreign dignitaries to meet the LoP, but the current dispensation "seemed intent on stifling every alternative voice."

"I cannot understand what drives such fear and insecurity," she said, stressing that a democracy depends on space for every viewpoint and the move was a sign of the government's own unease, which was putting the health of democracy at risk. "The LoP meeting foreign dignitaries during their India visits is a time-tested democratic tradition, so that our international engagement is deeper and more meaningful. But those who only wish to speak their own 'Man ki Baat' clearly have no regard for these traditions that serve as important pillars of our foreign policy engagement," said Congress general secretary KC Venugopal.

Putin is in India for a summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, where both sides are expected to focus on defence cooperation, securing bilateral trade mechanisms from external pressures, and exploring collaboration on small modular nuclear reactors, discussions closely watched by several



Western capitals.

Rubbishing Rahul Gandhi's claims, government sources told India Today TV that it is not the Ministry of External Affairs but the visiting delegation who decides if they want to organise meetings outside the Government.

However, one look at Rahul Gandhi's claims paints a different picture. Since June 9, 2024, when he became the Leader of Opposition, he has met at least four foreign heads of state during their official visits to India, including former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He, along with Priyanka and Sonia Gandhi, met then-Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina on June 10.

Soon after, he met Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in Delhi on August 21, 2024. In an exclusive interview with India Today TV, Ibrahim described the Gandhis as "family friends" following his visit.

In 2025, Rahul Gandhi met New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam during their state visits to India.

Government sources further pointed out that Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders had met President Putin during his visit to India in December 2014.

Earlier, Rahul went on to say that both the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Ministry routinely steer visiting delegations away from the Opposition, calling it an act driven by 'insecurity'. According to the Congress leader, the government does not want the LoP to offer a different perspective on India's position.

First come to India, then we'll hear your plea, Bombay HC tells Mallya

MUMBAI (TIP)

The Bombay High Court on Thursday, Dec 4, told the lawyer appearing for liquor baron Vijay Mallya that it would hear his petition questioning the validity of the Fugitive Economic Offences (FEO) Act, 2018, and seeking various reliefs in relation to the FEO proceedings against him, only after he returns to the country.

"Tell your client to appear in court first, and then we will hear the matter. Take instructions on when he will come," the division bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad told senior advocate Amit Desai, who appeared for the absconding liquor baron, and posted his petition and connected pleas for further hearing on December 23.

Mallya, accused of defrauding nationalised banks to the tune of crores of rupees, fled the country in March 2016, around a year after the CBI registered the first criminal case against him in connection with loans taken by Kingfisher Airlines Ltd, from a consortium of banks led by IDBI Bank.

The Banking Securities & Fraud Cell of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI-BS&FC) had registered a First Information Report (FIR) in July 2015, charging him with criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust and criminal misconduct relating to Rs 900 crore in loans disbursed by IDBI Bank to Mallya's airline, where he is



named as one of the accused. Based on another complaint, by the consortium of banks under the leadership of the State Bank of India, another FIR was registered in August 2016.

During the investigation, it was revealed that Mallya, as chairperson of Kingfisher Airlines, had allegedly committed gross irregularities in securing loans from banks, and diversion and laundering of funds.

He was also alleged to have siphoned off large sums of money, and parked it outside India to dodge the law here. After enactment of the FEO Act in 2018, proceedings were

initiated against Mallya under the law, prompting him to file a petition before the high court. The petition seeks a declaration that the enactment was unconstitutional.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a reply to his petition, seeking a declaration that all orders, including those for the confiscation of his properties, under provisions of the FEO Act, be made subject to the outcome of the pending petition.

In its reply filed through additional solicitors-general, SV Raju and Anil Singh, the ED said Mallya cannot seek protection while continuing to evade summons to come to India. It added that Mallya had allegedly formed a complex web structure of his group companies to indirectly control and alienate the assets to repay the loans. However, when he failed to do so, he filed a suit in the Bombay High Court in 2013, stating that the guarantees were executed under duress, coercion and therefore, should be declared as invalid and unenforceable.

The estimated proceeds of crime generated in the 2016 complaint were to the tune of Rs 1,301 crore, and that of property involved in money laundering was found to be of Rs 9,990 crore, including the share of IDBI Bank. The debt recovery tribunal in January 2017 charged Kingfisher Airlines ? 6,203 crore, with interest of 11.50% per annum.

IndiGo mess: 600 flights cancelled; all Delhi ops hit

As IndiGo's operational turmoil entered Day 3 on Friday, Dec 5, more than 600 flights were cancelled across major airports, adding to the over 550 cancellations reported on Dec 4. The airline has cancelled all 235 flights at Delhi airport today, while Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad were also severely affected, leaving hundreds of passengers stranded and disrupting travel plans.

IndiGo, the country's largest airline, has attributed the chaos to a pilot shortage compounded by winter-schedule pressures. The airline has requested partial relaxations of the new Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) norms to stabilise operations, noting that full implementation is expected only by February 2026.

At the Delhi airport, all 235 IndiGo flights, including departures and arrivals, have been cancelled until 12 am Saturday, according to sources.

In an advisory, the airport requested travellers to check their flight status as "operational challenges were affecting some domestic flights causing delays and cancellations."

At Mumbai airport, 104 IndiGo flights — 53 departures and 51 arrivals — have been cancelled since morning, as per airport sources.

While Bengaluru reported the cancellations of 52 arrivals and 50 departures, the Hyderabad airport recorded 43 arriving and 49 departing flight cancellations as of Friday morning.

In Pune, the airport director has confirmed that 32 IndiGo flights have been cancelled between 12 am and 8 am today, with one arriving from Nagpur diverted to Hyderabad.

"Pune Airport reported parking bay congestion as several IndiGo aircraft remained on the ground awaiting crew availability, causing delays to subsequent flights across multiple carriers. The airport is coordinating closely with airlines, ground handling agencies, Air Traffic Control, and other partners to manage congestion and restore normal operations as quickly as possible," the director added.

At the Kolkata airport, between Wednesday and Friday, IndiGo experienced significant operational disruptions. Out of a total of 468 scheduled flights, there were 320 delays (arrivals and departures combined) and 92 cancellations.

The Thiruvananthapuram airport has also witnessed IndiGo flight delays and cancellations over the past two days. On Friday, Dec 5, three arrivals and three departures were delayed, while two arrivals and two departures have been cancelled. Yesterday, five arrivals and five departures were delayed.

US deported 3,258 Indians in 2025, highest in 16 years, govt tells RS

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The United States (US) has deported 3,258 Indian nationals so far this year, the highest number in the past 16 years, with the total number of people deported since 2009 touching 18,822, according to figures provided by the government in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Dec 4.

The government has engaged US authorities to ensure that people being deported are not ill-treated and that women and children on deportation flights are not restrained with handcuffs and chains, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said while responding to questions from MPs. A protest was lodged with the US after 73-year-old Harjit Kaur was maltreated before her deportation in September, he said.

Indian authorities, both at the central and state levels, have taken action against illegal recruitment agencies and travel agents involved in human trafficking, and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has investigated 27 human trafficking cases and arrested 169 people, Jaishankar said. The NIA, which has set up an anti-



human trafficking division, arrested "two important traffickers" in Haryana and Punjab this year.

According to figures provided by Jaishankar in a written reply to a question from Ramji Lal Suman of the Samajwadi Party, a total of 3,258 Indian nationals were deported by the US between January and November 28. Of these, 2,032 people were deported on regular commercial flights, and the remaining 1,226 on charter flights operated by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

The number was the highest since 2009, when 734 Indians were deported

from the US. The figure rose to 1,303 in 2016 and to 2,042 in 2019. After declining in subsequent years, the figure again rose to 1,368 in 2024. The latest rise corresponded with the Donald Trump administration's crackdown on illegal migration since the start of the year.

Jaishankar said the US deports individuals who illegally entered the country, overstayed their visa, were found in the US without documentation, or have criminal convictions against them. The Indian government works closely with US authorities on deportation, which is agreed to after "unambiguous verification" of the Indian nationality of those being deported.

Responding to supplementary queries from Suman, Jaishankar said no instance of the shackling of women and children had come to the notice of the external affairs ministry since a deportation flight on February 5. Immigration officials and Harjit Kaur's lawyer had confirmed that she was not handcuffed or restrained. However, Kaur was "maltreated in detention before she was put on the flight", Jaishankar said.

Supreme Court calls for day-to-day special court trials in acid attack cases

NEW DELHI (TIP)

The Supreme Court on Thursday, Dec 4, called for day-to-day special court trials in acid attack cases as it heard an acid attack survivor's plea seeking social security, even as the trial in her case remained pending in a Delhi court since 2009. "It is a shame on society. If the national capital cannot respond to this challenge, who will take care of them? We will take suo motu cognisance of this issue," said a bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi.

The bench issued a notice to the Union government and sought information from the high courts on the pendency of acid attack trials.

The petitioner, who made submissions with her lawyer's assistance, told the court that her trial has been pending since it was transferred from Haryana to Delhi's Rohini. She added that all hope was lost at one point, but a judicial officer in Haryana encouraged her and helped revive her case. The petitioner pointed out the plight of acid attack survivors. She added that disfigurement occurs when acid is thrown at faces and body parts. She said in some cases, victims are made to drink acid, leading to rupture of their food pipe. The petitioner added that they have to survive on an

artificial feeding tube, and such victims face great difficulty surviving. She pointed out that no pension, employment opportunities, or social security are available to them. The CJI said he was shocked to note that some victims are even made to drink acid. "I came to know for the first time while reading your petition that acid is being fed to people. How much difficulty will they face?"

The court allowed the petitioner to file an application on why the trial had not concluded for 16 years. "We would like to see this trial expedited," the CJI said, posting the matter for hearing after four weeks. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, who was present in the court, told the court that such petitions cannot be opposed, as he took a copy of the acid attack survivor's petition. The bench said the system must respond to this issue. "There should be no sympathy for such persons [acid attack accused]. These cases should be tried by special courts," said the bench. The bench sought Mehta's assistance in getting instructions from the government on whether acid attack victims can be considered for benefits under the Right to Persons with Disabilities Act, which recognises 21 categories of disability and mandates reservation in education and employment, etc.

Adults can be in live-in relationship even without attaining marriageable age: HC

The Rajasthan High Court has ruled that two consenting adults are entitled to be in a live-in relationship even if they have not yet reached the legal age for marriage, underscoring that constitutional rights cannot be curtailed on that ground.

Justice Anoop Dhand delivered the judgement while hearing a plea for protection filed by an 18-year-old woman and a 19-year-old man from Kota, who told the court that they were living together out of free will.

The couple told the court that they had executed a live-in agreement on October 27, 2025.

The petitioners alleged that the woman's family opposed the relationship and had threatened to kill them, and that their complaint to the Kota police went unaddressed.

Oposing the petition, public prosecutor Vivek Choudhary argued that because the man had not attained 21 years — the minimum legal age for marriage for men — he should not be permitted to be in a live-in arrangement.

The court dismissed the argument, saying the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution cannot be denied merely because the petitioners are not of marriageable age.

India in history this Week

DECEMBER 5 TO DECEMBER 11

05 DECEMBER

1955 The STD service that provides long distance telephone calls to every home came into existence on this day in 1955.

1971 India recognized Bangladesh as a country.

1895 The birth of Josh Malihabadi, the famous Urdu poet of India and Pakistan.

1941 Famous Indian female painter Amrita Shergill died in Lahore. Many of his artworks were appreciated worldwide.

1969 The birth of Anjali Bhagwat, the famous shooter who has illuminated the name of India in the world in shooting.

1998 Russia agrees to give 'Krivak class' multi-purpose warship to Indian Navy.



1999 Yukta Mukhi took the title of Miss World to her name.

1657 Shah Jahan's younger son Murad proclaimed himself king.

1943 Japanese airplane bombed Kolkata.

1950 Freedom fighter, poet, yogi and philosopher Arvind Ghosh died in Puducherry.

1950 Sikkim became a protected state of India.

06 DECEMBER

1732 Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of the East India Company, was born.

1907 The first incident of dacoity related to India's freedom struggle took place at Chingaripota railway station.



1992 Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was demolished by Hindu kar sevaks. After this, riots broke out in many states of India.

1907 The first incident of dacoity related to India's freedom struggle took place at Chingaripota railway station.

1956 Bahujan political leader and constitution builder Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar died.

1987 MiG-29 joined the Indian Air Force, renamed 'Baz'.

07 DECEMBER

1949 Indian Armed Forces Flag Day is celebrated.

1782 Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore died.

1825 The first steam-powered ship 'Enterprise' reached Kolkata.

1856 The 'Hindu widow' was officially married for the first time in the country.

1995 India launched communication satellite INSAT-2C.

2003 Raman Singh holds the post of Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh.

2008 Indian golfer Jeev Milkha Singh won the Japan Tour title.

2016 Famous Indian actor, comedian, political satirist, playwright, film director and advocate Cho Ramaswamy passed away.

08 DECEMBER

1900 Pandit Uday Shankar, dancer and dance director of modern India, was born.

1967 The first submarine INS Kalwari was inducted into the Indian Navy.

2010 The house of former Telecom Minister of India and his partners has been raided by the Central Bureau of Investigation of India regarding a corruption scam.



1935 Bollywood veteran actor Dharmendra was born.

09 DECEMBER

1946 The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly that made the country's highest law was on this day.



1946 UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi was born.

1971 During the Liberation War, the Indian Army had pierced the air campaign Meghna Heli Bridge.

1484 The great poet and saint Surdas was born.



1758 The thirteen-month-long war of Madras began in India. This was the most dangerous war between Britain and France in India.

1898 Belur Math was established in Kolkata.

1825 Rao Tula Ram, a prominent hero of the Sepoy Mutiny was born.

1913 India's first female photo journalist Homi Vyrawala was born.

10 DECEMBER

1878 The freedom fighter leader G. Rajagopalachari was born.

2001 Dada Muni, one of the stalwarts of Indian cinema, said goodbye to the world.

1878 Birth of Muhammad Ali Johar, one of the founders of Jamia Millia Islamia in Rampur.

1992 The first hovercraft service of the country was started in Gujarat.

1998 Amartya Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in Stockholm.

11 DECEMBER



1911 Dilip Kumar, one of the greatest actors of Indian cinema, was born.

1935 Former President of the country Pranab Mukherjee was born in Birbhum in West Bengal.

1969 Vishwanath Anand, the emperor of chess, was born.

2011 Pandit Ravi Shankar died.

1845 First Anglo-Sikh War: The Sikh army crossed the Sutlej River in Punjab.

1858 Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Yadunath Bose became the first Bachelor of Arts subjects from the University of Calcutta.

1946 Rajendra Prasad was appointed the President of the Constituent Assembly.

1967 In western India, a magnitude 6.5 earthquake killed 170 people.

GET INTO THE SPIRIT WITH NJPAC'S KWANZAA FAMILY FESTIVAL AND HOLIDAY ARTISAN MARKETPLACE

BY MABEL PAIS

KWANZAA FAMILY FESTIVAL AND ARTISAN MARKETPLACE returns to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), the annual gathering of thousands for the Holiday Season. This takes place at 1 Center Street, downtown Newark on Saturday, December 20, 2025, 1-7:30 PM.

The festival, the Arts Center tradition lasting more than 26 years, includes family-friendly activities that embody the seven principles of **Kwanzaa (see below). Programming includes exquisite face painting, interactive storytelling, dance classes for all abilities and arts and crafts.

Get a sneak peek into the Festival - youtu.be/FzGMauXc9Ck

RSVP

RSVP (required) to the Kwanzaa Family Festival @ njpac.org/about/community-engagement/kwanzaa-festival-and-marketplace

"The Kwanzaa Family Festival & Artisan Marketplace' is NJPAC's annual gift to the community," says Eyesha Marable, Assistant Vice President, Community Engagement. "In collaboration with our 80 engaged partners, we produce a day of creative, fun and joyous activities so that people of all generations can form meaningful holiday memories at the Arts Center."

THE MARKETPLACE

The festival coincides with the Kwanzaa Artisan Marketplace, which will cover multiple floors of the Arts Center's Prudential Lobby on Saturday, December 20, from 1 – 11 PM.

The Kwanzaa Artisan Marketplace is the destination for purchasing one-of-a-kind gifts from more than 20 local artists, designers and crafters. Specialty items for sale include natural beauty products, candles, crystals, African mud cloth, artwork, home decor, pet products and much more!

Returning artisans will include Ashanti Fields (ashantifields.com), a creator of conversation-piece jewelry and clothing sewn from colorful West African fabrics. Philadelphia milliner Suzette Art Couture (suzetteartcouture.com) will sell handcrafted hats and accessories.

