



The INDIAN PANORAMA

Will publish a special edition of The Indian Panorama on April 10, 2026, to mark Vaisakhi- the day of creation of the Khalsa by the Tenth Master of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, in the year 1699. Sikhism is the fifth largest and the youngest religion of the world. Vaisakhi is also the most popular socio-cultural event of Punjab. Articles, messages, and advertisements may please be emailed to salujaindra@gmail.com by April 2, 2026. Visit www.theindianpanorama.news For any questions, email, or call 646-247-9458

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Trump, Netanyahu diverge on gas field attack, raise questions about whether they're in sync on war

The attack by Israel on the South Pars gas field prompted Iran to retaliate against energy infrastructure in other West Asian countries



U.S. President Donald Trump with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. File Photo / Credit : Reuters

MARCH 20, 2026 WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)

U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's diverging language on Israel's decision to attack a critical Iranian gas field marks the most notable difference of opinion between the two leaders since the start of the 20-day war against Iran, an AP report said. AP says the attack by Israel on the South Pars gas field prompted Iran to retaliate against energy infrastructure in other West Asian countries. The Iranian strikes led to already elevated global energy prices further surging and spurred Gulf allies to call for Mr. Trump to rein in Mr. Netanyahu. IRAN-ISRAEL WAR UPDATES ON MARCH 19, 2026

The aftermath of the strike left Mr. Trump and Mr. Netanyahu facing CONTD ON PAGE 38

The headwinds are strong, but our shared resolve to advance women's rights is stronger: Sima Bahous



Ms. Sima Bahous, UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director at the Commission on the Status of Women at its Seventieth Session, UN Headquarters. Left to right: UNDP Administrator Alexander De Croo, UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous, and Ambassador for Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the Netherlands Peter Derrek Hof. 11 March 2026. Photo: UN Women/Radhika Chalasani

MARCH 19, 2026 NEW YORK (TIP)

Speaking at the Status of Women at its Seventieth Session, Ms. Sima Bahous, UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director, said: "As always, this Commission on the Status of

Women (CSW) sent a strong message to the women and girls of the world: their right to justice matters, and discriminatory laws and practices have no place in legal systems, policies or institutions".

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India steps up diplomatic push to de-escalate West Asia conflict, engages global leaders

MEA confirmed that New Delhi is in touch with 'all sides' and actively exchanging perspectives to help ease tensions



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a meeting with UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy in New Delhi. -Photo: PTI

MARCH 19, 2026 NEW DELHI (TIP)

India has stepped up diplomatic outreach across regions and power centers in a bid to de-escalate the intensifying conflict in West Asia, engaging multiple stakeholders while firmly reiterating that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable path forward, says a PTI report. Amid growing global concern, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday confirmed that New Delhi is in touch with "all sides" and actively

CONTD ON PAGE 38

Vikram Doraiswami appointed India's next Ambassador to China



Doraiswami, a 1992-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, will succeed Pradeep Kumar Rawat

File Photo

MARCH 20, 2026 NEW DELHI (TIP)

Senior diplomat Vikram K. Doraiswami, currently serving as India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the People's Republic of China, the Ministry of External Affairs announced on Thursday, March 19. Doraiswami, a 1992-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, is expected to take up the assignment shortly. He will succeed Pradeep Kumar Rawat, who has been serving as India's Ambassador to China since March 2022.

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**COMMENT**

# Let Humanity Choose Peace Before History Repeats Its Cruellest Lessons

BY INDRAJIT SALUJA



There is a saying, as old as civilization itself and as hauntingly relevant today as ever: "History repeats itself." It is not merely a philosophical observation-it is a warning, written in the blood of millions, etched into the ruins of cities, and whispered through the grief of generations. And yet, mankind, despite all its intellectual progress, continues to ignore this warning with a persistence that defies reason.

War has been humanity's constant companion-from ancient tribal conflicts to modern geopolitical confrontations. The names change, the weapons evolve, the rhetoric becomes more sophisticated-but the outcome remains tragically the same: death, destruction, displacement, and despair. It is as if, despite witnessing the horrors of the past, humanity is condemned-or perhaps determined-to relive them.

We often pride ourselves on progress. We speak of technological revolutions, scientific breakthroughs, and global connectivity. We invoke Charles Darwin and marvel at how human beings evolved from primitive ancestors into intelligent, cultured societies. But one must pause and ask: has humanity truly evolved where it matters most? Have we outgrown the savagery that once defined our existence?

The answer, regrettably, appears to be no.

Beneath the veneer of civilization lies an unsettling truth-that the primal instincts of aggression, domination, and conquest still reside within us. Education, culture, and moral teachings have indeed refined many, teaching restraint, empathy, and coexistence. These are the individuals and societies that strive for peace, that believe in dialogue over destruction, and that understand the sanctity of life.

Yet, there remains a significant number-individuals, leaders, and even nations-who are unable, or unwilling, to suppress the monster within. For them, war is not a failure of diplomacy; it is an assertion of power. It is a stage upon which they seek to prove superiority, to etch their dominance into history, often at the cost of human suffering on an unimaginable scale.

History offers us countless lessons-lessons we seem determined to forget.

The devastation of the World Wars, the scars of Vietnam, the tragedies of Iraq and Afghanistan, the endless cycles of violence in the Middle East-each stands as a grim testament to the futility of war. Entire generations have been lost, economies shattered, cultures disrupted, and human dignity trampled upon. And yet, after every war, we hear the same solemn promises: "Never again."

But "never again" has, time and again, turned into "once more."

What drives this tragic repetition? Is it ambition? Is it fear? Is it the illusion of

invincibility that blinds leaders into believing they can succeed where others have failed? Or is it, perhaps, the deeply ingrained human tendency to divide-into nations, religions, ideologies-and to view the "other" as an adversary rather than a fellow human being?

The present state of the world offers little comfort. Conflicts continue to erupt, particularly in regions like the Middle East, where decades of strife have created wounds so deep that healing seems a distant dream. The destruction there is not merely physical-it is generational. Children grow up amidst violence, inheriting anger, trauma, and a distorted sense of normalcy. In such an environment, peace becomes not just difficult, but almost unimaginable.

And yet, the consequences of war are never confined to a single region.

The world today is interconnected in ways never seen before. Economies are intertwined, societies are linked, and crises in one part of the world reverberate across continents. As the saying goes, if one part of the body is afflicted with gangrene, the entire body suffers. War, therefore, is not a localized tragedy-it is a global affliction.

Are we prepared for the consequences of this affliction?

Are we prepared for the economic disruptions, the humanitarian crises, the refugee flows, the psychological scars, and the erosion of global stability that inevitably follow? Or are we, once again, willing to gamble with the future of humanity for the sake of fleeting power and misplaced pride?

These are not rhetorical questions. They demand honest introspection-not just from leaders, but from each one of us.

For too long, we have placed the burden of peace solely on governments and institutions. While leadership plays a crucial role, the responsibility for peace ultimately lies with humanity as a whole. Wars are not fought in a vacuum; they are enabled by narratives, justified by ideologies, and sustained by collective silence or support.

If we are to break the cycle, we must begin by confronting the "madman within"-that part of human nature that seeks conflict, that thrives on division, that equates strength with violence. This is no easy task. It requires not just education, but transformation-of thought, of values, of priorities.

We must teach our children not just history, but the lessons of history. We must emphasize not just national pride, but global responsibility. We must celebrate not just victories in battle, but victories of peace-those rare and precious moments when humanity chooses dialogue over destruction.

Religious and moral teachings across cultures have long emphasized peace, compassion, and brotherhood. Whether it is the message of Jesus Christ, who spoke of love and

forgiveness, or Guru Nanak, who preached unity and equality, the essence is the same: humanity is one, and its survival depends on harmony.

And yet, how often do we stray from these teachings?

How often do we invoke religion not as a force for unity, but as a justification for division? How often do we forget that the very figures we revere would be deeply pained by the violence carried out in their names?

It is time to return to these basic principles-not as abstract ideals, but as guiding forces in our collective existence.

The path to peace is neither simple nor immediate. It requires patience, courage, and above all, a willingness to change. It demands that leaders prioritize diplomacy over dominance, that nations invest in cooperation rather than confrontation, and that individuals reject hatred in all its forms.

It also requires accountability. Those who incite or perpetuate conflict must be held responsible-not just politically, but morally. The glorification of war must end. The romanticism associated with conquest and victory must be replaced with a clear-eyed understanding of war's true cost.

Let us not forget: there are no real winners in war. Even the so-called victors emerge scarred-economically drained, morally compromised, and socially fractured. War is, at its core, a collective failure of humanity.

And yet, despite this bleak reality, there is hope.

History, while filled with examples of conflict, also offers instances of reconciliation, cooperation, and peace. Nations that were once bitter enemies have come together to build alliances. Societies torn apart by violence have found ways to heal. These examples remind us that change is possible-that humanity is not doomed to repeat its mistakes, but has the capacity to learn and evolve.

The question is: will we choose to do so?

Will we heed the warnings of history, or will we continue to ignore them until it is too late? Will we allow the "monster within" to dictate our actions, or will we rise above it and embrace the higher ideals of peace and coexistence?

The choice, ultimately, is ours.

Let sanity prevail over madness. Let wisdom triumph over arrogance. Let brotherhood replace hatred. Let us not create a world that would bring sorrow to the very spiritual leaders we revere.

Let us, instead, build a world they would be proud of-a world where peace is not an aspiration, but a reality.

For if history is destined to repeat itself, let it repeat not the tragedies of war, but the triumphs of humanity.

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# 19th Bharatiya Temple Gangaur Festival Celebrated with Devotion and Cultural Fervor in Philadelphia

**MARCH 19, 2026  
PHILADELPHIA, PA (TIP)**

The 19th Gangaur Festival was celebrated with great devotion, enthusiasm, and cultural grandeur at the Bharatiya Temple in Philadelphia on March 14, 2026. On this occasion, more than 500 members of the Indian diaspora and the Rajasthani community from various states across the northeastern United States gathered to celebrate the sacred tradition of Isar-Gauri Mata. This information was shared in a press note by Dr. Ravi Murarka, President of the Philadelphia Rajasthani Mandal (PARAM).

The event was organized under the leadership of Nand Todi, founder of the Bharatiya Temple, and Dr. Ravi Murarka, President of PARAM.

The ceremony was graced by Binay Srikanta Pradhan, Consul General of India in New York, as the Chief Guest. Prem Bhandari, President of the Rajasthan Association of North America (RANA), New York, attended the event as the Guest of Honor. In addition, U.S. Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, the Mayor of Ambler, and several community leaders were also present.

Several members of Rajasthan Association of North America (RANA), New York accompanied Prem Bhandari, including newly appointed Patron Jugal Kishore Ladda, Secretary Ravi Jargarh, and members Raj Garg, Vinay Jain, Sharad Agarwal, and Harish Thakkar.

During the festival, devotees participated in the worship of Gauri Mata, a grand Gangaur procession, cultural performances, and the serving of traditional Rajasthani cuisine. Special attractions included Dal Baati Churma, Gatte ki Sabzi, and Chhach



the United States and India.

Ambassador Pradhan also encouraged members of the Indian community to inspire and support their

International Convener of the Akhil Bhartiya Rajasthani Bhasha Manyata Sangharsh Samiti and is a prominent voice of the Indian diaspora community,



Consul General of India in New York, Ambassador Binaya Pradhan said that the Indian diaspora can play an important role in strengthening the multifaceted relationship between the United States and India, and exhorted them to work together in unity and cooperation to address the issues and challenges faced by the Indian community in America.



Prem Bhandari, who serves as the International Convener of the Akhil Bhartiya Rajasthani Bhasha Manyata Sangharsh Samiti and is a prominent voice of the Indian diaspora community, highlighted the long-standing demand for the inclusion of the Rajasthani language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

(buttermilk).

In his address, Ambassador Binay Srikanta Pradhan, Consul General of India in New York, emphasized that the Indian diaspora in the United States should work together in unity and cooperation to address the issues and challenges faced by the Indian community in America. He said that the Indian diaspora can play an important role in strengthening the multifaceted relationship between

fellow Indians in entrepreneurship and trade through collaboration. He noted that the nature of U.S.-India relations has evolved over time while earlier the focus was on economic assistance, today the relationship is increasingly centered on collaboration in modern sectors such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), trade partnerships, and technological cooperation.

In his address, Prem Bhandari, who serves as the



highlighted the long-standing demand for the inclusion of the Rajasthani language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. He stated that it is extremely unfortunate that despite the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly unanimously passing a resolution on August 25, 2003, no concrete progress has been made in this direction over the past 23 years.

Bhandari said that all political parties share responsibility for this delay. He explained that for the past 16 years he has participated in various movements and demonstrations from protests on the streets to representations at Rashtrapati Bhavan yet due to a lack of political will, no

# Nirav Modi seeks to reopen UK extradition case alleging 'real risk of torture' in India

If permission to appeal is denied following this week's hearing, decks are expected to be cleared for the fugitive diamond merchant's extradition to be held at Arthur Road Jail in Mumbai ahead of his trial in India

**MARCH 18, 2026**  
**LONDON (TIP)**

Fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi's application hearing seeking permission to reopen his extradition appeal concluded in the High Court in London, with claims that he faces a "real risk of torture" during interrogations by the investigating agencies in India.

Lord Jeremy Stuart-Smith and Justice Robert Jay, presiding over the appeal at the Royal Courts of Justice, reserved their judgment at the end of a day-long hearing on Tuesday, March 17.

"This case is of extreme importance, to Mr Modi and to the Indian officials who have travelled from India. We will deliver the judgment as soon as possible," said Stuart-Smith, as the hearing listed over two days was wrapped up early.

The 54-year-old businessman, wanted in India to stand trial on charges of fraud and money laundering in the estimated USD 2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) loan scam case, appeared via videolink from Pentonville prison in north London.

His lawyers relied heavily on the extradition case of Sanjay Bhandari, the defense sector consultant accused of tax evasion and money laundering, who was discharged from extradition bail on human rights grounds last year.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), representing the Indian government in court, argued against the grounds for reopening a matter in which Nirav's extradition had been ordered nearly six years ago.



Nirav Modi -Image credit/PTI file

Extradition poses a real risk of inhuman or degrading treatment or torture arising from interrogation in India, argued Nirav's barrister Edward Fitzgerald KC.

He also sought to underplay the assurances given by the government of India as "neither adequate nor reliable" to meet the risk posed by the prospect of additional non-bailable warrants being executed against the diamantaire.

He alleged that his client could even be moved from Arthur Road Jail in Mumbai to Gujarat to be interrogated by agencies other than the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED).

CPS barrister Helen Malcolm KC highlighted the

Indian position that not only had Nirav's application been brought out of time, but also on a "false premise".

She appealed to the court to adopt a "common sense approach" as the case is "entirely exceptional and significant protective factors exist" which will ensure the assurances given by the government of India are not breached, not least due to the prospect of adversely impacting future extradition proceedings between India and the UK.

"As to any suggestion that the assurances might be reneged on in secret, the high-profile nature of NDM (Nirav Deepak Modi) and his case make that an unreal proposition," court documents state.

If permission to appeal is denied following this week's hearing, the decks are expected to be cleared for Nirav Modi's extradition to be held at Arthur Road Jail in Mumbai ahead of his trial in India.

There are three sets of criminal proceedings against Nirav Modi in India - the CBI case of PNB fraud, the ED case relating to the alleged laundering of the proceeds of that fraud and a third set of criminal proceedings involving alleged interference with evidence and witnesses in the CBI proceedings.

In April 2021, then UK home secretary Priti Patel had ordered his extradition to face these charges in the Indian courts after a prima facie case was established against him.

Since then, Nirav Modi has gone on to submit several unsuccessful bail applications as well as appeals in the UK courts.

## 3 Indian-origin men killed in Canada within a week

Two cases were of homicide, while one died in a group clash

**MARCH 18, 2026**  
**OTTAWA (TIP)**

Three India-origin persons were killed in Canada during the last seven days - two cases of homicide, while one died in a group clash - even as their friends worry they were the target of a racial hate crime, according to media reports.

Edmonton resident Birinder Singh, 22, was shot and killed while driving on a highway south of Leduc on March 14; while on March 13, Davinder Singh, 31, died during a workplace shooting at North Battleford, Saskatchewan, and Gurkirat Singh Manocha, 25, became a victim of an "altercation" outside Fort St John the same day.

"We just heard a gunshot, and within a minute, everything happened, everything has changed," Birinder's friend, who was in the car with him and another friend, was quoted as saying by Global News on Tuesday.

They were headed to the mountains via the QEII on Saturday afternoon, and were just a few minutes south of Leduc, when a pickup truck pulled up beside their Honda Civic. They were on Highway 2 south of Leduc, 35-odd kilometers from Edmonton in Alberta province.

Birinder's friends said they had never seen the people in the truck before, and in the absence of any explanation, they wonder if race could be the motivation, the channel reported.

The friends worry they were the target of a hate crime, explaining that animosity towards South Asians has been a topic of discussion in the community, it added.

"Through an investigation, police learned that a weapon had been discharged toward the Civic, resulting in the driver's death. The major crimes unit is now handling the investigation and trying to determine a motive," the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) was quoted as saying by the Edmonton City News portal on Monday.

In the second case, in Canada's British Columbia,



Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel has been on the Top Ten list since 2017, and remains the longest-tenured person on the current list, according to a report  
Photo for representational purposes only. iStock

student Gurkirat Singh Manocha, who had relocated to Fort St John to pursue a business management degree, was fatally injured during an altercation at the Charlie Lake boat ramp around 11:10 pm on Friday, BC Wire news portal said on Monday.

RCMP officers arrived to find him critically wounded, and despite emergency interventions, he could not be saved, it added.

Gurkirat had relocated from Ujjain in India to study at Fort St John College.

The North District Major Crimes Unit has taken over the investigation and is working to determine exactly what happened that night, the BC Wire said.

It added that the RCMP has not released details about the other people involved in the altercation or disclosed whether charges might be laid.

The death underscores the vulnerabilities faced by students who leave their home countries to study in smaller, more isolated Canadian communities, the portal pointed out.

In the third case, CTV News said that Davinder Singh was driving for Crown Cab on March 13 when he responded to a call at the Hitching Post Motel.

"Singh had no way of knowing when he accepted that fare that it would be his last. Later, just before 8 am, the RCMP were called to the motel with a report of an injured man. Singh was found unresponsive in the parking lot and declared dead at the scene by paramedics," CTV News said.

SaskToday news portal quoted the RCMP as saying that their investigation indicated that one of the two accused allegedly assaulted and pointed a firearm at another individual in the business, and together they allegedly confined that individual to a room at the business.

The victim was later transported to the hospital for injuries described as non-life-threatening, RCMP said.

Two 19-year-old men, Kojac Adams and Garren Baptiste, have since been charged in connection with his death, the news portal said. The accused both made their first appearance in North Battleford Provincial Court on Monday, where they were remanded in custody until March 30, CTV News said.

The owner of Crown Cab, Haris Korath, told CTV News that after closing for the weekend, the cab company has opted to donate all of its earnings from their first day back in business to Singh's family.

Korath said many drivers are feeling scared, and some have left their jobs following Friday's events.

SaskToday news portal said Singh was married and originally from Moga in Punjab, India. The news portal said he had been living in Canada for the last four or five years.

Meanwhile, India's Consulate General in Toronto said on Friday that the procedure for transportation of cremated remains (ashes) of Indian-origin persons has now been liberalized to ease the process for families during difficult times.

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

# Chinese varsity appoints Bathinda's Prof Zameerpal Kaur as foreign expert in Punjabi language

**MARCH 18, 2026**  
**CHANDIGARH / NEW YORK (TIP)**

Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) has appointed Prof Zameerpal Kaur Sandhu Bajwa as a foreign expert in South Asian Studies and Punjabi language for the 2026-27 academic session.

Bajwa is currently a professor and former Dean of the School of Languages, Literature and Culture, at the Central University of Punjab, Bathinda.

For upcoming two semesters, Bajwa will teach courses on Punjabi language, literature and folklore; Punjab's history and culture; Sanskrit poetics and literary theories; and the Urdu language to Chinese students, officials and diplomats specializing in foreign studies at the Chinese university.

During her tenure, she will also have the opportunity to learn Chinese as the university offers a special language course designed specifically for its foreign experts.

The university teaches 101 foreign



Prof Zameerpal Kaur Sandhu Bajwa at the Beijing university

languages, including Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil and Sanskrit. It teaches the official languages of 183 countries that have developed diplomatic relations with China.

In a conversation with The Tribune, Professor Bajwa said, "Over the years, the BFSU has trained a significant number of professionals with strong linguistic and intercultural competence

who serve both within and beyond China as diplomats, ambassadors, counsellors, translators, interpreters, journalists, lawyers and bankers."

She added, "The BFSU is a premier institution under China's Ministry of Education and is widely known as a cradle for diplomats, having produced over 400 ambassadors and more than 2,000 counsellors."

She is a highly qualified academic with a PhD from Punjabi University and a postdoctoral fellowship from the University Grants Commission (UGC). She holds multiple master's degrees in Punjabi, Sanskrit and Anthropological Linguistics, along with qualifications in Urdu, Persian and computer applications, and has also done a diploma in electrical engineering.

Before joining the Central University of Punjab in 2009, she taught at AS College for Women, Khanna.

Central University of Punjab Vice-Chancellor Raghavendra P Tiwari congratulated Prof Zameerpal Kaur.

## Indian national in FBI's 'Ten Most Wanted' list; reward raised to \$1 million, features first-ever cyber fugitive

**MARCH 18, 2026**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)**

The FBI has increased to USD one million the reward money for tip-offs on fugitives on its Ten Most Wanted list that includes an Indian national on the run in an 11-year-old murder case and features for the first time a cybercriminal wanted for allegedly leading an international ATM jackpotting scheme.



Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel has been on the Top Ten list since 2017, and remains the longest-tenured person on the current list, according to a report

Photo for representational purposes only. iStock

Addressing a press conference here, Heith R Janke, Assistant Director, Criminal Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), said three fugitives were added to the Ten Most Wanted list last week, and one was arrested soon after the listing.

Indian national B h a d r e s h k u m a r Chetanbhai Patel has been on the run after

allegedly killing his wife on April 12, 2015, in a doughnut shop in Hanover, Maryland, and was last spotted in Newark, New Jersey.

The FBI said Bhadreshkumar Patel would be about 35 now and should be considered "armed and extremely dangerous."

A report in the Washington Post said Patel has been on the Top Ten list since 2017, and remains the longest-tenured person on the current list.

Samuel Ramirez Jr, Trung Duc Lu and Anibal Aguirre were added to the Ten Most Wanted list last week, Janke said, adding that Ramirez was arrested in Mexico following a tip-off from community members soon after his listing.

"In addition to these three additions, the FBI is increasing the standard reward for all current Ten Most Wanted Fugitives of up to USD one million," Janke told reporters on Tuesday. Earlier, the reward money was USD 2,50,000.

The FBI official said Aguirre's addition was historic as he was the first cyber fugitive ever to feature in the Ten Most Wanted list.

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

## Extortion threats against Punjabi builders spread to Canada's Vancouver

**Builders seek removal of phone numbers, addresses from public records amid safety fears**

**MARCH 15, 2026**  
**VANCOUVER, BC (TIP)**

After surfacing in Surrey and Brampton, the menace of extortion targeting Punjabi business owners has reached Vancouver in Canada, where builders have slowed work and want their phone numbers and project details erased from public records for their safety.



Builders have criticized policies at Vancouver City Hall, arguing that transparency measures have inadvertently created a ready directory for criminals.

Image for representational purposes only. iStock

spreading," one builder told OMNI News. "We are living in fear. People are removing signs so they aren't targeted next." Builders have urged authorities to restrict public access to contact details and project information available on city websites. However, many feel their pleas have not been taken seriously. The builders reported receiving extortion calls and expressed real fear that they could be the next victims. As a result, some have delayed or cancelled projects even as the city grapples with a historic housing shortage. The Vancouver Police Department has confirmed four active extortion investigations in the city, though officials admit that the actual number of victims is likely to be much higher. Builders have also criticized policies at Vancouver City Hall, arguing that transparency measures have inadvertently created a ready directory for criminals. Anyone can access a developer's name, phone number and project details through public records, turning such information into a liability amid multi-million-dollar extortion threats, Punjabi builders told OMNI news.

The extortion crisis first escalated in Surrey and Brampton, where Punjabi and South Asian business owners have faced months of threats, often followed by violence.

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

## Indian national charged in Singapore for outraging modesty

**Man inappropriately touched the stewardess, caused distress by threatening behavior**

**MARCH 18, 2026**  
**SINGAPORE (TIP)**

A Singapore court on Tuesday, March 17, charged an Indian national for allegedly molesting and harassing an air stewardess on a flight from Bangkok to Singapore last month, a local media reported.

Akash Tiwari, 35, was charged with using criminal force to outrage the modesty of the victim on a Singapore Airlines flight after he allegedly initiated non-consensual physical contact with her.

The accused was also charged with causing distress by using threatening behavior on the air stewardess, The Straits Times reported.

According to court records, Tiwari has indicated that to plead not guilty to the charges.

His alleged offences took place on February 9 this year. The police said they were alerted to the incident at around 4.30 pm on the day of the incident.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the air stewardess was serving the man near his seat when he allegedly touched her inappropriately.

She immediately warned the man to stop touching her and went to the galley to prepare for landing, police said.

The accused was arrested after the plane landed, and officers from the Airport Police Division conducted follow-up investigations.

He is expected to return to court for a hearing on March 26 for a pre-trial conference, reported The Straits Times. "Such offenders will be dealt with sternly in accordance with the law," police said.

Those who use criminal force with the intent to outrage modesty can be jailed for up to three years, fined, caned, or receive any combination of these punishments.

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



Akash Tiwari, 35, was charged with using criminal force to outrage the modesty of the victim on a Singapore Airlines flight

Image for representation. iStock

# BJANA Hosts a Massive, Colorful Holi Milan 2026, with 600 Participating

**MARCH 16, 2026  
EDISON, NJ (TIP)**

The Bihar Jharkhand Association of North America (BJANA), a beloved non-profit cultural organization founded in 1975, hosted a massively successful Holi event at the Royal Albert Palace. The festive gathering drew families from Bihar and Jharkhand, with around 550 to 600 attendees, residing in several states of the USA, including New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut, blending vibrant traditions, community spirit, and the inauguration of the 2026-27 term.

The event launched with the announcement of Priti Kashyap as BJANA's new President, alongside the newly elected leadership team: Sushant Krishen as Vice President, Priya Ranjan as Secretary, Bishwanath Sharma as Joint Secretary, Rakesh Kumar as Treasurer, Dipen Banerjee as Joint Treasurer, and Executive Members Sarika Dubey, Anish Anand, Dhananjay Singh, Komal Sharan, Ravindra Kumar, Lata Shree Shanker, Pankaj Pravawi, Mridula Kairab, Dhiraj Singh, Priti Singh and Dr. Avishek Kumar. An



Dance

performances, singing, several kids' group dances, classical vs. Bollywood dance, adult group dance, ladies' group dance, skits, Fagua geet, and a glamorous ramp walk. It also included a mesmerizing skit that explained why Holi is celebrated, the "story of Prahlad," which captivated the audience.