FAMILY FESTIVAL & MORE

The weekend of the Kwanzaa Family Festival & Artisan Marketplace will also feature

- Holiday ceremonies such as a Kwanzaa candle-lighting and vibunzi (a tradition of honoring young people with a ear of corn, or fresh fruits and vegetables, to represent hope for the future)
- Kwanzaa-themed cookie decorating by The Cupcake Carriage
- Capoeira, salsa, Jersey club, soul line and West African dance and drumming classes
- A special film screening by the Newark Office of



Kwanzaa African dance - Credit: njpac.org



Another Kwanzaa dance. -Credit : njpac.org

Film & Television

- Hourly performances by local dance troupes in the Prudential Hall Lobby, including a final share performed by participants in the festival's dance and drumming classes. Dance groups include: Premiere Dance Theatre, Umoja Dance Company and Zawadi African Dance & Drum, Inc., Columbia High School's Infinite Step team, Najah Riker's soul line dancers and Solo Expressions.
- Fashion shows presented by Ancient African Formula and New Jersey Kids Fashion Week
- Storytelling led by the Beta Alpha Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated; Newark Public Library; Reading Partners and Source of Knowledge
- Arts and crafts workshops led by GlassRoots, The Newark Museum of Art, The North Jersey Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated,
- Creative Stuff, Children's Kwanzaa Village, Mansa Arts Education, Trust for Public Land and AARP Chapter 5398 of The Newark University Area
- A Kwanzaa Memory Wall and panel discussion on grief and mourning facilitated by Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss

- Health screenings offered by Clara Maass Medical Center and Newark Beth Israel Medical Center.
- Vision screenings and vision loss simulations presented by Eyes Like Mine Inc.
- Two GRAMMY-winning artists will present ticketed performances during the festival: gospel star CeCe Winans (njpac.org/event/cece-winans) and the gospel group, the Blind Boys of Alabama (njpac.org/event/blind-boys-of-alabama)

CONCERT TICKETS

'CeCe Winans' will perform at two ticketed concerts: on Friday, December 19, and Saturday, December 20, each day at 8PM. Ticket buyers for Winans' Friday night performance will have exclusive access to a poetry reading before the show at 7PM and to the Kwanzaa Marketplace from 7 – 11 PM.

The 'Blind Boys of Alabama' will perform on Sunday, December 21, at 3PM.

KWANZAA

Kwanzaa was created in 1966 by activist and author Maulana Karenga to offer people of African heritage a holiday that would celebrate their culture. Kwanzaa encompasses seven days dedicated to seven principles, also known as the Nguzo Saba. The **Kwanzaa principles are Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity) and Imani (Faith). Each activity or event at NJPAC's Kwanzaa Family Festival embodies one of the seven principles.

THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC)

NJPAC, located in downtown Newark, New Jersey, is the most diverse performing arts center in the country, and the anchor cultural institution for both the city of Newark and the state of New Jersey. It is an artistic, cultural, educational and civic center where great performances and events enhance and transform lives every day.

NJPAC brings communities together, providing access to all and showcasing the state's and the world's best artists, while acting as a leading catalyst in the revitalization of its home city. Through its extensive Arts Education programs, NJPAC is shaping the next generation of artists and arts enthusiasts. NJPAC Arts & Well-Being develops initiatives and programs that amplify the health benefits of the arts and measure the impact of the Arts Center on community health and well-being.

NJPAC has attracted more than 12.7 million visitors (including more than two million children) since opening its doors in 1997, and nurtures meaningful and lasting relationships with each of its constituents. Visit njpac.org for more information.

NIMBUS DANCE OF JERSEY CITY WELCOMES SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCES IN 'JERSEY NUTCRACKER'

BY MABEL PAIS

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) for the festive holiday weekend of December 12-13, 2025 has back-to-back performances of Nimbus Dance's 'Jersey Nutcracker.'

Nimbus Dance brings its beloved, distinctly local twist on Tchaikovsky's classic ballet to

audiences in Newark. With dazzling new sets and costumes, an expanded youth cast from across the state, and a statewide tour, this year marks a bold new chapter for Nimbus' signature holiday production.

In a special guest appearance, Newark's own Mayor Ras Baraka and his wife, First Lady Linda Baraka, will join the Dec 12th

production in cameo roles as "The Boss Mayor" and "Mama Cannoli".

(Read last week's article on more information on Nimbus Dance's 2025 'Jersey Nutcracker')

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



Nimbus Dance performers. -Credit: njpac.org

NJPAC TO ENLIVEN DOWNTOWN NEWARK LAUNCHES A PUBLIC ART INITIATIVE CO-OPTING NEW WORKS THAT DEPICT STORIES IN SOUND, MOVEMENT AND COMMUNITY

BY MABEL PAIS

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) launches a new public art initiative and its plan to commission 13 original artworks for NJPAC's redeveloped campus in downtown Newark.

On November 20, NJPAC released a Request for Proposals in partnership with local arts nonprofit Project for Empty Space (projectforemptyspace.org) and design firm WeShouldDoItAll (wsdia.com), outlining the vision and scope of the project, and opportunities for artists to contribute.

TRANSFORMING DOWNTOWN NEWARK

As part of a transformative redevelopment project that has redesigned the entirety of the Arts Center's 12-acre campus, the initiative will bring more works of art to the already-vibrant streets of Newark's downtown Arts and Education District.

The new neighborhood now under construction around NJPAC's iconic theaters will include ArtSide, a 350-unit residential and retail development, and the Cooperman Family Arts Education and Community Center, a three-story home for NJPAC's Arts Education, community programs and rehearsal studios.

The new public artworks will enliven all these spaces with installations that reflect the rhythm, resilience and vitality of Newark's communities. The project, called 'Stories in Sound, Movement and Community,' weaves together the three core elements of NJPAC's efforts to bring communities together through the performing arts. Each new work will be site-specific and will offer an interactive experience that celebrates the city's artistic legacy and contemporary expression.

"Newark's art defines our community and serves as a shorthand for where we've been, who we are, where we're going and what we want for ourselves," says Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka. "It is a highly valued, cultural priority here, which explains why our city was ranked eighth in the nation in the 2024 Arts Vibrancy Index. NJPAC shares this creative lifeblood with us and continuously embraces each new cohort of artists and creators in its ongoing history. It is one of the many reasons we are so proud to have NJPAC at the heart of our downtown."

PROCESS

NJPAC identified a number of core themes through community meetings, roundtables and surveys, reflecting widely shared and uniquely local perspectives on Newark's identity. Each commission will explore how stories of the past, present and future are told through music, dance, spoken word and performance, highlighting Newark as a city that is constantly evolving.

"We want the visual arts to be an integral part of our new campus," says John Schreiber, President and CEO of NJPAC. "ArtSide and the Cooperman Center were designed to include spaces that would serve as frames for public works of art, like the archway over one of the new streets that crosses through ArtSide. NJPAC has not, until now, had a formal way to engage with the muralists and visual artists who are so vital to Newark, and we look forward to engaging with the city's larger creative community through this project."

INVITATION TO ARTISTS

NJPAC invites artists who live or work within its core audience zones (in and around Newark, and the greater New Jersey and New York markets) to submit proposals for these new pieces. The commissioned works will be installed across exterior and interior sites on the NJPAC campus, including in prominent public-facing locations that engage residents, visitors and audiences alike.

INFORMATION SESSION FOR APPLICATION

A virtual artist information session will be held on



NJPAC public art initiative -Credit : njpac.org



NJPAC public art initiative building.

Credit : njpac.org.

December 10, 2025, at 3PM to introduce the initiative and guide artists through the application process. Proposals are due by January 19, 2026, with selected works scheduled for installation beginning in summer 2026 and continuing through winter 2027. Full project briefs, submission details and the link to apply are available on NJPAC's website at njpac.org/publicart.

NEWARK TODAY AND TOMORROW

Through this initiative, NJPAC reaffirms its commitment to contributing to Newark's vibrant arts scene while creating meaningful opportunities for visual artists and designers to collaborate, imagine and inspire. Stories in Sound, Movement, and Community invites artists to explore how shared histories, familiar rhythms and new voices can combine to tell the story of Newark today, and envision the Newark of the future.

"At Project for Empty Space, we believe in the powerful impact of partnership. Our history of public art is built on collaboration — with peer organizations, culture workers and audiences alike," says Project for Empty Space Co-Directors Jasmine Wahi and Rebecca Pauline Jampol. "We are honored to partner with NJPAC on this program, which will have a meaningful and lasting

impact not only on their new campus but on the broader public art community and the residents of Newark and beyond."

THE NEW JERSEY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (NJPAC),

NJPAC located in downtown Newark, New Jersey, is an anchor cultural institution for both the city of Newark and the state of New Jersey. It is an artistic, cultural, educational and civic center where great performances and events enhance and transform lives every day.

NJPAC brings communities together both on and off of our campus — on stages, in schools and community settings — providing access to the arts for all and showcasing the state's and the world's best artists, while acting as a leading catalyst in the revitalization of its home city.

Through its extensive Social Impact programs, NJPAC leverages the arts to advance positive outcomes in education, health and well-being, civic engagement and community development. NJPAC has attracted more than 12.7 million visitors (including more than two million children) since opening its doors in 1997. Learn more at njpac.org.

PROJECT FOR EMPTY SPACE (PES)

PES (projectforemptyspace.org) is a multifaceted arts organization in Newark, NJ and Chinatown, Manhattan that includes Exhibitions, Artists Residencies, Public Art initiatives, subsidized Artist Studios, and Artist Professional Development/Granting opportunities. PES's program centers social discourse, including narratives that have been historically and systemically erased. They strive to course-correct historic instances of forced marginality, inequity, and invisibility, supporting socially-oriented artists while maintaining a commitment to both reflecting on the past and envisioning new possibilities for the future. Learn more at projectforemptyspace.org.

WESHOULDDOITALL (WSDIA)

WSDIA (wsdia.org) is a New York-based multidisciplinary design studio working across spatial design, branding, environmental graphics, exhibition design, and digital platforms. The studio explicitly rejects specialization, instead focusing on solving problems through whatever disciplinary lens best serves the work. WSDIA's clients include Nike, Design Within Reach (DWR), Lincoln Center, Samsung, and cultural institutions including the Schomburg Center and Speed Art Museum. Learn more at wsdia.com.

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

WHARTON PERFORMING ARTS SCHOOL'S HOLIDAY CABARET BENEFIT CONCERT CELEBRATES FORTY YEARS OF COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ARTS

BY MABEL PAIS

The Wharton Performing Arts School (PAS) invites the community to its annual Holiday Cabaret, which, for the first time, will be held as a benefit to support PAS' programs. The festive evening of performances takes place on Friday, December 12, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. at the Wharton Black Box Theater, 60 Locust Avenue, Berkeley Heights, with a pre-concert reception beginning at 6:00 p.m.

This year's benefit celebrates 40 years of creativity, connection, and impact, featuring dazzling performances by Wharton Arts students and faculty. Guests will enjoy light fare, beer, wine, and soft drinks included with their tickets.

The evening will also include a silent auction and 50/50 raffle, with all proceeds supporting PAS programs. Kids of all ages can enjoy the festive lobby and photo booth, making this a fun and memorable night for the whole family. A silent auction will soon debut, offering a curated collection of local dining, bakery delights, premium



40th Anniversary, Performing Arts School (PAS) performers
--Credit : whartonarts.org

wines, and rejuvenating spa packages.

Debra Joyal, Performing Arts School Director said, "We are thrilled to invite you to our annual Holiday Cabaret, a dazzling evening of song and festive cheer. Come celebrate the season, our history, and the bright future of PAS as we toast to our 40th anniversary."

"We are excited to mark this milestone year by turning the beloved

Holiday Cabaret into a benefit," said Nancy Tagle, Wharton Arts Director of Development. "We invite the community to join us as we raise our voices, and the curtain, for 40 more years of inspiration, artistic excellence, and growth."

TICKETS

Single tickets and Family Four-Pack



40th Anniversary, PAS musicians.
-Credit : whartonarts.org

tickets are available. Sponsorships are also available, including premium seating. Proceeds will directly support Wharton Arts' programs, scholarships, and mission-driven initiatives that provide transformative arts education to students of all ages.

For tickets and sponsorship opportunities, visit holidaycabaret.givesmart.com.

WHARTON PLAYERS BRING BEETLEJUICE JR TO LIFE IN SPOOKTACULAR HOLIDAY PERFORMANCE

BY MABEL PAIS

The Wharton Performing Arts School (PAS) will present 'Beetlejuice JR.,' a frightfully funny musical based on the beloved film-turned-Broadway hit, December 5-7, 2025, at the Wharton Black Box Theater in Berkeley Heights.

Filled with outrageous humor, quirky characters, and high-energy musical numbers, 'Beetlejuice JR.' invites audiences into a supernatural comedy where the "ghost-with-the-most" takes center stage. The production is directed by Timothy Maureen Cole, with the show written by Scott Brown and Anthony King.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Performances will take place on
Friday, December 5 at 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 6 at 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 7 at 3:00 p.m.

Location: All performances will be held at the Wharton Black Box Theater, 60 Locust Avenue, Berkeley Heights, NJ.

"Creating Beetlejuice JR. with this cast has been a joyful burst of weirdness and creativity, said Cole. The Wharton Players have embraced the spooky, the silly, and the heartfelt, and we hope you enjoy this wonderfully strange and unusual show."

TICKETS

Adult tickets are available. Students and seniors get a discount with a valid ID.

Tickets and additional information are available at WhartonArts.org or by calling (908) 790-0700.

THE WHARTON ARTS SCHOOL (PAS)

PAS is proud to be part of Wharton Arts, New Jersey's largest independent non-profit community performing arts education center, serving nearly 2,000 students each year through a wide range of programs. PAS has been nurturing artistic excellence and creativity in the community for 40 years. By offering programs in music and performing arts, the school empowers students to develop their talents, confidence, and lifelong appreciation for the arts.

NJYS PERFORMS AT GALAXIES OF JOY: THE PLANETS IN CONCERT

BY MABEL PAIS

Wharton Arts' New Jersey Youth Symphony (NJYS) invites the audience to journey across the cosmos at 'Galaxies of Joy: The Planets in Concert' on Saturday, December 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. on the UCPAC's Main Stage in Rahway, New Jersey.

Led by Artistic Director & Principal Conductor Helen H. Cha-Pyo, this spectacular concert features Gustav Holst's iconic orchestral suite, 'The Planets,' accompanied by stunning, high-definition NASA imagery from the NASA Scientific Visualization Studio (SVS). As the symphony journeys through Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and beyond, vivid visuals drawn from space telescope data and interplanetary missions will illuminate the music's grandeur — transforming the concert hall into a breathtaking voyage through the solar system. (Video credit: NASA's Scientific Visualization Studio, svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/12880.)

Adding to the excitement, the program includes the world premiere of 'PLUTO: The Gatekeeper to the Underworld' by Oliver Kahng, a senior at Regis High School and a member of the NJYS Youth Symphony. Kahng's original composition offers a contemporary continuation to Holst's planetary suite, inspired by Pluto's mythological and astronomical legacy.

"At this magical time of year, there's no better gift to share with family and friends than 'The Planets,' one of the most beloved works in the symphonic repertoire, brought to life with breathtaking NASA visuals and the remarkable artistry of our NJYS Youth Symphony. This concert celebrates the wonder that connects music and imagination, featuring 'Pluto,' a new work by one of our

own student composers. I invite you to join us on a truly inspiring journey through sound and creativity," said Cha-Pyo.

"Experiencing Holst's 'The Planets' with NASA's stunning visuals creates an unforgettable celestial journey," said Executive Director Gina Caruso. "Premiering a new work by one of our own young composers makes the evening even more special, highlighting the imagination and creativity of our students at the New Jersey Youth Symphony."

PROGRAM

What: 'Galaxies of Joy: The Planets in Concert'

Who: NJYS Youth Symphony, conducted by Helen H. Cha-Pyo

When: Saturday, December 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

Where: UCPAC's Main Stage, Rahway, NJ

TICKETS

Adult tickets are available. Students and seniors get a discount. Purchase tickets at UCPAC.org.

NEW JERSEY YOUTH SYMPHONY (NJYS)

Founded in 1979, the New Jersey Youth Symphony is the premier instrumental ensemble program of Wharton Arts and a national leader in youth orchestral training. With 15 ensembles and nearly 600 student musicians, NJYS provides unparalleled access to musical excellence and community engagement through concerts, recordings, and international tours.

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



Rashmika addresses wedding rumors with Vijay Deverakonda, prefers privacy

Rashmika Mandanna has finally spoken out amid mounting speculation regarding her reported wedding with Vijay Deverakonda, which is said to be planned for February 2026. The rumours have gained traction on social media, prompting the actor to respond publicly for the first time. When asked about the reports, Rashmika declined to confirm or deny the claims, stating her preference to share information at her own time.

During an interview with The Hollywood Reporter India, Rashmika addressed the persistent questions surrounding her relationship and potential wedding plans. She said, "I wouldn't like to confirm or deny the marriage. I will just say when it's to be spoken about, we shall," making it clear that she wishes to keep personal matters private until she is ready to speak.

The speculation about Rashmika and Vijay's wedding has intensified in recent months, with reports suggesting that preparations may already be underway. Additional reports indicate that Rashmika recently made a trip to Udaipur, allegedly to explore possible venues for the event.

Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda were reportedly engaged in a private ceremony in Hyderabad in October this year. Details about the engagement remain limited, but it was confirmed by Vijay's team.

Their relationship, which began after working together on the films Geetha Govindam and Dear Comrade, has been the subject of speculation for several years.

The pair have often been seen together at public events and have shared photos from similar locations, fuelling further speculation about their personal lives. In 2024, they confirmed that they were not single but refrained from naming their partners, leaving fans and media to connect the dots.

Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna are now busy with their respective careers.

Tere Ishk Mein: Dhanush-Kriti's film hits Rs 100 crore globally

Director Aanand L Rai's latest romantic drama Tere Ishk Mein, featuring Dhanush and Kriti Sanon, faced a decline in box office collections on its sixth day. After strong growth, the film experienced its lowest figures so far this Wednesday, even as it surpassed the Rs 100 crore mark worldwide. The movie opened with momentum but encountered a typical mid-week slowdown, raising questions about its continued performance amid new competitors at the multiplexes.

As reported by Sacnilk, the romantic drama earned approximately Rs 6.75 crore nett on Dec 3, with around Rs 6.4 crore from the Hindi belt and Rs 35 lakh from Tamil markets. This mid-week slump follows a positive start and Sacnilk's data provides a closer look at the film's day-wise trajectory.