Dance

BJANA's new president, Priti Kashyap, was born in Ranchi, Jharkhand, and raised in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Priti Kashyap brings Mithila's cultural warmth to her leadership role. Since moving to the U.S., she has found family in BJANA, now guiding its festivals, youth initiatives, networking, and



Holi Song



Skit



Team

inspiring Holi speech by the prominent guests followed. Felicitations were offered to key contributors, including Nandini Singh, Rajeev Singh, Harsha Sinha, Rajiv Akhaury, and Arvind Prakash (event host).

The main program highlights included instrumental

In this event, BJANA launched the BJANA Next Gen Youth program - connecting, empowering, and uplifting our youth like never before!

Priti Kashyap closed with a heartfelt speech, leading into SAT fellow awards, a thrilling lucky draw, final bouquet presentations, and a thank-you to sponsors.

philanthropy.

"This Holi exemplified BJANA's joyful legacy," said a BJANA spokesperson. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, BJANA invites everyone to join for free at [bjana.org](http://bjana.org)

(Based on a Press Release issued by Alok Kumar)



Dr. Kevin Chen, Assistant Vice President, Ambulatory Care Innovation Lab, NYC Health + Hospitals is recognized as a health care trailblazer for advancing health equity and improving patient outcomes in underserved communities.

**MARCH 16, 2026  
NEW YORK, NY (TIP)**

NYC Health + Hospitals' Ambulatory Care Innovation Lab Assistant Vice President Dr. Kevin Chen has been named to the National Minority Quality Forum's 2025 annual "40 Under 40 Leaders in Minority Health" list. Each year, the National Minority Quality Forum recognizes 40 outstanding health leaders under the age of 40 from minoritized

## NMQF NAMES DR. KEVIN CHEN OF NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS TO "40 UNDER 40 LEADERS IN MINORITY HEALTH" LIST

communities who are driving meaningful change in healthcare. These honorees, ranging from clinicians and patient advocates to researchers and policy leaders, are advancing better patient outcomes while working to create healthier, more sustainable communities. Their work reflects a strong commitment to addressing persistent health disparities and strengthening the healthcare system despite ongoing challenges.

Dr. Chen is a practicing primary care physician at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Cumberland, Assistant Vice President in the Office of Clinical Services and Population Health, and Assistant Clinical Professor at the New York University Grossman School of Medicine. He leads the Ambulatory Care Innovation Lab, which helps design, evaluate, and scale front-line ideas for improving access, quality, care experience, and sustainability across outpatient services at Health + Hospitals. His work in this space spans multiple domains, including digital health, artificial intelligence, interprofessional care, special population care models, NYC Care, lifestyle medicine, and others. He joined the Office of Ambulatory Care and

Population Health in 2020 and was previously a National Clinician Scholar Fellow and Clinical Instructor at the Yale School of Medicine and VA Connecticut Healthcare System. He has also worked with 3M Health Information Systems and Anthem/CareMore. Dr. Chen completed his residency in the Yale Internal Medicine Primary Care Program and graduated from Rutgers New Jersey Medical School.

"I'm deeply honored to be recognized by the National Minority Quality Forum among such inspiring leaders who are dedicated to advancing health equity," said Kevin Chen, MD, MHS, Assistant Vice President, Ambulatory Care Innovation Lab, NYC Health + Hospitals. "This recognition reflects the collective work of so many colleagues and community partners committed to improving patient outcomes and building healthier, more equitable communities."

"At a time when health disparities continue to challenge our system, supporting emerging leaders is essential to advancing a more equitable future," said Dr. Gary Puckrein, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Minority Quality Forum. "The leaders we recognize today are not only driving

innovation in health care—they are helping redefine what equitable, community-centered care should look like for underserved populations across the country."

MEDIA CONTACT:  
PressOffice@nychhc.org

**ABOUT NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS**

NYC Health + Hospitals is the largest municipal health care system in the nation, serving more than a million New Yorkers annually in more than 70 patient care locations across the city's five boroughs. A robust network of outpatient, neighborhood-based primary and specialty care centers anchors care coordination with the system's trauma centers, nursing homes, post-acute care centers, home care agency, and MetroPlusHealth—all supported by 11 essential hospitals. Its diverse workforce of more than 46,000 employees is uniquely focused on empowering New Yorkers, without exception, to live the healthiest life possible. For more information, visit [www.nychealthandhospitals.org](http://www.nychealthandhospitals.org) and stay connected on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Visit [www.nychealthandhospitals.org](http://www.nychealthandhospitals.org)

CONTD FROM PAGE 3



decision has been taken so far. He also expressed that it is difficult to understand why the Government of Rajasthan has not yet granted the status of a second official language to Rajasthani within the state.

During his remarks, Bhandari also praised Ambassador Binay Srikanta Pradhan, Consul General of India in New York, for ensuring that the Indian Consulate remains accessible and active for the community 365 days a year, maintaining continuous engagement with members of the Indian diaspora.

He also appreciated Nand Todi, founder and philanthropist of the Bharatiya Temple, who has generously donated \$1 million for the construction of a shelter home in Philadelphia.

During the festival, nine children who won the poster competition were honored. These nine children

were presented cash awards and certificates by the Rajasthan Association of North America (RANA), New York. The children created beautiful posters highlighting Rajasthan's tourist destinations, historic forts, and the importance of granting constitutional recognition to the Rajasthani language.

On this occasion, a special meeting was also held with leaders of more than 25 Indian community organizations, where community issues were discussed with Consul General Binay Srikanta Pradhan and Prem Bhandari. During the meeting, representatives of all organizations also honored them by draping ceremonial shawls as a mark of respect.

Historically, Gangaur is one of the most significant festivals of Rajasthan, celebrated with great devotion and grandeur. The name "Gangaur" is derived from "Gana" (Lord Shiva) and "Gauri" (Goddess Parvati).

The festival typically begins on the day following Holi and continues for about 16 to 18 days. During this period, women worship clay idols of Gauri and Shiva, observe fasts, and sing traditional songs in praise of the divine couple. The final day is marked by colorful processions, particularly in cities like Jaipur and Udaipur, where the festival has royal patronage dating back centuries.

In essence, Gangaur is a celebration of love, devotion, and marital harmony, deeply embedded in the cultural and spiritual life of Rajasthan. Its observance in the United States is a testament to the enduring spirit of the Rajasthani community, which continues to cherish and celebrate its traditions with pride, wherever it may reside.

The Gangaur Festival has become an important platform for strengthening Rajasthani culture, traditions, and unity among the Indian diaspora.

## Indian Pharmaceutical Association Announces "Professor Harkishan Singh Research Excellence Award"

MARCH 18, 2026  
MONROE, NJ / NEW DELHI (TIP):

The Indian Pharmaceutical Association (IPA), under its national leadership and in collaboration with the IPA Punjab State Branch, has announced the institution of the "Professor Harkishan Singh Research Excellence Award," a prestigious annual national honor recognizing outstanding contributions to pharmaceutical research, drug discovery, academic leadership, and service to the profession. The award commemorates Padma Shri Professor Emeritus Harkishan Singh, one of India's most distinguished pharmaceutical scientists, educators, and historians.



Padma Shri Professor Emeritus Harkishan Singh, one of India's most distinguished pharmaceutical scientists, educators, and historians

Professor Harkishan Singh's legacy spans decades of excellence in research, education, and scholarship. A PhD from Banaras Hindu University and recipient of honorary doctorates from leading institutions in India and the United States, he authored over 350 publications, including 19 books, and held 14 patents, notably contributing to the development of Candocuronium Iodide (HS-310). He played a pioneering role in establishing National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), India's premier institute for pharmaceutical education and research, and was internationally recognized through his election to the

Académie Internationale d'Histoire de la Pharmacie.

The inaugural presentation of the award is scheduled during the 75th Indian Pharmaceutical Congress in December 2026 in New Delhi, an event expected to draw national and global participation, with the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India anticipated as the Chief Guest. The award is envisioned as a lifetime national recognition that will inspire excellence and innovation across the pharmaceutical sciences.

As part of this initiative, IPA and associated partners are inviting participation from global pharmaceutical manufacturers, academic institutions, research organizations, and alumni connected to Prof. Singh's legacy. To ensure the award's continuity, an endowment fund is being established, with invitations extended to industry, institutions, and individuals to contribute and support this national initiative.

This landmark initiative underscores India's commitment to advancing drug discovery, strengthening API innovation, and positioning the country as a global leader in pharmaceutical research and development.

For more information, please contact H. S. Panaser, [hspanaser@gmail.com](mailto:hspanaser@gmail.com)

Professor Harkishan Singh Foundation, Cell: 7322662027.

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# The Oil War Behind the Iran Conflict

How Energy Markets-Not the Battlefield-Could Decide a U.S.-Israel Confrontation with Iran

BY DAVE  
MAKKAR



The most dangerous battlefield in a war between the United States, Israel, and Iran may not be in the Middle East at all.

It may be the global economy.

What began as a military confrontation is rapidly evolving into an economic war with worldwide consequences. While Iran is unlikely to defeat the United States or Israel in a conventional military conflict, it possesses a different and potentially more disruptive form of leverage: the ability to destabilize global energy markets.

Recent developments in March 2026 have brought this reality into sharp focus.

Following coordinated U.S.-Israel strikes on Iranian military and strategic targets, the conflict escalated dramatically with direct attacks on critical energy infrastructure, including Iran's South Pars gas field-the largest in the world. These strikes triggered immediate disruptions in global energy markets, pushing oil prices sharply higher and injecting volatility into already fragile supply chains.

Iran's response has extended far beyond Israel. By targeting energy infrastructure and signaling potential disruption to shipping routes across the Persian Gulf, Tehran has transformed the conflict into a broader regional economic confrontation.

The war is no longer just about territory or military capability. It is increasingly about control over energy flows, market stability, and global economic pressure.

## THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ: THE WORLD'S ENERGY CHOKEPOINT

At the center of this strategy lies the Strait of Hormuz-the most critical energy chokepoint in the world.

Nearly one-fifth of global oil consumption and a significant portion of liquefied natural gas shipments pass through this narrow corridor. Roughly 20-22 million barrels of oil move through the strait each day, supplying major economies across Asia, including India, China, Japan, and South Korea.

Geographically, the strait is highly vulnerable. At its narrowest, it spans just 21 miles, with shipping lanes only about 2 miles wide in each direction. This creates a structural weakness: even limited disruption-through mines, missile strikes, drones, or damaged tankers-could severely restrict maritime traffic.

In such a scenario, the impact would not remain regional. It would ripple instantly across global markets.

## FROM MILITARY CONFLICT TO ECONOMIC WARFARE

The events of March 2026 suggest a clear strategic shift.

By targeting energy infrastructure-both directly and indirectly-the conflict has entered a new phase where economic disruption is no longer a secondary effect but a central objective.

Iran's strategic calculus appears rooted in asymmetry. Unable to match U.S. or Israeli military power, it can instead impose costs by:

- Disrupting energy production
- Threatening critical shipping lanes
- Increasing geopolitical risk premiums
- Triggering volatility in global commodity markets

This approach transforms the battlefield from a physical domain into a systemic one.

## OIL SHOCK AND GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES

The immediate market response underscores the stakes.

Energy prices have surged amid fears of supply disruption, with traders pricing in risks related to infrastructure damage and potential restrictions in the Strait of Hormuz. Even the perception of instability has proven sufficient to drive significant price movements.

A sustained disruption could lead to:

- Sharp increases in oil and gas prices
- Rising inflation across major economies
- Supply chain disruptions
- Financial market volatility
- Slower global growth or recessionary pressure

For energy-importing nations, particularly in Asia, including India, China, Japan, and South Korea, the consequences could be severe. For advanced economies already managing inflation and monetary tightening, an energy shock of this scale could destabilize recovery trajectories.



### STRAIT OF HORMUZ

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow waterway linking the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It is one of the world's most strategically significant chokepoints for global oil and gas shipments, serving as a critical artery in international energy trade and maritime security.

#### KEY FACTS

- Location: Between Iran and Oman (Musandam Peninsula)
- Width: Approximately 21 nautical miles (39 km) at its narrowest
- Depth: Averages 60 meters
- Major users: Oil exporters such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE, and Kuwait
- Transit volume: Roughly one-fifth of global petroleum passes through

"About 22 million barrels of oil per day-roughly one-quarter of global seaborne oil trade-passes through the Strait of Hormuz."

## REGIONAL ESCALATION AND SYSTEMIC RISK

What makes the current situation particularly dangerous is the widening scope of the conflict.

Strikes on energy infrastructure and threats to Gulf shipping routes indicate that the confrontation is no longer confined to bilateral hostilities. Instead, it is evolving into a broader regional crisis with global implications.

The risk is not merely of higher oil prices, but of systemic disruption:

- Multi-country involvement in energy infrastructure attacks
- Spillover into key maritime trade routes
- Increased military presence in critical shipping corridors
- Escalation cycles driven by retaliation and deterrence

In this environment, even limited incidents can produce outsized global effects.

## A WIDER GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSION

Another important dimension of the conflict involves intelligence and surveillance.

China's tracking vessel Liaowang 1 has reportedly been operating in international waters near Oman. Ships of this type can monitor radar emissions, aircraft activity, and missile launches across vast distances.

In modern warfare, information can be as valuable as weapons. Even without direct military involvement, outside powers can influence conflicts through intelligence, satellite imagery, and electronic surveillance.

## LESSONS FROM HISTORY

History shows how powerful energy disruptions can be. During the 1973 Oil Crisis, supply cuts from the Middle East caused oil prices to surge, triggering inflation and economic stagnation across many Western economies.

A major disruption today could have even faster consequences because the global economy is far more interconnected than it was in the 1970s.

## CONCLUSION: WHERE WAR MAY BE DECIDED

Most wars are judged by territorial gains or military outcomes.

This one may be different.

The decisive arena may not be the battlefield, but the global energy system. The side that can most effectively influence oil flows, market stability, and economic pressure may ultimately shape the outcome.

The developments of March 2026 have made one thing clear: the risk is no longer hypothetical.

The conflict is already testing the resilience of global energy markets and exposing the vulnerability of an interconnected world economy.

If escalation continues, the consequences will not be confined to the Middle East. They will be felt in fuel prices, inflation rates, and economic growth across the globe.

In this war, the most powerful weapon may not be military force.

It may be disruption.

It would be interesting to make a guess about probable winners and losers, though of course, such assessments may not always prove correct even though they are based on an assessment of the existing situations.

The biggest loser in this war is America. It may end up with 1 trillion dollars being added to their already unsustainable deficit of 39 trillion dollars. If you break it down, it is \$113,617 per citizen and \$357,068 per taxpayer. Americans will face the unbearable pain of double-digit inflation, unemployment and affordability crisis even for basic food items for their families.

Bloomberg reports that Goldman Sachs projects if the war stretches on five or six more weeks it will lead to a 14% contraction of the GDP of Qatar and some of the other GCC countries. That would have a domino effect on the global economy, adding that the only available impact comparison is the state of the global economy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The biggest winner of this war will be Israel. Besides occupying West Bank and Gaza turned rubble by displacing 3.5 million Palestinians, in the current war Israel may end up occupying the entire south Lebanon by turning into rubble like Gaza and displacing 1.5 million Lebanese. Israel has invaded Lebanon six times in the past 50 years and has encroached its land with impunity from the civilized world. Israel will also be able to decimate Iran by turning its more than 40% territory into rubble with no industry and infrastructure and 5-8 million displaced residents.

Israel is famous since its bloody inception, "kill the leadership that wants to discuss peace and solution to the conflict over territory; prime example is Palestine than Iran, Syria and Lebanon. It is the Israelis that are never interested in any diplomatic solution for a simple reason; they have a vision for a Greater Israel with a bigger territory than what they have now. They want to be the superpower of Middle East also having control on USA, Europe and India. They are the only country in the world that can bring a Superpower USA to fight their wars of expansion.

Another winner of this war economically is Russia with oil prices over \$100 dollars and all those sanctions the Europeans and US put on countries to stop them from buying Russian oil are being discarded by USA itself that countries can buy Russian oil. Prominent among are India, Pakistan, South Korea, Japan etc. Europeans are in a moral quandary whether to restart buying oil from Russia because they are the one that decided not to buy Russian oil when Russia attacked Ukraine. At present they are supporting Ukraine in their war against Russia since 2022.

(Dave Makkar is a New Jersey based social activist and contributes regularly to The Indian Panorama. He can be reached at [davemakkar@yahoo.com](mailto:davemakkar@yahoo.com))

(with inputs from various sources)

# Can India act as a 'peace architect' in West Asia?

BY PRABHU  
DAYAL



India's foreign policy framework—built on strong, simultaneous ties with Israel, Iran, the US, and Gulf nations—positions it as a potential 'back-channel' negotiator and peace architect in West Asia.

"One phone call from PM Narendra Modi could help end the Iran-Israel conflict," said former UAE envoy to India Hussain Hassan Mirza, highlighting India's potential role in regional diplomacy.

Since February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel have conducted coordinated military strikes against Iran under a joint campaign aimed at degrading its military and nuclear capabilities. The campaign has expanded into a sustained, large-scale air operation targeting military, nuclear, and leadership infrastructure across at least 26 of Iran's 31 provinces.

The coalition has struck over 5,500 targets, including 11 of Iran's 17 tactical airbases, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) headquarters, and the underground fuel enrichment plant at Natanz. US forces have reportedly destroyed at least 50 Iranian vessels, including mine-laying ships near the Strait of Hormuz, which remains virtually closed due to the conflict. Human rights organizations report over 1,700 deaths, while other sources suggest total Iranian casualties may exceed 4,300, including nearly 1,300 civilians.

Iran has vowed an "eye for an eye" response to attacks, and the IRGC has dismissed claims of its missile capabilities being destroyed. Iran has responded with missile and drone strikes against US bases and civilian sites in Israel, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. Iran is engaging in a multi-front, asymmetric retaliation, launching hundreds of missiles and drones at Israel, US bases, and Gulf state energy infrastructure.

Iran aims to sustain high-intensity attacks to exhaust regional air defenses, disrupt global oil supplies, and force a costly, long-drawn-out conflict. The blockage of the Strait of Hormuz has paralyzed global oil traffic, with Iran warning that prices could reach \$200 per barrel.

The campaigns codenamed Operation Epic Fury by the US and Operation Roaring Lion by Israel have pursued several overlapping strategic and military objectives. A core goal is to permanently prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. This follows the collapse of previous negotiations and findings by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regarding increased uranium enrichment. The operation seeks to destroy Iran's ballistic missile stockpiles and raze its missile production industry, targeting weapons capable of reaching Israel, Europe, and the US mainland.

The US and Israel aim to neutralize Iran-backed proxy groups, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, to reduce regional instability and threats to Israeli security. A stated objective is to "annihilate" the Iranian Navy and destroy mine-laying vessels to ensure freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Some analysts suggest long-term US interests include influencing global oil prices and potentially controlling Iranian energy infrastructure post-conflict to diminish Russian and Chinese influence.

Above all, both nations have explicitly called for the overthrow of the Iranian government. US President Donald Trump has urged the Iranian people to "take over the government", and the initial strikes included a "decapitation" attempt that killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Thus, President Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have framed the campaign as an opportunity for the Iranian people to "take over" their government. However, US intelligence and independent analysts remain skeptical that these actions will successfully topple the Iranian government. Shortly before the war began, the US National Intelligence Council concluded that a large-scale military attack was unlikely to quickly topple Iran's "deeply entrenched" political structure.

Following the death of Ali Khamenei, his son Mojtaba Khamenei has already been named the new Supreme Leader, suggesting the regime's core structure remains intact. The IRGC and the Basij militia remain loyal and maintain deep control over the country, effectively



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi

suppressing domestic uprisings.

The current US and Israeli strategy appears to involve using intense military pressure and sanctions to create an environment where the Iranian people or internal military factions (like the Artesh, the national army) might rise up and overthrow the government themselves.

This is widely viewed by analysts as "hope" rather than a reliable strategy, as a sufficiently numerous, organized, and ideologically motivated internal opposition force has not yet emerged. A ground assault, whether by external military forces or an internal armed opposition group, is generally seen as necessary to fully remove the existing power structure and prevent it from regrouping.

History suggests that air power alone is rarely sufficient to collapse a deeply entrenched regime. While US and Israeli airstrikes can severely damage Iran's military capabilities, nuclear programme infrastructure, and leadership, they cannot seize territory or secure physical assets like the underground uranium stockpiles. It is widely considered difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the complete toppling of the Iranian regime using only air power, sanctions, and other non-ground interventions. Regime change typically requires some form of "boots on the ground", whether by foreign forces or a substantial domestic opposition movement.

Examples often cited include the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the 2011 intervention in Libya. In both cases, the regimes were only removed when significant ground forces (a US-led invasion in Iraq and local rebel forces supported by NATO air power in Libya) were involved in the ground offensive. In short, most experts agree that without a significant force on the ground, a complete regime change remains an elusive goal for the US and Israel.

President Trump has not ruled out the possibility of putting "boots on the ground" in Iran, though no formal announcement of a ground invasion has been made. While the US has primarily relied on air and naval strikes so far, President Trump has stated he would "never say never" regarding ground troop deployment, noting the administration will do "whatever is necessary" to protect US interests.

However, many military analysts believe a traditional mass-infantry invasion is unlikely due to Iran's large size and rugged terrain; instead, they expect potential targeted special operations if ground forces are used. Some US lawmakers have expressed alarm over a potential ground war, citing risks of a wider regional conflict and the involvement of Russian and Chinese support for Tehran. Moreover, Pentagon officials have framed current operations as a "limited war" aimed at destroying Iran's offensive capabilities rather than an Iraq-style "nation-building quagmire".

The Iranian regime is a deeply embedded theocratic

system that has weathered severe sanctions and large-scale protests in the past through brutal repression. The assassination of key leaders may simply lead to the consolidation of power under even more hardline factions, as the system is designed with succession plans in mind.

The situation is described as a "lethal cocktail" affecting global energy markets and security. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed "grave concern" over the escalation, urging a return to dialogue and diplomacy. While diplomacy is being pursued, the situation remains highly volatile with continued attacks, making an immediate, lasting peace difficult to guarantee.

India is increasingly viewed by regional actors as a potential mediator in the escalating conflict between Iran, Israel, and the United States, though it has not formally accepted a lead mediation role. India maintains robust, independent partnerships with all primary rivals—Israel, Iran, and the Gulf states. This unique positioning allows New Delhi to act as a neutral "back channel" for de-escalation.

This month, former UAE envoy to India, Hussain Hassan Mirza, stated that "one phone call from PM Modi" has the potential to encourage dialogue between the conflicting nations. Previously, in mid-2025, Israeli Ambassador Reuven Azar expressed optimism that India could play a role due to its "avenues for dialogue with both sides". Iran has indicated a willingness to engage with India as a mediator, provided India more openly condemns Israeli actions. Iranian diplomats have stated that while they recognize India's balanced, neutral approach toward Iran and Israel, they expect India—as a voice of the Global South—to openly condemn Israeli actions against Iran and in Gaza.

India is navigating a difficult balancing act, ensuring its economic interests—including energy imports and the safety of its diaspora in the Gulf—are protected amid the 2026 conflict. India has stated its willingness to support peace efforts, emphasizing its close relations with all involved parties. India is viewed as a credible, neutral "back channel" for de-escalation, particularly as traditional western mediation mechanisms face challenges.

India has avoided explicit condemnation of any side to maintain its neutrality, a stance criticized by some domestic opposition as "silence" but which serves as a "calibrated response" to protect its diverse partnerships. India can offer to host talks or provide humanitarian aid, positioning itself as a "peace architect" that emphasizes stability and dialogue over military escalation.

Will India play the role of a mediator in the Iran war? Will India act as a passive observer or leverage its "multi-aligned" foreign policy to mediate in order to bring to an end this volatile situation?

India's foreign policy framework, which involves maintaining strong, simultaneous ties with all involved parties (Israel, Iran, the US, and Gulf nations), positions it as a potential "back-channel" negotiator. India is one of the few powers with credibility to talk to all sides. It has a "Special Strategic Partnership" with Israel (for defense and technology) while maintaining long-standing, strategic ties with Iran (via the Chabahar port). India's current strategy allows it to act as a "peace architect".

## STORY CONTINUES BELOW THIS AD

Given the high stakes, India should leverage its multi-aligned policy to facilitate de-escalation through quiet diplomacy and back channels. While a public, high-profile mediation attempt might be risky, a passive stance would be detrimental to India's national interest. Therefore, a proactive, balanced, and behind-the-scenes role that advocates for dialogue (as shown by recent diplomatic engagements) is the most logical path forward.

(The writer is a retired Indian diplomat and had previously served as ambassador in Kuwait and Morocco and as Consul General in New York. Views expressed in the above piece are personal and solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect Firstpost's views.) (First published in Firstpost)

# U.S. Farmers are in Crisis. The Iran War Is Not Helping

BY SIMMONE  
SHAH



Over the past year, farmers across the United States have been facing a crisis. Staring down record high business costs and lower profit yields, cuts to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and tariff policies, many have found that the profession is no longer economically viable. And now the war in Iran is adding another stressor.

"All the stress that we have seen compounding from last year has really driven more farmers to bankruptcy, to take on more loans, or just actually stop farming altogether," says Vanessa Garcia Polanco, government relations director at the National Young Farmers Coalition.

The 2026 Farm Bill, passed by the House Agriculture Committee with bipartisan support earlier this month, is supposed to bring much needed support for farmers across the country. The bill—which still needs to go through the Senate—typically sets national policy for agriculture, nutrition, and conservation every five years.

agriculture policy at the University of Illinois. "Farmers get squeezed between what they're receiving for the crop and what they pay to produce it."

A number of other factors are contributing to the financial strain. President Donald Trump's tariffs have raised costs for some fertilizers by \$100 per ton, along with making steel parts for farm equipment like tractors and combines more expensive.

In 2025, the USDA also paused funding that supported farmers adopting conservation practices, after many had already paid the upfront costs themselves. Meaning they would not get the financial support they expected when making those investments. Going forward, fewer will be able to incorporate more sustainable farming options—options which, as Lavender explains, "can make the farmer more productive and business more viable, but it can also support soil health and climate resilience, carbon sequestration, depending on the practice."

On top of this, thousands of positions at USDA

markets. The disruption has increased the price of natural gas, which is critical to fertilizer production, and put a hold on shipping fertilizer manufactured in the Gulf region.

This comes as many farmers in the U.S. are beginning spring planting. About half the world's food is grown using fertilizer, and any shortages could impact yields. In the U.S., some fertilizer prices have shot up by more than 70% in the last 90 days.

## WHAT IS TRUMP DOING TO HELP FARMERS?

The farm bill is one of the main ways the government supports the farming industry. It began after the Dust Bowl, as a way for the government to invest in policies that could help farmers navigate the ups and downs of the agricultural economy. A new farm bill is typically passed every five years, but Congress has not passed an update since the last one expired in 2023.

That means that farmers are playing by outdated rules until the new bill is approved by Congress. "The food and farm policy that we're operating under was written, really, in 2017, before COVID-19, which we learned a ton of lessons from. It was written before we [began seeing] increasing incidences of extreme weather and impacts of climate change. And it and it was written before, you know, a long overdue racial justice reckoning over the past several years," says Lavender. "It's outdated farm policy and food policy in so many ways."

Trump's H.R.1 bill, passed last summer, included tax relief and billions in farm subsidies. And in December, the Trump Administration announced a separate \$12 billion aid package for American farmers. But experts say the money isn't enough—and that many farmers are not eligible for the aid.

Much of the funding provided in the December aid program has been earmarked for commodity soybean and corn farmers rather than specialty farmers who were impacted by program cuts at the USDA last year—and whose products make up over one-third of U.S. crop sales. Of the \$6 billion in aid funding that has been released so far, most has gone to commodity farmers that didn't participate in those USDA programs, says Garcia Polanco. Further still, government funding is often used to pay down debts and doesn't help address lost income, experts say. "The payments are not fixing the underlying problems," says Coppess. The White House did not respond to a request for comment ahead of publication.

Ultimately, "we do not see enough appetite [from Congress] to actually improve the safety net and actually transform American agriculture," says Garcia Polanco.

The passage of the farm bill in the House comes after a coalition of 56 agriculture organizations sent a letter to Congress on Jan. 15 calling for action, noting that extreme economic pressures are "threatening the long-term viability of the U.S. agriculture sector."

"In addition to continuing to pursue federal policies to increase long-term domestic demand for U.S. agricultural commodities, we urge Congress to provide immediate economic support to fill in the gap of remaining losses for both field and specialty crop farmers," the letter states. "Additional support will stabilize the farm economy, protect rural communities and ensure a secure food supply. This support must be robust enough to fill in sector-wide gaps."

With no end date in sight for the conflict in Iran, the Trump Administration is now looking to find alternative fertilizer sources—such as from Venezuela or Morocco.

Going forward, experts stress that more needs to be done to help small farmers as they face economic uncertainty. "The safety net isn't built for everyone, and that's a problem, because when hiccups arrive in the economy, it's people without support or new and beginning farmers who are the most susceptible," says Lavender. "And so we've got to improve the farm safety net, and the current House bill does not do that to the level that's needed."

(Simone Shah is a Reporter with Time Magazine)

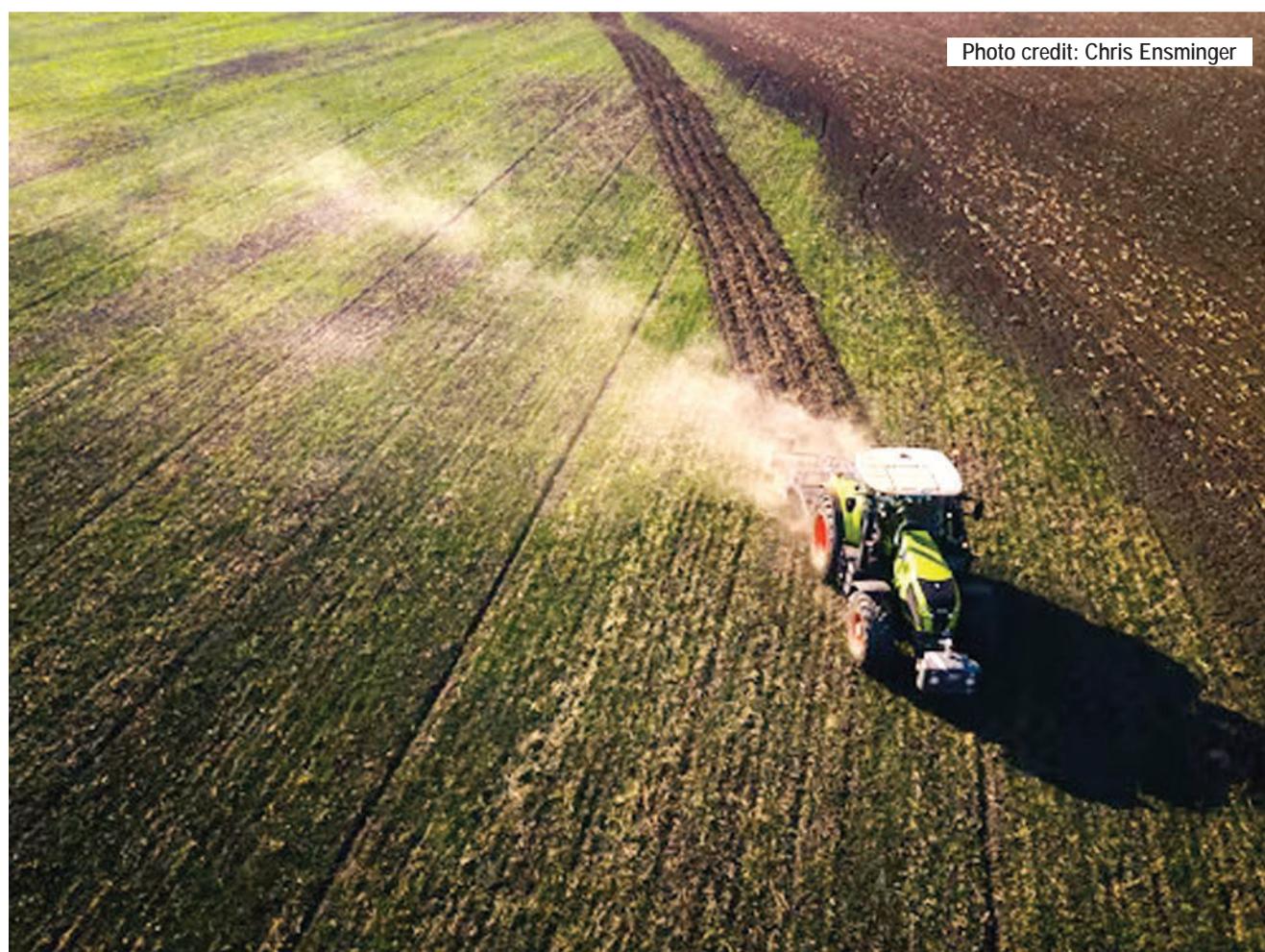


Photo credit: Chris Ensminger

But experts worry the bill won't be enough to fix the root challenges impacting the industry now.

"Farming is an inherently risky business," says Mike Lavender, policy director at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. "But I think what we've seen over the past 12-plus months is something different."

Looking ahead, however, the challenges are only going to multiply for American farmers. The blockage of the Strait of Hormuz due to the war in Iran is expected to further increase costs for farmers, as about 20% of the fertilizer used by American farmers is produced by a Qatari facility—which is unable to be shipped as long as the Strait is closed.

Climate change, meanwhile, continues to linger in the background making crops more vulnerable to extreme weather, which in turn will raise prices and lower agricultural yields.

## WHY ARE FARMERS FACING AN ECONOMIC CRISIS?

Since the pandemic, farmers have been seeing rising production costs, and revenues haven't been able to keep up. "It's a return of a classic problem that we've long seen. Crop input costs are higher, while revenues have fallen," says Jonathan Coppess, associate professor of

departments across the country were cut last year, resulting in fewer staffers being available to help farmers access remaining federal programs and funding.

"When you put all of that together, staffing shortages, the chaos of [USDA program] pauses, abrupt trade policy shifts, and tariff uncertainty, you can really quickly see the picture of where many farmers are right now, and it's incredibly challenging," says Lavender.

Farm bankruptcies have nearly doubled between 2024 and 2025. Garcia Polanco worries that if we don't see action soon, we might see an exodus as more and more people turn away from the profession.

"The farmers I work with, they know what they are signing up for. They know it's hard work. They know it's a lot of labor. They know they can barely break even," she says. "They go through this with their open eyes. But there's only so many times you can take a hit and not fall apart."

## HOW IS THE WAR IN IRAN IMPACTING U.S. FARMERS?

Since the war in Iran began on Feb. 28, thousands of cargo ships have been blocked from transiting through the Strait of Hormuz, sending ripples through the energy

# India and Canada look to collaborate to advance skills training partnerships

MARCH 17, 2026  
TORONTO (TIP)

In less than three weeks of the first official visit of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to India, a six-member Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) mission has arrived in Mumbai on a five-day mission for the launch of the new Canada-India Joint Talent and Innovation Strategy.

The mission will visit New Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai to meet with Indian government officials, private sector leaders, India's apex bodies for technical education and skills implementation, and Indian postsecondary institutions to explore mutually beneficial bilateral skills training partnerships.

Last month, a delegation of Canadian universities also undertook a visit to India.

After Mark Carney took over as prime minister, Canada has been expressing its willingness to draw the best brains or talent from India for its advanced research institutions.

The mission comprises Ajay Patel, President & CEO, Vancouver Community College (CICan Board member); Ann Marie Vaughan, President & CEO, Humber Polytechnic (CICan Board member); Craig Stephenson, President & CEO, Centennial College; Laura Jo Gunter, President and CEO, NAIT; Sean Kennedy, President and CEO, Niagara College (CBIE Board Chair); Pari Johnston, President and CEO, Colleges and Institutes Canada; and Milica Njegovan,



Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) mission is on a five-day mission to India for the launch of the new Canada-India Joint Talent and Innovation Strategy. -Photo / ANI

Senior Program Officer, Partnerships and Programs, Colleges and Institutes Canada.

The Mission will showcase the expertise of Canada's college and polytechnic training model to meet India's national skills imperatives in key sectors of shared importance. CICan's engagement with India is anchored in a complementary workforce development reset that will strengthen India's national skills architecture while advancing Canada's economic, labor market, and investment interests. It is envisioned as a long-term systems partnership focused on aligning skills, standards, and workforce readiness between two major economies.

Commenting on the visit, High Commissioner of Canada in India Chris Cooter said: "India is home to a very large and talented young population who will

be entering the workforce in the years to come. Canada and India will both benefit greatly from top-notch skills training to capitalize on the jobs of tomorrow. Canadian colleges and educational institutes have proven programs that can provide the skills training needed in a global economy. This important CICAN visit will open new avenues for further collaboration towards developing a world-class Canada-India skills partnership for the future."

Speaking ahead of the visit to India, Pari Johnston said, "Education, research, and skills cooperation are critical enablers of economic growth and trade diversification. In Canada's global engagement ambitions, its public college and polytechnic sector is a strategic national asset and a committed global partner. We are excited to explore opportunities with Indian technical

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institutions and industry associations through our collaboration with India's Ministry of Skills Development and Entrepreneurship and other key public and private sector partners. This college leaders' mission to India will lay the groundwork upon which both countries can build training and innovation partnerships to create a skilled workforce for tomorrow.

The Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) represents a pan-Canadian network of 127 institutions that educate and train the people Canadians depend on every day: the builders, makers, caregivers, first responders, innovators, and job creators who sustain communities and power the economy. CICan has 50 years of experience delivering member-driven pan-Canadian workforce training programs for government, foundation, and industry partners in Canada and abroad. Combined with deep global partnerships, this experience positions CICan as a trusted connector between education, industry, government, and communities in Canada and around the world.

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

## Premier Eby defends budget after credit drop, but Opposition says B.C. is going broke

MARCH 19, 2026  
VICTORIA (TIP)

British Columbia's credit rating has been downgraded, but Premier David Eby said government made a "very clear choice" between making cuts to "meet a credit rating" and "prioritizing British Columbians."

"We have to meet people where they're at," Eby said at an unrelated event in Metro Vancouver. "They are sicker, and they stay in hospital longer. We need to ensure high-quality health-care services and services for British Columbians generally. We have to build these projects to get our province moving."

Moody's Ratings said Thursday, March 19, it has lowered B.C.'s baseline credit rating to Aa1 from Aa2, among other changes in creditworthiness.

The agency said it has seen a "marked deterioration in the province's credit fundamentals" and expects "sizable and entrenched deficits" for the next three years.

"This deterioration is driven by continued growth in operating and capital spending, resulting in large, structural deficits and rising leverage," it said in a statement.

While B.C. is looking for ways to raise more revenues and cut costs, "uncertainty related to global and U.S. trade conditions adds risks to the fiscal outlook," it added.

This year's budget forecasts a record deficit of \$13.3 billion, and Eby said the budget was "incredibly challenging" for a number of reasons, including rising health-care and infrastructure costs.

Eby said this year's budget presented government with a choice.

"Were we going to, as the Conservatives suggested, make health-care bear the brunt of cuts to be able to



Premier David Eby heads back to his office in the west wing following a press conference at the legislature in Victoria, B.C., on Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026.

File photo : The Canadian Press

meet a credit rating?" Eby said. "Or were we going to make sure that we were doing all we can to deliver services for British Columbians, find efficiencies in government and grow the economy to make sure that we're able to pay for the services British Columbians deserve?"

Interim B.C. Conservative leader Trevor Halford said financial markets are telling the government that "B.C. is going broke," and he said it is time for government to table a budget that restores confidence.

He said B.C.'s fifth credit downgrade in four years puts the provincial finances at risk, because of the growing interest costs.

"Bond rating agencies are giving the NDP budget the equivalent of an F," Halford said. "The government needs to take this seriously, go back to drawing board, and table a budget that will restore confidence in world financial markets."

Government figures forecast that B.C.'s debt will hit \$183.3 billion this fiscal year, rising to \$209.8 billion next year, and \$234.5 billion the year after that.

Those same figures also forecast that B.C.'s debt-to-GDP ratio will rise from 30.6 per cent this year to 37.4 per cent in 2028-29.

The interest bite will rise from 6.2 cent on the dollar to 8.2 cent on the dollar in 2028-29.

Moody's decision to downgrade B.C.'s baseline credit rating was not the only change to the provincial creditworthiness. Moody's also downgraded B.C.'s long-term issuer and senior unsecured debt ratings to Aa2 from Aa1 and senior unsecured program and shelf ratings to (P)Aa2 from (P)Aa1.

Moody's added that B.C.'s outlook remains negative.

But Moody's also affirmed B.C.'s commercial paper ratings, and had some praise for the overall economic direction.

"British Columbia's credit profile is supported by a resilient and diversified economy that underpins a broad tax base and limits reliance on any single sector," it said.

It added that exports are also more diversified than those of most peers, with lower dependence on the U.S. market, which reduces single-market trade risk.

"While the province is working to further diversify trade toward Asia-Pacific and Europe, the U.S. remains the main destination for several key exports, including natural gas, electricity and lumber, leaving these sectors exposed to the ongoing U.S. trade uncertainty," it reads.

Finance Minister Brenda Bailey said in a statement that despite the rating change, B.C. remains one of the highest-rated Canadian provinces with strong access to global capital markets.

(Source: The Canadian Press)

# U.S. War Planes and Helicopters Kick Off Battle to Reopen Hormuz

MARCH 20, 2026  
WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)

The U.S. and its allies have intensified the battle to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, sending low-flying attack jets over the sea lanes to blast Iranian naval vessels and Apache helicopters to shoot down Iran's deadly drones, The Wall Street Journal reports, quoting American military officials.

The stepped-up operation is part of a multistage Pentagon plan to reduce the danger from Iranian armed boats, mines and cruise missiles, which have halted ship traffic through the waterway since early March. If the danger can be reduced, the U.S. could send U.S. warships through the strait and eventually escort vessels in and out of the Persian Gulf.

But it will still likely take weeks for the U.S. to clear out Iran's web of assets that have harassed traffic through a chokepoint for 20% of the world's oil exports and a large amount of commercial shipping traffic. The strait's effective closure has sent Brent oil prices soaring above \$100 a barrel—briefly touching \$119 before closing at \$108.65, up 1.2%, on Thursday—and forced the Trump administration to grapple with the economic implications of the war it launched alongside Israel on Feb. 28.

Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, revealed the operation in a Pentagon news conference Thursday, saying heavily armed A-10 warplanes, known as the Warthog, along with Apache attack helicopters, were flying missions over the strait or off the southern coast of Iran.

"The A-10 Warthog is now engaged across the southern flank, targeting fast-attack watercraft in the Strait of Hormuz," he told reporters at the Pentagon. He added that the Apaches "have joined the fight on the southern flank."

He said some allies, without naming them, were using Apaches to "handle one-way attack drones," one of the most effective weapons Iran has used to hit neighboring Arab states and their energy infrastructure across the Persian Gulf.

Both the A-10s and the Apaches have for several days been blowing up Iranian fast-attack boats that have been harassing commercial shipping in the strait, a U.S. official said. Jet fighters already in the region can also help take out Iran's small fast-attack boats and missile threats, but the additional aircraft intensify the campaign, the official said.

The U.S. has been bombing bases and heavily fortified cruise missile batteries manned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the paramilitary organization that oversees defense of the strait along



The Strait of Hormuz

with the Iranian navy, which has its own fleet of attack boats. The strikes have damaged or destroyed more than 120 Iranian naval vessels, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Thursday.

Despite the strikes, Iran is still believed to have a vast stockpile of mines, cruise missiles on trucks and hundreds of undamaged boats in hidden facilities with deeply dug tunnels along the coast and on islands, said Farzin Nadimi, an expert on Iranian defenses at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"I think it will take weeks to reach a point where there can be safe operations in the strait," he said. "Even then, a lot of the Iranian assets will survive."

Iran has attacked dozens of vessels in the strait, often with small, unmanned boats carrying explosive charges or airborne drones. Other ships have been hit by projectiles, in the strait and in the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf.

Taking back control of the strait assumed new urgency Thursday as Iran began laying plans to allow select ships through, with Tehran's Parliament considering a law to charge tolls. It raised the prospect that Iran could leverage its position and make deals with nations that need oil, gas and other commodities produced in the Persian Gulf region.

"In practice, this creates a form of coerced interdependence: states that seek access to gulf energy may find themselves needing to accommodate Iran, whether directly or indirectly," said Danny Citrinowicz, a national-security fellow at the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank. Even when the fighting ends, he said in a post on X, "There is real doubt that this dynamic will fundamentally change."

The extent to which Iran has seeded naval mines in the strait couldn't be determined. It has a large array of different mines, including versions that can be anchored to the sea floor and detonated by remote

control when a ship passes. The U.S. recently moved littoral combat ships, which it uses to clear mines, out of the region.

Only 24 miles wide at its narrowest point, the Strait of Hormuz is such a confined space that cruise missiles can be fired from hundreds of miles away and still hit ships moving through it, said Michael Connell, an Iran analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses, a Washington think tank.

Lowering the threat to the point where ships can resume transiting the strait is "doable but it takes time and you are probably never going to get to 100%," Connell said. "We could reach a stage where we're getting ships through and they could still get a lucky shot," he added.

Houthi militants in Yemen, who are aligned with Iran, waged a two-month campaign last year with missiles, drones and unmanned boats against international shipping that parallels Iran's closure of the strait. The U.S. struck more than 1,000 targets in Yemen, but never succeeded in halting Houthi attacks fully until the two sides declared a truce in May.

U.S. Army Apache attack helicopters, which are equipped with Hellfire missiles, have long had the mission of striking Iranian mine-laying boats from gulf states in the region.

The A-10 was developed to provide close air support for U.S. ground troops but has now been repurposed to strike ships at sea, Caine said.

The Air Force has long sought to retire the A-10s to save funds to develop more technologically advanced weapons that would be more useful in a conflict with China.

But the A-10, with its nose-mounted 30mm gun and wing-mounted bombs, has proven to be useful in past air campaigns against insurgents and now against Iranian targets at sea. In recent months, A-10s have been based in Jordan, from which they have been used to strike Islamic State militants.

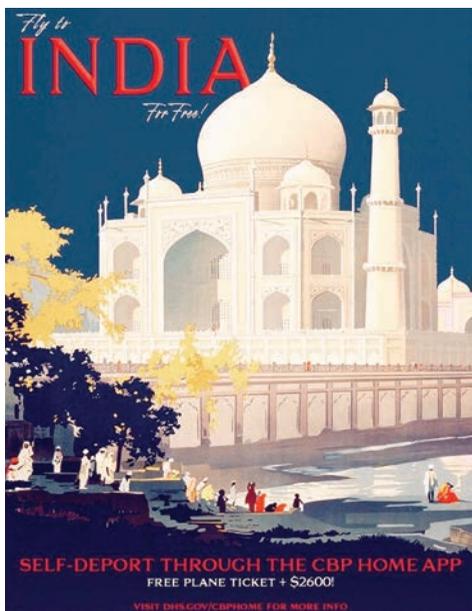
The A-10, which has a titanium-lined cockpit to protect the pilot, has primarily seen combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. But it has also been used in a maritime role. In the spring of 2023, the Pentagon deployed the A-10 to help patrol the Strait of Hormuz in response to Iran's attacks on commercial shipping. In February, A-10s exercised with a littoral combat ship in the region.

A rapid-response unit of roughly 2,200 Marines is on its way to the Middle East, where they could play a role in reopening the strait by seizing the islands off Iran's southern coast.

(Source: The Wall Street Journal)

## US offers USD 2,600 exit bonus to illegal immigrants for self-deportation

Department of Homeland Security promotes self-deportation initiative using images of the Taj Mahal and landmarks of Colombia and China



"Receive a FREE flight home and a USD 2,600 exit bonus when you use CBP Home to self-deport," the DHS says. Image credit/X/@DHSgov

MARCH 18, 2026  
WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP)

The US Department of Homeland Security has released posters offering to fly illegal immigrants, including from India to their home countries for free with an exit bonus of USD 2,600.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) used an image of the Taj Mahal and prominent landmarks of Colombia and China to promote its self-deportation initiative targeted at illegal immigrants living in the US.

"Receive a FREE flight home and a USD 2,600 exit bonus when you use CBP Home to self-deport," DHS said in a post on X.

The initiative, called Project Homecoming, was launched in May last year, after the inauguration of US President Donald Trump's second term in office.

The DHS has advised migrants to use the Customs and Border Protection

(CBP) app to begin the process, allowing them to register their intent to leave the country voluntarily, submit their details, and access information about travel assistance and the financial incentive offered under the programme.

According to the DHS, over 2.2 million illegal immigrants have availed of the scheme since its launch in January 2025.

The current cost of a single enforced deportation is USD 18,245. With the new offer of a USD 2,600 stipend, the cost of a single self-deportation via the CBP Home App will be just USD 5,100 saving the American taxpayer over USD 13,000 per illegal alien, the DHS said in a note in January.

The programme provides migrants the chance to "return home as regular travelers—without arrest, detention, or restraints. It's a safe, orderly alternative that provides assistance and flexibility, not fear, according to the website.

Using the CBP Home app, according to DHS, "allows illegal aliens to plan their return, including having an opportunity to depart in a timely manner allowing illegal aliens to wrap up work, school, and personal matters and organize their return in an orderly and lawful way."

When the program was launched in May last year, the DHS was offering an exit bonus of USD 1,000, which tripled to USD 3,000 during the holidays in December if the illegal aliens opted to leave before the new year.

The exit bonus was fixed at USD 2,600 in January this year.

# Celebrating International Women's Day 2026 at the Consulate General of India, Houston



Welcoming the participants, Consul General D.C. Manjunath emphasized the importance of collective progress and the transformative role of women in shaping society.



hosted the celebrations, creating platforms that honor women's leadership and amplify community voices, which continue to shape the Consulate's legacy of empowerment and inclusion.



dialogue, and celebration. Dr. Renu Khator, Chancellor of the University of Houston System, delivered a compelling keynote address highlighting the role of individuals who shaped her life and success, including her mother, and called upon participants to expand the circle of giving to new persons beyond our known circle. Her words resonated with every member of the audience.



A dynamic panel discussion followed the keynote, moderated by Mr. Pradeep Anand, a well-known Business & Marketing strategist and CEO of Seeta Resources. The panel members, Mayor of Sugarland City Carol McCutcheon, Flight Director, NASA Ms. Pooja Jesrani, Political Commentator & Columnist Ms. Sunanda Vashisht, provided their perspectives on leadership, resilience, and community engagement, which enriched the conversation and inspired all the participants.

**MARCH 18, 2026  
HOUSTON (TIP)**

The Consulate General of India, Houston, hosted a powerful and inspiring celebration of International Women's Day 2026. This is the third consecutive year the Consulate has

Welcoming the participants, Consul General D.C. Manjunath emphasized the importance of collective progress and the transformative role of women in shaping society. He also highlighted this year's IWD theme, "Give to Gain," setting the tone for an evening of reflection,

## Democrat Raja Krishnamoorthi loses Illinois Senate primary to Juliana Stratton

**MARCH 18, 2026  
CHICAGO (TIP)**

Democrat Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi has lost the Illinois primary race to Lt Gov Juliana Stratton, who bagged the party nomination for the US Senate elections for the seat vacated by incumbent Dick Durbin.



Democrat Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi.  
Photo Credit: X/@CongressmanRaja

Stratton, who had the support of Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, had been lagging Krishnamoorthi in polling until recent weeks. However, a fresh infusion of funds from the Governor and a hardening sentiment on immigration issues pushed aside four-term Congressman Krishnamoorthi's campaign.

With 92 per cent of votes counted, Stratton had polled over 40 percent, while Krishnamoorthi bagged 33.2 per cent. Robin Kelly, the third in the fray for the Senate nomination, managed to get 18 per cent votes.

"I called Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton and congratulated her on winning this primary. I trust that she will continue the lasting legacy that Senator Durbin leaves behind," Krishnamoorthi said in a post on X late Tuesday night.

Born in 1973 in New Delhi, Krishnamoorthi came to the US as a three-month-old infant when his father moved to Buffalo, New York to pursue higher education.

"Only in America can an immigrant with twenty-nine letters in his name go from public housing and food stamps to the halls of Congress. I will continue to fight for our country, the greatest on Earth, to make the United States of America the kind of country we all still believe in," he said.



Juliana Stratton could become the sixth Black woman senator in US history  
Photo credit: AP

Illinois will see its fourth Black senator in the Senate if Stratton wins the seat in the elections in November. She will face Don Tracy, the former Illinois Republican Party chairman, who has won the Republican primary. If elected, Stratton would be the sixth Black woman to serve in the Senate, joining Angela Alsobrooks, of Maryland, and Lisa Blunt Rochester, of Delaware.

After promising during the campaign to fiercely oppose President Donald Trump and abolish the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, Stratton took an early lead over Krishnamoorthi in the counting of votes that held up throughout the night.

## Consulate General of India in Houston hosted a well-attended Iftar



Consul General DC Manjunath extended greetings on the occasion of Ramadan, emphasizing the values of unity, compassion, and collective well-being.



**MARCH 18, 2026  
HOUSTON (TIP)**

The Consulate General of India, Houston hosted a well-attended Iftar gathering on the evening of March 16, 2026, as part of its ongoing community outreach initiatives.

The event brought together members of the Indian community and friends from the

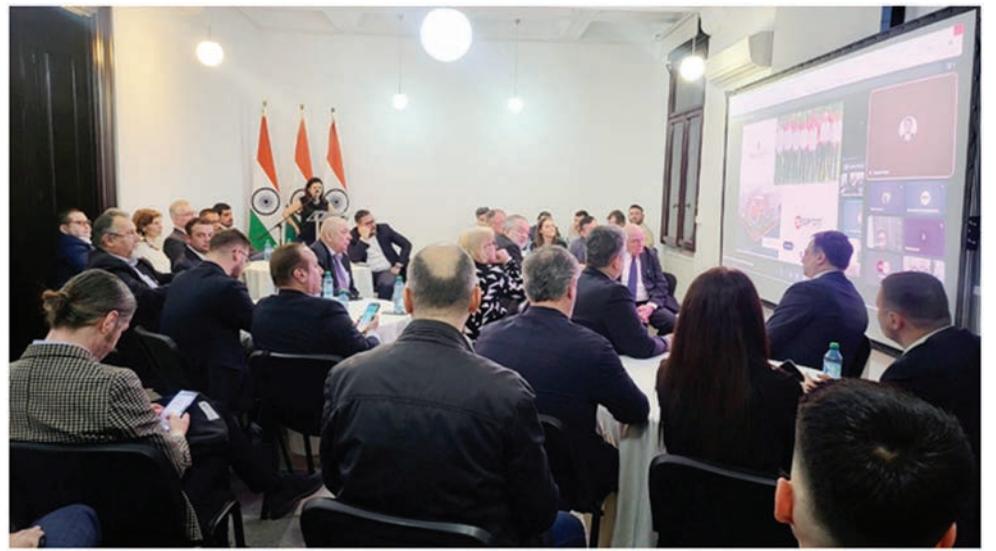
consular corps for an evening of unity and celebration. Consul General DC Manjunath extended greetings on the occasion of #Ramadan, emphasizing the values of unity, compassion, and collective well-being.