According to the latest Sacnilk update, Dhanush and Kriti's Tere Ishk Mein recorded a fall in numbers on Wednesday. By the evening, the movie added around 3.83 crore (approx.), slipping to less than half of yesterday's numbers. At this point, the film's cumulative domestic total reached 74.83 crore (approx.). The story of Shankar and Mukti, played by Dhanush and Kriti Sanon, drew early crowds. The film had started its run on a high with a robust day 1 total of 16 crore (combined Hindi and Tamil).

Box office data shows the film began with an estimated Rs 16 crore on Friday, followed by Rs 17 crore on Saturday and its highest day of Rs 19 crore on Sunday. Collections dipped over the week: Monday brought in around Rs 8.75 crore, before rebounding to Rs 10.25 crore on December 2.



It's just a phase, not a shutdown: Rakul Preet



Pooja Entertainment, led by Vashu Bhagnani and his son Jackky Bhagnani, recently experienced significant financial challenges after their film Bade Miyan Chote Miyan failed at the box office in 2024. The losses led to widespread speculation about the company's stability, including reports of unpaid dues and large-scale staff layoffs. Actor Rakul Preet Singh, who is married to Jackky Bhagnani, has now addressed these issues, providing clarity about the situation and rejecting claims of company closure.

Speaking about the intense scrutiny and media coverage, Rakul Preet Singh said, "You are also part of the business, so you know that today we are in a clickbait culture. You know the reality and what is actually happening, and I have seen that entire phase, so it doesn't matter. Tomorrow, somebody can write something about me, and it doesn't matter because he knows me. Being part of the industry, you have to cut out the noise. You cannot get affected by what people say, because people won't say the right thing most of the time. We are in a culture where sensational news runs. We have to be honest with one another and shut the noise."

She further explained the difficulties faced by the family during this period. "It was a very challenging time for the family and for him. But a lot of things said in the news weren't even correct. No company is shut. I didn't even know because I don't read. I was unbothered because I knew things first-hand. Yes, it's a fact that two to three films didn't work, and it was a huge blow that brought a lot of financial loss, but that happens with every producer. It even happened to Amitabh Bachchan at one point. This is all a phase," Rakul Preet Singh added.

Scarlett Johansson in final talks to join 'The Batman' sequel

Scarlett Johansson is headed to DC's Gotham City, and is in final negotiations to join *The Batman* Part II, sources said, according to Deadline. The actress' potential appearance in the sequel to Matt Reeves' 2021 hit would happen four years after she left the Marvel Cinematic Universe behind.

Should the deal come together, Johansson will first film *The Exorcist*, to which she signed on last week. She will then move on to *Batman*, joining Robert Pattinson, who is set to reprise his role as the Caped Crusader in the sequel being written and directed by Reeves.

It is, however, unclear who Johansson might be playing and what the details about her potential role are. The DC Studios film could start shooting next spring for an October 2027 theatrical release from Warner Bros, according to Variety.

"It's been a long journey, but I am so incredibly excited. I'm really proud of the script me and Mattson did," Reeves told Variety at the Emmys in September, describing how *The Batman* team kept the story under wraps. "We put [the script] into a secret pouch that literally has a lock on it with a code. [Robert Pattinson] was in New York at the time, and everything is high security."

Johansson has been busy setting up several franchises. Besides the *Exorcist* and *Batman*, she recently helped relaunch the *Jurassic World* franchise with *Jurassic World: Rebirth*. The film hit theaters in July, and grossed \$868M worldwide. It even has a sequel in the works.

Johansson recently made her directorial debut with the Sony Pictures Classics drama *Eleanor the Great*, which world premiered at the Cannes Film Festival. She is also set to be seen in the James Gray pic *Paper Tiger* opposite Miles Teller and Adam Driver.



DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence to start shoot for Scorsese's *What Happens At Night*

Filming for the upcoming film *What Happens At Night*, directed by Martin Scorsese and starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence, is scheduled to begin next month, that is, in early 2026. The film is based on Peter Cameron's novel and will bring together DiCaprio and Lawrence for the first time, with the story rooted in psychological thriller and gothic drama elements. The project is a collaboration between Apple Original Films and Studiocanal.

The film's narrative follows an unnamed American couple who travel to a remote, snow-blanketed European town to adopt a baby. Upon their arrival, they stay at a vast, largely empty hotel, where they encounter a range of unusual characters such as a flamboyant singer, a corrupt businessman, and a mysterious faith healer. These interactions contribute to the unsettling and surreal atmosphere that defines the couple's experience.

As the adoption process unfolds, the couple's journey becomes increasingly complex and disorienting. The boundaries between reality and illusion start to blur, affecting the couple's emotional and psychological states. The wife's battle with cancer adds another dimension to the narrative, exploring themes of vulnerability, mortality, and the search for meaning.

After flaunting diamond ring, Miley Cyrus confirms engagement to Maxx Morando

After sending the rumor mills into overdrive with an eye-catching diamond ring at the *Avatar: Fire and Ash* premiere in Los Angeles, Miley Cyrus has finally put all speculation to rest. The pop star has confirmed that she is engaged to her longtime partner Maxx Morando after four years of dating.

The news of Miley, 33, getting engaged to the musician was confirmed by several portals including Page Six and People.

The couple sparked engagement rumours when they walked the red carpet together for the world premiere of *Avatar: Fire and Ash* on Monday in Los Angeles. Her song *Dream As One* is featured in the movie.

Miley, 33, and Maxx, 27, posed for pictures together on the red carpet with the singer flaunting her diamond ring on her left-hand ring finger. The ring which is set in a thick gold band was front and

center in every shot. Later, Miley also confirmed the news to People, saying she is very happy in this phase of her life. When asked about her engagement, she shared that she was "astounded" about taking this next step in her relationship with Maxx, who plays drums for the band Liily.

"The detail that I can share is that for us, our privacy and us kind of keeping it small has been something that I've been astounded that I've actually been able to have and being able to kind of have more choice. I think it's also being older, being more protective of what I'm open to sharing," she said. She went on to connect her relationship to *Avatar*'s themes, mentioning that the movie is "about love, family resilience and kind of reconnection and that stronger together idea." "And so I thought it was kind of perfectly thematic and aligned with where I am in my life now," she shared.



Next steps for Ukraine talks unclear after Moscow meeting, Trump says

The path ahead for Ukraine peace talks is unclear, U.S. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday, after what he called "reasonably good" talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. envoys.

The Kremlin said on Dec 3 that Putin accepted some U.S. proposals aimed at ending the war in Ukraine and was prepared to keep working to find a compromise.

U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner spent hours at the Kremlin, departing in the early hours of Wednesday morning with no specific breakthrough on ending the war.

Trump, speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, said Witkoff and Kushner briefed him about the talks via telephone and told him their impression from Putin was that "he would like to make a deal." What happens now, however, is unclear, Trump said.

"What comes out of that meeting I can't tell you because it does take two to tango," Trump said, without elaborating. He added: "We have something pretty well worked out (with Ukraine)".

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, asked if it would be correct to say that Putin had rejected the U.S. proposals, disagreed.

"A direct exchange of views took place yesterday for the first time," Peskov said. "Some things were accepted, some things were marked as unacceptable. This is a normal working process of finding a compromise."

Putin says Russia will take Donbas by force or Ukraine's troops will withdraw

MOSCOW (TIP)

President Vladimir Putin has warned again that Ukrainian troops must withdraw from Ukraine's eastern Donbas region or Russia will seize it, rejecting any compromise over how to end the war in Ukraine.

"Either we liberate these territories by force, or Ukrainian troops will leave these territories," he told India Today. Moscow controls some 85% of Donbas.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has ruled out ceding territory.

Putin's comments come after Donald Trump said his negotiators discussing a US peace plan believed Russia's leader "would like to end the war" after Tuesday's talks in Moscow.

Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff, who was in Moscow, was due to meet Ukraine's team in Florida.

Trump said Tuesday's talks in the Kremlin were "reasonably good", adding it was too soon to say what would happen as "it does take two to tango".

The original iteration of the US peace plan proposed to hand over areas of the Donbas still under Ukrainian control to the de facto control of Putin - but the Witkoff team presented a modified version in Moscow.

In his India Today interview ahead of a state visit to Delhi, Putin said he had not seen the new version before his talks with Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.

"That's why we had to go over every point, that's why it took so long," the Kremlin leader said.

He also said Moscow disagreed with parts of the US plan.

"At times we said that yes, we can discuss this, but to that we can't agree," Putin said.



He did not name the sticking points. At least two significant points of contention remain - the fate of Ukrainian territory seized by Russian forces and security guarantees for Ukraine.

Putin's senior foreign policy adviser and key negotiator Yuri Ushakov earlier said straight after the talks that they produced "no compromise" on ending the war. Ushakov also implied that the Russian negotiating position had been strengthened thanks to what Moscow said were its recent successes on the battlefield.

Ukraine has repeatedly accused Russia of stalling any ceasefire agreements, saying Moscow is seeking to seize more Ukrainian territory.

Commenting on the Kremlin talks, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybha said Putin was "wasting the world's time".

Ukraine has long insisted on firm security guarantees for Ukraine in any deal.

On Wednesday, Dec 3, Zelensky said "the world clearly feels that there is a real opportunity to end the war" - but negotiations must be "backed by

pressure on Russia", which Kyiv and its European allies accuse of deliberately stalling any ceasefire agreements.

The Ukrainian president said last week his top negotiators had managed to make some key changes in the original US peace plan - seen as strongly favouring Moscow - during talks with an American delegation in Geneva on 23 November.

In a joint statement, US and Ukrainian negotiators said at the time that they had drawn up an "updated and refined peace framework" - but provided no further details.

Top negotiators from Europe - who had voiced concern over the original US plan - were also in the Swiss city last week, meeting separately with the Ukrainian and the US teams.

In a separate development on Thursday, Germany's Der Spiegel news website said it had obtained a confidential transcript of a conference call in which European leaders expressed concern over the US negotiations.

"There is a possibility that the US will betray Ukraine on the issue of territory without clarity on security guarantees," French President Emmanuel Macron reportedly said, according to an English transcript of Monday's conference call.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz was quoted as warning that Zelensky had to be "extremely careful in the coming days".

"They are playing games, both with you and with us," Merz reportedly said.

Finnish President Alexander Stubb was also quoted as saying: "We mustn't leave Ukraine and Volodymyr alone with these guys."

The BBC has not seen the reported transcript. *Source: BBC*

Israel strikes Hezbollah weapons storage sites in Southern Lebanon

TEL AVIV (TIP)

Israeli raids hit south Lebanon on Thursday, Dec 4, as its military said it was striking Hezbollah weapons storage facilities, a day after Lebanese and Israeli civilian representatives held their first direct talks in decades.

Despite a November 2024 ceasefire that was supposed to end more than a year of hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group, Israel has kept up strikes on Lebanon and has also maintained troops in five south Lebanon areas it deems strategic.

The visit from Sunday to Tuesday of Pope Leo XIV had provided Lebanon with a window of reprieve from Israeli air strikes, which had intensified in recent weeks, and the pontiff urged an end to hostilities during his visit.

But on Thursday, the Israeli army said it "began conducting strikes on Hezbollah terror targets in southern Lebanon", after warning it would strike buildings in south Lebanon's Mahrouna and Jbaa.

It subsequently issued warnings that it would strike further Hezbollah "military infrastructure" in Majadal and Baraasheet, also in the south.



Lebanon's official National News Agency said "Israeli warplanes launched a strike on the town of Mahrouna" while other raids targeted buildings in Jbaa, Majadal and Baraasheet.

An AFP photographer saw smoke rising from the site of the strike in the town of Jbaa.

"It's a completely civilian area. We're used to Israeli threats from time to time," local official Yassir Madi told journalists, including AFP.

"As for the damage, there's not a window within 300

metres that didn't break. Everyone is living in shock," he added.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said it struck "weapons storage facilities belonging to Hezbollah" located in the "heart of the civilian population".

"This is yet another example of Hezbollah's cynical use of Lebanese civilians as human shields, and continued operations from within civilian areas," it said. Lebanon's government has committed to disarming Hezbollah, but the group has rejected the idea and many in the country fear a return to expanded Israeli military operations.

Lebanese and Israeli civilian representatives held surprise talks Wednesday under the auspices of the ceasefire monitoring mechanism at the UN peacekeeping force's headquarters in Lebanon's Naqura near the border with Israel.

Representatives of the ceasefire monitoring committee -- the United States, France, Lebanon, Israel and the UN force -- regularly convene in Naqura.

On Thursday, Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun said another round of talks with Israel will begin on December 19.

Meta says starting to remove under-16s from social media in Australia

Tech giant Meta said on Thursday, Dec 4, it is starting to remove under-16s in Australia from Instagram, Threads and Facebook ahead of the country's world-first social media ban.

Australia is obliging social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram and TikTok to remove and block users younger than 16 by December 10, when the law comes into force.

Platforms face fines of Aus\$49.5 million (US\$32 million) if they fail to take "reasonable steps" to comply.

"While we are working hard to remove all users who we understand to be under the age of 16 by 10 December, compliance with the law will be an ongoing and multi-layered process," a Meta spokesperson said.

Younger users can still save and download their online histories, the spokesperson said.

"Before you turn 16, we will notify you that you will soon be allowed to regain access to these platforms, and your content will be restored exactly as you left it."

Meta said it was committed to complying with the Australian law, but it called for app stores to be held accountable for checking ages instead of the social media platforms.

"The government should require app stores to verify age and obtain parental approval whenever teens under 16 download apps, eliminating the need for teens to verify their age multiple times across different apps," the spokesperson said.

Macron urges China to push for peace, rebalance trade

PARIS (TIP)

French President Emmanuel Macron appealed to Xi Jinping to help end the war in Ukraine and to tackle trade deficits as the two leaders met in Beijing on Thursday, Dec 4.

For Macron, making his fourth visit to China while in office, the three-day trip is an opportunity to shore up support for a ceasefire in Europe's deadliest conflict since WWII, as well as to attract more Chinese investment in France.

Speaking in the Great Hall of the People, where the meeting took place, Xi said he and Macron had agreed to push for more "balanced" economic ties, two-way investment and a "non-discriminatory" environment for businesses in both countries.

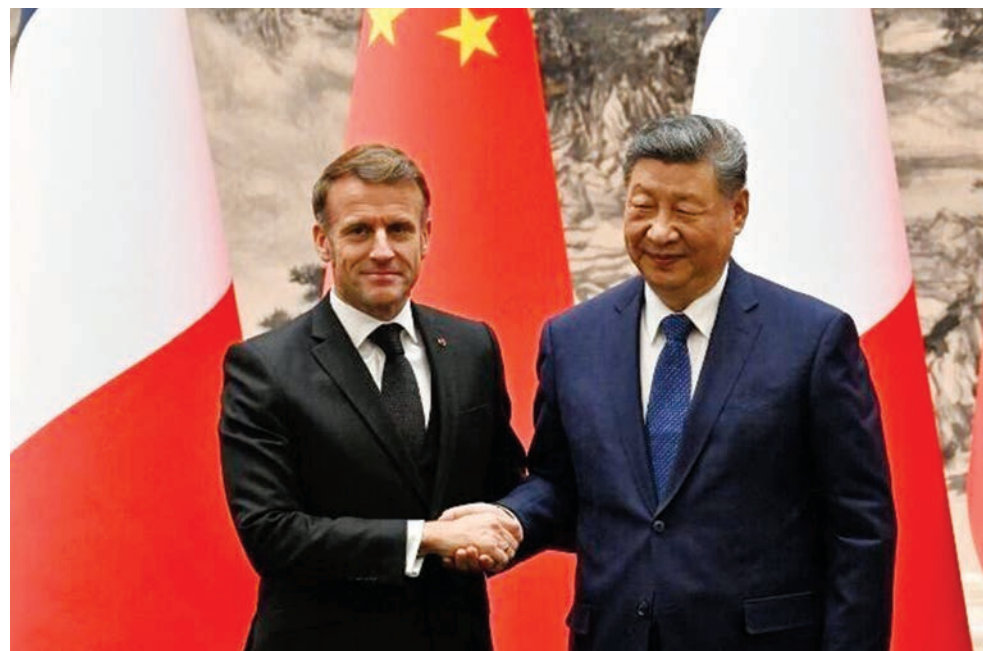
Beijing has long sought to avoid EU tariffs on Chinese products, including steel and EVs that Brussels says are sold at unfair prices due to state subsidies.

Xi also reiterated his support for an end to the hostilities in Ukraine, telling Macron that "China supports all efforts committed to peace and hopes that all parties will reach a fair, lasting and binding peace agreement that is acceptable to all parties".

China -- a major Russian trading partner -- has said it takes a neutral stance on the war, refraining from condemning Moscow's invasion.

All smiles as he entered the cavernous Great Hall of the People, Macron blew kisses to the crowd while a band played the national anthems of both countries.

After the ceremony, Macron told Xi that France and China must overcome their "differences". The Chinese



leader echoed Macron, calling for "more stable" ties.

Their tete-a-tete comes amid fresh attempts to broker an end to the nearly four-year war in Ukraine, with Macron leading a push to counter a US-backed plan widely criticised for echoing Russia's demands.

"We must continue to work towards peace and stability in the world, and in Ukraine and other regions affected by war," Macron told Xi, adding: "Our capacity to work together is decisive."

"I hope that China will join our call and our efforts to achieve, as soon as possible, at least a ceasefire in the form of a moratorium on strikes targeting critical infrastructure," he said. Macron, who will host the G7 summit next year, also urged Beijing to work with the grouping for "more balanced, fairer" rules-based

economic governance.