The evening reflected the spirit of togetherness and harmony that defines India's cultural and religious diversity.

# Embassy of India in Romania Hosts Hybrid B2B Meeting on Real Estate and Construction



The event commenced with special remarks by Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, Ambassador of India to Romania



Romanian companies actively participated and explored opportunities with Indian firms.

**MARCH 16, 2026**  
**BUCHAREST (TIP)**

Embassy hosted a Hybrid B2B Meeting on Real Estate and Construction on 13 March 2026, bringing together leading Indian exporters and Romanian companies to explore avenues for enhanced bilateral cooperation.

The event commenced with special Remarks by Dr.

Romania. Representatives from the CAPEXIL and the Trade Promotion Council of India participated actively, highlighting India's strong manufacturing capabilities and export potential in the construction sector.

A key highlight of the session was the presentation by Mr. Vishal Acharya, who provided a detailed overview of the Bharat Buildcon exhibition one of

comprehensive showcase of India's capabilities in areas such as construction technologies, ceramics, sanitaryware, pipes, hardware, and allied infrastructure products. The exhibition brings together leading manufacturers, exporters, industry experts, and global buyers, offering a dynamic environment for networking, technology exchange, and business development. He emphasized the exhibition's role in promoting "Brand India" globally and invited Romanian companies to actively participate, explore sourcing opportunities, and build long-term partnerships with Indian firms.

Several Indian companies, including Kera Vitriified LLP, Bandhan Pipes, Sparten Group, Black and White Hardware, Dreamtech Hardware, Milota Group, Sunhearrt Ceramix Pvt Ltd, Swar Ceramiche, and Coastal Tiles LLP, also showcased their products and expertise.

The event featured interactive B2B discussions and a Q&A session, enabling meaningful engagement between Indian exporters and Romanian firms. Participants explored potential partnerships in areas such as building materials, ceramics, pipes, and



Mr. Vishal Acharya presented a detailed overview of the Bharat Buildcon exhibition



Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, Ambassador of India to Romania, who underscored the growing potential for collaboration in infrastructure, construction materials, and real estate development between India and

India's prominent platforms dedicated to the construction and building materials sector which will be held between 29th April to 2nd May 2026 in New Delhi. He highlighted that Bharat Buildcon serves as a



Group photo : Hybrid B2B Meeting on Real Estate and Construction



Several Indian companies joined virtually showcased their products and expertise

hardware solutions. The hybrid format facilitated participation from companies based in India via virtual platforms, ensuring wide representation and dynamic exchanges.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks, marking another important step toward strengthening economic and commercial ties between India and Romania. The Embassy remains committed to promoting such engagements to deepen bilateral trade and foster mutually beneficial partnerships.

(Based on a Press Release issued by the Embassy of India in Bucharest)

# India's Ambassador to Romania and Moldova visits Chisinau to Strengthen India-Moldova Ties

**MARCH 18, 2026  
ROMANIA (TIP)**

During an official visit to Chisinau on 16-17 March 2026, Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, Ambassador of India to Romania and Concurrently Accredited to Moldova, held high-level meetings with senior Moldovan dignitaries, government officials, and diplomatic representatives. These engagements aimed to bolster India-Moldova bilateral relations across political, economic, energy, and institutional domains. The Ambassador conveyed Indian companies' firm commitment to investing up to USD 6.5 billion in Moldova's infrastructure projects under a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model, alongside participation in a 170 MW wind power tender.

## PARLIAMENTARY AND LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

The Ambassador called on H.E. Mr. Igor Grosu, Speaker of the Parliament, for comprehensive discussions on parliamentary exchanges, democratic engagement, and legislative cooperation. The talks emphasized sustained institutional dialogue to foster mutual understanding. At the invitation of Mr. Igor Dodon, Former President and President of the Moldova-India Parliamentary Friendship Group, the Ambassador met with him and the group members. Focus areas included inter-parliamentary ties, lawmaker exchanges, and raising awareness of bilateral relations within legislative circles.

## ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE DISCUSSIONS



Ambassador meets Mr. Igor Dodon, Former President and President of the Moldova-India Parliamentary Friendship Group

Meetings with Mr. Ion Lupan, Head of the Economic Council; Mr. Vladimir Munteanu, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Economic Affairs; and Mr. Sergiu Diaconu, Acting Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister centered on investment modalities, trade expansion, bilateral investments, and new economic sectors. With H.E. Mr. Vladimir Bolea, Minister of Infrastructure, discussions highlighted infrastructure's role in economic growth and regional integration via BOT projects. The Ambassador also met Ms. Olga Ro?ca, Presidential Adviser, to explore strategic priorities and high-level collaboration.

## SECTOR-SPECIFIC COOPERATION

In talks with the State Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Ms. Felicia Bechtoldt, both sides addressed labour mobility, skills development, workforce training, and social initiatives, stressing safe mutual exchanges. At the National Agency for Energy Regulation (ANRE) and with Ms. Carolina Novac, State Secretary in the Ministry of Energy, engagements covered energy regulation,



Ambassador meets Mr. Ion Ceban, Mayor of Chisinau

renewables, efficiency, and technical knowledge-sharing, underscoring energy security and diversification. The Ambassador conveyed that an Indian company has shown interest in wind-energy generation and will participate in the ongoing tendering process.

## DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH

The Ambassador met H.E. Ms. Dominique Waag (France), H.E. Mr. Nikolaos Krikos (Greece), and H.E. Mr. Cristian-Leon ?urcanu (Romania) to exchange views on regional developments, multilateral cooperation, trilateral opportunities, and shared interests in economic and cultural domains. A meeting with Ms. Perebinos Carolina, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focused on diplomatic engagement, multilateral coordination, and foreign policy alignment.

## CITY-TO-CITY COOPERATION

With Mr. Ion Ceban, Mayor of Chi?in?u, discussions targeted urban development, smart cities, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people ties. The



Ambassador meets with Mr. Igor Grosu, Speaker of the Parliament

Ambassador offered scholarships for the Mayor's colleagues to participate in training programs offered by the Government of India under its premier ITEC program. The Ambassador also suggested city-to-city cooperation.

The Ambassador's recent visit reaffirmed India's commitment to deepening Moldova ties via high-level dialogue, investments, and linkages, enabling expanded sectoral collaboration. Over the prior two months, he held similar engagements with President H.E. Ms. Maia Sandu, Prime Minister H.E. Mr. Alexandru Munteanu, and ministers of Defence, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Infrastructure, Economy, Education, Energy, Culture, and Labour. These discussions advanced India-Moldova cooperation on infrastructure, partnerships, energy, skills, and investments. Consequently, Indian firms pledged up to USD 6.5 billion in Moldova's infrastructure under a BOT framework, signaling strong partnership momentum.

(Based on a Press Release issued by Embassy of India in Romania)

# Embassy of India Celebrated Holi Festival 2026 at Club Heaven Ballroom, TIMISOARA

**MARCH 17, 2026  
BUCHAREST (TIP)**

The Embassy of India in Bucharest, in coordination with Dr. Nilima Kundnani, Community Leader from Timi?oara, organized the first-ever vibrant celebration of Holi 2026 on 15 March 2026 at Club Heaven Ballroom, Timi?oara. Timi?oara, located approximately 550 km from Bucharest, is one of Romania's important cultural and economic centers. The event brought together members of the Indian community, Friends of India, representatives of the Government of Romania, and members of the Romanian business and cultural communities.

The celebration was organized with the objective of promoting India's rich cultural heritage and traditions, and showcasing the vibrancy of Indian culture through music, colors, and festive traditions. It provided a unique platform for the Indian diaspora and Romanian friends to come together and experience the spirit of one of India's most joyful and widely celebrated festivals.

Addressing the gathering, H.E. Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohapatra, Ambassador of India to Romania and Moldova,



Ambassador remarked on the occasion of Holi Festival in Timisoara



Ambassador playing Holi festival with the Indian community and Romanians



Group photo with the Indian community and the Romanian in Timisoara

highlighted the significance of Holi as a festival that symbolizes joy, harmony, and the triumph of good over evil. He noted that festivals such as Holi play an important role in strengthening cultural understanding and people-to-people connections between India and Romania. The Ambassador emphasized that such celebrations not only bring together the Indian community living abroad but also offer Romanian friends an opportunity to experience India's rich cultural traditions and shared values of unity, friendship, and harmony.

The event in Timi?oara showcased these traditions through curated cultural elements, music, and festive activities, offering guests an authentic glimpse into India's colorful cultural heritage. Participants enjoyed the vibrant atmosphere created by traditional music, festive interactions, and the joyful exchange of colors-synonymous with Holi celebrations. The festivities created an atmosphere of warmth, friendship, and celebration, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds in a spirit of unity and shared happiness.

The celebration witnessed the participation of over 500 members of the Indian diaspora and Friends of India, including representatives from Romanian government institutions.

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

# Italians evince keen interest in Hola Mohalla celebrations

PRABHJOT SINGH



**MARCH 16, 2026**  
**CORTENUOVA, ITALY (TIP)**

For them, a "Nagar Kirtan" procession by a strong immigrant community from Punjab in North India has been something "unique" and "unprecedented." For them, the display of "gatka" by Nihang Sikhs was both "out of the world" and "awesome."

Hundreds of Sikhs drawn not only from all over Italy but also from neighboring countries, including Germany, France, Switzerland, and Spain, descended on Cortenova in Bergamo to join the historic Hola Mohalla celebrations.

Italy has a substantial population of immigrants from Punjab. Working both at farmhouses and cheese processing factories, besides making their presence felt in other dominant sectors, many Indo-Italians have become an integral part of the societies of the new countries of their abode.

It is one reason that Italians, too, look for opportunities to join the festivities of their "overseas" companions, many of whom have become naturalized citizens here.

Cortenova, a city in the Bergamo district of the Italian province of Lombardy, is one such area where the population of Punjabi immigrants is



Sikh community at Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Cortenuova, Italy celebrating Hola Mohalla.

Photo by Majinder Singh Suxxaru of Italy

substantial. Also a part of the overseas Punjabi community are the "Nihang Sikhs," affectionately called members of the "Ladli Fauj" (adorned army) of the 10th Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh.

In the second week of March, Sikhs in Italy assemble at different places to take out "Nagar Kirtan," or "Sikh Parade," to

mark the Hola Mohalla celebrations.

Even the Italian youth love the festival of colors, says Prithipal Singh, a key figure in the Italian chapter of the World Sikh Soldiers Organization. "They love to play Holi and greet their near and dear ones with 'gural'."

The three-day Hola Mohalla festival

was celebrated with great pomp and show by the Guru's beloved troops in Cortenova. Prithipal Singh says that Hola Mohalla has been celebrated by the Nihang Sikhs for the last six years. Apart from Italy, a large number of devotees from other European countries like Germany, France, and England also arrived to celebrate the Holi festival.

"If we talk about the number of devotees, then according to an estimate, "the number of devotees was between 30 and 35 thousand." Another thing worth mentioning here is that the girls and boys of the local Italian community also participate in Hola Mohalla celebrations. They have a lot of fun by applying goulal on their near and dear ones.

Prithipal Singh, Iqbal Singh Sodhi, Manjinder Singh, Gurmail Singh, and Jasvir Singh Parma from Gurdwara Singh Sabha Novolara joined the Nagar Kirtan procession. The entire route of the procession was dotted by special stalls serving Guru Ka Langar.

The celebrations also mark the start of a new Sikh year:

(Prabhjot Singh is a much-awarded senior journalist based in Toronto. He can be reached at prabhjot1406@gmail.com)

# State Department Declares Suozzi Constituent from Great Neck 'Wrongfully Detained'

**MARCH 17, 2026**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C. (TIP):**

Congressman Tom Suozzi announced that his constituent, Kamran Hekmati of Great Neck, who has been imprisoned by the Iranian regime for over 300 days, was last night designated a wrongful detainee by U.S. State Department. This development comes after months of advocacy from Suozzi, including leading a bipartisan letter alongside Congresswoman Tenney (R-NY) to Secretary Rubio that directly requested the State Department classify Mr. Hekmati as a wrongful detainee under the Levinson Act.

"This is a clear, cut-and-dry case of wrongful detention," said Congressman Suozzi. "Mr. Hekmati and the numerous other Americans being imprisoned in Iran are not being held not for any crimes they committed, but because they're an American. In Mr. Hekmati's case, a Jewish American."

Designating Mr. Hekmati as a 'wrongful detainee' triggers the U.S. Government to deploy all possible



Kamran Hekmati, 61, of Great Neck Estates, has been held in Iran since last May.

Photo Credit: Hekmati relatives

levers-diplomatic, legal, and economic-to secure his release.

"This is a promising step," Congressman Suozzi

continued. "I am grateful to Secretary Rubio and the State Department for designating Mr. Hekmati as a wrongful detainee. We now need the Administration to bring him home as soon as possible. It could not be more urgent. I am calling on them to prioritize his case at the highest levels-that is the only way he will safely return home."

Kamran Hekmati, a 70-year-old resident of Great Neck, has been unjustly imprisoned for over 10 months in Evin Prison, a notorious prison in Iran known for holding political prisoners and for engaging in abuse and torture. Mr. Hekmati was detained after traveling to Iran on family business, a trip he had previously made on multiple occasions without issue. His alleged crime was attending his son's bar mitzvah in Israel 13 years ago, though Iran's own laws state that an individual must not have visited Israel only within the last ten years.

"I will continue to use every option available to me to push for Mr. Hekmati's release," Suozzi concluded.

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## Changes to Foreign Contribution Act 'cleared' by Cabinet

MARCH 20, 2026

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** A proposed legislation allowing the government to prescribe the validity period within which foreign contributions may be received and also the timelines for their usage, is learnt to have been cleared by the Union Cabinet. The amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), are said to have been approved by the Cabinet, under which detailed statutory directions for proper management and usage of foreign contributions of NGOs whose registration has been suspended or cancelled, have been underlined.

The existing law does not have any provisions for managing assets and foreign contributions of such NGOs, and therefore, the amendments are said to have been cleared which will underline a clear regulatory framework for them, sources said. The Bill also proposes to introduce a safeguard to ensure criminal probes under the Act are initiated only with the prior approval of the Centre, the sources said further.

## Dawood Ibrahim's Maharashtra plots finally auctioned after four failed attempts

MARCH 20, 2026

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Properties linked to fugitive underworld don Dawood Ibrahim in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri district have finally been sold after several unsuccessful attempts over the years. The Central government conducted the auction on March 5, 2026, marking a significant breakthrough in disposing of assets tied to criminal activities. The auction involved four agricultural plots located in Mumbake village in Ratnagiri. These lands were registered in the name of Ibrahim's mother, Amina Bi, and had been seized under the Smugglers and Foreign Exchange Manipulators (Forfeiture of Property) Act (SAFEMA), which allows authorities to confiscate properties linked to smuggling and illicit wealth.

According to officials, two buyers emerged in the latest auction. One Mumbai-based individual secured a single plot, while another bidder acquired the remaining three parcels by quoting the highest prices. However, the identities of both buyers have not yet been disclosed. Efforts to sell these properties had been ongoing for years, with auctions conducted in 2017, 2020, 2024 and 2025 failing to attract successful bids.

# BJP releases first Assam, second West Bengal candidate lists

MARCH 20, 2026

**GUWAHATI/KOLKATA (TIP):** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on March 19 released a list of 88 candidates for Assam and 111 for West Bengal as it geared up for assembly elections next month in four states and a Union Territory.

In Assam, where the BJP is hoping to come back to power for a third consecutive term, the party released its first list just four days ahead of the last date of filing nominations of March 23. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will contest from Jalukbari, on the outskirts of Guwahati, a seat he has represented continuously since 2001.

The list also included new entrants such as former Congress state unit chief Bhupen Kumar Borah (Bihpuria), who joined the party last month, and Pradyut Bordoloi (Dispur), who quit as the Congress MP on Wednesday. The list contained six women and dropped 19 sitting lawmakers.

In West Bengal, where the BJP hopes to end Mamata Banerjee's 15-year-long rule, the party released a second list of 111 candidates, fielding former Union minister Nisith Pramanik from Mathabhanga, Sandeshkhali protester Rekha Patra from Hingalganj, and actor Roopa Ganguly from Sonarpur Dakshin.

All 126 seats in Assam go to the polls on April 9. Bengal goes to the polls in two phases – 152 seats on April 23 and 142 seats on April 29.

In Assam, the BJP is contesting 89 of the 126 seats, leaving 37 to allies Asom Gana Parishad (26) and Bodoland Peoples Front (11). "Names of 88 candidates from our party have been included in our list. The candidate for only one constituency, Sissiborgaon, which we will be contesting, has not been decided yet. We will finalise that soon," said Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia.

This is the first assembly election after the controversial 2023 delimitation of seats. "Because of delimitation, many MLAs have lost their constituencies. Some seats have become ST or SC seats, due to which we were not able to give tickets to all sitting legislators. This time we have included many youths as well as very senior leaders who have been working in the grassroots," said CM Sarma. He also defended fielding Congress turncoat Bordoloi. "I don't think the BJP has given him anything... He sacrificed a lot and did not join the BJP in the hope of receiving any benefit," the CM said. Dispur has been represented by BJP's



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, left, and BJP Assam president Dilip Saikia, right, welcome Nagaon MP Pradyut Bordoloi into the Bharatiya Janata Party, in New Delhi. | Photo Credit: @BJP4Assam/X via PTI Photo

Atul Bora since 2016 who was denied a ticket this time. "We want to bring the Congress leaders, who are assets, to the BJP. The process started in 2016, and 99 per cent of it has been completed," Sarma said.

Other former Congress leaders Sashi Kanta Das and Kamalakhya De Purkayastha were given tickets from the Raha and Katigora seats, respectively. But another Congress MLA, Basanta Das, who joined the BJP last month, didn't find a place in the list. Among the ministers who found a place were Pijush Hazarika (Jagiroad), Prasanta Phukan (Dibrugarh), Jayanta Malla Baruah (Nalbari) Ranjeet Dass (Bhawanipur-Sorbhog), Ajanta Neog (Golaghat), Ranoj Pegu (Dhemaji), Chandra Mohan Patowary (Tihu), Ashok Singhal (Dhekiajuli), Bimal Bora (Tingkhong), Rupesh Gowala (Doom Dooma), Kaushik Rai (Lakhipur) and Krishnendu Paul (Patharkandi).

Speaker Biswajit Daimary was fielded from Tamulpur, former BJP state chief Bhabesh Kalita from Rangia and former MP Rajdeep Roy from Silchar. In Jorhat, sitting BJP lawmaker Hitendra Nath Goswami will take on Congress state chief Gaurav Gogoi, who is the sitting MP from the Jorhat parliamentary seat. Sarma said that the BJP will start its election campaign from March 24, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah, BJP chief Nitin Nabin and other senior leaders like former CM Sarbananda Sonowal will be among the star campaigners.

## Floodgates for cheap weight-loss drugs open as key patent expires

MARCH 20, 2026

**DELHI (TIP):** The market for diabetes and weight-loss drugs is set for a transformation starting Friday as Danish drugmaker Novo Nordisk's patent on semaglutide expires, triggering the launch of a multitude of cheaper generic versions.

More than 50 branded versions of semaglutide, the active ingredient in Novo's diabetes drug Ozempic and weight-loss treatment Wegovy are expected to enter the Indian market, making it one of the most crowded drug launches in recent years. The influx is likely to sharply reduce prices and improve access for diabetes and obesity patients, but experts warn it could also lead to misuse. Sun Pharma, Mankind Pharma, Dr. Reddy's, Zydus, Lupin and Alkem are among the companies expected to launch generic versions.

According to industry estimates, the new versions are likely to be priced at a third to



a fifth of the innovator drug, bringing the monthly cost of the once a week injectable down to around Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000. At present, Ozempic costs between Rs 8,800 and Rs 11,175 per month, while Wegovy ranges from Rs 10,850 to Rs 16,400, depending on dosage.

"Diabetes and obesity management is long term and expensive, so cheaper options will help families and improve adherence. It can also help doctors start treatment earlier," said Dr Sandeep Kharb, senior consultant, endocrinology, Asian

Hospital. However, experts caution that increased access may also lead to inappropriate use. "These drugs have already been widely promoted and used for weight loss without prescription. With cheaper options entering the market, misuse may increase if not regulated," said Dr Vivek Bindal, senior director at Max Healthcare, adding that there is a need to prevent promotion for cosmetic use and improve public awareness.

Adding to this, Dr Saptarshi Bhattacharya, senior consultant, endocrinology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, said the patent expiry marks a significant shift in chronic disease management. "Improved affordability and wider availability of generics will allow many more people, especially outside metro cities, to access a therapy that has proven benefits in blood glucose control and weight management.

## Rupee hits all-time low, slips past Rs 93 mark against US dollar

MARCH 20, 2026

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The rupee plunged to a record low on Friday, March 20, breaching the Rs 93 mark for the first time as a surge in crude oil prices and escalating tensions in West Asia triggered fresh pressure on the currency.

It weakened to Rs 93.15 against the US dollar in early trade, extending recent losses as investors reacted to the intensifying conflict across the Gulf, which has disrupted energy infrastructure and pushed oil prices sharply higher.

Brent crude remains firmly above \$100 per barrel amid fears of prolonged supply disruptions, a key concern for India, which imports a large share of its oil needs. Higher oil prices increase the country's import bill, drive up demand for dollars, and put downward pressure on the rupee.

At the same time, rising geopolitical uncertainty has triggered a global risk-off mood, with investors moving towards safe-haven assets such as the US dollar. This has strengthened the dollar and weighed on emerging market currencies, including the rupee.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have also stepped up selling in Indian equities amid the uncertainty, further adding to pressure.

## Exporters to get Rs 497-cr relief package to offset war disruption

MARCH 20, 2026

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** Amid heightened concerns around the Strait of Hormuz and the deteriorating global geopolitical situation due to the war in West Asia, the government on March 19 announced a Rs 497 crore relief package for exporters to mitigate the immediate impact of logistics disruptions and safeguard jobs.

The intervention, called RELIEF (Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation) comprises three complementary components covering consignments destined to countries in West Asia such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Israel, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Iraq, Iran and Yemen, meant either for delivery or for transshipment, the commerce ministry said in a statement.

The first intervention is for exporters who already have an ECGC credit insurance cover. They will benefit from up to 100% risk coverage, over and above the existing cover during the eligible period (February 14 to March 15), giving them extra protection without additional financial burden, it said.

The second one is for exporters planning consignments during the next three months. They will be encouraged to obtain ECGC cover with government support for up to 95% risk coverage, over and above the existing ECGC cover, which will help maintain exporter confidence and facilitate continued shipment flows, it said.

The third intervention is for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Recognising that some MSME exporters may not have availed credit insurance between February 14 and March 15, and are facing extraordinary freight and insurance surcharge burdens, RELIEF will provide a partial reimbursement mechanism, it said.

"This support will be extended subject to prescribed conditions, documentary verification and notified ceilings (up to Rs 50 lakhs per exporter)," it said.

The interventions are part of the Rs 25,060 crore Export



Promotion Mission (EPM) 2026-31, which aims to "mitigate the immediate impact of logistics disruptions, protect exporter confidence, prevent order cancellations and safeguard employment in export-linked sectors" and it also reinforces India's commitment to maintain "resilience and competitiveness" in global trade during periods of uncertainty, the ministry said.

"RELIEF has been structured to provide support across the export cycle by covering the shipments already left during the disruption period as well as prospective exports planned to the affected region," the statement said.

Under the approved framework, ECGC Ltd (formerly known as Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India Ltd), has been designated as the nodal and implementing agency responsible for verification, claim processing, disbursement and monitoring. State-run ECGC Ltd is under administrative control of the ministry of commerce & industry.

## American held for terror training in India wore many hats

MARCH 20, 2026

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The lone American who was arrested along with six Ukrainians last week by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for alleged drone warfare training, illegal border crossings and links to armed groups operating near India's North-Eastern region is Matthew VanDyke. He has worn different hats and, according to his social media profile, calls himself an American spy, an international security analyst, foreign fighter, media personality and even a documentary filmmaker.

However, what attracts attention is that he calls himself the "founder of the non-profit organisation Sons of Liberty International (SOLI)".

According to the Wikipedia page on him, whose link VanDyke has shared on his X profile, "he first gained fame during the Libyan Civil War as a foreign fighter on the side of the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi and as a prisoner of war."

His profile on X reads, "Founder, Sons of Liberty International. Fought in Libya+Ukraine. Run covert ops in Venezuela. FREE IRAN. And more..."

According to NIA, all the seven accused had allegedly entered India illegally and imported drones from Europe for training purposes. All



seven were on March 16 remanded in NIA custody until March 27 by a special NIA court. The agency is now probing as to how they managed to enter India, especially Mizoram, which is a restricted territory for foreigners and from there, they entered neighbouring Myanmar.

Sources further informed that the persons who provided them logistical support to travel within the country and then cross over to Myanmar is also being investigated.

NIA -- in a statement on March 18 -- said that "since the case is in the initial stage of investigation, we will not be able to share the details at this stage. The same will be shared at an appropriate time".

VanDyke was arrested from Kolkata airport by NIA on March 13. Three Ukrainian nationals were picked up from Lucknow airport and the remaining three from Delhi airport the same day. They have been charged under relevant Sections, including Section 18 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The reaction of the US Embassy in India was muted regarding VanDyke's arrest. "We are aware of the situation. However, for privacy reasons, we cannot comment on cases involving US citizens," a US Embassy spokesperson had said on his arrest.

Source: TNS

## Supreme Court quashes FIR against YouTuber Elvish Yadav in snake venom case

**NEW DELHI (TIP), MARCH 20, 2026:** The Supreme Court on March 19 quashed criminal proceedings against YouTuber Elvish Yadav in a case alleging use of snake venom in video shoots and involvement in drug-fuelled rave parties, holding that the FIR was legally unsustainable. At the same time, the court made it clear that its order does not amount to a clean chit, granting liberty to competent authorities to initiate separate proceedings under the Wildlife (Protection) Act.

The bench of justices MM Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh confined its scrutiny to two specific questions — the applicability of provisions under the NDPS Act, 1985, and the validity of proceedings under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. On both counts, the court found the case, as presently instituted, to be legally untenable.

Dealing first with the NDPS Act, the bench noted that the alleged substance recovered from a co-accused did not fall within the schedule of psychotropic substances under the law. "Admittedly, what is recovered from the co-accused cannot come within the purview of psychotropic substances found in the schedule," noted the court.