Macron's three-day visit to Beijing follows a trip to Paris by Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, who urged Europe to stand by Kyiv as Washington pushes a plan to end the war. China regularly calls for peace talks and respect for the territorial integrity of all countries, but has never condemned Russia for its 2022 invasion.

Western governments accuse Beijing of providing Russia with crucial economic support for its war effort, notably by supplying it with military components for its defence industry.

The French presidency said Macron would tell Xi that China must "refrain from providing any means, by any means, to Russia to continue the war".

China rejects Japan PM Takaichi's reaffirmation of Taiwan stance

BEIJING (TIP)

China continued to voice its frustration with Japan after new comments from Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi reaffirming Tokyo's long-held position that it understands and respects Beijing's view on Taiwan.

At a regular press briefing on Dec 4, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian questioned Ms Takaichi's remarks. "Now that Prime Minister Takaichi claims that the Japanese government's basic position regarding Taiwan remains as stated in the 1972 Sino-Japanese joint statement, can she accurately and fully articulate what was stated in the joint statement?" he asked.

"Why does the Japanese side just refuse to clearly articulate the commitments it has made and its legal obligations?" he added. Takaichi had told Parliament on Dec 3 that Japan's position on Taiwan hasn't changed since the 1972 Japan-China joint communique. She was responding to a question on whether Japan had shifted from its official stance, which respects China's view that Taiwan is an "inalienable part of its territory", without specifically agreeing to the 'One China' principle. Tensions between the two countries have soared after Ms Takaichi suggested in November that a Chinese attack on

Taiwan could mean a "survival-threatening situation" for Japan, effectively implying that Tokyo could deploy its military with other nations in that scenario.

Since then, Tokyo and Beijing have been locked in a diplomatic and economic dispute, with China taking several measures against Japan, including advising its citizens to avoid travelling there.

Takaichi's remarks were earlier seen by some Chinese social media users as a step back from her earlier stance, though others said more clarity was needed. On Dec 4, the phrase "Sanae Takaichi finally relented" was the No. 1 trending topic on Weibo, China's X-like social media platform. In the joint statement that formalized diplomatic relations between the two nations more than half a century ago, Japan said it "fully understands and respects" China's view that Taiwan is an "inalienable part" of its territory. That agreement stopped short of saying Japan fully supported Beijing's interpretation of "One China".

Ms Takaichi has resisted Chinese demands to retract her remarks on Nov 7, saying repeatedly that Tokyo's position on any security emergency remains the same. Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi has also said multiple times that Japan's stance on Taiwan hasn't

changed from 1972. She originally spoke about how a Chinese attack on Taiwan would directly threaten Japan's national security, noting that any invasion or blockade could be damaging to Japan and its citizens. In a potential conflict, the tens of thousands of US troops stationed in Japan could also become involved, making them targets and increasing the risk of Japan being pulled into the fighting under its security alliance with Washington. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese citizens also live in or travel frequently to Taiwan, and trade between the two sides remains important for Tokyo, particularly regarding semiconductors.

Underscoring those close ties, at the annual Taiwan-Japan Economic and Trade Conference Thursday, the two sides were set to sign a memorandum of understanding on customs cooperation and an agreement on digital trade, according to a statement. At the same time, Beijing has been on a campaign to win backing from other countries over its dispute with Tokyo. China's top diplomat Wang Yi used a call with French President Emmanuel Macron's diplomatic adviser Emmanuel Bonne on Nov 27 to say the two sides needed to support each other and to condemn Takaichi's "provocative remarks".

Pak allows UN to deliver relief supplies to Afghanistan through 2 border crossings

Pakistan on Thursday, Dec 4, decided to allow United Nations agencies to deliver relief supplies to Afghanistan from two border crossing points in northwest Pakistan, according to an official communication issued by the Ministry of Commerce.

The ministry has written a letter to the Director General of Afghan Transit Trade and the Member Customs Operations of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), informing them of the decision. The approval has been granted on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, enabling humanitarian organisations to transport essential food items across the border, the letter said. The permission has been granted for only 143 UN containers to cross into Afghanistan via the Chaman and Torkham border crossings on humanitarian grounds, it added. The government directed authorities to facilitate the phase-wise clearance of containers belonging to UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The clearance process should prioritise humanitarian considerations, it said, emphasising that customs officials need to ensure the smooth passage of cargo vehicles carrying relief goods. The containers carrying medicines and medical equipment will be cleared in the earlier phase.

Petition filed In Pak court for Imran's medical examination

A petition filed in the Islamabad High Court has sought medical examination of incarcerated former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan by doctors from a specialised cancer hospital in Lahore.

The hospital named in the petition is The Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital (SKMCH) in Lahore that Khan had set up more than three decades ago. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister and a leader of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party Sohail Afridi, while petitioning the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday, also named as respondent the government of Punjab province through its prison department.

Khan, the 73-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician, has been lodged at the Adiala Jail in Punjab province in connection with multiple cases since 2023 after he was first arrested in August that year.

Dawn reported that Afridi argued in his plea that Khan was facing "multiple health complications" and "required assessment from specialist doctors."

Pakistan formally appoints Asim Munir as first Chief of Defence Forces

ISLAMABAD (TIP)

President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday, Dec 4, approved the appointment of the army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, as Pakistan's first Chief of Defence Forces for a period of five years.

President Zardari approved the summary submitted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formally asking him to appoint Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Munir as the first CDF of Pakistan.

Last month, the parliament passed the 27th Constitutional Amendment providing to create the post of CDF with the objective to create unity of command and expedite the decision making in any critical situation.

The CDF replaced the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), the post for which was abolished.

The President extended his best wishes to Munir, a release from President's office said here.

Zardari also approved a two-year extension in the service of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu, Chief of Air Staff, to take effect from the completion of his present tenure on March 19, 2026.

According to a statement by the PM Office, the prime minister had earlier approved the summary for the appointment of Field Marshal Munir as the army chief and the CDF, and then referred it to the President House.

Field Marshal Munir was appointed as COAS in November 2022 initially for three years but his tenure was extended for five years in 2024.

The decision to issue a formal notification has put to rest rumours regarding delay in the appointment of the CDF, which



was due since November 27, when the last CJCSC General Sahir Shamshad Mirza retired.

Earlier, Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar, addressing a press conference, had said that there was no legal or political obstacle regarding the notification of the appointment of the Chief of Defence Forces and this notification would be issued soon.

Critically ill former Bangladesh PM Khaleda Zia to be taken to London, doctors say

DHAKA (TIP)

A medical board looking after critically ill former Bangladesh prime minister Khaleda Zia on Thursday decided to send her to London for advanced treatment, her personal physician AZM Zahid Hossain said.

Zia, the 80-year-old Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson, will be flown in an air ambulance late after midnight or early Friday to London, where her elder son and acting BNP chief Tarique Rahman lives.

After she developed a chest infection that affected both her heart and lungs, Zia was admitted to a private hospital here on November 23 and four days later, shifted to the coronary care unit (CCU) after several of her health complications worsened. "The medical board has unanimously decided that she will be taken to London via the Qatar Royal Air Ambulance, either after midnight tonight or early tomorrow morning," Hossain told reporters during a briefing outside the hospital.

Hossain, who is also a member of BNP's policy making standing committee, however, did not explicitly comment on Zia's current health condition. During the last such briefing on Tuesday, he said Zia was responding to the treatment. Hossain's briefing confirmed earlier media reports that



Zia's family was preparing to transfer her to London while adding that the decision for her urgent transfer was made by the extended medical board incorporating the recently arrived specialist teams from China and the United Kingdom.

The BNP also issued a list saying 14 people, one of them being Syeda Shameela Rahman, wife of Zia's deceased younger son Arafat Rahman and six being doctors, who will accompany Zia to London.

The others include a party leader and Zia's adviser Enamul Haque Chowdhury, two agents of the elite Special Security Force (SSF) provided by Muhammad Yunus' interim government and her personal aides.

Qatar had already offered to provide the air ambulance for Zia for taking her to London even as two military and air

force helicopters on Thursday staged landing tests at the rooftop of the hospital, where she is admitted. Presumably, she will be flown from the hospital to the airport in one such helicopter.

Meanwhile, a four-member Chinese medical team, comprising doctors Chi Jiang Fang, Yan Xin, Zhong Yuhui, and Meng Huang Wu, arrived at the hospital late on Wednesday night and met with the medical board to review treatment options for the BNP chairperson, the state-run BSS news agency reported.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir met the specialists upon their arrival and discussed Zia's treatment with them, according to news portal bdnews24.com.

The Chinese doctors joined a four-member UK specialist group led by Dr Richard Buell that had arrived earlier in the day to help chart an advanced treatment plan.

The team's arrival marked the second batch of Chinese doctors, who had arrived earlier this week. A five-member advance team from China had arrived in Dhaka on December 1 to provide preliminary assistance.

Interim government chief Muhammad Yunus on Wednesday visited the hospital to enquire about Zia's health, a day after the army, navy and air force chiefs visited her.

Sikh History This Week

DECEMBER 5 TO DECEMBER 11

5th December



1705 Guru Gobind Singh Ji bid farewell to Anandpur. Accompanied by members of his family and 1500 other singhs/singhnees, Guru Sahib was leaving Anandpur with the promises of the Hindu Hill Rajas and the Muslim Mughal forces that they shall not attack this entourage. However, these promises soon evaporated and the Sikhs were not only attacked but pursued.



1710 Sikh forces, under the leadership of Baba Gurbakhash Singh (Banda Bahadur), fought Mughal forces in Sadaura.

1872 Bhai Vir Singh, a great Sikh scholar, was born. Bhai VIR SINGH (1872-1957) born on Dec. 5, 1872, was a great poet, scholar, and a spiritual leader. He edited and published for the first Prachin Panth Prakash, the work of Rattan Singh Bhangu. As K.N. Subramanyam commented "He was essentially a product of the best aspects of Sikhism." He was conferred the degree of Doctor of Oriental Learning Honoris Causa, in 1949, in absentia by the Punjab University. He was awarded the Padame Bhusham in 1956. He died on June 10, 1957.

1966 Fateh Singh announced that he would immolate himself on Dec. 27, 1966, if Chandigarh was not transferred to Punjab. However, neither Chandigarh was transferred nor Fateh Singh kept his promise.

6th December

1778 Khalsa Dal, the combined forces of 11 Sikh Mislis, attacked Ruhel Khand, U.P.

1921 Kishan Singh Garhgaj delivers an anti-British speech at Haripur.



1947 Winston Churchill sent a note to S. Baldev Singh suggesting him to stay in London for couple more days and let Jawaharlal Nehru go back to India, hoping that by talking to the British govt. and the Muslim League they could possibly find a solution, "So as to enable the Sikhs to have political feet of their own on which they may walk in the current of World-History."

S. Baldev Singh mentioned this to Nehru and then called a press conference and read a statement (apparently prepared by Nehru) that the Sikhs demand nothing from the British. Whatever the Sikhs want will get it from the Congress and the only demand of the Sikhs is that the British leave India.

7th December



1715 Baba Gurbakhash Singh (Banda Bahadur) along with 740 of his men were arrested from Gurdas Nangal. A Fierce fight took place between Baba GurBakhash Singh and Abdus Samad Khan. Baba GurBakhash Singh and his men were besieged in the Gurdas Nangal fortress near Gurdaspur. The unbreakable siege lasted for 6 months. In Dec, the entire food stock and ammunition exhausted and the Mughal forces captured Banda Bahadur with 740 men. All taken to Delhi.

8th December

1922 Letters of the Sikh solidiers printed in the

"Babbar Akali Doaba".

1933 The Babbar Akalis murder Bela Singh of Zian. The early 20th century was a time of great turmoil for Sikhs in Canada – the first wave of immigration had arrived, the notorious Komagata Maru incident happened, Sikhs had to contend with openly racist laws and societies, and the Ghadar movement was underway.

1946 During the violence instigated by India's partition, Muslims killed 102 members of a Sikh family in Ughi Nagar.

1990 International Conference on Sikh Studies was held at George Washington University, Washington, DC. Some of the topics covered at this conference include: "Sikh Fundamentalism and Punjab Problem; Western Approaches to the Sikh Tradition; Sikh Mysticism; Sikhs in Americam – Stress and Survival; Sikhism and Modern Technology; and Evolution of Sikh Philosophy and Misinterpretation of Sikhism in Western Writings". Nearly 200 people attended this conference.

9th December

1710 Baba Gurbakhash Singh (Banda Bahadur) escapes Mughal forces.

1946 Nehru introduces assurances for Sikhs in Constituent Assembly.

1979 The Dal Khalsa in its first annual conference at



Gurdaspur passed a resolution demanding the declaring of Amritsar as a "Holy City." The Youth (Dal Khalsa and the Sikh Students Federation) had long since been demanding the declaration that Amritsar was a Holy City. The SGPC chief, G. S. Tohra, had met the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, on September 24, 1980, and had asked her to make a declaration to that effect. When more than six months had passed and there was no movement in that case, the Sikh Youth decided to organise a procession to press the Sikh demand. A joint meeting of the Dal Khalsa and the Sikh Students decided to take out such a procession on May 31, 1981.

10th December

1710 Bahadur Shah issued the orders to kill Sikhs.

1841 Battle for the conquest of Tibet by Sikhs.

1988 Conference on Sikh Studies, Long Beach

11th December

1705 Guru Gobind Singh escapes Mughal forces in Macchiwara.

1710 Baba Gurbakhash Singh (Banda Bahadur) escaped unhurt from the fort Lohgarh.

1836 Sardar Zorawar Singh captured Ladakh.

1845 Sikhs cross Sutlej River and surprise British, causing outbreak of Anlo-Sikh War.

1991 Khalistan Flag was hoisted at CSU Chico.

French manicure for soft hands

The French manicure continues to be one of the most iconic nail styles in the world, celebrated for its clean aesthetic, soft femininity, and effortless sophistication. What makes it remarkable is its universal appeal—women of all ages, professions, and personal styles gravitate toward this look because it instantly makes the hands appear polished, graceful, and well-groomed. At the heart of this trend lies a beautiful balance of sheer, natural tones contrasted with crisp, defined tips. But the magic of a French manicure goes beyond the design itself; it elevates the overall look of the hands, bringing softness, elegance, and a kind of understated luxury that never goes out of style.

Why Soft Hands Matter

A French manicure looks its best when the hands themselves are smooth, nourished, and naturally radiant. Soft hands become the perfect canvas for the delicate nude base and white tips, making the nails appear brighter and the fingers more refined. When the skin is dry or rough, even the most precise French manicure can look dull and uneven. Hydrated hands, on the other hand, create a youthful glow that enhances the overall impact of the manicure. This makes hand care an essential part of achieving the perfect French look. Starting with gentle exfoliation to remove dead skin, followed by warm soaks that soften cuticles, and finally regular moisturizing rituals, the preparation ensures that the hands look as beautiful as the nails they carry.

Prepping the Hands

Hand preparation sets the foundation for a French manicure that truly stands out. Exfoliating with a sugar scrub or a gentle cream polish removes roughness and reveals smoother skin. A warm soak infused with almond oil, rose water, or essential oils relaxes the muscles, softens the cuticles, and gives the skin a fresh, dewy finish. Pushing back the cuticles after soaking instantly creates a cleaner nail bed, making the white tips of the French manicure look sharper and more defined. This simple ritual transforms the hands from ordinary to pampered, giving the manicure the luxurious backdrop it deserves.

Moisturization

If there is one rule that guarantees beautiful hands, it



is consistent moisturization. Rich creams containing shea butter, vitamin E, glycerin, or almond oil keep the hands soft, supple, and resilient. Massaging the cream into the knuckles, palms, and around the nails improves circulation and makes the skin appear naturally plump. For overnight care, applying a buttery cream with a few drops of nourishing oil and wearing cotton gloves ensures deep hydration and baby-soft hands by morning. Cuticle oil applied daily prevents cracks and dryness, helping maintain the clean, elegant look that complements a French manicure.

The traditional French manicure features a nude or pale pink base topped with pure white tips, but modern variations offer endless possibilities. A sheer pink base brings a youthful softness to the hands, while a milky nude creates a dreamy, natural finish. Thin micro-French tips look delicate on short nails, whereas classic arcs enhance medium lengths, and ombré French nails—softly blending white into nude—give a romantic, bridal-like elegance. For those who enjoy subtle glamour, a tiny strip of gold along the white tip or a glossy tip on a matte nude base adds sophistication without overpowering the soft beauty of the hands. Pastel French tips in lavender, mint, or peach are perfect for those who love a fresh, feminine twist.

Things couples can do to strengthen their bond

Create Shared Rituals

Simple daily habits like a morning walk, cooking dinner together, or ending the day with a 10-minute talk create emotional consistency and deepen intimacy. These small rituals become the glue that holds a relationship steady.

Try New Experiences Together

Whether it's exploring a new café, taking a weekend road trip, or trying an adventure sport, novelty boosts excitement. Shared firsts help couples grow closer and form memories that keep the relationship fresh.

Plan Device-Free Time

Putting phones aside for even one hour a day allows couples to reconnect. Unplugged moments—like board games, long conversations, or cuddling—help revive emotional closeness in a distraction-heavy world.



Work on a Project as a Team

Starting a kitchen garden, redecorating a room, learning a skill, or even doing a fitness challenge together builds teamwork. Collaborating towards a common goal strengthens understanding and partnership.

Celebrate Each Other in Small Ways

Surprise notes, thoughtful gestures, or planning a small date night can make your partner feel valued. When appreciation flows both ways, love naturally deepens and becomes more expressive.

FOOD CORNER

Zafrani kheer

A luxurious, slow-cooked Indian dessert infused with saffron, cardamom, nuts, and the richness of full-cream milk.