It also took note of the submission that no recovery was made from Yadav, who was represented by advocate Raman Yadav, with the prosecution case resting largely on allegations that he had placed orders through an associate. In the absence of any scheduled substance and without direct recovery from the accused, the court held that invocation of the NDPS Act could not be sustained.

On the Wildlife Protection Act aspect, the bench found a more fundamental legal flaw.

# India in history this Week

## MARCH 20 TO MARCH 26

### 20 MARCH



2014 Khushwant Singh, a journalist, writer and historian who was recognized for his impeccable comment, died.

1351 Muhammad Tughlaq Shah Do died in 1351.

1921 Doctor Alexander was born in 1921.

1970 The Satyashodhak Samaj was formed in 1970.

1992 The great creator Satyajit Rai received the Bharat Ratna.

1987 The Food and Drug Administration approved the anti-AIDS drug AZT. It was the first drug approved by the US government to treat AIDS.

### 21 MARCH

1836 First public library started in Kolkata, now its name is National Library.

1858 Rebel soldiers of Lucknow surrender.

1887 Establishment of Prathana Samaj in Bombay.

1916 Shehnaist Ustad Bismillah Khan was born.

1791 British army was captured in 1791 by defeating Tipu Sultan of the then Bangalore.

1975 The then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed declared Emergency under Section 352 at the request of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975.

### 22 MARCH

1890 Ramachandra Chatterjee became the first person to get off parachute in 1890.

1972 Mrs. Indira Gandhi resigned as Prime Minister in 1977.

1964 First rally of old cars held in Kolkata.

1957 A national calendar based on suspicion was adopted.

1969 Inauguration of Indian Petrochemicals



Corporation Limited.

### 23 MARCH

1910 1910 Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was born in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh.

1931 During the 1931 Indian independence



movement, revolutionary Bhagat Singh and his associates Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged on this day.

1986 1986 First company of women was trained in Central Reserve Police Force.

1940 The All India Muslim League demanded a separate country for Muslims in 1940.

### 24 MARCH

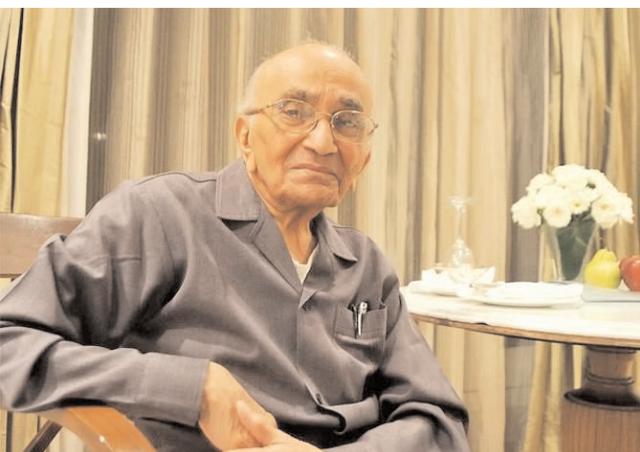
1855 Long-distance telegraph message was sent from Calcutta to Agra for the first time.



1977 Morarji Desai became the fourth Prime Minister of India in 1977 and formed the first non-Congress government at the Center.

1990 The Indian Army left Sri Lanka and returned home in 1990.

1999 PN Bhagwati was elected vice-president of the United Nations Human Rights Committee for a second consecutive term in 1999.



1855 British Cabinet Mission reaches India.

### 25 MARCH

1788 First advertisement of Indian language Bangla

published in the newspaper 'Calcutta Gadget'.

1898 Swami Vivekananda gave initiation of celibacy to Sister Nivedita.

1954 The country's first helicopter "S-55" was launched in 1954 in Delhi.



2007 Team India out of World Cup cricket in 2007.

2017 Tanushree Pareek of Bikaner, Rajasthan, made the country and state proud by becoming the first woman officer of the country's Border Security Force



(BSF) in 2017.

### 26 MARCH

1552 Guru Amardas became the third Guru of the Sikhs.

1907 Mahadevi Varma, the modern 'Meera' of Hindi literature world, was born.

1972 President of India VV Giri inaugurates the first International Sanskrit Conference.

1973 In the state of Uttarakhand, India, in 1973, farmers organized an eco-protection movement called "Chipko Movement" to oppose the cutting of trees.



## INDIA-CONNECTION AT THE 98TH ACADEMY AWARDS

ACADEMY  
OF MOTION PICTURE  
ARTS AND SCIENCESOscar, official poster.  
Credit: www.oscars.org.

## BY MABEL PAIS

Filmmaker ALEXANDRE SINGH with his life-and-long-time creative partner and co-director Natalie Musteata, won an Academy Award (popularly known as The Oscar) in the category of Best Live Action Short Film for the French-language drama “Two People Exchanging Saliva” at the 98th Academy Awards (The Oscars) on Sunday, March 15 held at the Dolby Theatre, Hollywood, Los Angeles.

This was their first win and first nomination at the Academy Awards. Singh and Musteata received their award from Kumail Nanjiani, a second-time presenter at the Oscars. Nanjiani, a renowned comedian, actor, and screenwriter, had a past Oscar nomination.

They shared the honor in a rare tie with “The Singers” by Sam A. Davis and Jack Piatt. This marked only the seventh tie in Academy history.

During his acceptance speech, Singh traced his roots to India-Britain-France calling himself a Franco-Indian-Brit. In his acceptance speech, Singh said the world today is dark, absurd, ridiculous, and horrifying.

“But that’s why we make films because we believe that art can change people’s souls.”  
“Maybe it takes 10 years’ time, but we can change society through art, through creativity, through theater and ballet and also cinema.”  
Watch the speech @

<https://youtu.be/0SNBNHwOmPk>

Geeta Gandbhir, Indian-American filmmaker, despite a double nomination for her Documentary Short “The Devil Is Busy” and Documentary Feature “The Perfect Neighbor” did not receive an Oscar.

Raj Kapoor, adept television producer, returned as the executive producer and showrunner for the 98th Oscars. He has worked on the Oscars telecast for several years, contributing to its production and creative direction. He is the recipient of eight Emmy nominations and one win (at the 96th Oscars).

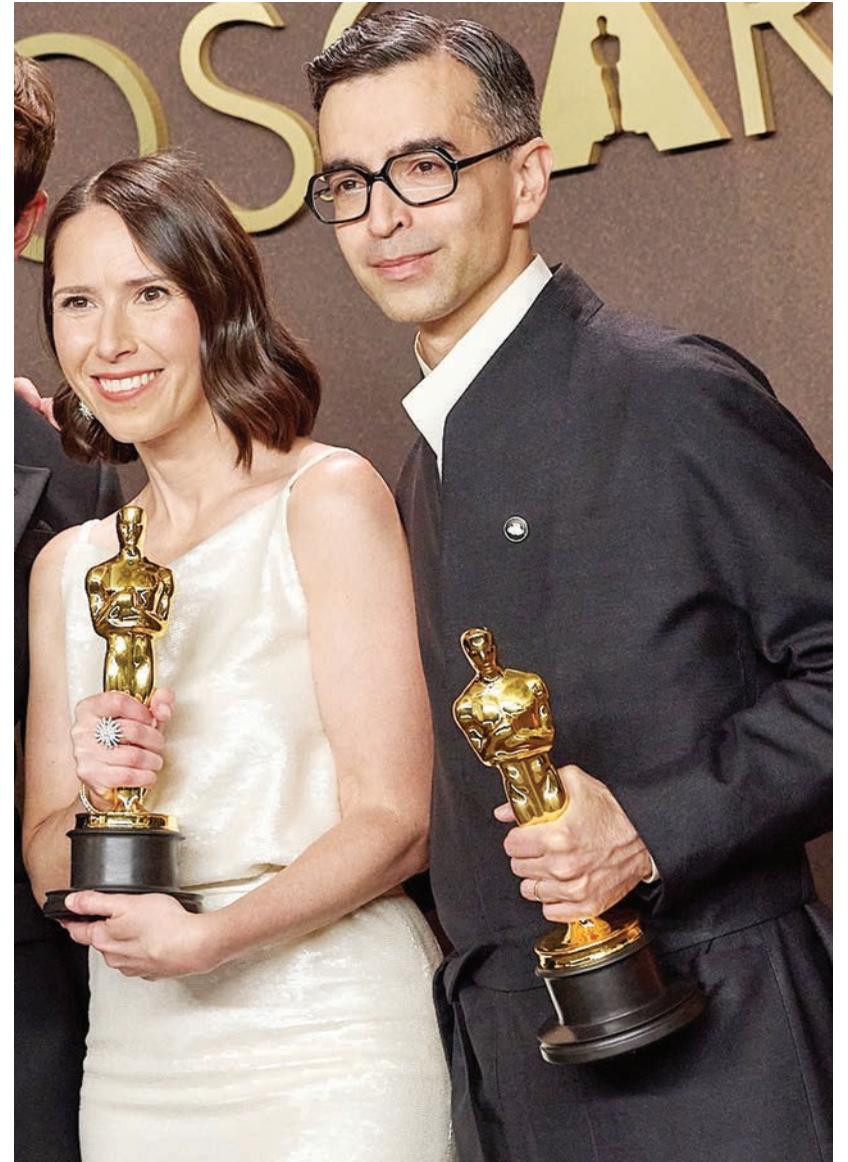
Rohan Ramanan, a southern California-based tenor/counter-tenor who has studied Western and Hindustani voice, was a performer during host Conan O’Brien’s monologue.

Priyanka Chopra lit up the 98th Oscars with elegance, confidence, and global star power presenting the Best International Feature Film award alongside Javier Bardem. She represented Indian excellence shining on the world’s biggest stage.

This year, the front-runners were “One Battle After Another” and “Sinners” who won six and five awards respectively. “One Battle After Another” bagged The Best Picture award.

For a full list of winners, visit:  
<https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/2026>

Watch the acceptance speeches -  
<https://youtu.be/0SNBNHwOmPk>



Best Live Action Short Film, winners - Natalie Musteata with Alexandre Singh.

Credit: Copyright ©A.M.P.A.S.

## SOCIALLY RELEVANT™ FILM FEST'S 13TH EDITION WRAPS UP WITH AWARDS NIGHT

## BY MABEL PAIS

The SR Socially Relevant Film Festival New York (SRFF)’s in-person 13th edition concluded in New York City with its Closing Awards Ceremony at the Tenri Cultural Institute (www.tenri.org - 43A W 13th St, New York, NY 10011 - Phone: (212) 645-2800), honoring films that highlight pressing social issues through powerful storytelling. The films are streaming online starting March 16.

The festival opened earlier on March 11 at the Lenfest Center for the Arts and continued with screenings across the city, including Cinema Village and Morningside Retirement and Health Services (MRHS).

This year’s program featured a diverse international selection of narrative features, documentaries, and short films exploring themes such as BIPOC Films, Disability, Family and Home, Race, Religion and Exile, Gender Equality, Mental Health and Social Justice.

Among the top honors, “Abdo” and “Saneya,” directed by Omar Bakry, received the Best Narrative Feature Film Award, while the Vania Exerjian Award for Empowering Women went to “Grains of Sand,” directed by Sarah Gross. The Best Documentary Feature Film Award,

presented Ex Aequo, went to “The Sky Was on Fire,” directed by Jonathan Maricle and John Finn Adkinson, and “No Filter Café,” directed by Coralie Van Rietschoten and Galaad Hemsli.

The IndiePix Vision Award and the Festival’s annual Scriptwriting Contest awards were amongst the categories awarded. Additional awards were

presented for the narrative and documentary shorts, best actor and best actress, Armenian cinema through the KIRK Awards, and the Women Film Critics Center Award.

Prizes, in addition to the award trophies, included a scarf from festival sponsor Lost Pattern and a HarperCollins book by Joze Piranian,

Stop Holding Back, tracing an amazing journey of overcoming personal limitations.

The complete list of awards and details is available @ <https://ratedsrffilms.org>. Trailers of the films can be accessed @ <https://youtube.com/@SRFilmFestNY>

## SRFF FESTIVAL

Founded in 2013 by actress and filmmaker Nora Armani, the SR Socially Relevant Film Festival New York was created to highlight films that address significant social issues and promote meaningful storytelling without relying on gratuitous violence or sensationalism.

Since its inception, the festival has presented over 800 films from around the world, offering audiences the opportunity to engage with filmmakers and explore stories that reflect the realities and aspirations of diverse communities.

The festival continues to champion cinema that fosters empathy, awareness, and constructive dialogue about the challenges shaping our global society.

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



SRFF 2026 poster. Credit: www.ratedsrffilms.org.

# THE CULTURE TREE & OTHERS CELEBRATE EID AL-FITR IN NYC

BY MABEL PAIS

EID MUBARAK to all who celebrate Eid al-Fitr!

As the holy month of Ramadan comes to an end, all at The Culture Tree extend warmest wishes to everyone who has observed this special time.

Ramadan is a beautiful period of reflection, generosity, and community, and The Culture Tree hopes it has been filled with peace, gratitude, and meaningful moments with family and loved ones.

As the month has come to a close, The Culture Tree wishes you and your families, Eid Mubarak! Eid is a joyful celebration that brings people together through prayer, food, generosity, and shared traditions, marking a time of renewal and togetherness.

To celebrate this festive occasion, The Culture Tree is hosting two family-friendly Eid celebrations, and would love for you to join them. These events will bring the community together with cultural activities, storytelling, music, crafts, and festive treats for children and families.

## March 20: Children's Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) Eid

EID AL-FITR

WEDNESDAY - FRIDAY, MARCH 18 - 20

Eid al-Fitr is a holiday celebrated by Muslims around the world marking the end of Ramadan: a month of reflection, care for others, and community.

EID AL-FITR CELEBRATION WITH THE CULTURE TREE

Friday, March 20 | 2:00 pm – 4:30 pm | All ages | 1st Floor & 3rd Floor | Inside Art & Discovery Classroom

Eid Mubarak! Join The Culture Tree for an exciting afternoon; for a warm and welcoming Eid celebration designed for children and families.

READ-ALoud: STORYTIME WITH ANU SEHGAL OF THE CULTURE TREE

Friday, March 20 | 2:00 pm – 2:25 pm | All ages | 1st Floor | Inside Art

Join The Culture Tree's founder and author Anu Sehgal for a special storytime, creating a rich, engaging experience that weaves together storytelling, music, dance, and art to help children learn about the meaning and joy of Eid in a fun and meaningful way.

READ-ALoud: NOURA'S CRESCENT MOON WITH AUTHOR ZAINAB KHAN

Friday, March 20 | 2:40 pm – 3:15 pm | All ages | 1st Floor | Inside Art

Author Zainab Khan will read from her beautiful picture book "Noura's Crescent Moon," sharing the story of a young girl experiencing the excitement and meaning of seeing the moon that begins the holiday, followed by collaborative moon art-making.

PERFORMANCE AND WORKSHOP: KATHAK DANCE WITH SHAYONA SACHDEV

Friday, March 20 | 3:30 pm – 4:00 pm | All ages | 1st Floor | Inside Art

The celebration will also include a special Kathak dance performance by Shayona Sachdev, followed by an interactive workshop where children can learn simple movements from this classical Indian dance form and understand how storytelling and rhythm come together through dance.

WORKSHOP AND DEMONSTRATION: HENNA TATTOO MAKING DESIGN\*

Friday, March 20 | 2:45 pm – 3:15 pm; 3:25 pm – 3:55 pm; 4:05 pm – 4:35 pm | Ages 4 & up | \*Sign-up | 3rd Floor | Discovery Classroom

Families will enjoy hands-on cultural activities, readalouds and drawing centered on Henna Tattoos design, with The Culture Tree Founder Anu Sehgal and CMOM Educators! Learn about this traditional art form and its role in celebrations across South Asia and the Muslim world. Then, you'll have the opportunity to draw your own celebratory design and receive your own simple Henna Tattoo.



Eid celebrations. -Credit: www.cmom.org.



Eid celebrations. Credit: brooklynkids.org.

EID AL-FITR MOON BINOCULARS

Wednesday – Friday, March 18 – 20 | 11:15 am – 12:15 pm & 2:45 pm – 3:45 pm | Ages 4 & younger | 3rd Floor | PlayWorks

Take a closer look and track phases of the moon this Eid al-Fitr by decorating a pair of cardboard binoculars with festive colors!

WATERCOLOR WELL WISHES

Wednesday – Friday, March 18 – 20 | 10:30 am – 12:30 pm | Ages 5 & up | 1st Floor | Makerspace

Create your own watercolor postcards to wish people a happy Eid al-Fitr!

MOON ARTMAKING

Wednesday & Thursday, March 18 – 19 | 2:00 pm – 4:15 pm | Ages 5 & up | 1st Floor | Inside Art

Create your own collaborative stamped moon art in its different phases and learn about the significance of the moon during Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr!

Learn more @ <https://cmom.org/visit/public-programs>

## March 28: Brooklyn Children's Museum (BCM) Eid

Celebrate the end of Ramadan as cultures from across the Muslim world share their Eid traditions!

Join a Sufi drumming circle, move to Bangladeshi dance, enjoy Turkish food, and hear Eid stories and songs.

Presented with the Turkish Cultural Center (<https://turkishculturalcenter.org>) and The Culture Tree (<https://theculturetree.com>)

CELEBRATE EID AL-FITR

Saturday, March 28

11:00 am – 4:00 pm

<https://brooklynkids.org/programs/celebrate-eid-al-fitr>

Come celebrate the spirit of Eid with others and share in the joy, culture, and community that make this holiday so special.

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

# SETH RUDETSKY AND JESSIE MUELLER WILL GRACE THE STAGE WITH BROADWAY TUNES

BY MABEL PAIS

SETH RUDETSKY, SiriusXM radio host, acclaimed pianist, Broadway expert, and JESSIE MUELLER, Tony award winner, will share the stage to present an unforgettable evening of music and stories from Rudetsky's Broadway concert series, at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) at 7:30 PM on Saturday, March 21, 2026.

Rudetsky will be joined by Tony Award winner Jessie Mueller (known for her roles in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *Waitress*, and *Carousel*). This evening promises to be a captivating musical experience filled with behind-the-scenes insights from the world of Broadway.

This special event concert is set to delight theater lovers and music fans alike,



(right) Jessie Mueller and Seth Rudetsky. -Credit : www.njpac.org.

offering Seth's signature humor and exclusive Broadway stories, paired with Jessie Mueller's remarkable vocals and powerful stage presence. Audiences can look forward to heart-stirring renditions of

Broadway favorites such as "She Used to Be Mine" from *Waitress*, "If I Loved You" from *Carousel*, and chart-topping hits from "*Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*." As always, Rudetsky's concerts are renowned

for surprise moments that make each performance unique and unforgettable.

Jessie Mueller has earned acclaim as one of Broadway's most celebrated leading ladies, captivating audiences with her dynamic voice and emotional depth. Together with Seth Rudetsky, she will create a concert experience that blends intimate interview, spontaneous storytelling, and dazzling musical performances —making this a truly one-of-a-kind event.

## TICKETS

Tickets for Seth Rudetsky & Jessie Mueller at NJPAC can be purchased at NJPAC.org or by stopping by the NJPAC Box Office at 1 Center Street, Newark, New Jersey or calling 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

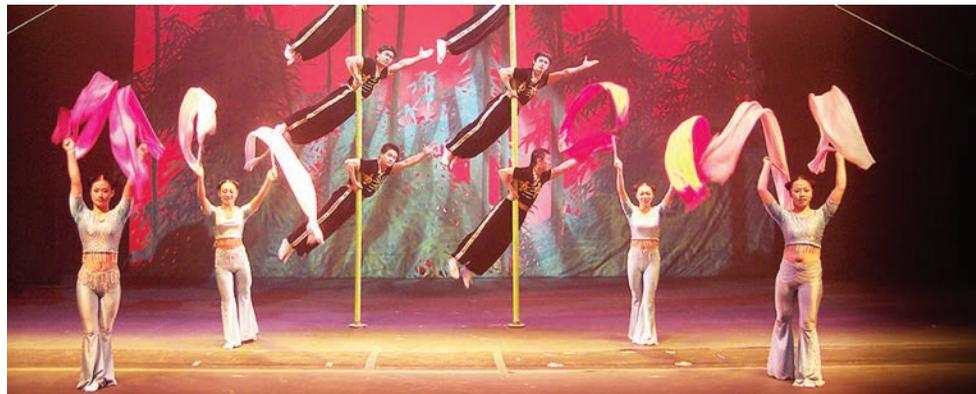
# WITNESS DISPLAY OF SKILL, ARTISTRY & TRADITION BY PEKING ACROBATS IN NEW JERSEY

BY MABEL PAIS

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) welcomes back the renowned Peking Acrobats for two breathtaking performances on Saturday, March 28th, 2026. Audiences of all ages are invited to witness this world-class troupe at 2:00 PM and 7:30 PM for an unforgettable display of skill, artistry, and tradition.

Don't miss your chance to experience this dazzling showcase of acrobatic artistry. Join NJPAC and discover why The Peking Acrobats continue to captivate audiences around the world!

Prepare to be amazed as The Peking Acrobats push the very limits of



Peking Acrobats. -Credit : www.njpac.org.

human ability. Featuring daring maneuvers atop a pagoda of chairs, powerful precision tumbling, somersaulting, and gymnastics, their

performance is a kaleidoscope of magnificent movement. Hailing directly from the People's Republic of China, these extraordinary artists

promise an authentic Chinese spectacular that will leave you breathless.

This acrobatic extravaganza includes trick cycling, contortion, juggling, gymnastics, and balancing acts that promise to keep viewers on the edge of their seats. Enhanced with music, special effects, and vibrant pageantry, The Peking Acrobats deliver a show that is both fun and inspiring for audiences of all ages.

## TICKETS

Tickets can be purchased by visiting NJPAC.org, the NJPAC Box Office at 1 Center Street, Newark, New Jersey or calling 888.GO.NJPAC (888.466.5722).

# BRING THE FAMILY ON APRIL 11 TO CELEBRATE AILEY DAY AT NJ

Video: Ailey Day activities. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Xfh1VWw3NLkChXHiHcT-E8asRiBcwa9f/view>

-Credit : www.njpac.org.

BY MABEL PAIS

Join NJPAC's annual Ailey Day celebration!

At "AILEY DAY," hundreds are expected to gather in Newark for the return of the 18th annual AILEY DAY on Saturday, April 11, 2026, at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC).

This full day of dance immersion at NJPAC features a variety of movement classes taught by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater alumni, Dance New Jersey faculty and NJPAC teaching artists.

This memorable NJPAC tradition welcomes all skill levels and movement abilities. Take your first steps into dance performance or show off your advanced moves.

At the end of the day, take the stage for a special "Show and Share" featuring Ailey Day choreography. Plus, be dazzled by performances from local dance companies.

"AILEY DAY" includes free family-friendly activities for people of all ages

and abilities and dancers of all skill levels. The full day of dance immersion kickstarts with classes taught by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater alumni, Dance New Jersey faculty and NJPAC teaching artists.

In addition to dance classes, the Newark Public Library hosts a story time session with readings of children's books including "Alvin Ailey" by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney. The afternoon continues with the day's participants showcasing their newly learned dance movements in a "Show & Share" which also features performances from local dance companies.

**AILEY DAY | SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026**

New Jersey Performing Arts Center, One Center Street, Newark, New Jersey

## REGISTRATION

Registration is required. RSVP in advance by visiting NJPAC at

[njpac.org/event/ailey-day-26](http://njpac.org/event/ailey-day-26) or by calling 1.888.GO.NJPAC/1.888.466.5722.

## SCHEDULE

(subject to change)  
8:30 AM – Registration  
9:00 AM – Program begins (Welcome, warm-up, and teacher introductions)  
10:00 AM – Dance Classes & Story Time Session  
11:15 AM – Alvin Ailey Q&A  
11:30 AM – 1:30 PM – Show and Share + Performances (this end time is approximate)

## PERFORMERS + TEACHERS:

Alvin Arts in Education & Community Programs  
Brother Jerome Hunter  
Dance New Jersey  
Canela Dance  
Eastside Dance Project  
Footprints Dance Company with Freddie Moore  
School of Nimbus  
Sharron Miller's Academy for the

Performing Arts

Solo Expression with Anthony Solo Harris

Watch a reel of last year's class - [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rvxCQ0TIXoOkeUpipYS3VignuY\\_B6yJd/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rvxCQ0TIXoOkeUpipYS3VignuY_B6yJd/view?usp=sharing)

## SPECIAL OFFER\*\*

On Ailey Day, discounted tickets will be available for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's May 8 & 9 performances @ ([https://njpac.org/event/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater-3/?utm\\_source=multiblock&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=alvin\\_ailey](https://njpac.org/event/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater-3/?utm_source=multiblock&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=alvin_ailey))

Get 20%\*\* off your tickets plus save on handling fees.

Any questions? Please reach out to Daniela Fonseca at [dfonseca@njpac.org](mailto:dfonseca@njpac.org).

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



## Nora Fatehi song 'Sarke Chunar' banned, free speech not absolute, says govt

The government informed the Lok Sabha that freedom of speech in India is not absolute and must function within the reasonable restrictions outlined in the Constitution, as it confirmed that the song "Sarke Chunar" has already been banned.

Replying to a question, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "The song that the honourable MP referred to has already been banned. I would like to clearly state, through you, to the entire House that we must operate within the framework of the reasonable restrictions placed on freedom of speech by the framers of the Constitution. Freedom of speech cannot be absolute; it has to exist in the context of society and culture." Notably, Nora and Sanjay Dutt-starrer song "Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke" from the Kannada film "KD-The Devil" has been receiving constant and massive backlash due to its lewd lyrics. The song has, however, been taken down from the platform.

Meanwhile, Nora Fatehi addressed the controversy surrounding her new track Sarke Chunar from the Kannada pan-India film KD: The Devil, on Wednesday, stating that she was unaware of the Hindi version of the song. However, several social media users questioned her clarification, calling it a vague excuse. And Nora chose not to stay silent, and fired back at trolls, defending her stance.

Nora took to Instagram to share a clarification video, stating that she had signed on only for the original Kannada version of the song and was unaware that a Hindi version was also planned. However, her explanation sparked debate online, with several social media users questioning her claims in the comments section. Nora didn't hold back and stepped in to respond directly to the criticism.

When one commented, "bullsh\*\*\* no one does any work without knowing the lyrics", Nora reacted, "But I didn't perform to those lyrics. Do u (you) not understand anything I said in this video? I did not perform to the Hindi version. I (have) never even seen or heard it until it was released. U (you) clearly didn't watch this video entirely. If you really are affected by this, please raise this issue to the people who made this song and decided to attach my image to it without my permission."

# Dhurandhar 2: Fans say film is grand, gritty, but not flawless

**D**hurandhar: The Revenge has set social media abuzz, with early reactions on X pouring in soon after its release. While many have hailed the film as a grand cinematic spectacle, others feel the sequel doesn't quite live up to the legacy of the original.

Ranveer Singh's performance has emerged as a major talking point, with fans describing it as energetic and gripping. Many users have termed the film a "pure entertainer," applauding its mix of stylised action and emotional beats. The cinematography, too, has received widespread appreciation for its scale and execution.