Ingredients (4 servings)

- 1 litre full-cream milk
- ¼ cup basmati rice (preferably small-grain or broken)
- ½ cup sugar (adjust to taste)
- 10-12 strands of saffron (zafran)
- 2 tbsp warm milk (for soaking saffron)
- ½ tsp cardamom powder
- 8-10 almonds, sliced
- 8-10 cashews, chopped
- 1 tbsp pistachios, sliced
- 1 tbsp raisins
- 1 tsp ghee
- Few drops of kewra water or rose water (optional)

Preparation

- Warm 2 tbsp milk.
- Crush saffron strands slightly and add to the warm milk.
- Let it soak for 10-15 minutes to release its deep color and aroma.
- Rinse rice once and soak it for 20-25 minutes.
- Drain and lightly crush it with your fingers or a spoon (helps thicken the kheer).
- Heat 1 litre milk in a heavy-bottom pan.
- Bring to a boil, then add the soaked rice.
- Cook on low flame, stirring frequently so milk doesn't stick.
- After 20-25 minutes, the rice will soften and the milk will thicken.
- Add sugar and mix until dissolved completely.
- Add saffron milk and watch the kheer turn golden.
- Add cardamom powder.
- In a small pan, heat 1 tsp ghee, fry almonds, cashews, and raisins until golden.
- Add these fried nuts into the kheer (reserve some for garnish).
- Stir and cook for a final 5 minutes.
- Add a few drops of kewra or rose water (optional).
- Garnish with pistachios and saffron strands.
- Serve warm for comfort or chilled for a rich dessert.

Tips for Perfect Zafrani Kheer

- Slow cooking is key - it brings a creamy, rabri-like texture.
- The more saffron you use, the richer the color and aroma.
- Always use full-cream milk for authentic richness.
- Add sugar only after the rice is cooked; it prevents the rice from softening properly.



Eating too fast can spike your blood sugar: Here's why slowing down matters

In our fast-paced lifestyle, eating has become something we squeeze between meetings, commutes and endless to-do lists. But rushing through meals can do more harm than just causing indigestion. Nutritionists warn that eating too quickly can lead to sharp spikes in blood sugar, increasing the risk of insulin resistance, weight gain, and long-term metabolic problems. What feels like a harmless habit may actually disrupt your body's natural rhythm of hunger, fullness and glucose regulation.

How Fast Eating Affects Blood Sugar

When you eat at speed, the stomach receives large amounts of food in a short time, pushing glucose into the bloodstream faster than your body can handle. Chewing less means food isn't broken down properly, forcing the digestive system to work harder and absorb glucose more quickly. On top of that, the brain takes around 20 minutes to register fullness. If you finish your meal before this window, you often end up overeating without even realising it - leading to a sudden jump in blood sugar followed by a crash.

Insulin Strain and Metabolic Stress

Eating too fast puts pressure on the pancreas to release insulin at a faster rate. Over time, this constant stress reduces insulin sensitivity, making it harder for cells to use glucose effectively. This is why people who eat quickly are more likely to develop prediabetes, belly fat, high triglycerides and type 2 diabetes. The body simply cannot keep up with the rapid inflow of nutrients, especially refined carbs and sugars.

The Mind-Body Disconnect

Speed eating disconnects you from your natural hunger cues. When you swallow mouthfuls quickly, you're not giving your senses - smell, taste, texture - enough time to



send signals of satisfaction to the brain. This results in feeling full only after you've already overeaten. The habit also triggers emotional eating tendencies, making you crave more food even when your body doesn't need it.

Benefits of Slowing Down Your Meals

Eating slowly is not just about manners; it's a powerful metabolic tool. When you chew thoroughly, carbohydrates break down gradually, allowing sugar to enter the bloodstream more steadily. This prevents sudden spikes and supports better insulin function. Slowing down also improves digestion, reduces bloating, enhances nutrient absorption, and supports weight loss by helping you naturally consume fewer calories. People who eat mindfully often report improved mood, less stress, and greater satisfaction from food.

Simple Ways to Eat More Mindfully

Small habits can make a big difference. Put your fork down between bites, chew 15-20 times, sip water throughout your meal, and avoid distractions like screens while eating. Start meals with fibrous foods such as salads or vegetables to slow glucose absorption. Even pausing for a few seconds before each bite can help your brain reconnect with the act of eating.



Air pollution may reduce health benefits of exercise: Study

A new study led by researchers at University College London (UCL) shows that chronic exposure to toxic air can significantly diminish the health benefits of regular physical activity. The study analysed data from more than 1.5 million adults tracked for more than a decade in countries including the UK, Taiwan, China, Denmark and the United States.

The team found that the protective effect of regular exercise on people's risk of dying over a specific period - from any cause and from cancer and heart disease specifically - appeared to be reduced, but not eliminated, for those who lived in high pollution areas.

The researchers looked at levels of fine particulate matter - tiny particles known as PM2.5s with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres across. These particles are so small they can get stuck in the lungs and enter the bloodstream.

The health benefits of exercise significantly weakened where the yearly average level of PM2.5s was 25 micrograms per cubic metre (mg/m³) or higher, the team found. Nearly half (46%) of the world's population live in areas exceeding this threshold.

The lead researcher, Professor Po-Wen Ku of National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan, said, "Our findings emphasise that exercise remains beneficial even in polluted environments. However, improving air quality can greatly enhance these health gains."

Co-author Professor Andrew Steptoe, from UCL's Department of Behavioural Science & Health, said: "Our study shows that toxic air can to some extent block the benefits of exercise, although not eliminate them. The findings are further evidence of the damage that fine particle pollution can do to our health."

"We believe clean air and physical activity are both important for healthy ageing and so we encourage greater efforts to curb health-harming pollution levels." For the study, the research team looked at data from seven existing studies, including three that were unpublished, combining the summary statistics from each study into one overall analysis. For three of these studies, they re-analysed the raw data at the level of individual participants.

Persistent chest tightness may be an early lung cancer warning: Expert

Persistent chest tightness and breathing discomfort, often brushed off as stress, acidity or seasonal asthma, may be early warning signs of lung cancer that patients commonly overlook, warns a leading oncologist.

In an interview with Indiatoday.in, Dr Abhijit Das, Sr. Consultant, Radiation Oncology at HCG Cancer Hospital, Kolkata, explained why so many cases continue to be detected late and what symptoms truly merit urgent medical attention.

"Chest discomfort from lung cancer usually feels constant and deep, not the on-and-off tightness you get with anxiety or the burning feeling from acidity," he says. Unlike stress-related tightness, the pain tends to worsen with time and is often accompanied by red flags such as a persistent cough, unexplained tiredness or weight loss.

"Most importantly, it doesn't go away with calming down or taking antacids, that steady, lingering pain is what makes it different," he emphasises.

Health experts add that many patients only seek help once the pain interferes with breathing, sleep, or daily functioning, by which point the disease may have already progressed.

Breathing trouble usually appears late, making lung cancer a 'silent disease'.

Contrary to popular belief, early lung cancer rarely causes noticeable breathing issues.

THE PAIN PATTERNS THAT SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED

Dr Das says certain types of pain warrant immediate evaluation:

- Pain that worsens with deep breaths, indicates irritation around the lungs
- Pain triggered by coughing or laughing more likely a lung-related issue
- Pain that increases at night or when lying down, suggests pressure changes
- Persistent deep ache that remains in the same area

Pain radiating to the shoulder or upper back

"These patterns don't always mean cancer, but if they linger or worsen, they definitely need to be checked," he says.

Senior clinicians note that Indians frequently attribute such pain to acidity, viral infections or gym strain, losing valuable time before diagnosis.

"Breathing difficulty or chest pressure usually appear later in the disease," Dr Das explains. "Early tumours are often too small to block airways. Most people have no symptoms at the beginning."

This "silent progression" is one of the biggest reasons lung cancer continues to be detected at advanced stages in India, where screening rates remain low.

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Putting Pompeii's pieces together, with the help of a robot

Pompeii's ancient Roman frescoes, shattered and buried for centuries, could get a second life thanks to a pioneering robotic system designed to support archaeologists in one of their most painstaking tasks: reassembling fragmented artefacts.

The technology, developed under an EU-funded project called RePAIR, combines advanced image recognition, AI-driven puzzle-solving, and ultra-precise robotic hands to accelerate traditionally slow and often frustrating restoration work.

Launched in 2021 and coordinated by Venice's Ca' Foscari University, the robotic project showcased in Pompeii on Thursday brought together international research teams that have used the archaeological site as their testing ground. The experimental project "actually started from a very concrete necessity to recompose fragments of frescoes that had been destroyed during the Second World War," said the site's director Gabriel Zuchtriegel.

Researchers believe the technology could transform restoration practices worldwide.

The robot uses twin arms equipped with flexible hands in two sizes and vision sensors to identify, grip and assemble fragments without damaging their delicate surfaces.

The once-thriving city of Pompeii, near Naples, and its surrounding countryside were submerged by volcanic ash when Mount Vesuvius exploded in AD 79.

Researchers focused on frescoes preserved in a fragmentary state in Pompeii's storerooms -- two large ceiling paintings which were damaged during the initial eruption and later shattered by bombing in World War Two, and frescoes from the so-called 'House of the Gladiators' which collapsed in 2010.

Replicas were created during this initial testing phase to avoid risking the original pieces. While the robotics teams worked on designing and building the system, experts in artificial intelligence and machine learning developed algorithms to reconstruct the frescoes, matching colours and patterns that may not be visible to the human eye. Experts say the task is similar to solving a giant jigsaw puzzle, with extra difficulties such as missing pieces and no reference image of the final result.

"It's like you buy four or five boxes of jigsaw puzzles. You mix everything together, then you throw away the boxes and try to solve four or five puzzles at the same time," said Marcello Pelillo, the Venice university professor who coordinated the project.



OpenAI working on a secret Garlic AI model to challenge Google Gemini 3 and Opus 4.5 in coding and reasoning

The race to build the most powerful artificial intelligence system has entered a new phase, with Microsoft-backed OpenAI quietly developing a large language model called Garlic. The model is being designed to rival Google's Gemini 3 and Anthropic's Opus 4.5, particularly in advanced reasoning and coding abilities, according to a report by The Information. Early internal tests suggest Garlic is performing strongly and could debut as GPT-5.2 or GPT-5.5 by early next year.

The Garlic project comes amid growing competition following Google's success with Gemini 3. According to The Information, OpenAI's Chief Research Officer, Mark Chen, told colleagues that Garlic had shown "strong performance" across multiple benchmarks, including reasoning and programming, where Google and Anthropic currently hold an edge.

CEO Sam Altman has reportedly declared a "code red" inside the company to improve ChatGPT and reclaim OpenAI's lead in the AI race. He told staff that OpenAI's new reasoning model was already "ahead" of Gemini 3 in its own internal evaluations. Although OpenAI has not commented



publicly, insiders say the company is fast-tracking Garlic's release, aiming for an early 2026 rollout.

Garlic reportedly builds on lessons from Shallotpeat, an earlier in-house model that Altman mentioned to employees in October. While Shallotpeat was designed to challenge Gemini 3, Garlic incorporates bug fixes and refinements from that project, particularly in the pretraining phase. This stage teaches a model to recognise relationships in massive datasets drawn from across the internet.

According to Chen, Garlic represents a leap forward in pretraining efficiency.

He told colleagues that the team had managed to "infuse a smaller model with the same amount of knowledge" that previously required a much larger one. This advancement means Garlic could deliver GPT-4.5-level performance at lower cost and faster speed.

The breakthrough comes as Google has been touting similar improvements with Gemini 3's training process. OpenAI's progress with Garlic could counterbalance that advantage and potentially give the company a more efficient path to future upgrades.

Chen said Garlic had already surpassed OpenAI's "previous best" pretraining results and resolved key technical bottlenecks that affected GPT-4.5, which launched earlier this year. With these improvements, OpenAI is confident it can now develop smaller yet more capable models without inflating training costs.

Before Garlic launches, it will undergo post-training with specialised datasets, along with safety testing and evaluation. Sources also claim the success of Garlic has already allowed OpenAI to begin working on an even more advanced successor model, building on the lessons learned during its development.

Is this comet flying backwards? Nasa spacecraft captures comet 2025 R2 (Swan)

Nasa's Polarimeter to Unify the Corona and Heliosphere (Punch) mission has provided a detailed look at Comet 2025 R2 (Swan), tracking its movement from August to early October 2025. The spacecraft collected images every few minutes, offering one of the most frequent observation cadences ever achieved for a comet.

The comet, first identified on September 11 by Ukrainian amateur astronomer Vladimir Bezugly in SOHO spacecraft data, was later found in Punch records dating back to August 7, as it journeyed near Mars and the star Spica. Processed videos created from Punch data display Comet Swan moving leftward, away from the Sun, which gives the visual impression that the comet is moving backwards.

This illusion occurs because the solar wind, a continuous stream of charged particles emanating from the Sun, pushes the comet's tail in the same direction as its orbital motion, reversing the expected appearance.

Punch's four satellites closely monitored the dynamic changes in the comet's tail, including its growth,



shrinkage, and flickering. These multi-vantage observations enabled researchers to better understand how the solar wind interacts with cometary material.

The SOHO mission, a joint initiative between Nasa and ESA, celebrates its 30th launch anniversary in December 2025. SOHO's Swan instrument has contributed to the discovery of over 5,000 comets, with many, such as Comet Swan, identified by citizen scientists like Bezugly.

Comet Swan reached its closest point

to the Sun, or perihelion, on September 12 at a distance of 0.5 astronomical units. The comet brightened rapidly, increasing from magnitude 11 to 8, and peaked at magnitude 6 during its closest approach to Earth on October 20, when it was just 0.26 astronomical units away. A possible fragmentation event was detected in early November, suggesting shifts in its physical structure.

Punch's high-frequency imaging, capturing the comet every four minutes through October 5, surpassed the traditional daily observation schedule. Principal investigator Craig DeForest emphasized the advantages of this approach, noting its value in examining the interactions between the solar wind and various objects in the solar system.

Gina DiBraccio, a heliophysicist at Nasa Goddard, commented on the benefits of the multi-vantage observations: "Watching the Sun's effects from multiple vantage points... gives us a complete picture of the space environment," she said. These findings help improve models of how solar wind can affect comets, planets, astronauts, and technological systems on Earth.

US plans more stakes in minerals companies, Trump official says

WASHINGTON (TIP)

The US government plans to take more equity stakes in critical minerals companies, a White House official said Thursday, Dec 4, calling the once-rare move necessary to counter China's dominance in the raw materials used in everything from semiconductors to MRI machines.

"I think they're the norm from our perspective," said Jarrod Agen, executive director of the National Energy Dominance Council, speaking at a forum in Washington. "There is a broad scope of different companies who are coming to us. They're making the right case."

Critical minerals such as gallium and cobalt are used in products ranging from iPhones to industrial magnets. They're also vital for defense systems including missile guidance, radar and jet engines, as well as batteries and other technologies needed to cut carbon pollution. Over the past year, the Trump administration has spent over \$1 billion to take stakes in critical minerals and mining companies, often sending the company's stock prices soaring.

Among the deals are \$400 million in exchange for a 15% stake in MP Materials Corp. which was announced in July, \$670 million in exchange for a stake in magnet producer Vulcan Elements Inc. and \$35.6 million for a 10% stake in Canadian minerals explorer Trilogy Metals Inc. The Trump administration announced in September it was acquiring a stake in Lithium Americas Corp., which is developing the largest lithium deposit in the country, as part of a deal to restructure an existing \$2.23 billion loan the Canadian company held with the Energy Department.

Agen, in a brief interview, declined to specify what company could be next.

The strategy of investing taxpayer



dollars in companies the administration has deemed essential to national security comes as the US' reliance on China for the crucial materials has become a flash point in the trade war. Beijing responded to US export restrictions by curbing shipments of rare-earth elements, a move that briefly disrupted global supplies before China eased the limits after Washington lifted its countermeasures.

"We're literally buying equity, getting equity in companies to give the backing of the US, because that's the only way we're going to catch up with China on these things," Agen said in his remarks at the American Growth Summit, which was sponsored by companies such as Citigroup Inc. and NVIDIA Corporation. "They know the government is backing us. No one wants to mess with President Trump, and so we can actually get the materials."

Global race to secure critical minerals for weapons threatens climate

The accelerating global arms race

is hindering climate action as critical minerals that are key to a sustainable future are being diverted to make the latest military hardware, according to a report

The study from the Transition Security Project – a joint US and UK venture – reveals how the Pentagon is stockpiling huge stores of critical minerals that are needed for a range of climate technologies including solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles and battery storage.

It found that since the US president, Donald Trump, passed his "one big beautiful bill" earlier this year, the Pentagon – through its National Defense Stockpile programme – has earmarked billions of dollars to secure a growing list of critical minerals for use in military hardware – from precision-guided weaponry and advanced communication systems to an emerging arsenal of military technologies such as "AI-driven autonomous warfare platforms".

Rupee hits record low of 90.43 against US dollar, slumps 28 paise

The rupee slumped 28 paise to an all-time low of 90.43 against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday, Dec 3, amid substantial foreign institutional investor outflows and restrained intervention from the Reserve Bank of India.

Forex traders said that restrained central bank intervention ahead of the crucial Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decision and significant dollar demand from importers have exerted persistent downward pressure on the local currency. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.36. It slipped further to a record low of 90.43 against the greenback in initial deals, registering a loss of 28 paise from its previous closing level.

On Wednesday, the rupee breached the 90-a-dollar level for the first time to settle at a fresh all-time low of 90.15 against the greenback.

Meanwhile, Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran on Wednesday said the falling rupee is not affecting inflation or exports.

A falling rupee helps outward shipment but makes imports costlier.