Directed by Aditya Dhar, the film is being widely praised for its scale and visual ambition. Several users on X have lauded Dhar's "fantastic vision," particularly highlighting the interval sequence featuring Aari Aari as a standout moment. The placement of Man Atkeya has also caught viewers' attention, with many calling it a high point in the narrative.

However, the response on X remains divided. A section of viewers has pointed out that the sequel lacks the emotional depth of the first Dhurandhar, with some calling parts of it slow and stretched. The film's runtime has also been flagged, while the music has drawn mixed reactions, with comparisons to the original album continuing to surface.

The film's political undertones have further fuelled the conversation online. While some users have praised its bold and direct storytelling, others have criticised it as polarising. The debate has added to the film's strong online traction.

Meanwhile, fans of Yash have even joked that his upcoming film Toxic may have benefited from avoiding a box-office clash with Dhurandhar: The Revenge, given the scale of its release and buzz.



## Deepika likes post defending 8-hr work shift demand, exit from Spirit and Kalki sequel

**A**ctor Deepika Padukone sparked a debate about actors' eight-hour work shifts in 2025 when she reportedly exited Sandeep Reddy Vanga's Spirit and the sequel to Kalki 2898 AD. It led to a wide range of responses from several big names in the industry, from Kareena Kapoor to Rana Daggubati. The discourse resurfaced on social media after a digital media platform shared an opinion piece on the actor's demands. The actor 'liked' the article on Instagram.

Deepika liked the post from The Quint, authored by Debiparna Chakraborty, which noted how the actor decided to walk out of two big-ticket films, sparking a debate over her professionalism. The article noted that Deepika herself called out the industry's hypocrisy: male actors have been working on fixed-hour shifts for years, but when a female actor demands the same, it becomes a 'tantrum.'

A social media user shared the same post on Reddit, where many on the platform came to Deepika's support. One wrote, "The sexism surely exists. If actresses came late to sets like SRK or Salman. They would be thrown out and called names." Another said, "I support Deepika here. Movies have been shot in 8 hours shift a day even in 80's and 90's, but now they are targeting Deepika when she also has a main reason that she recently gave birth! Misogyny in film industry is so high man." A comment read, "First 8 hour shift can't be labelled as a demand. An actor is putting in the 8 hours to finish the work. Male actors do the same - some of them have no decency but show up late. Why should women just keep sitting around for this? She was being brand unprofessional by a section of industry."

The controversy around Deepika Padukone and director Sandeep Reddy Vanga emerged when she exited the pan-India



film Spirit, starring Prabhas, reportedly due to disagreements over creative terms and a request for an eight-hour workday. Her departure led to Triptii Dimri taking her place. The makers of Kalki 2898 AD also announced her exit from the sequel through a post on X, sparking online debate about professionalism, work-hour limits, and remuneration in high-budget projects.



## Leonardo DiCaprio hard launches girlfriend Vittoria Ceretti at the Oscars

Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio and Italian model Vittoria Ceretti made a rare public appearance together at the Academy Awards on March 15, stepping out as a couple at the ceremony held at the Dolby Theatre. The outing marked the first time the pair attended the Oscars together since their relationship began nearly three years ago.

Despite arriving at the venue for the same high-profile event, Leonardo initially walked the red carpet alone, keeping with his usual low-key approach to public appearances. Vittoria, meanwhile, joined him inside the theatre, where broadcast cameras later captured the couple seated together during the ceremony. Known for maintaining a largely private relationship, the duo offered a rare glimpse of their dynamic as they watched the awards show together.

Leonardo, 51, was among the nominees of the night, earning a Best Actor nomination for his role in the film *One Battle After Another*. For the occasion, the actor wore a classic black tuxedo paired with a bow tie, adding a distinctive touch with a gold bee brooch pinned to his jacket. Vittoria, 27, made her Oscars debut in a striking red gown, drawing attention as she accompanied the Oscar-winning actor inside the venue.

The couple were first linked romantically in August 2023 after they were reportedly seen dancing together at a nightclub in Ibiza. Over time, their relationship gradually became more visible, with the pair spotted together during trips to Italy and later making a joint appearance at the Met Gala. Their appearance at this year's Oscars is seen as another notable moment in their relationship timeline. In the past, Leonardo has typically attended major award ceremonies with his mother, Irmelin Indenbirken. She accompanied him to several high-profile events over the years, including the Golden Globe Awards and the BAFTA Awards earlier this season.

# Spider-Man: Brand New Day trailer: Tom Holland faces mayhem in a darker new era

Actor Tom Holland is back as Peter Parker, aka Spider-Man in the first trailer of *Spider-Man: Brand New Day*. The film, which marks the fourth instalment in the MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe) Spider-Man series, signals a darker new era.

In the film's trailer, the story resumes from *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, in which the world, including Mary Jane (Zendaya), and Ned (Jacob Batalon) has forgotten Spider-Man. This follows Peter's massive sacrifice to save New York City and the multiverse from being ripped apart, a crisis inadvertently caused by Doctor Strange's spell.

Left to navigate his grief following the death of Aunt May, Peter creates a fresh, classic red-and-blue suit and returns to the streets to continue his heroics. Holland, as the friendly neighbourhood superhero, is seen leaping across skyscrapers while also grappling with his personal demons.

The ensemble for the film features a mix of familiar and fresh talent from across the franchise. Mark Ruffalo returns as the Hulk alongside Jon Bernthal as the Punisher, while Michael Mando reprises his role as Scorpion. Joining them are Sadie Sink, Tramell Tillman, and Liza Colon-Zayas, with Marvin Jones II taking on the role of the criminal Tombstone.

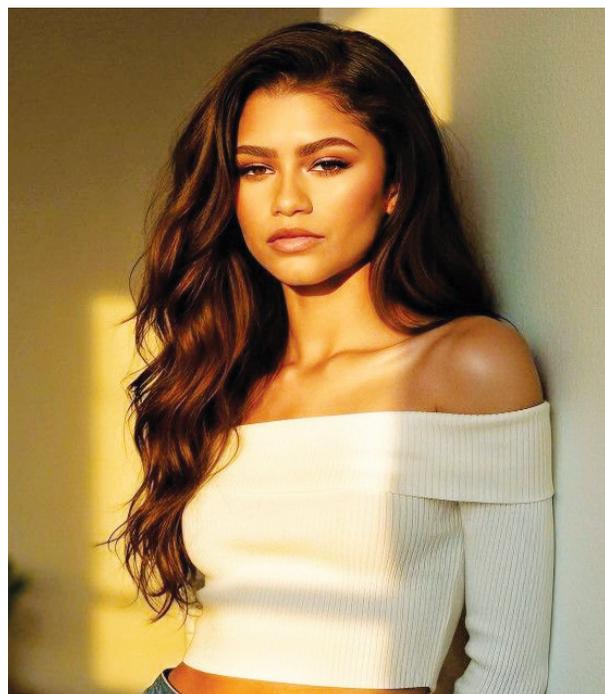
*Brand New Day* marks the first Spider-Man film in the MCU not to be directed by Jon Watts, following his work on Holland's first three instalments. The film is directed by Destin Daniel Cretton.

The film is expected to be the final solo-hero-focused entry in Phase 6, as Marvel Studios shifts its focus to *Avengers: Doomsday* and *Avengers: Secret Wars*.

*Spider-Man: Brand New Day* is set for a theatrical release on July 30, 2026.



## Zendaya says many have been 'fooled' by AI pics of her wedding to Tom Holland



Over the last few weeks, social media has been buzzing with reports of Zendaya and Tom Holland tying the knot in secret. It all started with Zendaya's stylist, Law Roach, who claimed that the wedding was already over! Amid these speculations, Zendaya arrived on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* to promote her upcoming film, *The Drama*, where she was asked about the 'headlines' surrounding these rumors.

Although Zendaya did not confirm whether she and Tom Holland had already gotten married, she said in response, "Really? I haven't seen any of them (headlines)." She also addressed the fake AI-generated pictures of her wedding that have been circulating on social media.

"Many people have been fooled by them. While I was just out and about in real life, people were like, 'Oh my God, your wedding photos are gorgeous,' and I was like, 'Babe, they're AI. They're not real,'" she said.

At the 2026 Actor Awards, Zendaya's stylist, Law Roach, confirmed the news of their wedding. During a red carpet interview with *Access Hollywood*, he said, "The wedding has already happened. You missed it." When asked, "Is that true?" he confirmed, "It's very true," with a laugh and walked away. When Zendaya recently attended Paris Fashion Week for the Louis Vuitton show, fans couldn't help but notice the gold band on her finger.

# Rome, Berlin rule out military aid without truce after allies say ready to help in Hormuz

MARCH 20, 2026

**LONDON (TIP):** Six major international powers said on March 19 they were ready "to contribute to" ensuring safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, though two stressed that any initiative would take place post-ceasefire.

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands said Thursday they were ready "to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz".

The grouping said they "welcome the commitment of nations who are engaging in preparatory planning", as they condemned "in the strongest terms recent attacks by Iran on unarmed commercial vessels in the Gulf".

But Italy and Germany both made clear later Thursday that they were not talking about any immediate military help, but rather a potential multilateral initiative after a ceasefire.

The declaration came as an effective Iranian blockade of the strait has paralysed commercial shipping through the crucial maritime chokepoint, which in peacetime sees a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas pass through it.

The war, which erupted on February 28 when the United States and Israel began bombing Iran, has led Tehran to retaliate with strikes across the Gulf region.



Twenty-three commercial vessels, including 10 tankers, have reported incidents or having been attacked.

The situation has left around 20,000 seafarers stranded on approximately 3,200 vessels west of the strait, according to the International Maritime Organization. "We express our deep concern about the escalating conflict," the allies' joint statement said.

"We call on Iran to cease immediately its threats, laying of mines, drone and missile attacks and other attempts to block the Strait to commercial shipping,"

it added.

"Freedom of navigation is a fundamental principle of international law, including under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

"The effects of Iran's actions will be felt by people in all parts of the world, especially the most vulnerable."

- Not a 'war mission' -

US President Donald Trump has urged other world powers, and NATO, to help reopen the Hormuz Strait to commercial shipping.

But they have rebuffed his call in the

short term while insisting they were open to discussions and planning.

Italy's Defence Minister Guido Crosetto said the statement by the six countries should not be seen as a "war mission".

"No entry into Hormuz without a truce and a comprehensive multilateral initiative", for which "it is right and appropriate for the United Nations to provide the legal framework", he said in a statement.

And in Berlin, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said that any German military involvement "would depend on the situation after a ceasefire... and whether we could participate within the framework of an international mandate".

Military involvement would also require approval by the German parliament, he added.

A UK defence official told reporters at a briefing Wednesday that "the level of threat is such that I don't see many nations being willing to put warships into the middle of that threat right now".

The defence official noted London has sent a "small number" of additional military "planners" to US Central Command to "help with the planning and option development for... whatever comes next in the Strait of Hormuz might look like".

## Genocide supporters: Australian PM booed, heckled at Sydney mosque

MARCH 20, 2026

**SYDNEY (TIP):** Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was booed and heckled at a major mosque in Sydney on Friday after being invited to attend Eid prayers. Albanese and Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke were attending an event marking the end of Ramadan at the Lakemba mosque, one of the country's largest. The visit was intended as a show of engagement with Muslim Australians but was disrupted when some attendees began protesting during a speech by a mosque leader.

Several worshippers accused Albanese and his deputy of being "genocide supporters", booing and shouting "get out of here". Videos shared on social media showed people chanting "Allahu Akbar" (God is great). According to the BBC, one person yelled, "Why is he here? Get him out of here! It's a disgrace."

Amid jeers, Albanese beat a hasty retreat while avoiding a large crowd gathered on the steps of the mosque, per The Guardian.

## How 'defenceless' Iran likely took down 'unkillable' US F-35 fighter jet?

MARCH 20, 2026

**TEHRAN (TIP):** The F-35, America's most advanced stealth fighter jet, has never been hit in combat in its entire operational history. Until March 19, when Iran did the unthinkable. Iran's air defences, which US President Donald Trump said were destroyed, detected, locked on to, and hit an F-35. The US said the jet made an emergency landing at a base in the Middle East, even though Iran claimed it crashed. A second F-35 jet was also reportedly hit over Iran's Bandar Abbas. It raises a pertinent question. How did Iran, with its depleted air defences, manage to hit one of the world's most advanced and costliest aircraft?

That the US F-35 was flying over central Iran when it was struck indicates a degree of confidence within America's security circles that Iranian air defences have been sufficiently weakened. "We're flying wherever we want. Nobody is even shooting at us," Trump boasted on Thursday. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth further said



Iran's air defences have been "flattened". Hours later, the F-35 jet, which has been designed to evade radar, was hit.

Even before the US could issue a statement, Iran twisted the knife by publishing footage showing the exact moment when Iranian air defences tracked and intercepted the American jet, which cost over \$100 million.

Factor this - the F-35 is the acme of US aerospace capabilities. It is the product of a trillion-dollar program. But now, a "decimated" Iran has shown it has certain vulnerabilities.

But how did a stealth aircraft, specifically designed to evade radar, get hit? Defence expert Sandeep Unnithan said the so-called stealth technology was a "misnomer".

"Company brochures may claim it is totally invisible to radar. But there are other ways to get detected. One of them is through heat. It is exactly what happened on Thursday," Unnithan told IndiaToday.in.

While it is not known what missiles the Iranians used, it was a loitering munition, specifically the 358 anti-aircraft missile, or a short-range surface-to-air missile.

The 358 missile, also known as the SA-67, is a kind of loitering drone equipped with an infrared sensor that can target slow-moving aircraft. But the F-35 is not a slow-moving jet. Previously, Iran has used the 358 missile to target American MQ-9 Reaper drones. Iran has also supplied these missiles to the Houthis in Yemen.

In fact, since the war began on February 28, the US has reportedly lost over 12 MQ-9 Reaper drones.

## Spitting paan on London street costs two Indian-origin men £2,800 in fines

Two Indian-origin men have been hit with hefty fines of 1,391 pounds each by authorities in the London borough of Brent for spitting paan juice in public, reported the UK-based local news outlet, Harrow Online. The city council has launched a campaign against paan-spitting that officials say is defacing public spaces and straining civic resources. The Brent City Council spent 30,000 pounds a year on cleaning paan stains, according to reports.

According to the Harrow Online report, the penalties were imposed after both men failed to pay initial on-the-spot fines of 100 pounds, prompting legal action that significantly increased the financial consequences. Akshitkumar Bhadre Patel, a resident of the town of Edgware, was fined by the North West London Magistrates' Court for spitting paan on Kingsbury Road near a local metro station in June 2025. Patel did not attend his court hearing and the case was decided in his absence. His failure to settle the original fine resulted in the penalty escalating more than tenfold.

In a similar instance, Hitesh Patel, a resident of the suburb of Ruislip, was also fined 1,391 pounds for spitting paan on Wembley Hill Road. Like the first case, he too failed to appear before the court, resulting in a conviction in absentia, and a steep increase in the fine.

# Yemeni warns of Red Sea strikes targetting warships if US joins Israel against Iran

MARCH 20, 2026

**SANAA (TIP):** The Houthis have issued a stern warning that they will target American ships and warships in the Red Sea if the United States participates in any attack alongside Israel against Iran.

The statement came from Yahya Sarea, spokesperson for Yemen's Houthi rebels, who described such a scenario as part of a broader strategy aimed at enabling Israel to control the region.

"Because it considers it the biggest obstacle in the way of completing its plan. Therefore, any American attack and aggression supporting the Israeli enemy against Iran is within the framework of the same goal aiming to enable the Israeli enemy to control the entire region. This is something that cannot be overlooked because it means confiscating the freedom, independence and dignity of our nation, enslaving and humiliating it, obliterating its identity, occupying its homelands, looting its wealth, and establishing the equation of the permissibility of blood, honor, land and sanctities," Sarea said.

He described the potential conflict as "the battle of the entire nation," emphasizing that pride, salvation, and victory lie in what he termed "the movement in Jihad for the sake of Almighty God." He cited religious texts, stating: "And fight in the cause of Allah and know that Allah is Hearing and



Knowing," and added, "O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet. Allah the Almighty has spoken the truth."

Sarea further warned that the Yemeni Armed Forces are closely monitoring all regional movements, including hostile actions against Yemen, and will take "the necessary legitimate measures to defend our dear country and its proud people" in the event of aggression.

He reaffirmed Yemen's solidarity with other Arab and Islamic nations, particularly in the context of Palestinian resistance. "Dear Yemen, with its great people, its believing leadership, and its

Mujahid army, will stand by any Arab or Islamic country that is exposed to Zionist aggression or decides to face this aggression in self-defense or support and assistance to the Mujahideen in the Palestinian resistance. We will not abandon our brothers in the Gaza Strip," Sarea said.

The warning highlights the escalating tensions in the region, reflecting Yemen's long-standing opposition to Israeli and American policies in the Middle East, and signals potential military action in the strategic waters of the Red Sea should the United States intervene against Iran alongside Israel.

## Madagascar's president orders lie detector tests for candidates applying to be government

MARCH 20, 2026

**ANTANANARIVO (TIP):** Anyone applying to become a minister in Madagascar's new government will be subjected to lie detector tests to root out those who are corrupt, the country's military leader said Thursday.

President Michael Randrianirina, who took power in a coup in the Indian Ocean island in October, said Madagascar had acquired a polygraph machine and a specialist to operate it to vet new government ministers. "We will know who is corrupt and who can help us," Randrianirina said. "We are not looking for someone who is 100% clean, but someone who is more than 60% clean."

Randrianirina, a colonel in an elite army unit, ousted President Andry Rajoelina after a weekslong uprising last year by mainly young Madagascans frustrated with the lack of government services and opportunities in a nation of around 32 million that is beset by poverty. Randrianirina fired his entire Cabinet and dissolved the government last week. He appointed a new prime minister on Sunday.

"After taking the polygraph test, candidates who fail will not proceed to an interview," Randrianirina told reporters. "Those who pass the polygraph test will have an interview with me and the prime minister."

## Kim Jong Un secures near-total election win with 99.93% votes in North Korea

MARCH 20, 2026

**PYONGYANG (TIP):** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has secured another overwhelming electoral win, with his ruling Workers' Party of Korea and allied groups claiming 99.93 per cent of the vote in the latest parliamentary elections.

The vote, held on March 15 to elect members of the 15th Supreme People's Assembly, saw establishment-backed candidates take every seat, according to state media outlet Korean Central News Agency.

Official data indicated that 99.93 per cent backed Kim's party, although state media cited a slightly higher figure of 99.97 per cent, with turnout reaching an extraordinary 99.99 per cent.

Authorities said only around 0.0037 per cent of registered voters were unable to cast ballots due to being abroad or at sea, while a negligible 0.00003 per cent reportedly abstained.

There were no opposition



candidates on the ballot. In every constituency, voters were presented with a single, pre-approved candidate and asked to either endorse or reject them.

This means the remaining 0.07 per cent did not go to any rival party or figure, but instead reflects those who voted "no" against the official nominee.

Notably, this marks the first time in decades that North Korean state media has acknowledged such

dissent in a parliamentary election — something not publicly admitted since 1957, according to reports.

Under North Korean election law, 687 representatives — including workers, farmers, intellectuals, military personnel and officials — were elected to the Supreme People's Assembly.

However, each constituency features only one candidate, already vetted by the ruling establishment led by Kim. Voters are left with a stark choice: approve the candidate or reject them.

According to Yonhap News Agency, KCNA reported that 0.07 per cent of voters chose to vote against the candidates.

Kim assumed power in 2011 following the death of his father, Kim Jong Il, and has since remained the country's supreme authority.

In 2019, constitutional changes further strengthened his grip, formally designating him as head of state and cementing his "monolithic" control over the government, military and state institutions.

## Bangladesh FM's India trip likely in April, first since Tarique Rahman took power

**B**angladesh foreign minister Khalilur Rahman is expected to make a brief visit to the Indian capital next month – the first since the new Tarique Rahman government came to power in Dhaka – as the two countries take forward their efforts to normalise relations after a period of unprecedented strain, people familiar with the matter said.

Rahman, the former National Security Adviser in the interim setup led by Muhammad Yunus and a surprise inclusion in Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's cabinet, is expected to make a stopover in New Delhi on April 8 while travelling to Mauritius for the Indian Ocean Conference, the people said on condition of anonymity.

Indian high commissioner Pranay Verma met Rahman in Dhaka last month and extended an invitation from external affairs minister S Jaishankar to visit India at an early date, reflecting New Delhi's interest in revitalising ties after the strains witnessed during the term of the caretaker administration.

There has been no official word from Dhaka on Prime Minister Rahman's first foreign trip, though the people said he is unlikely to make India or China the destination for such a visit as part of the new Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government's desire to signal that its foreign policy will not favour any regional power.

# Pak says its missile programme region-specific, defensive in nature

MARCH 20, 2026

**ISLAMABAD (TIP):** Pakistan on Thursday said that its missile programme was region-specific and exclusively defensive in nature, a day after US intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard voiced concern about a potential threat from the country's missile capabilities.

"Pakistan categorically rejects the recent assertion by a United States official alleging a potential threat from Pakistan's missile capabilities," Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said in a statement.

He said Pakistan's strategic capabilities were exclusively defensive in nature, aimed at safeguarding national sovereignty and maintaining peace and stability in South Asia.

"Its missile programme, which remains well below intercontinental range, is firmly rooted in the doctrine of credible minimum deterrence vis-à-vis India," he said.

"In contrast, India's development of missile capabilities exceeding 12,000 kilometres reflects a trajectory that extends beyond regional security considerations and is certainly a cause of concern for the neighbourhood and beyond," he claimed.

He said that Pakistan remains committed to constructive engagement with the United States, anchored in mutual respect, non-discrimination, and factual accuracy.

"We urge a more measured and considered approach that aligns with South Asia's strategic imperatives and advances peace, security, and stability across the region," he said.

Separately, responding to media queries regarding a video clip of the Israeli Ambassador to India circulating on social media, the spokesperson said that Pakistan "firmly rejects this baseless characterisation".

He did not specify which clip he was referring to. Andrabi was perhaps referring to the Israeli diplomat's remarks to a news channel in which he said that "there is one rogue state that already has nuclear weapons." Andrabi added that the real record of aggression and rogue conduct is evident in the illegal



A nuclear-capable Ghauri missile is driven past with its launcher during a Pakistan National Day parade in Islamabad. [File photo: Mian Khurshood/Reuters]

occupation, the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, and the indictment of Israeli leadership in international courts.

### China welcomes temporary ceasefire between Pak, Afghanistan

China has welcomed a temporary pause in fighting between Afghanistan and Pakistan while downplaying reports of its failure to enforce a ceasefire between the two neighbours.

China welcomes the temporary ceasefire agreement reached by Pakistan and Afghanistan during the Eid al-Fitr holiday, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing here.

China appreciates the efforts made by relevant Islamic countries, Lin said, downplaying reports of Beijing's failure to enforce a ceasefire between the two neighbours.

Pakistan and Afghanistan on Wednesday announced a "temporary pause" in fighting in view of Eid-ul-Fitr and at the request of Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Qatar. There was no mention of China's mediation efforts by both sides.

## Govt formation process begins in Nepal; EC submits poll report to President

MARCH 20, 2026

**KATHMANDU (TIP):** The government formation process has formally begun in Nepal with the Election Commission submitting the poll report to President Ram Chandra Paudel on Thursday.

Structural engineer, rapper, and former Mayor of Kathmandu, Balendra 'Balen' Shah, is poised to become the next Prime Minister of the Himalayan nation.

Ram Prasad Bhandari, officiating Chief Election Commissioner, presented the report to the President during a special ceremony at the Office of the President, Shital Niwas.

During the event, President Paudel expressed satisfaction over the successful conclusion of the polls, noting that they were conducted with dedication and integrity despite "difficult and complex circumstances."

The EC report includes the final names of the 275 members elected under both the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) and Proportional Representation (PR) systems. The submission marks the formal conclusion of the general elections, clearing the way for the President to initiate the process of government formation.

Earlier in the morning, the electoral body also distributed certificates to lawmakers elected under the PR system in the recent House of Representatives elections. A total of 110 lawmakers were elected through the PR system. Officiating Chief Election Commissioner Bhandari, along with Commissioners Janaki Kumari Tuladhar and Sagun Shumsher JB Rana, welcomed them with Tika and garlands. Election Commission Secretary and PR election officer Krishna Bahadur Raut distributed the certificates.



"We have so much to tackle, from the most basic things of justice, security, and safety to more complex problems related to development. We've got so much to address, but we are very confident that the team we have will be able to handle all issues, from foundational to growth-related ones. For me personally," Anushka Shrestha, Miss Nepal 2019 and newly elected MP, said.

Under the PR system, 57 lawmakers were elected from the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), 20 from the Nepali Congress (NC), 16 from the CPN (UML), nine from the Nepali Communist Party (NCP), and four each from the Shram Sanskriti Party and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). The Election Commission had announced the PR election results on March 16.

Under the FPTP system, the RSP secured 125 seats, followed by the NC with 19, UML with nine, NCP with eight, Shram Sanskriti Party with three, RPP with one, and one independent candidate.

As per constitutional provisions, the House of

Representatives, the lower house of the Federal Parliament, consists of 275 members, including 165 elected through FPTP and 110 through PR.

"Just the locations where we were standing have changed. On September 8, we were at the Maitighar Mandala protesting, and next we'll be in Parliament addressing the sessions. Only the place where we stand has changed, not the nature. We will remain vocal in Parliament, as we were on September 8. If the ruling party makes any mistakes, we will raise our voice and be very vocal about it," said Purushottam Yadav, September 8 protest organiser and newly elected MP.

With the distribution of certificates to elected representatives and the submission of the final poll report, the President will now call for government formation under Article 76 of the Constitution of Nepal. Clause (1) states that the President shall appoint the leader of the parliamentary party commanding a majority in the House of Representatives as Prime Minister. According to constitutional provisions, the President must convene a session of the Federal Parliament within 30 days of the announcement of final results, as stipulated in Article 93(1). The first meeting of the House of Representatives will be chaired by the senior-most member, during which the process to elect the Speaker and Deputy Speaker will begin within seven days.

The RSP had projected its senior leader, Balen Shah, as its prime ministerial candidate. As per constitutional requirements, the Prime Minister must be a member of the House of Representatives and the leader of the parliamentary party.

# Martyrs' Day (Shaheed Diwas): The immortal saga of sacrifice and revolutionary spirit

**Every year on March 23, India solemnly observes Shaheed Diwas to honor the supreme sacrifice of three young revolutionaries—Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru—who were executed by the British colonial government in 1931. Their martyrdom in Lahore became a defining moment in India's struggle for independence, igniting a spirit of resistance that continues to inspire generations.**

Every year on March 23, India observes Shaheed Diwas, a day etched in the nation's collective memory as a tribute to the unparalleled courage and sacrifice of three of its most fearless sons—Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru. On this fateful day in 1931, these young revolutionaries were executed by the British colonial authorities in Lahore, marking a turning point in India's freedom struggle.

Shaheed Diwas is not merely a ceremonial observance—it is a deeply emotional and ideological remembrance of resistance, patriotism, and the undying quest for justice. It symbolizes the fire of revolution that burned in the hearts of India's youth and continues to inspire generations even today.