Import-dependent sectors such as gems and jewellery, petroleum and electronics may see lower benefits due to a rise in input costs, putting pressure on inflationary expectations, he said at an event on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.14 per cent higher at 98.99.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.49 per cent to USD 62.98 per barrel in futures trade.

Forex traders believe investors are adopting a cautious stance amid ongoing trade tensions with the US, with expectations of a settlement towards the end of the year.

Fitch ups India's FY26 GDP growth forecast to 7.4%

NEW YORK (TIP)

Fitch Ratings on Thursday, Dec 4, raised India's GDP (gross domestic product) growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7.4%, from 6.9%, on increased consumer spending and improved sentiment boosted by GST (goods and services tax) reforms.

It said falling inflation gives the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) room for one more policy rate cut in December to 5.25%, following 100 bps of cuts in 2025 so far.

Fitch said that GDP growth accelerated further in the July-September quarter to 8.2%, from 7.8% in the April-June quarter.

"Growth will ease over the remainder of the financial year 2025-26 (to end-March), but we have raised our full-year growth forecast to 7.4%, from 6.9% in September," Fitch said in its Global Economic Outlook report for December.

Private consumer spending is the main driver of



growth this year, supported by strong real income dynamics, increased consumer sentiment, and the impact of recently implemented GST reforms.

Effective September 22, GST on about 375 items has been slashed, making more than 99% of

consumption items cheaper.

Fitch expects GDP growth to slow to 6.4% in the financial year 2027.

It projected private investment to pick up in the second half of the next fiscal (2026-27) as financial conditions loosen.

Consumer price inflation fell to an all-time low of 0.3% in October, driven by lower food and drink prices. "We expect falling inflation should give the Reserve Bank of India room for one more policy rate cut in December to 5.25%, following 100 bps of cuts in 2025 so far, and a series of reductions in the cash reserve ratio (from 4% to 3%)," Fitch said.

The central bank's monetary policy committee is slated to announce its policy review on Friday.

With core inflation recovering and activity projected to remain strong, Fitch said that it expects the RBI to have reached the end of its easing cycle, and that rates will remain at 5.25% over the next two years.



BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA



ARIES

Ganesha says that people of the Aries zodiac sign need to be very careful at the beginning of the week from those people who often keep plotting for their work. During this period, there will be pressure on you to finish the work on time. Those doing consultancy, tourism, and marketing work will face some complications. You may have to run around a lot regarding matters related to land and property. It would be better to resolve such matters through talks instead of taking them to court. Do not take any risk in business in the middle of the week which may cause you financial loss. Take special care of your health and luggage while traveling for career business. In the latter half of the week, youth will spend most of their time having fun. During this period, there will be an atmosphere of happiness due to the arrival of a loved one in the house. From the point of view of a love relationship, this week you should avoid ignoring the feelings of your love partner to improve your love relationship. Whereas single people will have to wait a little longer to get the desired love or life partner. Married life will remain happy. Your spouse will become your support in your difficult situations. Take special care of your health in the changing weather.



TAURUS

Ganesha says that this week will bring auspiciousness and benefits for the people of the Taurus zodiac sign. At the beginning of the week, you may get a big opportunity related to your career and business. During this period, acquaintance with eminent people will increase. With the help of this, you will get the opportunity to join profitable schemes in the future. Your seniors in the workplace will praise your work. In the middle of the week, you may spend more money on decorations or any comfort-related item. There will be an atmosphere of happiness due to the arrival of desired things in the house. This time is auspicious for businessmen. During this period, there will be desired profit in business. Travels undertaken in connection with business will prove profitable. Students and youth will get direction for progress. People preparing for exams and competitions may hear some good news by the end of the week. There will be additional sources of income for employed people. This week will prove to be very auspicious for you in terms of the love relationship. A love partner may enter the life of a single person. The love relationship already going on will become stronger. You may



GEMINI

Ganesha says that compared to last week, this week is going to be very auspicious and full of happiness for the people of the Gemini zodiac. People who are searching for employment will get the desired opportunity at the beginning of the week. People already working may get the desired promotion or transfer. Obstacles coming in the way of work related to government will be removed. Despite some complications in the middle of the week, you will get desired profits in your business. If you were thinking of expanding your business for a long time, your wish may be fulfilled this week. The special thing is that in doing this you will get the full support of your relatives. This time will be very auspicious for women professionals. They may have some big success. For those who were thinking of going abroad and making their career, the obstacles coming their way will be removed. Resolving disputes related to land and property will bring great relief to your mind. Love relationships will deepen. You will get opportunities to spend quality time with your love partner. Your family may accept your relationship and give the green signal for marriage. Married life will remain happy. Health will be normal.



CANCER

Ganesha says that this week is going to be very cool for the Cancer zodiac sign. At the beginning of the week, you may have to travel long or short distances in connection with career business. The journey will prove to be pleasant and fulfilling your wishes. There will be progress in work with the help of acquaintances or family members. You will get full support from both seniors and juniors in the workplace. There will be additional sources of income for employed people. In the second half of the week, some big positions or responsibilities may fall in the lap of people associated with politics, which will increase their status not only in the party but also in society. During this period, people working in colors, chemicals, and medicines will get the desired benefits. At the end of the week, you may spend more time on home decoration or maintenance. From the point of view of a love relationship, this week you will need to avoid being hasty. To strengthen your relationship and win the trust of your love partner, you will have to avoid hurting his/her feelings. At the same time, the attraction of single people towards the opposite sex will increase. Married life will remain happy. You will see better coordination with your spouse.



LEO

Ganesha says that the beginning of the week will be positive for the Leo zodiac people and all your planned work will be completed on time. During this period, you will get full support of good fortune and you will be successful in earning profits from various sources. During this time, you will get opportunities to have fun with close friends. A trip to a pilgrimage place or a tourist spot can be planned with friends. This time will prove to be very auspicious for those working abroad. By being alert in financial matters, there will be a possibility of sudden profit. You will get special support from family members to take the business forward. Everyone will respect the decisions taken by you regarding family. In the second half of the week, you may spend more money out of your pocket on things related to your comforts. All the obstacles in love relationships will be seen getting removed and you will be able to spend time happily with your love partner. There will be better coordination between husband and wife. At the end of the week, you may hear some good news related to your spouse. Health will be normal.



VIRGO

Ganesha says that this week is going to be more auspicious and fruitful for people of the Virgo zodiac than the previous week. At the beginning of the week, any major hurdle related to work will be removed. With the help of an influential person, you will be successful in finding a solution to a domestic issue. Money stuck in business for a long time may suddenly be recovered. Your credibility in the market will increase, although for this you will have to continuously compete with your competitors. Students preparing for exams and competitions may get to hear some good news. If seniors and juniors work together at the workplace, the planned work will be completed on time. In the second half of the week, you may have some big responsibilities related to the family. To fulfill this you will have to make special efforts and hard work. At the end of the week, employed people will get chances of sudden profits along with regular income. This week is going to be very auspicious for you in terms of a love relationship. A love partner may enter the life of a single person. A recent friendship with someone may turn into love, while the already ongoing love relationship will become even more intense. Married life will remain happy. Health will be normal.



LIBRA

Ganesha says that this week will prove to be auspicious for the people of the Libra zodiac sign. At the beginning of the week, you will get an opportunity to join some profitable schemes. There will be

additional sources of income for employed people. With the help of this, economic problems will be solved. If you were thinking of changing your job, you may get a better opportunity with the help of a friend. However, decided to change very thoughtfully. In the middle of the week, interaction with close friends will increase. This time is going to be very favorable for youth and women. During this time, a picnic party may suddenly be planned with friends or family members. Retail traders will benefit compared to wholesale traders. You will get to participate in some religious-social programs in the second half of the week. To strengthen your love relationship, avoid taking small matters to heart and do not take any decisions emotionally. Especially do not do this under the influence of others. Married life will remain happy. You will get opportunities to spend pleasant moments with your life partner. You will get full support and love from your parents in life.



SCORPIO

Ganesha says that this week is full of good luck for people of the Scorpio zodiac sign. At the beginning of the week, any problems related to power and government will be resolved. If you have been visiting government offices for a long time for some work, then this week all the obstacles related to it will be removed. Employed people will not only foil the conspiracies of their opponents with the help of their intelligence and discretion but will also receive praise from their seniors in the workplace. In the middle of the week, you may have to run around more in connection with your career and business. However, you will also get positive results from this. This time will prove to be auspicious for those working on land, construction, and commission. During this period, relationships with relatives will become stronger. Marriage proposals may come from unmarried people. If you are in a love relationship with someone, your family members may give their approval to it. There will be love and harmony between husband and wife in married life. From the health point of view, you need to keep your daily routine and eating habits correct, otherwise, you may have to suffer physical and mental problems.



SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says that this week may be a bit busy for Sagittarius. At the beginning of the week, you may suddenly face a huge burden of work. To solve this, you will need extra hard work and effort. During this time, domestic disputes will also become a major cause of your worry. There may be differences of opinion between brothers and sisters over some issues. Avoid conflict with relatives over land-building-related disputes and try to

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE : DEC 08 TO DEC 14 BY VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

DECEMBER 8

Ganesha says that today is a day to celebrate love and affection with friends and family. You may feel more emotional and impulsive than usual, so be sure to think about what you are about to do before you do something. Spend some time showing your partner how much you value your relationship. If you are single right now, be open to exploring new possibilities for a romantic relationship.

DECEMBER 9

Ganesha says that today is a great day for you to focus on your own needs and concerns. Spend some time taking care of yourself and indulging in the things that bring you the most joy. You may also consider devoting some time to reflecting on your goals and concerns for the future.

DECEMBER 10

Ganesha says that in today's world, communication is very important. You may find yourself in situations where you need to express your thoughts clearly and confidently. Make sure to listen to others and look for areas of agreement to avoid arguments.

DECEMBER 11

Ganesha says today is a day to connect with your feelings and express them. You may feel more sensitive and intuitive than usual, so you should heed the voice of your intuition. You should probably also spend some time with people you care about and be as honest as possible about your feelings.

DECEMBER 12

Ganesha says today is a good day to focus on your personal growth, trust your instincts, and make choices that are

in line with your values and long-term goals. Today is a good day to focus on your personal growth and trust your instincts. Your ability to be realistic and your attention to detail will greatly assist you in managing these issues.

DECEMBER 13

Ganesha says you may experience a sense of restlessness or a need for change. Take advantage of new possibilities and push yourself to do things that take you out of your comfort zone. You will be able to overcome any challenge that comes your way due to your resilience and resourcefulness.

DECEMBER 14

Ganesha says that today you can focus on your relationships and your connections with other people. Maintain your existing friendships and be open to making new ones as well. It may be easy



VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR BEJAN DARUWALLA

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for you to connect with others as a result of your charisma and the abilities of other people that can be highlighted. Still, you must establish positive boundaries and make time for your self-care.

CONTD FROM PAGE 31

resolve such matters through dialogue. There may be minor obstacles in work in the middle of the week but they will soon be removed with the help of an influential person. Any kind of carelessness can force you to visit the hospital. Even if the progress of businesspeople is slow, profits will remain constant. Similarly, additional sources of income will be created for employed people, due to which they will continue to have an inflow of money. This week you will see better tuning with your love partner. Mutual love and trust will increase. Married life will also remain happy.

CAPRICORN



Capricorn

Ganesha says that health is a thousand blessings. Capricorn people will need to keep this saying in mind, especially this week, otherwise, you may have to visit the hospital unnecessarily. At the beginning of the week, you may have to travel long distances for work. The journey will be profitable but very tiring. Which can affect your health. During this time, disputes related to land and buildings may arise, due to which you may have to face unnecessary problems. It would be better if you try to resolve such matters through dialogue instead of taking them to court, otherwise, the matter may drag on. There will be an opportunity to participate in some religious-social program in the middle of the week. When you meet a loved one after a long time, old memories will be refreshed. In the latter part of the week, traders may see big fluctuations in business. During this time, avoid taking risks by being misled by anyone. Before taking any big step in a love relationship, think ten times, otherwise, you may not only have to face defamation but may also have regrets in the future. You may be a little worried about your spouse's health.

AQUARIUS



Aquarius

Ganesha says that this week is going to be a mixed one for the people

of the Aquarius zodiac sign. At the beginning of the week, you will heave a sigh of relief if any major work-related problem is resolved. During this time, you will get full support from your close friends, through which you will be able to complete all your work easily and on time. Those who have been thinking of buying land and property for a long time may get a good profitable deal. However, do not make the mistake of making any such deal in a hurry, otherwise a small mistake can become a problem for you later. In the middle of the week, you may have to spend more out of pocket for home repair or decoration, which may disturb your budget a bit. During this time, your opponents in the workplace may try to divert you from your goal. People preparing for exams and competitions will need extra hard work to achieve their desired success. Love

relationships will be normal. Sweetness will remain in married life also.



PISCES

Ganesha says that people of Pisces should avoid being hasty in any work this week. Do not make the mistake of signing any paper without reading it properly, otherwise, you may have to repent later. In the workplace, instead of leaving your work to others, try to do it better yourself, otherwise you may have to become a victim of your boss's anger. In the middle of the week, students may lose interest in their studies. During this time, control your speech and emotions and think ten times before saying anything to anyone, otherwise, your relationships built over the years may get spoiled. Avoid resorting to the wrong

things to earn profit in business, otherwise, you may have to give up. Be very careful in money transactions. To strengthen your love relationship, try to understand the compulsions and feelings of your love partner. Married life will remain happy despite bitter and sweet disputes.

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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As December 2025 draws closer to the year's end, millions of Hindu households will perform the auspicious Shri Satyanarayan Puja, a revered ritual dedicated to Lord Vishnu in His benevolent form as Satyanarayan—the embodiment of truth, compassion and fulfilment. Traditionally performed on Purnima (full moon) or during significant life occasions, the December puja holds special emotional significance. It becomes a spiritual closing ceremony to the year gone by, a way of expressing gratitude, seeking forgiveness, and inviting blessings for a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious new year.

The December Satyanarayan Puja often coincides with a sense of reflection. The end of the year naturally encourages families to look back at their achievements, challenges, and personal journeys. Performing the puja in this month symbolizes closing negative cycles, resolving karmic burdens, and turning a fresh page. For many devotees, it becomes the ideal time to thank the Divine for protection, health, and guidance through the year's ups and downs. The winter season also adds a serene charm—oil lamps, incense and sacred chants create an atmosphere of purity and inner warmth.

The puja begins with the Kalash Sthapana, invoking Lord Vishnu, Goddess Lakshmi and all protective energies. Devotees prepare panchamrit, place sacred tulsi leaves, offer flowers and perform the Satyanarayan Katha—a collection of stories highlighting the importance of truth, devotion and humility. Each chapter narrates how faith in Satyanarayan removes obstacles, heals, and restores harmony. The offering of sheera (halwa) or rava prasadam represents sweetness, purification and the nourishment of both body and soul. The ritual of Aarti at the end signifies surrender—letting the Lord's light guide one's path.

Spiritual Essence of Satyanarayan Katha

At the heart of this puja lies the message that truth is the foundation of a meaningful life. The stories in the Katha remind devotees that material success must be balanced with righteousness, gratitude and spiritual awareness. Whether it is the tale of the poor Brahmin blessed with prosperity, the merchant saved from shipwreck, or the humble woodcutter whose devotion transformed his destiny, each narrative inspires faith and reinforces the belief that the Divine responds to sincerity. In December, as people evaluate their life decisions, these teachings feel deeply relevant and grounding.

Family Bonding and Community Harmony

In many regions, December becomes a month of communal and family celebrations. Families gather, children join in singing bhajans, women prepare prasadam, and elders lead the Katha. The puja becomes an occasion for unity—healing old misunderstandings, rekindling warmth, and reaffirming shared cultural values. In temples and community halls, mass Satyanarayan Pujas are organised, allowing devotees to

Sri Satyanarayan Puja: A sacred ritual rooted in faith and gratitude



Important information

Margashirsha Purnima

Thursday, 04 December 2025

Purnima Begins - 04 December 2025 at 08:38 AM

Purnima Ends - 05 December 2025 at 04:44 AM

collectively pray for global peace, wellness, and prosperity in the coming year.

Devotees perform the puja with the belief that Lord Satyanarayan brings stability, removes hurdles, protects homes from disruptions, and ensures harmony within the family. It is also considered auspicious for beginning new ventures as the year turns—be it a home purchase, business plan, or a personal resolution. Many believe that performing the puja in December clears the pathway for a blessed and prosperous start to the new year.

As life gets increasingly fast-paced, the December Satyanarayan Puja serves as a sacred pause. It allows individuals to reconnect with their inner self, offer gratitude for the blessings already received, and surrender anxieties about

the future. The glow of diyas, the chants of Vishnu Sahasranama, and the fragrance of tulsi create a space where the mind feels lighter and the heart feels at peace. As devotees complete the puja and bow before the deity, they carry a renewed sense of hope and clarity into the new year. The blessings of Lord Satyanarayan—whose very name is associated with truth and fulfillment—serve as a guiding light for the months ahead. In December 2025, as another year concludes, this puja will once again become a bridge between the blessings of the past and the promise of the future.

Rituals of Shri Satyanarayan Puja Preparation

Clean the home, set up a neat puja space, wear clean clothes, and arrange all items—kalash, flowers, prasadam ingredients, lamp, incense.

Kalash Sthapana

Place a water-filled kalash with mango leaves and a coconut on top. This symbolizes inviting Lord Vishnu into the home.

Ganesh Puja

Begin by praying to Lord Ganesha to remove obstacles and bless the puja.

Sankalp

The performer declares the intention of the puja—asking for peace, prosperity, gratitude and blessings for the family.

Worship of Lord Satyanarayan

Offer kumkum, sandal paste, flowers, tulsi leaves, fruits, and naivedya to Lord Vishnu in His Satyanarayan form.

Satyanarayan Katha

The five chapters of the Katha are read aloud, teaching devotion, truthfulness and gratitude.

Prasad Offering

Prepare and offer sheera/sooji halwa, panchamrit and fruits as prasadam.

Aarti

Perform aarti with a ghee lamp, conch blowing, and devotional singing.

Prasad Distribution

Share the prasadam with all family members and neighbours, spreading blessings and harmony.

Charity

Conclude with charity or dakshina, symbolising gratitude and completing the puja.

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

Modi-Putin summit yields sweeping economic and strategic package

committed to diversify and expand trade and investment, with new cooperation across sectors including agriculture, shipping, ports, fertilizers, food safety, medical sciences, and consumer protection.

One of the concrete outcomes: Indian firms have inked a deal with Russia's chemical major Uralchem to establish a urea production plant in Russia - a significant step for bilateral industrial collaboration.

In the maritime and logistics sphere, an MoU has been signed to boost cooperation in the port and shipping sector, underlining ambitions to improve transport connectivity and trade routes.

Importantly, the summit also delivered a mobility pact: a new framework agreement for labor mobility, facilitating movement of skilled and semi-skilled Indian professionals to Russia.

Russian authorities, including the banking sector, signaled readiness to support increased imports of Indian goods - especially in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and IT - while making trade settlements in rupees and troubles in a bid to bypass Western financial restrictions.

Energy security & uninterrupted fuel supply: Moscow reassures New Delhi

On energy, the summit reaffirmed Russia's commitment to remain a "reliable" supplier of oil, gas and coal to India, pledging uninterrupted shipments despite Western sanctions on Moscow following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Given India's rising energy demands - especially for industrial and agricultural sectors - that assurance carries strategic weight, helping New Delhi balance its energy security with growing global pressure to reduce reliance on Russian hydrocarbons.

Defense, technology and strategic-sector cooperation

Defense ties - long a cornerstone of the Russia-India relationship - featured prominently. While no large new weapons deal was publicly announced yet, the two sides confirmed intent to expand cooperation in space, artificial intelligence and other strategic technologies.

Officials say discussions will likely include upgrades to existing platforms - such as additional deliveries under the air-defense S-400 missile system contract - and faster supply of spare parts, maintenance, and possibly joint maintenance facilities.

Calls were also renewed for cooperation on next-generation projects - including hypersonic weapons and extended-range missile systems - reflecting Moscow's ambition to deepen the technological dimension of the partnership.

On the civil side, broad cooperation in sectors like space, medical sciences, and port infrastructure was agreed - underlining a mixed civil-military character to the renewed engagement.

Diplomacy, world affairs and India's stance on Ukraine

During their joint press briefing, PM Modi reaffirmed that India was not neutral on the war in Ukraine, declaring that "India is on the side of peace" - and calling urgently for a return to dialogue and diplomacy.

President Putin, for his part, expressed gratitude for India's attention to peace initiatives. Moscow hailed the durability of the "deep-rooted" Indo-Russian strategic partnership that has weathered global turbulence - including sanctions and Western pressure.

Observers note that while the two powers avoided a detailed confrontation over Ukraine, the summit's outcome sends a clear geopolitical signal: that Moscow and New Delhi intend to sustain - and deepen - ties even under pressure from Western capitals.

Why this summit matters: timing, balance and geopolitical significance

This is Putin's first official visit to India since the Ukraine war began - and comes at a time when India faces mounting pressure from Western countries, particularly the United States, over its continued purchase of Russian oil.

Yet, by pushing ahead with a sweeping cooperation package spanning trade, energy, defense, mobility, and high technology - and by establishing a vision through 2030 - both sides underscore their commitment to a long-term, even "structural" partnership, rather than just transactional deals.

For India, the agreements are a strategic hedge: securing energy and fertilizer supplies, enhancing industrial cooperation, and opening markets for Indian exports at a time when global supply-chain disruptions and geopolitical turbulence demand diversified trade partners.

For Russia, finalizing such agreements with India reinforces Moscow's efforts to pivot eastward - toward new markets, new supply routes, and a trade architecture less reliant on Western-dominated systems.

What to watch next: implementation and global reactions

The coming months will be critical to seeing whether the newly signed pacts translate into concrete deliveries: building and commissioning the Uralchem urea plant, operationalizing the labor mobility agreement, boosting Indian exports to Russia, and laying groundwork for joint infrastructure and defense projects.

At the same time, global reactions - especially from Western capitals - are likely to be sharp. Washington has already imposed tariffs on Indian goods in response to Russia oil imports, and the deepening of Russian-Indian ties could complicate New Delhi's diplomatic balancing act.

Finally, how India navigates its appeal for peace over Ukraine, while simultaneously deepening ties with Russia, will be scrutinized by both allies and critics - making the 2025 summit a defining moment in India's foreign-policy recalibration.

It is a developing story . (With inputs from news outlets)

Grand jury refuses to reindict Letitia James in mortgage fraud case

The administration then appointed Lindsey Halligan, one of Trump's personal lawyers, to replace Siebert. She personally presented the case against James to a grand jury in September, securing an indictment on one count of bank fraud and one count of making a false statement related to a Virginia property she purchased years ago. Halligan also presented the case against Comey.

But a federal judge dismissed both indictments last month, determining that Trump's rushed appointment of Halligan was unlawful and therefore she did not have the authority to present the cases to a grand jury.

That left the Justice Department with a choice: reindict the cases or appeal the decision.

On Thursday, Halligan was not involved. The administration has named Roger Keller a prosecutor previously based in Missouri, to handle the case.

The case against James stems from a criminal referral sent to the Justice Department in April by Bill Pulte, the head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency. Pulte, a Trump ally, has also made similar mortgage-fraud allegations against Sen. Adam Schiff (D-California) and Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook.

Pulte alleged that James lied on loan documents for a house she purchased in Norfolk in 2023. In paperwork related to that purchase, she said the home would be her primary residence even as she served as attorney general in New York. That constituted an effort to fraudulently obtain "more favorable loan terms," Pulte said. (Source: The Washington Post)

Elon Musk predicts 'war in 5 to 10 years', warns it's 'inevitable'

the threat of large-scale war between major powers has been reduced by nuclear weapons.

"Governments all suck now because nuclear weapons prevent war, or even the credible threat of war, between major powers. So, there's no external/evolutionary/market pressure on governments to not suck," Ash wrote. Musk replied with a terse but alarming prediction: "War is inevitable. 5 years, 10 at most." He did not provide any further explanation, leaving users to speculate about which geopolitical tensions he may have been referring to.

Given Musk's influence-bolstered by his brief role leading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) under former U.S. President Donald Trump-his comment quickly drew widespread attention.

Some users turned to Grok, xAI's chatbot, for clarification. Grok pointed to Musk's earlier warnings about global instability, including concerns about mass migration in Europe, rising identity-based political conflicts, and escalating tensions involving Taiwan, Ukraine, and major powers such as the United States and China.

While neither Musk nor the original thread specified any particular conflict, past statements suggest Musk sees a range of potential flashpoints.



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History This Week

DEC 05 - 12

DECEMBER 5

December 5, 1933 - The 18th Amendment (Prohibition Amendment) to the U.S. Constitution was repealed. For nearly 14 years, since January 29, 1920, it had outlawed the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages in the U.S.

December 5, 1955 - In Alabama, the Montgomery bus boycott began in response to the arrest of Rosa Parks for refusing to give up her seat on a municipal bus to a white man. Organized by the African American community, the boycott lasted until December 20, 1956, when a U.S. Supreme Court ruling integrated the public transportation system.

December 5, 1955 - The AFL-CIO was founded after two separate labor organizations, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, joined together following 20 years of rivalry, thus becoming the leading advocate for trade unions in the U.S.



Birthday - Walt Disney (1901-1966) was born in Chicago, Illinois. As a little boy, he liked to draw farm animals and eventually got a job as an artist. He moved to Hollywood and in 1928 produced Steamboat Willie, starring Mickey Mouse, in the first cartoon with synchronized sound. In 1937, he released his full length animated film, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. He opened the Disneyland amusement park in Anaheim, California, in 1955. Five years after his death, Disney World opened in Florida. The company he founded has since grown into a global entertainment empire.

DECEMBER 6

December 6, 1917 - Two ships collided at Halifax, Nova Scotia, resulting in an explosion that killed more than 1,500 persons and injured 8,000. The Norwegian ship Imo collided with the French munitions ship Mont Blanc which was loaded with supplies for the war in Europe, including 5,000 tons of TNT. A tidal wave caused by the explosion destroyed much of the city.

December 6, 1921 - The Irish Free State became an independent member of the British Commonwealth.

December 6, 1971 - The Democratic Republic of Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, was recognized by India. Pakistan then broke off diplomatic relations with India.

December 6, 1973 - Gerald Ford was sworn in as vice president under Richard Nixon following the resignation of Spiro Agnew who pleaded no contest to charges of income tax evasion.

December 6, 1978 - In Spain, a new constitution was approved by referendum, providing for a constitutional monarchy and a

parliamentary form of government.



Birthday - American poet Alfred Joyce Kilmer (1886-1918) was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Best known for his poem Trees, published in 1913. He was killed in action during World War I near Ourcy, France. The U.S. Army's Camp Kilmer was named in his honor.

Birthday - American lyricist Ira Gershwin (1896-1983) was born in New York City. He collaborated with his brother George to create many Broadway successes including; Lady Be Good, Funny Face, Strike Up the Band, and songs such as The Man I Love, Someone to Watch Over Me, and I Got Rhythm.

Birthday - Photojournalist Alfred Eisenstaedt (1898-1995) was born in Dirschau, Prussia. Best known for his Life magazine cover photos, including the sailor kissing a nurse in Time's Square, celebrating the end of World War II.

DECEMBER 7

December 7, 43 B.C. - Cicero (Marcus Tullius) died. He was a writer, statesman, and was considered ancient Rome's greatest orator.

December 7, 1787 - Delaware became the first state to adopt the new constitution of the United States of America.

December 7, 1941 - The U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, was attacked by nearly 200 Japanese aircraft in a raid that lasted just over one hour and left nearly 3,000 Americans dead.

Birthday - Wax modeler Marie Tussaud (1761-1850) was born in Bern, Switzerland. She established Madame Tussaud's waxworks in London in 1802 and later added a Chamber of Horrors.

DECEMBER 8

December 8, 1940 - During the Blitz, the House of Commons and Tower of London were seriously damaged amid an overnight air raid by German bombers on London.

December 8, 1941 - A day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States and Britain declared war on Japan.

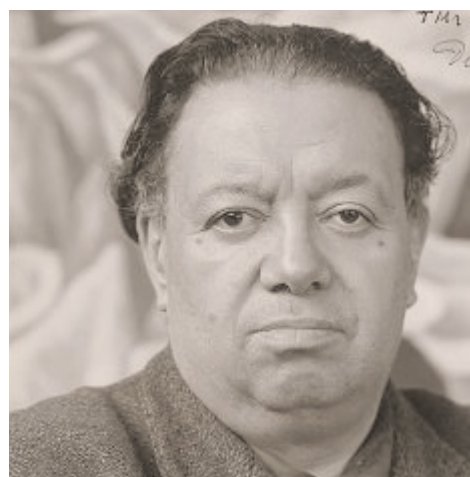
December 8, 1980 - Former Beatle musician John Lennon was assassinated in New York City.

December 8, 1987 - President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Russia's General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev signed the INF Treaty eliminating all intermediate-range and shorter-range nuclear missiles.

December 8, 1991 - The USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) ceased to exist, as the leaders of Russia,

Byelorussia and the Ukraine signed an agreement creating the Commonwealth of Independent States. The remaining republics of the former USSR, with the exception of Georgia, joined the new Commonwealth.

Birthday - General Motors founder William C. "Billy" Durant (1861-1947) was born in Boston, Massachusetts.



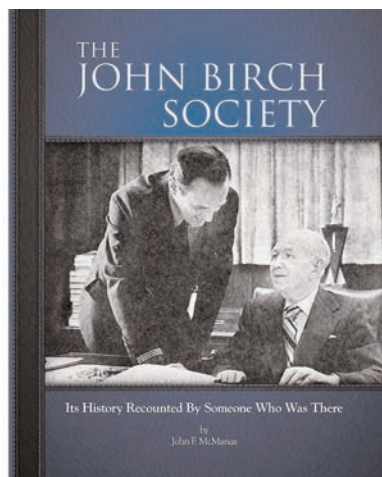
Birthday - Mexican artist Diego Rivera (1886-1957) was born in Guanajuato, Mexico. He created large works for display in the U.S. which aroused controversy due to his political point of view as a Communist. In 1933, his fresco Man at the Crossroads was removed from Rockefeller Center in New York City amid claims it included a figure resembling Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin. A year earlier, a mural done for the Detroit Institute of Arts had been criticized as irreligious. Following these controversies, he was denied further commissions in the U.S., although his work remained popular in Mexico.

Birthday - American humorist and artist James Thurber (1894-1961) was born in Columbus, Ohio. Best known for The Secret Life of Walter Mitty.

DECEMBER 9

December 9, 1941 - During World War II, China issued a formal declaration of war against Japan, Germany and Italy.

December 9, 1948 - The United Nations General Assembly unanimously approved the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It took effect on January 12, 1951, following ratification by 20 member nations.



December 9, 1958 - The John Birch Society was founded in the U.S. by Robert H.W. Welch as an anti-Communist political organization named for Capt. John Birch, a U.S. Army officer killed in 1945 by Chinese Communists.

December 9, 1990 - Lech Walesa won a landslide victory in the Polish presidential election.

December 9, 1992 - Buckingham Palace

announced the separation of Prince Charles and Princess of Wales, Dianna.

December 9, 1993 - A five-day repair job in space on the \$3 billion Hubble Space Telescope was finished by U.S. astronauts.

December 9, 1994 - Sinn Fein, the Irish Republican Army's political wing, held its first formal talks with Britain in over 70 years.

December 9, 1998 - Swiss politicians elected Interior Minister Ruth Dreifuss as president, making her the first woman to lead the Swiss government.

Birthday - American industrialist Clarence Birdseye (1886-1956) was born in Brooklyn, New York. He developed a method of deep-freezing foods and was one of the founders of General Foods Corp.

DECEMBER 10

December 10, 1941 - During World War II, British Battleships Repulse and Prince of Wales were sunk by Japanese warplanes in the South China Sea, killing nearly 800 crewmen.

December 10, 1948 - The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

December 10, 1950 - Dr. Ralph Bunche became the first African American man awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, for his efforts in mediation between Israel and nearby Arab states the previous year.

December 10, 1989 - The first non-Communist government since 1948 assumed power in Czechoslovakia.

Birthday - Educator Thomas Gallaudet (1787-1851) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He co-founded the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1817.

Birthday - Poet Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. Her poetry became known only after her death when her sister discovered nearly 2,000 poems locked in her bureau, written on the backs of envelopes and scraps of paper. They were published gradually over the next 50 years, beginning in 1890.

Birthday - American librarian Melvil Dewey (1851-1931) was born in Adams Center, New York. He invented the Dewey decimal book classification system, advocated spelling reform, and urged use of the metric system.

DECEMBER 11



December 11, 1936 - King Edward VIII abdicated the throne of England to marry "the woman I love," a twice-divorced American named Wallis Warfield Simpson. They were married in France on June 3, 1937, and then lived in Paris.

December 11, 1941 - A major turning point in World War II occurred as Japan's Axis partners, Italy and Germany, both declared war on the United States.

Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, is not just a destination; it is an experience woven with culture, hospitality and centuries-old elegance. Famous as the City of Nawabs, Lucknow blends the charm of its Mughal-Avadh heritage with the vibrancy of a modern metropolis. Every street, every aroma, every conversation echoes its legendary *tehzeeb*—a unique blend of politeness, poetic sensibility and refined living that defines the soul of the city.

A walk through Lucknow feels like stepping into a living museum. Start your journey at the Bara Imambara, an architectural marvel built by Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula in the 18th century. Famous for its central hall with no supporting beams and the mysterious Bhul Bhulaiya labyrinth, it remains one of India's most intriguing historical structures. Just nearby stands the Chota Imambara, a shining example of Persian-influenced design, with chandeliers, calligraphy and ornate stucco work that transform the monument into a glowing palace.

The majestic Rumi Darwaza, often called the Gateway of Lucknow, rises like a regal backdrop to the city's skyline. Modeled after Istanbul's Sublime Porte, it captures the spirit of the Nawabi era. Further along, the British Residency whispers stories of the 1857 uprising—its quiet ruins standing as a reminder of Lucknow's pivotal role in India's freedom struggle.

CONSTANTIA

Now a part of the famous La Martiniere College in Lucknow, the Constantia is a grand creation of a Frenchman called General Claude Martin. Martin started the construction of this structure in 1785, with the intention of building a palatial residence in India. However, he couldn't live long enough to live in the house and died in the year 1800. The construction could finally be completed only two years of his death. The building was named after the main principle of Martin's life, which was 'Labore et Constantia' (energy and persistence). Before he died, he made a will stating his desire to use the property as a centre of learning and thus, Constantia became an integral part of the college. The architectural grandeur of this majestic building will remind you of the bygone era.

RUMI DARWAZA

An exquisite example of Awadhi architecture, the Rumi Darwaza is a 60-foot-tall gateway located close to historical landmarks such as Bada Imambara and Chota Imambara in the city of Lucknow. The exquisite arch-shaped doorway is as central to Lucknow, as India Gate is to Delhi or Gateway of India is to Mumbai. Built in the 18th century, Rumi Darwaza is famed for its intricate carvings, architectural beauty and the vantage point on its top which offers panoramic views of the city (though entry to the topmost point is restricted mostly). This striking gateway is also known as the Turkish Gate, because of its resemblance with the entrance gate in Istanbul.