## Colonial India and the Rise of Revolutionary Nationalism

In the early decades of the 20th century, India was witnessing an intensification of its struggle against British rule. While the non-violent movement led by Mahatma Gandhi was gaining mass support, a parallel stream of revolutionary nationalism was taking shape among the youth, driven by impatience with colonial brutality and a desire for immediate action.

The formation of organizations like the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) marked a significant shift toward armed resistance. Influenced by global revolutionary movements and socialist ideals, young leaders like Bhagat Singh envisioned not just political freedom but a radical transformation of Indian society—free from exploitation, inequality, and imperial domination.

## The Catalyst: Death of Lala Lajpat Rai

A defining moment that galvanized revolutionary sentiment was the death of Lala Lajpat Rai in 1928. During protests against the Simon Commission in Lahore, Rai was brutally lathi-charged by British police under the command of James A. Scott. Though he initially survived, he later succumbed to his injuries.

His death sent shockwaves across the nation. For Bhagat Singh and his comrades, it was not just a loss—it was a call to action. They vowed to avenge the injustice and send a strong message to the colonial rulers.

## The Saunders Assassination: A Bold Act of Defiance

In December 1928, the revolutionaries planned to assassinate James Scott.



However, due to mistaken identity, they shot and killed John Saunders, a British assistant superintendent of police in Lahore.

The operation was meticulously planned. Rajguru fired the first shot, Bhagat Singh followed, and the group managed a daring escape. This act shook the British administration and made Bhagat Singh and his associates symbols of resistance.

## The Assembly Bombing: "To Make the Deaf Hear"

In April 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt carried out another historic act by throwing bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi. Importantly, these bombs were deliberately non-lethal. The intention was not to cause harm but to protest against repressive laws and awaken the masses.

After the bombing, they did not flee. Instead, they surrendered voluntarily, shouting slogans like "Inquilab Zindabad" (Long live the revolution). This act transformed the courtroom into a platform for revolutionary propaganda, where Bhagat Singh articulated his vision of freedom, justice, and equality.

## The Lahore Conspiracy Case and Execution

The British government launched an extensive investigation, linking Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru to the Saunders murder. The trial, known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case, became one of the most famous political trials in Indian history.

Despite widespread protests, appeals, and demands for clemency, the colonial

government remained unmoved. On March 23, 1931, the three revolutionaries were executed ahead of the scheduled time, in secrecy, to avoid public unrest.

Eyewitness accounts suggest that they embraced death with extraordinary courage—smiling, singing patriotic songs, and shouting revolutionary slogans as they walked toward the gallows. Their bodies were secretly cremated near the banks of the Sutlej River, further fueling public outrage.

## Observance of Martyrs' Day in India

The observance of Shaheed Diwas on March 23 is marked across India with deep reverence, patriotism, and a collective sense of gratitude. This day commemorates the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru, whose sacrifice continues to inspire the nation. While it is not a public holiday nationwide, its emotional and historical significance is immense, particularly in northern India and among youth and educational communities.

## Tributes at Memorials and Historic Sites

One of the most prominent ways Shaheed Diwas is observed is through homage at memorials dedicated to the martyrs. The Hussainiwala National Martyrs Memorial, located near the India-Pakistan border, is the principal site where the three revolutionaries were cremated. Each year, thousands gather here—including political leaders, armed forces personnel, and citizens—to offer floral tributes and observe moments of silence.

The atmosphere is solemn yet charged

with patriotic fervor, as the nation remembers the courage of its fallen heroes.

## Educational and Cultural Programs

Schools, colleges, and universities across India actively observe the day through a range of educational and cultural activities. Special assemblies are held where students learn about the lives and ideals of the martyrs. Speeches, debates, essay competitions, and quiz contests focus on India's freedom struggle and revolutionary history.

Dramatic performances and stage reenactments of events such as the Assembly bombing or the Lahore Conspiracy Case bring history alive for younger generations. Patriotic songs and poems are recited, instilling a sense of national pride and awareness.

## Public Processions and Patriotic Rallies

In several cities and towns, especially in Punjab and nearby regions, processions (prabhat pheris) and rallies are organized. Participants carry portraits of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru, raise slogans like "Inquilab Zindabad," and march through streets as a mark of respect.

These rallies often include youth groups, social organizations, and political parties, reflecting the widespread resonance of the martyrs' legacy.

## Media, Literature, and Public Discourse

Television channels, radio stations, and digital platforms dedicate special segments to the martyrs on this day. Documentaries, films, and interviews revisit the lives and contributions of the revolutionaries.

Books, articles, and editorials are widely published, offering deeper insights into their ideology and sacrifice. Social media platforms are flooded with tributes, quotes, and patriotic messages, especially highlighting Bhagat Singh's thoughts and writings.

## Government and Institutional Commemorations

Government bodies and institutions organize official ceremonies where leaders pay homage to the martyrs. Wreath-laying ceremonies, public addresses, and remembrance events are conducted at national and state levels.

Although the scale may vary, the spirit of remembrance remains consistent—honoring the courage and sacrifice that shaped India's freedom movement.

## BHAGAT SINGH: THE THINKER, VISIONARY, AND SYMBOL OF REVOLUTION



Born on September 28, 1907, in Banga village of Lyallpur district (now in Pakistan), Bhagat Singh was born into a family steeped in patriotism. His father Kishan Singh and uncle Ajit Singh were actively involved in anti-British activities, which deeply influenced his early upbringing.

### Early Influences and Awakening

One of the most defining moments of his childhood was the aftermath of the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre. It is said that a young Bhagat Singh visited the site soon after the tragedy and collected blood-soaked soil, vowing to avenge the injustice. This incident ignited in him a lifelong dedication to the cause of freedom.

He was also deeply influenced by the Ghadar Movement and revolutionary leaders across the world. Rejecting colonial education, he left school and joined the National College in Lahore, which promoted nationalist ideals.

### Intellectual Depth and Ideology

Unlike many revolutionaries, Bhagat Singh was not driven solely by emotion—he was a profound thinker. He read extensively on political theory, socialism, anarchism, and world revolutions. The works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin shaped his understanding of oppression and liberation.

His famous essay, "Why I Am an Atheist," reveals his rationalist outlook and his courage to question even religious orthodoxy. He believed that true freedom required not only political independence but also intellectual emancipation.

### Role in the Freedom Struggle

Bhagat Singh became a key member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). He was instrumental in planning the assassination of British officer John Saunders as an act of retribution for the death of Lala Lajpat Rai.

His participation in the Central Legislative Assembly bombing in 1929 marked a turning point. By deliberately courting arrest, he transformed the courtroom into a revolutionary arena, using it to spread his ideology and inspire the masses.

### In Prison: The Revolutionary Spirit Intensifies

During his imprisonment, Bhagat Singh undertook a historic hunger strike demanding better treatment for Indian political prisoners. The strike lasted over 100 days and drew nationwide attention to the inhumane conditions in British jails.

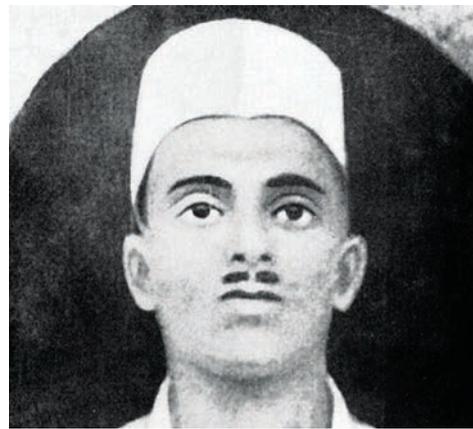
Even in captivity, he continued to read, write, and reflect. His letters from prison reveal a mature, composed, and visionary mind, unafraid of death.

### Martyrdom and Legacy

At just 23 years of age, Bhagat Singh embraced martyrdom with extraordinary courage. His calm acceptance of death and his unwavering belief in his ideals transformed him into a legend.

Today, he is remembered not just as a revolutionary, but as a philosopher of freedom—a youth icon whose thoughts remain as relevant as his actions.

## SUKHDEV THAPAR: THE MASTERMIND AND SILENT PILLAR OF REVOLUTION



Born on May 15, 1907, in Ludhiana, Sukhdev Thapar was one of the most disciplined and committed revolutionaries of his time. Though often overshadowed by Bhagat Singh's towering presence, Sukhdev's role was equally vital.

### Early Life and Formation of Ideals

Sukhdev lost his father at a young age and was raised by his uncle, who instilled in him a strong sense of patriotism. From an early age, he

displayed leadership qualities and a deep concern for the plight of his country under British rule.

He was actively involved in student movements and soon became associated with revolutionary groups.

### Organizational Genius

Sukhdev was the backbone of the HSRA's operations in Punjab. He established networks, recruited members, and ensured coordination among revolutionaries. His ability to work quietly yet effectively made him indispensable.

He founded the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, an organization aimed at awakening nationalist consciousness among the youth. Through meetings, pamphlets, and discussions, he spread the message of revolution far and wide.

### Role in Revolutionary Activities

Sukhdev played a central role in planning the assassination of Saunders. He was deeply involved in strategizing and ensuring the success of the operation.

Despite knowing the risks, he remained committed to the cause. His courage was not loud or flamboyant—it was steady, disciplined, and resolute.

### Character and Personality

Sukhdev was known for his seriousness, dedication, and selflessness. He believed in collective action and often placed the mission above personal recognition. His calm demeanor concealed a fierce determination to see India free.

### Final Days and Sacrifice

Even as the trial progressed, Sukhdev showed no signs of fear or regret. He refused to plead for mercy, accepting his fate as a necessary sacrifice for the nation.

His martyrdom at the age of 23 cemented his place in history as one of the most committed revolutionaries of India's freedom struggle.

## SHIVARAM RAJGURU: THE FEARLESS YOUTH WITH UNMATCHED COURAGE

Born on August 24, 1908, in Khed (now renamed Rajgurunagar), Shivaram Hari Rajguru was the youngest among the



trio, yet his bravery and daring spirit made him a formidable revolutionary.

### Early Life and Influences

Rajguru was born into a traditional Brahmin family and received education in Sanskrit and Hindu scriptures. However, the oppressive realities of British rule stirred a sense of rebellion within him from a young age.

He was inspired by nationalist leaders and soon joined the revolutionary movement, seeking a more direct path to freedom.

### Association with HSRA

Rajguru became an active member of the HSRA and quickly gained recognition for his physical courage and marksmanship. He was known for his agility, sharp instincts, and readiness to undertake risky missions.

### Role in the Saunders Assassination

Rajguru played a crucial role in the assassination of John Saunders. It was he who fired the first shot, displaying remarkable precision and bravery. His actions ensured the success of the mission and demonstrated his fearless commitment.

### Personality and Spirit

Rajguru was spirited, energetic, and deeply patriotic. Unlike Bhagat Singh's intellectualism or Sukhdev's strategic thinking, Rajguru represented raw courage and action. He believed in confronting oppression head-on.

### Martyrdom and Immortality

At the young age of 22, Rajguru faced the gallows with the same fearlessness that defined his life. His sacrifice, though less documented in detail, remains equally significant.

He stands as a symbol of youthful valor—a reminder that courage knows no age.

### Three Lives, One Eternal Legacy

Though their personalities differed—Bhagat Singh the thinker, Sukhdev the organizer, and Rajguru the warrior—their goal was one: the freedom of India. Together, they formed a powerful triad of intellect, strategy, and action.

Their biographies are not just historical accounts; they are living inspirations. They teach us that true patriotism demands not only love for the nation but also the courage to stand against injustice, even at the cost of one's life.

The legacy of these three martyrs continues to burn bright, reminding us that while their lives were short, their impact is eternal.



# Fade away the shadows: Say goodbye to pigmentation

**P**igmentation is one of the most common skin concerns faced by people across age groups. Whether it appears as dark spots, uneven skin tone, melasma, or sunspots, pigmentation can affect not only the skin's appearance but also one's confidence. While modern skincare offers a range of treatments, many people are turning back to time-tested home remedies that are natural, affordable, and gentle on the skin.

The key to treating pigmentation lies in reducing melanin production and promoting healthy skin regeneration. Here are home Remedies that work

## Lemon Juice: The Natural Bleaching Agent

Lemon juice is rich in vitamin C, a powerful antioxidant known for its skin-brightening properties. It helps lighten dark spots and evens out skin tone.

- Apply fresh lemon juice to affected areas using a cotton ball. Leave it on for 10-15 minutes before rinsing off.
- Always dilute lemon juice with water for sensitive skin and avoid sun exposure immediately after application.

## Aloe Vera: The Soothing Healer

Aloe vera contains aloin, a natural depigmenting compound that helps reduce pigmentation and promotes skin repair.

- Apply fresh aloe vera gel directly to the skin before bedtime and rinse off in the morning.

## Turmeric: The Golden Glow Booster

Turmeric has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that help reduce melanin production and brighten the skin.

- Mix turmeric with milk or honey to form a paste. Apply it to the skin, leave for 15-20 minutes, and wash off.

## Potato Juice: The Gentle Lightener

Potatoes contain enzymes and vitamin C that help lighten pigmentation and dark spots naturally.

- Rub a slice of raw potato on the affected areas or apply its juice and leave it on for 15 minutes before rinsing.

## Papaya: The Natural Exfoliator

Papaya contains enzymes like papain that exfoliate dead skin cells and promote new cell growth.



- Mash ripe papaya and apply it as a face mask. Leave it for 20 minutes and rinse off.

## Apple Cider Vinegar: Balancing Skin Tone

Rich in acetic acid, apple cider vinegar helps lighten pigmentation and restore the skin's pH balance.

- Mix equal parts of apple cider vinegar and water. Apply with a cotton ball and rinse after a few minutes.

## Green Tea Extract: The Antioxidant Shield

Green tea is packed with antioxidants that can help reduce melanin production and soothe the skin.

- Apply cooled green tea bags or extract to pigmented areas regularly.

## Yogurt and Honey: Hydration Meets Brightening

Yogurt contains lactic acid, which gently exfoliates the skin, while honey hydrates and heals.

- Mix yogurt and honey, apply as a mask, and wash off after 15-20 minutes.

## FOOD CORNER

# Paneer butter masala

### Ingredients

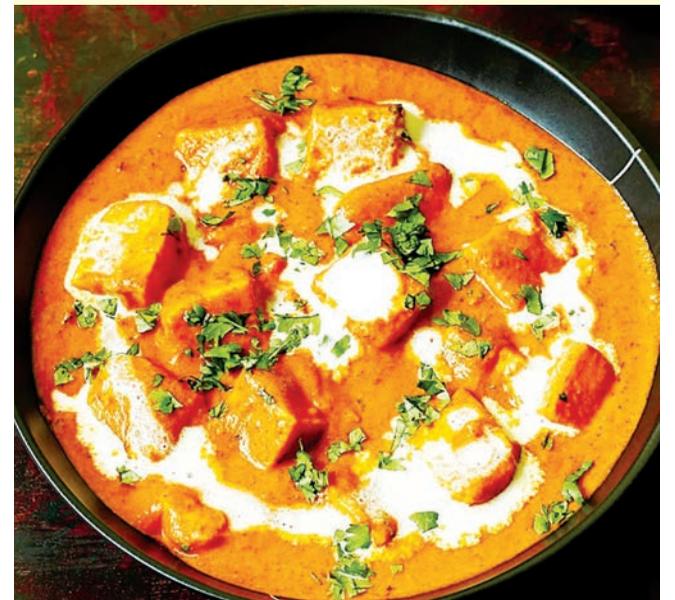
For the gravy:

- 2 tbsp butter, 1 tbsp oil, 2-3 tomatoes (roughly chopped), 1 medium onion (chopped), 5-6 garlic cloves, 1-inch ginger, 10-12 cashew nuts, 1 tsp Kashmiri red chili powder, 1 tsp garam masala, 1 tsp coriander powder, ½ tsp turmeric powder, Salt to taste

- 200-250 grams paneer (cubed), ½ cup fresh cream, 1 tsp sugar (optional), 1 tsp kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves), Fresh coriander leaves (for garnish), 1 cup water

### Preparation Steps

- Heat oil and 1 tbsp butter in a pan. Add chopped onions, garlic, and ginger. Sauté until soft and slightly golden. Add chopped tomatoes and cashews. Cook until tomatoes become mushy.
- Let the mixture cool slightly, then blend into a smooth paste using a mixer.
- In the same pan, add remaining butter and pour in the prepared puree. Cook on medium heat for 5-7 minutes until it thickens and releases oil.
- Add turmeric, red chili powder, coriander powder, garam masala, and salt. Mix well and cook for another 2-3 minutes.
- Pour in fresh cream and mix gently. Add paneer cubes and 1 cup water. Let it simmer for 5 minutes so paneer absorbs the flavors.
- Crush kasuri methi between your palms and add it to the curry. Add a pinch of sugar (optional) for balance. Mix well. Serve.



# Elevate your style with effortless outfits

**I**n a world where fashion trends change at lightning speed, mastering effortless style is the ultimate goal. It's not about owning an overflowing wardrobe or following every runway trend—it's about curating simple, timeless pieces and wearing them with confidence. Effortless dressing is the art of looking polished without appearing like you tried too hard, and it is a skill that anyone can cultivate with the right approach.

At the heart of effortless style lies the concept of simplicity. Clean silhouettes, neutral tones, and well-fitted clothing create a strong foundation for any outfit. A crisp white shirt paired with tailored trousers, a classic denim-and-tee combination, or a breezy midi dress can

instantly make you look put together. These staples never go out of fashion and can be styled in multiple ways, making them essential building blocks of a versatile wardrobe.

Fit plays a far more important role than most people realize. Even the most basic outfit can look elevated if it fits perfectly. Clothes that are too tight or overly loose can disrupt the overall look, while well-tailored pieces enhance your natural shape and create a refined appearance. Investing in minor alterations can make a significant difference, turning everyday clothing into statement pieces.

Another key element of effortless dressing is the thoughtful use of layers. Adding a structured blazer, a lightweight

scarf, or a classic jacket can transform a simple outfit into something stylish and dynamic. Layers not only add depth but also allow flexibility, making your outfit suitable for different occasions and weather conditions.

Accessories, when used wisely, can elevate even the simplest ensemble. Minimal jewelry, a structured handbag, or a pair of elegant sunglasses can add personality without overwhelming the look. The idea is to keep it balanced—choosing one or two standout accessories rather than overloading the outfit.

Color coordination also plays a crucial role. Neutral palettes such as beige, white, black, and pastels create a cohesive and sophisticated look.

# How everyday stress and lifestyle are damaging your heart health

Diseases related to the heart are often considered conditions that affect older individuals, but in recent times, we are witnessing an increase in cardiovascular issues among the young urban professionals, particularly those who are aged between 20 and 40.

Factors that contribute most to the health of the heart are mainly increasing work pressure, irregular lifestyles, poor sleep patterns, and chronic stress as well. Modern lifestyles have also created conditions where many individuals expose their hearts to continuous stress in an unknowing way.

Stress is one of the most underestimated risk factors of heart disease. When a prolonged stress is experienced by a person, certain hormones are released by the body, such as adrenaline and cortisol, which also increase the heart rate and blood pressure.

During the short-term challenges, chronic stress usually keeps the body in a constant state of alertness. With the passage of time, this can also lead to persistent high blood pressure, inflammation, and increased strain on the heart, which also raises the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Young professionals who usually have long working hours, deal with tight deadlines each and every day, or experience job insecurity, are quite vulnerable to stress-related heart problems.

Lifestyle habits are also affecting the health of the heart, such as:

- A sedentary lifestyle: Long hours of desk work with minimal physical activity reduce cardiovascular fitness and increase the risk of obesity as well.
- Poor dietary habits: Regular consumption of processed foods, excessive intake of salt, and unhealthy fats also contribute to high levels of cholesterol and hypertension.
- Lack of sleep: Nowadays, many working



professionals get less than 7-8 hours of sleep, which also impacts the hormonal balance.

- Smoking and alcohol consumption: These habits usually increase the risk of heart disease by damaging the blood vessels and increasing blood pressure as well.

Early warning signs such as fatigue, palpitations, breathlessness, and unexplained chest discomfort are also observed in many younger patients. These symptoms are usually untreated or attributed to stress.

However, such signs should not be ignored, especially if they occur on a frequent basis.

Maintaining the health of the heart also requires a great effort to balance the demands of work with healthy habits.

Doctors recommend:

- Regular physical activity,
- Balanced amount of nutrition,
- Practices related to stress management,
- Routine health screening

In today's fast-paced world, safeguarding the health of the heart should not be considered as a long-term investment in the overall well-being.

## Start cholesterol drugs as early as your 30s, suggest new guidelines

New guidelines on cholesterol management are urging doctors and patients to act earlier even if it's as early as the age of 30, to prevent heart attacks and strokes later in life.

The recommendations, released by the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association along with nine other medical groups, highlight a growing consensus among experts: the earlier high cholesterol is treated, the better the long-term health outcomes.

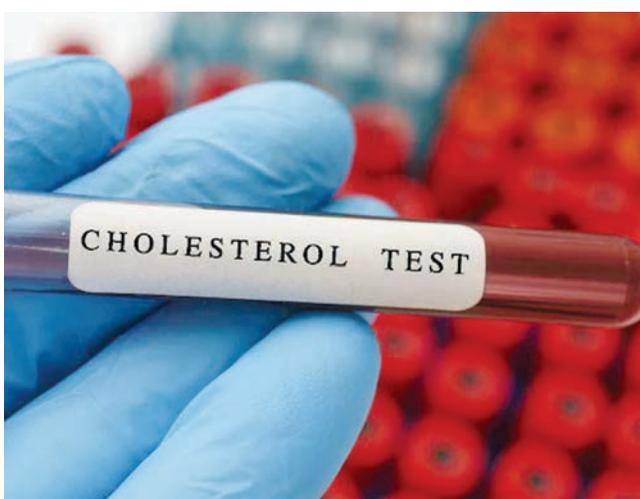
For decades, cholesterol management has focused mostly on middle-aged and older adults.

But the updated guidance suggests that prolonged exposure to high levels of LDL cholesterol, commonly called "bad cholesterol", can silently damage arteries over many years, raising the risk of cardiovascular disease later in life.

The guidelines say adults in their 30s may need to consider cholesterol-lowering medication, particularly statins, if they have high LDL cholesterol or other risk factors for heart disease.

Statins are among the most widely prescribed medications worldwide and work by lowering LDL cholesterol, the fatty substance that can accumulate along artery walls and form plaques that narrow blood vessels.

Experts say treatment should be considered for adults



aged 30 and above who have LDL cholesterol levels of 160 milligrams per deciliter or higher, a strong family history of early heart disease, or a high long-term risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

For people already taking statins, the updated guidance sets clearer targets. Adults aged 30 to 79 with borderline or intermediate risk are advised to reduce LDL cholesterol to below 100 mg/dL to prevent a first heart attack or stroke. Those at very high risk should aim for levels below 55 mg/dL.



## HBOT is trending for skin treatments, but does it really work?

Bryan Johnson, entrepreneur and longevity enthusiast, appeared on Chris Williamson's podcast earlier this year and said hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) is the "single best performing therapy" he has ever done.

HBOT is a specialised treatment where patients breathe pressurised, pure oxygen in specially-designed chambers.

According to Johnson, he saw improvements in most of his metrics with HBOT. Johnson is a known biohacker and is often in the news for experimental treatments. He also called HBOT the best skin rejuvenation therapy, but does it actually work?

The oxygen delivered in this therapy is around 95-100 percent pure, and typically at a pressure around 1.3-3 times higher than average. HBOT fills the lungs with pure oxygen, with the aim of repairing tissues, restoring body functions, or treating conditions like carbon monoxide poisoning, decompression sickness, scuba injuries, acutely reduced blood flow, and traumatic injuries that may not respond to other treatments.

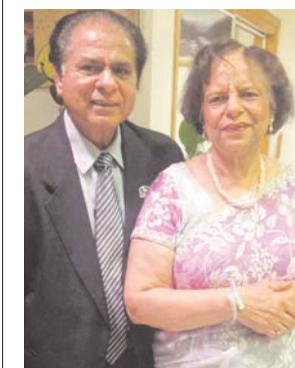
HBOT is not new. In fact, hyperbaric therapy was first reportedly used in 1662, even before oxygen was discovered, and used pressurised air in a steel container. In 1878, the father of hyperbaric physiology, Paul Bert, documented the toxic effects of hyperbaric oxygen. It wasn't until 50 years later that hyperbaric oxygen could be successfully used as a medical treatment. In 1937, AR Behnke and LA Shaw successfully used hyperbaric oxygen to treat decompression sickness.

Fast forward to 2026, HBOT is increasingly available not only for medical uses but also at wellness centres, and is being touted as an anti-ageing therapy, among other things. Each session typically lasts around 60 minutes. HBOT claims therapeutic benefits by increasing the amount of oxygen available to tissues.

Under normal conditions, oxygen is carried through the bloodstream primarily by haemoglobin in red blood cells. However, at high pressure, a large amount of pure oxygen dissolves directly into the plasma, which is the liquid component of blood. This increases the diffusion capacity, allowing oxygen to reach deeper tissues or areas of the body with low oxygen supply.

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# DarkSword malware alert, millions of iPhone users at risk of their data being stolen

A new spyware has been discovered, one that specifically targets iPhones. As per research reports, this new spyware, called DarkSword, can instantly hack and steal data from vulnerable devices, and is likely capable of penetrating millions of iPhones.

Cybersecurity firms Lookout and iVerify, along with Alphabet's Google, jointly analysed the malware. Researchers across the three organisations have released notes on DarkSword.

Researchers estimate that between 220 million and 270 million iPhones may still be vulnerable to DarkSword due to running outdated iOS versions. Here is everything you need to know about this spyware.

According to researchers, DarkSword was found embedded across multiple legitimate Ukrainian websites. It exploits iPhones running iOS versions 18.4 to 18.6.2 with "elegant techniques never publicly seen before."

Once a user visits the infected site, the spyware can instantly and silently hack their device. This allows the spyware to gather information such as Wi-Fi passwords, text messages, call history, root location history, browser history etc.

One of the impacted websites was said to have a ".gov.ua" address, indicating that the hackers were able to compromise Ukrainian government servers. And Ukrainian websites may not be the only ones compromised.

Google reported that multiple commercial vendors and suspected state-linked hacking groups have used DarkSword in separate campaigns targeting users in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Malaysia and Ukraine. The operations in Malaysia and Turkey were linked to Turkish commercial surveillance firm PARS Defense.

Researchers note that DarkSword is hosted on the same servers as the Coruna spyware that was found targeting users in Ukraine on March 3, 2026. Though Coruna was used largely for crypto theft.

iVerify claims that the infrastructure was likely run by a threat actor from Russia. Russia has been at war with Ukraine



since invading the country in February 2022.

Though the real identity of the hackers remains unknown.

DarkSword leverages vulnerabilities in iOS versions released between March and August 2025. Since then, Apple has released several patches addressing these exploits. However, it is believed that around 220 million and 270 million users may still have their iPhones on older iOS versions, making them vulnerable. An Apple spokesperson told Reuters, "Keeping software up to date remains the single most important thing users can do to maintain the high security of their Apple devices." The spokesperson also stated that Apple Safe Browsing blocks all malicious domains identified by Google in its Safari web browser to prevent further exploitation. iPhones are known for being more private and secure compared to other operating systems like Android. However, hackers have now targeted iPhones with two powerful iOS exploits in the same month, potentially signalling a large-scale ecosystem. Researchers believe that such an ecosystem was previously limited mostly to state-level intelligence operations.