BEGUM HAZRAT MAHAL PARK

Situated in the heart of the city, the Begum Hazrat Mahal Park was built in the memory of the beautiful Queen of

Lucknow: The city of nawabs — A journey into grace and grandeur



Awadh, Begum Hazrat Mahal. Though the garden and monument were constructed by the Indian government to commemorate her contribution to the 1857 revolt, it is also immensely popular with couples now. This impressive garden in the Hazratganj region has striking wellsprings, beautiful trees and stone pathways. The greenery and serenity around the garden draws couples in large numbers.

KAISERBAGH PALACE

One of the most-visited tourist attractions in Lucknow, Kaiserbagh Palace complex is truly an architectural marvel. It was built by the Nawab of Awadh Wajid Ali Shah between 1848 and 1850. In the later years, the palace acted as a stronghold of Begum Hazrat Mahal during the 1857 mutiny. A major part of the palace was destroyed by the British forces after the Revolt of 1857. Though the palace is in ruins now, it remains a prime tourist hotspot in the city. Visitors can still see the pediments, lanterns, Moorish minarets and banisters here. Moreover, the tombs of Nawab Saadat Ali Khan (the fifth Nawab Wazir of Awadh) and his beloved wife Khursheed Zadi, rest on the northern terrace of palace's courtyard, which is another major highlight of the place. With its splendid architectural style, Kaiserbagh Palace is a must see attraction in the city.

JAMA MASJID

Built entirely in sparkling off-white sandstone, Lucknow's Jama Masjid is considered to be one of the most beautiful mosques in India. Constructed in the 15th century, this architectural wonder will leave you spellbound with the calligraphy on its walls, its picturesque domes and striking minarets. Standing tall with 260 pillars, the mosque has 15 arched domes complete with exquisite carvings and stone work. Still used for daily prayers, the mosque is decorated on special festivals such as Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Zuha. Located towards the north-west of Chota



Imambara, the mosque is an important landmark in the city of nawabs.

CLOCK TOWER

Also known as Hussainabad Clock Tower, Clock Tower is a 67 m tall structure constructed by Nawab Nasir-ud-din Haider in the year 1881. Displaying the finest works of art, the tower was built to commemorate the arrival of Sir George Couper, the first Lieutenant Governor of

United Province of Avadh. Situated close to the famous Rumi Darwaza, the tower is a magnificent example of English architecture, and displays Victorian and Gothic structural designs. The mastermind behind the creation of this gigantic clock tower was none other than the famous royal clock maker, James William Benson. So do make it a point to visit this impressive building while you're in the city.

Kohli - the embodiment of passion, drive and desire



BY
R. KAUSHIK

The dictionary definition of a machine is 'a piece of equipment with moving parts that is designed to do a particular job. It usually needs electricity, gas, steam etc. in order to work.' Sometimes conveniently, mostly lazily and almost out of compulsion, we have tended to label Virat Kohli as a run-machine. How much further from the truth can we be?

Does Kohli need electricity or gas or steam? Really? Is he a lifeless, inanimate piece of equipment designed to do a particular job?

VIRAT KOHLI is the living embodiment of passion. Of commitment and drive and desire, of the need to keep pushing the boundaries, to be the best version of himself day after day. He is his best judge and his worst critic. Yes, because he is as human as the rest of us, he is also affected by criticism, by censure, by what he and others of his ilk often refer to as 'outside noise'. But in his heart of hearts, he is governed by what he thinks of himself, how he rates himself. 'Outside noise', be it approbation or otherwise, will affect his psyche, but not as much as his own reading of whether he is living up to the lofty standards he has set for himself over the last 17 years as an international cricketer.

Watching Kohli bat in the last six weeks or so, few would guess that he is retired internationally from two of the three formats. That, in a lot of ways, he is a part-time cricketer - no disrespect meant. In his last three outings in 50-over cricket, the only format in which he represents the country these days, he has made an unbeaten half-century and two blazing hundreds. On Wednesday when he brought up a 53rd ton, off a mere 90 deliveries without seemingly hitting a shot in anger, it marked a staggering 11th time he had smashed ODI centuries in successive innings. Kohli is at that stage of his career where every run, forget about every three-figure knock, he conjures is a milestone of sorts, an extension of his own record. Before the three-match series against South Africa, he already boasted the most three-figure knocks in the history of the One-Day game, a massive 51. Kohli had gone past the great Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 centuries during India's stirring charge to the final of the 50-over home World Cup two years back. In Dubai against Pakistan in the Champions Trophy league fixture in February, he drew abreast of Tendulkar for the most international centuries (51) in a single format. Now, after ODI hundred Nos. 52 and 53 on Sunday and Wednesday respectively, he has pulled further away from the rest; with 84 centuries across the three formats, he has only Tendulkar (100) ahead of him in the overall hundred-hitting stakes. It's more than likely, given he only plays one format and 50-over matches don't come along as frequently as the other two versions, that he will end up behind Tendulkar whenever he hangs up his boots, but that's unlikely to occupy his mind space one bit.

A roller-coaster ride

It's been a turbulent, tumultuous last 12 months for the 37-year-old from Delhi. An unbeaten second-innings century in a winning cause in Perth last November hinted at Kohli rekindling his romance with Australia, but his series unraveled spectacularly thereafter as an old failing - his vulnerability to balls in the corridor to which his bat appeared magnetically attracted - came back to haunt him. Kohli was out caught behind the wickets, either by the wicketkeeper or in the slip cordon, all eight times in Australia; if he was 31 rather than 36, he might have knuckled down to iron out that crease, like he had done after the England tour of 2014 when 10 Test innings brought him only 134 runs. But the passage of time and the changing of guard at the top of the Indian management tree, with Gautam Gambhir coming in as head coach to replace Rahul Dravid, potentially drove Kohli to



Watching him bat in the last six weeks or so, few would guess that he is retired internationally from two of the three formats. In his last three outings in 50-over cricket, he has made an unbeaten half-century and two blazing hundreds. Photo Credit: R. RAGU

retirement from Tests in May.

No one knew when he was pounced at second slip for six by Steve Smith pushing away from his body off the back foot against Scott Boland at the Sydney Cricket Ground on January 4 that it would be Kohli's last Test innings. Perhaps Kohli himself wasn't sure at the time, and there appeared no indication of what was going through his mind when he played two stunning hands in the Champions Trophy, following up his 100 not out against Pakistan with a pivotal 84 in the successful semifinal chase against old nemesis Australia. His travails Down Under seemed behind him and he seemed to be enjoying being in the middle as much as he always had, which was why it came as a massive surprise when he walked away into the Test sunset a week after his old pal Rohit Sharma had pulled the plug on his five-day career.

Ro-Ko a package deal

Kohli and Rohit's cricketing journeys have run parallel for 17 years now. Rohit was the first to debut, in June 2007 in Ireland on a limited-overs sojourn; it wasn't until 14 months later that Kohli earned his first India cap, in an ODI series in Sri Lanka. Kohli went on to carve a magnificent path in Test cricket, especially during a golden period from the end of 2014 to the end of 2019, while Rohit established himself as arguably the greatest limited-overs batter of all time, backed up by an unmatched three double hundreds in ODIs and five international centuries in the 20-over iteration.

Both of them called it quits from the 20-over game at the highest level following India's title charge in Bridgetown in June last year. There was, therefore, a certain added poignancy to them retiring from Test cricket within a week of each other, leaving them to fly the flag only in the 50-over game where both are behemoths bar none. In ways

unimaginable even a couple of years back, they are now inextricably intertwined, almost one soul in two bodies. They have been made a package deal by their fans; Kohli is a touch ahead in the popularity stakes but Rohit is well-liked and respected, as much for molding the next generation of superstars as his propensity to lead from the front and set the example that others have striven to emulate. When they were picked for a three-match series in Australia in October, there was massive interest. Were they in the plans for the 2027 50-over World Cup? Oh, never mind if it is two years away. Are they on notice? On probation? Will they be judged on every failure while every success is taken for granted?

It certainly appeared so, more for Kohli than Rohit, when he failed to trouble the scorers in the first two games in Australia, in Perth and then Adelaide. The whispers were beginning to pick up momentum when he produced a sublime unbeaten 74, playing second fiddle to centurion Rohit in another of their three-figure alliances (20 at the last count).

In the last week, it has looked as if Kohli hasn't been away at all. The two failures in Australia were not due to lack of preparation, but no amount of work in the nets can compensate for actual match-play. The Perth game on October 19 was Kohli's first competitive hit since the final of the IPL 2025 on June 3. Even the most gifted, intense and unyielding competitor can't buck such odds.

Better off for the time spent in the crease in Sydney, Kohli has been an unstoppable force against the South Africans. In Ranchi and then Raipur, he entertained and enthralled; in the first game, he put on a six-hitting exhibition, smashing seven of them on his way to a 120-ball 135. In Raipur on Wednesday, vintage Kohli was back in business. His hundred came off a mere 90 deliveries, yet this was no boundary-laden blitzkrieg. Seven fours and two sixes meant nine deliveries brought him 40 runs; the other 60 still came off just 81 balls and were eked out through excellent running between the wickets.

Kohli has always been both a terrific judge of a run and outstanding between the sticks. The tempestuous, excitable version would expect others to keep pace with him which, unless one was Mahendra Singh Dhoni, was well-nigh impossible. As he matured, Kohli began to run at his partners' pace. He now finds himself in a team where apart from Rohit, everyone else is younger, several considerably so. Yet, it can be said with complete confidence that Kohli will outpace every single one of them comfortably.

After Saturday's final ODI against Temba Bavuma's side in Visakhapatnam, India will play three 50-over games against New Zealand at home in the middle of January. In that gap, Kohli will play for Delhi in the 50-over Vijay Hazare Trophy while India and South Africa fine-tune their preparations for the T20 World Cup with a five-match shortest-format showdown.

After the Kiwi ODIs, the focus will shift to 20-over cricket in the form of the World Cup, to be followed by Season 19 of the IPL. Kohli will watch the former on television and hope to help his side, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, mount a successful title defense in the latter. He will, therefore, be game-ready when the team travels to England, where he now resides on a semi-permanent basis, in mid-July for three 50-over outings.

Who knows what after that? You don't need to know Kohli intimately to figure out that he won't overstay his welcome. If he feels the fire is dimming, the intensity is fading and the desire drops even a touch, he will instantly pull the plug on his career. Whether that is in 2026, 2027 or beyond shouldn't really be our concern. All we can do is enjoy the Kohli magic, celebrate a generational genius and not get caught up in the 'outside noise' that we ourselves are generating.

And yes, can we also please stop referring to him as a run-machine?

(R Kaushik is a sportswriter and biographer. He has written a book on Rohit Sharma- The Rise of the Hitman : The Rohit Sharma Story. The book is available at Amazon)

Kohli, Gaikwad hundreds in vain as SA chase 359 to level ODI series

RAIPUR (TIP)

Virat Kohli's 53rd ODI ton and Ruturaj Gaikwad's maiden century were eclipsed by a collective effort from South Africa in a steep run chase, giving the visitors a series-levelling four wicket-win in the second ODI against India here on Wednesday, Dec 3.

Chasing 359, South Africa rode on a brilliant century from Aiden Markram (110), a brutal 34-ball 54 (1x4, 5x6s) from Dewald Brevis and Matthew Breetzke's 68 to get over the line in another resilient effort with the bat.

The series-deciding third and final ODI will be played in Visakhapatnam on Saturday, Dec 6.

India's job was far from done even after putting a daunting total on board as heavy dew in the second half not only made spinners' job tougher, but poor returns from Prasidh Krishna (2/79) did not help their cause.

Prasidh, who had broken a second-wicket century partnership earlier by dismissing Temba Bavuma (46), got it right finally to pin Breetzke leg-before late in the game, and soon after, Arshdeep Singh (2/54) removed the dangerous Marco Jansen (2), but Corbin Bosch (29 not out off 15) and Keshav Maharaj (10 not out off 14) took the Proteas over the line with four balls to spare.

Markram was in his element utilising a flat deck under lights to notch up his maiden century against India and providing South Africa a heavy contribution from the top to push on.

He took the initiative in the opening partnership and even though he lost Quinton de Kock (8) early with Arshdeep drawing first blood, Markram found a stable partner in Bavuma to put on 101 for the second wicket.

Markram had to remain the aggressor as Bavuma farmed the strike from the other end. Markram pierced gaps at will with brute force as well as some artistry.

He also hit through the line and over the bowlers' head to clear the ropes while using the feet well against Indian spinners, with heavy dew making their job even more difficult as the innings progressed.

But the opener also had luck favouring him when a powerful hit off Kuldeep Yadav towards long on saw the ball going through Yashasvi Jaiswal's hands for a six.



Had the catch been taken, Markram's charge would've ended on 53. Markram eventually fell off a short off-cutter from Harshit Rana (1/70) but his dismissal had Brevis and Breetzke teaming up, who waltzed to 92 off the next 64 balls to put South Africa in complete control.

While Brevis fell after his quick fifty which featured some massive sixes, Breetzke made a composed 68 for a second consecutive half-century.

Incidentally, it was only the second occasion where India lost an ODI despite scoring in excess of 350, with the first instance being against Australia in March 2019 when they lost by a similar margin of four wickets despite making 358/9 at Mohali.

Earlier, Kohli's successive hundred, maiden century from Gaikwad (105) and KL Rahul's quickfire 66 not out propelled India to a formidable 358 for five.

Kohli (102 off 93 balls, 7x4s, 2x6s) and Gaikwad (105 off 83 balls, 12x4s, 2x6s) reset the record for highest third-wicket stand for India in ODIs against South Africa as their 195-run association built the platform for the hosts to launch themselves into a big score.

And Rahul's (66 not out off 43 balls, 6x4s, 2x6s) second fifty in a row ensured that, even as India continued to tinker with their batting line-up with the stand-in skipper coming in at No 5 ahead of Washington Sundar, who endured another failure.

Fit-again Shubman Gill, Hardik Pandya picked for T20I series against SA

Flamboyant all-rounder Hardik Pandya and star batter Shubman Gill on Wednesday, Dec 3, returned to the Indian T20I squad for the upcoming five-match series against South Africa after recovering from their respective injuries.

Gill, who missed a major part of the Test series and the ODIs against South Africa due to a neck injury, has been picked for the T20 games as vice-captain after recovering from his condition.

Gill's participation, however, is subject to fitness clearance from the BCCI Centre of Excellence, the board said in a statement.

Pandya, who missed the Asia Cup 2025 final and the five-match series in Australia, also made a comeback in India's setup after proving his fitness on Tuesday during the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy match against Punjab in Hyderabad.

Gill, who is India's Test and ODI skipper, sustained the injury during the opening Test against the Proteas in Kolkata. He was subsequently ruled out of the second Test in Guwahati and the ODI series that followed.

The selection committee meeting to pick the T20 squad took place here on Wednesday.

The five-match series begins December 9 in Cuttack. The other matches are scheduled in Chandigarh (December 11), Dharamsala (December 14), Lucknow (December 17) and Ahmedabad (December 19).

Premier League: Arsenal grind out Brentford win, Chelsea suffer shock loss

BRIGHTON (TIP)

Arsenal strengthened their hold at the top of the Premier League table with a 2-0 victory over Brentford, maintaining a five-point advantage over their closest rivals, Manchester City. First-half and stoppage-time goals secured a composed win at home, pushing Arsenal's unbeaten run across all competitions to 18 matches. Despite not being at their most fluent, Arsenal's control and resilience, particularly in the face of defensive absences and late pressure from Brentford, kept their title challenge on track.

The Gunners had their lead cut to two points after City's 5-4 win over Fulham. The match began with Arsenal taking the lead through Mikel Merino in the 11th minute, setting the tone for a professional showing. Bukayo Saka added a crucial second goal in injury time (90+1'), offering relief after a tense second half and ensuring the three points were secured.

While Arsenal controlled possession for significant periods, the match was



punctuated by nervy moments. Brentford's Kevin Schade struck the crossbar, threatening to level the score. Brentford later increased their intensity with long balls and crosses, but Arsenal's

reorganised back line managed these threats, despite suffering injuries to Cristhian Mosquera and later Declan Rice.

Arsenal's tactical approach involved

retaining possession and resisting Brentford's late physical and direct style.

In contrast, Chelsea suffered a damaging 3-1 defeat at home to Leeds United, hampering their title aspirations. Leeds took an early lead through Jaka Bijol in the sixth minute and extended it with Ao Tanaka's spectacular goal before half-time. Pedro Neto reduced the deficit for Chelsea after the break, but Dominic Calvert-Lewin capitalised on a defensive error in the 72nd minute to secure Leeds' win.

The defeat leaves Chelsea on 24 points, now in fourth place and nine points adrift of Arsenal. Leeds' victory lifted them out of the relegation zone into 17th place with 14 points. Chelsea's defensive lapses and inability to control Leeds' intensity and counter-attacks were evident, further damaging their standing in the title race.

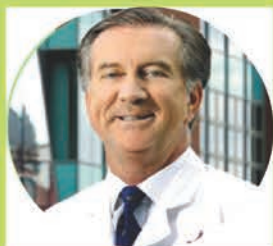
Aston Villa moved to the third spot on the table with a thrilling 4-3 comeback win over Brighton. After trailing 0-3, goals from Ollie Watkins, Amadou Onana and Donyell Malen got the win for Unai Emery's side in the end.



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Best Wishes, Peter



Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



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