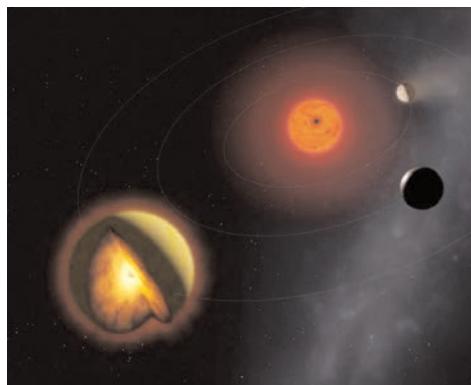
## Molten alien planet with sulfur-choked atmosphere displays unique hellscape

Astronomers have spotted a planet orbiting a star in our neighbourhood of the Milky Way galaxy that presents a unique hellscape — covered with a perpetual ocean of magma and enveloped by a noxious and fiercely hot sulfur-rich atmosphere.

The molten planet's diameter is more than 60 per cent greater than Earth, though its density is only about 40 per cent that of our planet.

It orbits a star smaller and dimmer than the sun located about 34 light-years from Earth in the constellation Volans. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km).

"The planet lacks distinct structure within its magma ocean, so there is no crust, upper mantle and lower mantle. The magma ocean is a single deep, mushy layer," said Harrison Nicholls, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Cambridge Institute of Astronomy and lead author of the



research published in the journal *Nature Astronomy*.

Small crystals of solid rock may be trapped within the turbulent fluid magma comprising the mantle, Nicholls said.

The planet's metallic core appears to be relatively small, with the magma ocean comprising 70-90 per cent of the planetary interior radius — reaching a depth between 2,775 and 3,565 miles

(4,465-5,740 km).

Its thick atmosphere is composed primarily of hydrogen, but has a very high sulfur content. About 10 per cent of the atmosphere is the toxic gas hydrogen sulfide, which gives off the stench of rotten eggs. The atmosphere has caused a runaway greenhouse effect, trapping heat from the star, that keeps the planet's surface so hot that it remains molten.

"Your nose can smell hydrogen sulfide at concentrations of something like one part per billion, so this would be overwhelmingly stinky. But you wouldn't survive long enough in this hot atmosphere to notice," said planetary scientist and study co-author Raymond Pierrehumbert of the University of Oxford and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The atmosphere's composition suggests a high sulfur content in the planetary interior, the researchers said.

## Nasa will track Sun from Mars to ensure safety of Artemis astronauts

For the first time in over 50 years, humans are leaving Earth's protective magnetic field. The Artemis II crew of four astronauts will travel around the Moon aboard Nasa's Orion spacecraft on a 10-day mission, venturing into a part of space where the Sun's fury is no longer kept at bay.

Out there, solar storms are not just a technical nuisance. They can be genuinely dangerous.

Space weather refers to the ever-changing conditions driven by solar wind and eruptions from the Sun. Solar flares are the most powerful eruptions in the solar system, and the strongest ones release more energy than a billion hydrogen bombs.

Coronal mass ejections, meanwhile, are enormous clouds of solar particles, hundreds of times the size of Earth, that blast away from the Sun at tremendous speed.

The real danger for astronauts lies in what these eruptions can trigger: solar particle events. During such events, particles are accelerated to nearly the speed of light.

Too much exposure over a lifetime raises the risk of cancer and conditions that affect cognition and physical performance.

Nasa and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) will monitor the Sun around the clock throughout the Artemis II mission.

Teams at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland will use data from multiple Sun-watching spacecraft spread across the solar system, including Nasa's Solar Dynamics Observatory and the recently launched Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe.

Even Nasa's Perseverance rover on Mars is pitching in. Because Mars is currently on the opposite side of the Sun from Earth, the rover's cameras can spot sunspots up to two weeks before they become visible from Earth, giving teams advance warning of regions that could produce dangerous solar flares.

Inside Orion, six radiation sensors continuously measure dose rates across the cabin. Each astronaut also wears a personal radiation tracker. If radiation levels rise to a concerning level, onboard systems trigger both a visual warning and an audible alarm.

The crew is trained to act quickly. They can rearrange equipment inside the cabin, stacking it in specific areas to create additional mass between themselves and incoming particles. Since charged particles slow down as they pass through matter, adding mass is one of the most effective forms of shielding available.

# RBI's defence of rupee vs dollar is weighing on India's forex reserves

MARCH 20, 2026

**NEW DELHI (TIP):** The Reserve Bank of India's recent defence of the rupee vs dollar is weighing on the nation's foreign exchange reserves, prompting calls from some analysts to scale back future intervention.

India's forex reserves, excluding gold, are now just enough to cover for 8.7 months of imports, the lowest in three years, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The rupee weakness comes at a time when India is facing a rising import bill due to higher crude oil prices, with implications for both its economy and markets.

The more the RBI intervenes, the lesser firepower it will be left with, which can lead to more problems if the ongoing crisis in the Middle East continues, said Indranil Pan, chief economist at Yes Bank Ltd. "On the external sector, the shock absorber has to be the exchange rate only. There is definitely a need for the RBI to be slightly more flexible in terms of allowing rupee depreciation."

In recent weeks, the RBI has stepped up intervention in the currency market to shield the rupee, which fell to a fresh record low of 92.48/dollar on Wednesday (18 March 2026).

India's forex reserves fell to \$563 billion in the week of 6 March, from a peak of \$591 billion in June. Overall reserves, which have been supported by higher gold prices, declined by the most since November 2024.

India needs a forex reserve buffer of at least \$1 trillion for robust intervention capacity, according to former RBI Deputy Governor Michael Patra.

The RBI's ammunition to support the rupee is lower after accounting for its outstanding dollar sales, with its forward



book at \$67.8 billion at the end of January.

"Defending a particular level of the rupee could become very problematic very quickly, if the fundamentals have shifted for good," said Dhiraj Nim, FX strategist at Australia and New Zealand Banking Group. "The RBI can let the rupee adjust a bit more before the level of reserves becomes a concern."

## RBI says it found no material concerns at HDFC Bank after chairman's exit

The Reserve Bank of India said on Thursday it found no material concerns regarding HDFC Bank's conduct or governance after its part-time chairman resigned citing differences with the lender over "values and ethics".

"The bank remains well-capitalised and the financial position of the bank remains satisfactory with sufficient liquidity," the Reserve Bank of India said in a statement.

Shares of HDFC Bank fell as much as 8.7% on Thursday after Atanu Chakraborty's resignation, while the lender said there were no material issues at the bank.

## Bain Capital Gets RBI Nod for Manappuram Finance Control

Bain Capital has received the RBI approvals for joint management control of Manappuram Finance and its subsidiaries pursuant to the acquisition of a stake in the gold loan firm.

Following the proposed acquisition of up to 41.66 per cent stake of Manappuram Finance, its subsidiaries Asirvad Micro Finance Limited (AMFL) and Manappuram Home Finance Limited (MHFL) would come under the joint control of the US-based global private investment firm Bain Capital, Manappuram Finance said in a statement on Wednesday.

With this, Manappuram Finance and its subsidiaries are now in receipt of all requisite statutory approvals for Bain Capital's proposed investment of approximately Rs 4,385 crore and joint control with the existing promoters, together with the consequent open offer under the SEBI (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 2011, it added.

## Apple Is Way Behind in AI—and Still Making a Fortune From It

Apple is on pace to surpass \$1 billion in artificial-intelligence revenue this year, a tidy sum that demonstrates the company's AI advantage even as it struggles to deliver an AI strategy of its own.

Its Siri chatbot is still weak by modern AI standards. What Apple does have that the other AI players don't is a dominant position making devices. However fancy OpenAI, Google, Anthropic and xAI make their chatbots, iPhones are still a primary way to deliver them to consumers.

That means they typically pay the App Store tax, roughly 30% of subscription fees in the first year and 15% a year thereafter, though rates vary by country. Generative AI apps paid Apple nearly \$900 million in App Store fees in 2025, according to the analysis firm AppMagic.

Three-fourths of the revenue Apple rakes in from GenAI apps in its App Store comes from ChatGPT, according to AppMagic. Next, at about 5%, is xAI's Grok. Apple's revenue from GenAI apps rose from about \$35 million in January 2025 to a high of \$101 million in August. Sales have fallen from their peak, partly because ChatGPT downloads have declined, according to the data.

As a proportion of Apple's total sales, \$1 billion is small. Yet GenAI apps are a growth driver for Apple's services business, which investors have focused on in recent years because it has grown faster than device sales and boasts higher profit margins.

Apple's dominant share at the top of the smartphone market affords it another luxury: time to get its own AI strategy right.

Apple's AI plan runs counter to strategies of competitors that are spending hundreds of billions of dollars on chips and data centers to build frontier large language models. Apple is spending a fraction of that, aiming instead to use all the personal information people store on their iPhones together with chips it designs itself to power an on-device AI strategy. That strategy could prove a winner if, as some AI researchers have suggested, access to user data and strong user privacy makes on-device AI the dominant way consumers access the technology.

Apple investors want to see progress from Apple's own AI strategy, said Charles Rinehart, chief investment officer of Johnson Asset Management, an Apple shareholder. "If they can act as a toll road for providers of AI, then they'll probably end up looking good long-term for not having the big capex overhang," he added.

# US Fed holds rates, flags higher inflation risks amid US-Iran war tensions

MARCH 20, 2026

**NEW YORK (TIP):** The Federal Reserve held interest rates steady and projected higher inflation, steady unemployment and only a single reduction in borrowing costs this year as officials took stock of economic risks from the US and Israeli war with Iran.

New projections from US central bank policymakers showed the Fed's benchmark overnight interest rate would fall by just a quarter of a percentage point by the end of this year, with no hint of the timing of such a move. That view was unchanged from previous projections and remains out of step with President Donald Trump's demand for a sharp drop in borrowing costs.

US stocks pared losses slightly after



the release of the Fed's policy statement and projections, with the S&P 500 index last down about 0.6% and the Nasdaq Composite down about 0.5%.

US stocks pared losses slightly after the release of the Fed's policy statement

and projections, with the S&P 500 index last down about 0.6% and the Nasdaq Composite down about 0.5%.

The dollar pared its earlier gains, with the dollar index last up 0.27%. US Treasury yields also pared gains, with the 10-year yield last up at 4.214%.

Inflation, as measured by the Fed's preferred gauge, was expected to end the year at 2.7%, not far below its current rate and higher than the 2.4% projected in December, possible fallout from the spike in global oil prices that followed the start of the bombing campaign against Iran.

"Implications of developments in the Middle East for the US economy are uncertain," the Fed said in a policy statement that also noted ongoing stable unemployment.



**BEJAN DARUWALLA AND CHIRAG DARUWALLA**

### ARIES



Ganesha says responsible behavior in the house will earn praise. Positive thinking will bring color in a new direction. Unable to work hard in important areas, the mind will be worried. The mind will be influenced by progressive thoughts. The mind will be excited by the interest in some new work. The mind will be happy with any sudden good news on Sunday and Monday. Any important work that has been blocked for a long time will be expected to be resolved. The means of income will be accessible. On Wednesday and Saturday, the mind will be worried due to obstruction in any important work. Old relations will be strong but avoid defamation and slander. Your serious nature reduces emotional exchange in relationships. improve it.

### TAURUS



Ganesha says old problems will be solved. Professional busyness will come in the way of a lack of time for personal needs. Some new doubts will create bitterness in old relations. Be cautious about the health of your life partner. In a time full of worries, some good prospects will be seen. On Sunday and Tuesday, the hold in governance will be strong. Difficulties are possible in traveling for any important purpose on Friday and Saturday. Your proximity to people of bad and flattering nature can be harmful to you. Don't take any decision on impulse.

### GEMINI



Ganesha says divine faith will increase. Your attraction towards a new business will increase. Take advantage of good opportunities by controlling the apprehensive mind with prejudice. The mind can be focused on social and auspicious works. Governance- Time will be favorable for the people of the power sector and you will be able to face the situations with your high might. All the responsibilities thrown together will burden the mind. Suffering is possible due to work done in emotion. The mind will be worried due to the illness of someone in the family. Beware of secret enemies in the guise of friends. Creative works will increase in popularity. Support from parents and superiors will be received.



### CANCER

Ganesha says you will get the benefit of hard work in the livelihood sector. There will be opportunities for good success in the field of work and the jewel of efficiency and talent will spread. Obstacles in endeavors and problems in married life are possible. The mind will be worried about the happiness and sorrow of the family members. Control sensitivity and anger, it can bring bitterness in your close relationships. Minor health problems are possible on Monday and Wednesday. The illness of a superior person in the family is possible. Success will be achieved in the endeavored areas on Friday and Saturday. Efforts in the direction of employment will be meaningful. Students may be a little worried about their careers.

### LEO



Ganesha says for economic strength, the mind will focus on new schemes. There is a possibility of bitterness in the relationship due to some unpleasant things. In spite of having good feelings towards everyone, you will be unable to prove yourself good. A lot of worries will be included in the mind. Good desires will awaken in the mind on Sunday and Monday. Learners will get the benefit of planetary compatibility. Material happiness will increase. On Thursday and Friday, there will be intensity in relations with your tact. The mind will be happy with the favorable situation in the work area. There will be busyness in the discharge of socialism. Your talent will flourish in the professional field.

### VIRGO



Ganesha says some financial difficulties will trouble the mind. Some things in the family can cause emotional distress to the mind. There are strong chances of transfer of government employees. There will be busyness with some auspicious events in the family. Will get the company of all the family members. Meaninglessness can become a hindrance in the fulfillment of important tasks. Consult experienced people before investing capital in any new business. Planetary compatibility for students will make their hard work worthwhile. On Thursday and Friday, the mind surrounded by negative worries and apprehensions will be focused on the refuge of God. Laziness can deprive you of important benefits.

### LIBRA



Ganesha says this is a time of big change in life. The mind will be restless for some emotional relations. There will also be chances of solving old problems. The mind will be restless in realizing its ambitions. Be careful of the activism of opponents in the work area.

## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE - MAR 26 - 29, 2026

By Chirag Daruwalla - Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

Efforts will be intense in the field of education competition. The job environment may be a bit distasteful for government employees and there are possibilities of a change of place. Your intensity will increase in romantic relationships. On Thursday and Saturday, stop living in imagination and try to walk according to the physical world. Do not waste time on unnecessary work. Put your mind into some creative and good work.

### SCORPIO



Ganesha says there is a chance of traveling a long distance. The mind will be worried about its result in emotional relationships and endeavored areas. Beautiful possibilities will communicate new enthusiasm in the mind. It is time for major changes in the economic sector. Some new means of income will be accessible. There are chances of success through good planning. Will be hopeful of some important successes. Make a balance between income and expenditure on Monday and Tuesday. Do not do any work in haste. Otherwise, errors are natural. Control your juvenile behavior as it can have a bad effect on your image in the work area. On Thursday and Saturday, you will get the benefit of being close to high-level people.

### SAGITTARIUS



Ganesha says with the implementation of new schemes in the economic sector, there will be chances for progress. Proximity to high-level people will lead to progress. It will be a very pleasant and auspicious week. Political activism will increase. There can be a time of big change in the employment sector. From the point of view of education competition, the mind will be focused on proper hard work. With the help of your mother, your side of the family will be strong on every issue. Good opportunities for profit will bring happiness to the mind. Will enthusiastically try to implement new schemes.

### CAPRICORN



Ganesha says any auspicious event is also possible in the family. Social and business engagement will increase. Negative worries will be effective on the mind due to weak morale. Time is very valuable. So don't waste it. There are sums of money spent on important works. The mind will be worried about the happiness and sorrow of the relatives on Monday and Tuesday. Being active in the discharge of social work and relations will increase your popularity. Possible differences with a colleague in the job. Efforts in the direction of education competition will be fruitful. The family atmosphere will be pleasant. Expenditure is possible in material comforts. There will be chances of

the fulfillment of some important family obligations.

### AQUARIUS



Ganesha says people in the political field will benefit from a favorable environment. Possible emotional distress from a superior or guardian. Don't get angry about small things. Politicians may have to face some upheaval. Increasing responsibilities will put pressure on the mind for timely fulfillment. Caution towards health is expected. Laziness is possible due to excessive labor in the work area. The mind will be worried about proper arrangement towards important responsibilities. The mind will be worried about gathering material comforts. Your popularity will increase with your eloquence and efficiency on Wednesday and Friday. Will get the benefit of high-level relations. The enthusiasm will increase with the emotional support of the parents.

### PISCES



Ganesha says it would be best to forget the past this week as it will bring sweetness to the relationship. Financial difficulties will trouble you. There are chances of excessive expenditure in the fulfillment of material comforts. There is a possibility of emotional distress from a close relative on Sunday and Monday. Hard work will be intense for the meaningfulness of any important work. Accidental long-distance travel may have to be done. Some worries in the direction of education competition will be effective on the mind. On Friday and Saturday, the people of governance will get opportunities for profit. Efforts for some important work will be worthwhile. It is possible to improve spoiled relations with the mediation of a friend. Proximity to dignitaries will increase

### AUTHOR BIO

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

Ganesha says today you have many opportunities to improve your financial condition. Traveling abroad or doing transactions can be beneficial. Property-related disputes can be resolved. Children may bring good news for you, demanding more attention. Take good care of yourself. At the end of the year, you are planning a pilgrimage that can give you relaxation and peace of mind.

**MARCH 24**

Ganesha says you are a great host and love socializing, but sometimes you should curb your stubborn and extravagant tendencies. Foreign travel or transactions can be very beneficial. Some people get a healthy romantic period during marriage. You can give priority to real estate transactions, construction projects, and renovations. Avoid any confrontation or situation that creates tension and stress.

**MARCH 25**

Ganesha says that although you are incredibly talented and highly respected by your friends and colleagues, you need to check your tendency to be rigid,

extravagant, and sometimes jealous. People with piles and high blood pressure need to be extra careful about their health. The marital front seems smooth despite occasional disputes and estrangement. You can gain popularity among your friends and the social environment because of your creative thinking.

**MARCH 26**

Ganesha says you have a great memory and amazing technical skills, but you need to work on your tendency to be irritable and vindictive at times. Today, many changes can be seen in the company where you work. You can get a lot of benefits from these, but there can be a change in your routine. Offers can be lucrative for businessmen looking to make quick cash. Women who are pregnant should pay more attention to their health. Paying attention to your diet and prescription medications is important.

**MARCH 27**

Ganesha says you should exercise financial restraint today and avoid spending money on unnecessary

luxuries. The closeness between you two can increase, and you can respect each other more. For most of you, a distant trip is likely towards the end of the year. You should not be disappointed by the high expectations of your family members. Also, you can spend some special and romantic moments with your partner.

**MARCH 28**

Ganesha says you enjoy surrounding yourself with beautiful things. Even if you are not an artist, you still like to collect objects that have artistic value. This year, there may be occasions of improper communication with your employer. Check thoroughly before handing over your work to your superiors. Although many factors may not be in your favor, the support and assistance of friends and family members can give you new energy and make things more comfortable than otherwise. It couldn't be an easier time.

**MARCH 29**

Ganesha says you put in a lot of effort, and your dedication and efforts are always appreciated, but you need to curb

**VEDIC ASTROLOGER NASTUR  
BEJAN DARUWALLA**

your tendency to be indecisive, stubborn, and sometimes lazy. This year, your employer and you may become close relatives. As a result, you can play an important role as an ambassador for the company. You can be the center of attraction at any social gathering. You can meet new people and develop important relationships. Even if you seem to be in good health, it is still recommended that you take preventive medications.

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# Sikh History This Week

## MARCH 20 TO MARCH 26

### 20th March

1761 GurSikhs greatly harassed Ahmad Shah's returning forces from his 5th invasion, successfully engaged them near Goindwal and rescued Hindu women captured by him.



1914 Baba Gurdit Singh of Sarhali village charter a ship, Kamagata Maru, to satisfy the condition of the Canadian Privy Council Order No. 920. There were 376 passengers in it including 346 Sikhs. It started its journey for Canada reaching there on the 23rd May 1914, but the ship was not allowed to entry and was compelled to leave Canadian waters on 23rd July 1914.

1922 A conference at Apra takes place.

1931 Sikhs presented 17 demands charter for the Round Table Conference.

1956 Hukam Singh was elected Deputy Speaker of Indian Lower House.

### 21st March

1664 Ninth Patshah, Guru Tegh Bahadur visited



Delhi.

1758 Sikhs captured Sirhind.

1921 Karam Singh Daulatpur organizes a conference at Mahalpur.

1986 One group of the Akalis called for a protest procession at Chandigarh. This procession was fired upon by the BSF and CRPF indiscriminately, killing several Sikhs.

### 22nd March

1923 First declaration of the Babbar's owning the murders and open letter by the Babbar Akalis to Lt. Governor, Punjab, was issued in "Babbar Akali Doaba" newspaper.

1924 3rd Shahidi Jatha of 500 valiant Akali Satyagrahies, led by Sardar Santa Singh of Chuck No. 133, Sargodha, marched from Amritsar to Gangsar, Jaito.

1946 Akali Dal passed resolution for an independent Sikh State.

### 23rd March

1931 Bhagat Singh Shaheed was hanged to death in



the Lahore central jail along with Shivram Rajguru and Sukhdeo. Shaheed BHAGAT SINGH: was one of the leader Sikh revolutionaries of the early 20th century who earned the fame of causing explosion in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi and of committing daring acts of killing British Police Officers. He and his associates were hanged on March 23rd of 1931. Their bodies were secretly cremated on the bank of the Satluj river near Ferozpur. The associated secrecy was to avoid public outcry and any subsequent outburst of violence.

1985 Sikh Women's Seminar was held in Toronto. The seminar's primary objective was to bring the Sikh



women together, whereby they could discuss various issues facing the community. There was a need for such a forum where Sikh women could assemble, deliberate, and contribute toward the development of programs for the Sikh youth. The following papers were presented at the seminar: A Portrait of South Asian Canadian Women; Role of Women in Sikh Society; What is Leadership; Role of Sikh Women in Canadian Society; Role of Women in Sikh Leadership; and Participation of Sikh Women in Community Life.

### 24th March

1664 Guru Har Krishan Ji visited Aurangzeb's



court. This is the time Guru Sahib visited Aurangzeb's court, when Ram Rai emphatically declared that the

decision of his father in selecting his younger brother as his successor to the pontificate of Guru Nanak was based on cogent reasons, and that he was now under the command of the new Guru.

1847 The British being aware of the Sikh's emotional and sentimental attachment to Golden Temple and other shrines, issued special instructions to the British subjects to be careful in maintaining the sanctity of the shrines.

1922 Meeting at Rajowal by Kishan Singh Gargaj group to devise ways and means of reforming the toadies

1945 Master Tara Singh denounces the Acharyae Formula.

### 25th March

1830 Baba Ratta Ji Nirankari was born.

1921 13th Sikh Education Conference was held in Hoshiarpur that and lasted until Mar. 27. This conference saw the rise of militant Akalis who advocated non-cooperation with the British government and were deeply inspired by Master Mota Singh. They met separately and created disturbances in the conference as well as worked on a separate program. They were equally patriotic believing in the militant traditions of the Nihangs.

1921 The militant Akalis hatched a conspiracy to murder the officials responsible for the Nanakana carnage. 1972 Mohan Singh Tur became President of Akali Party. 1981 The SGPC unanimously passed the resolution "Sikhs are a Nation." With the passing of such a resolution by the Sikh Parliament and with the ratification of this resolution by the Jathedar of the Akal Takht on April 21, 1981, the issue stood finally decided by the whole of the Sikh nation. On May 11, 1981, the Akali Party also passed a resolution to that effect.

1986 Surjit S. Barnala himself ordered firing at the Sikhs who were observing holy festival at Anandpur



Sahib, killing several Sikhs.

### 26th March

1644 Gur Gadhi Diwas, Guru Har Rai Sahib Ji (1644).

1746 The forces of Yahiha Khan and Lakhapat Rai seized and set fire to the Kahnuwaan forest. 7,000 Singh were martyred here while another 3,000 were taken to Lahore and martyred there.

1746 Matta Sunder kaur Ji sent a mace of Kalgidhar to honor Jassa Singh Ahluwalia.

1748 Raja Amar Singh of Patiala was born. He was a thorough gentleman.

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CONTD FROM PAGE 1

**Trump, Netanyahu diverge...**

questions on whether they're entirely in sync in prosecuting the war that began as a closely coordinated joint attack on the longtime regional foe. The emergence of daylight -- or at least the appearance of it -- between the two leaders could shape the balance of the conflict and any eventual endgame.

Mr. Trump, during an Oval Office meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, told reporters that he neither agreed with nor approved of Israel's attack on the world's largest gas field, which is an energy lifeline for Iran.

"I told him, 'Don't do that,'" Mr. Trump said of Mr. Netanyahu's decision to strike. "We get along great. It's coordinated, but on occasion he'll do something. And if I don't like it -- and so we're not doing that anymore." Mr. Netanyahu said that Israel "acted alone" and that he's agreed to Mr. Trump's request that Israel hold off on any further attack on Iran's giant gas field. The prime minister also sought to downplay any space between him and Mr. Trump.

"It's been said that for 40 years I've been saying that Iran is a danger to Israel and a danger to the world. That is true," Netanyahu said at a news conference in Jerusalem. "You know who else said that? President Trump." Mr. Netanyahu later added: "Look, I don't think any two leaders have been as coordinated as President Trump and I. He's the leader. I'm his ally. America is the leader." Mr. Trump's first public reaction to Wednesday's (March 18, 2026) strike on the Iranian gas field came several hours afterward in a fiery social media post where he also declared the US "knew nothing" about the attack before it was carried out.

Two people familiar with the matter who were not authorized to comment publicly said the U.S. was made aware of Israel's plan ahead of the attack. The people were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. One of the people said Israel's targets are being coordinated with the U.S.

U.S. intel chief says U.S., Israel have different objectives

Top U.S. administration officials on Thursday made the case that Mr. Trump is simpatico with Mr. Netanyahu, but is ultimately guided in his Iran strategy by what he believes is in the US national security interest.

The U.S. air campaign has focused on decimating Iran's missile programme, pummeling its already beleaguered nuclear program and destroying its navy. Israel, meanwhile, has carried out one high-level assassination after another as it looks to topple the Islamic authority that has led the country since 1979.

The Prime Minister has framed the moment as an opportunity to usher in a new era in the West Asia - one in which the government in Tehran is run by a more moderate leadership that is not hostile to Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu is buoyed by an Israeli public that is far more supportive of the war than the American public.

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**The headwinds are strong...**

Ms Bahous added that the past two weeks had witnessed yet again "the energy, the determination, and the passion of all of you, delegates and civil society, who bring the Commission to life".

Here is the text of her address on the occasion.

"You have done this, in the face of many challenges, because of our shared belief in one fundamental truth: gender equality and women's rights are the foundation on which our peace, security, economic prosperity and sustainable development ambitions rely.

"Without women's equal, meaningful participation, without their equal access to justice, to economic opportunity, to a life free from violence, without their leadership in governments, the private sector, in peace negotiations - our nations will not progress. Reaffirming this very simple truth, pushing it forward through agreed conclusions, is the purpose of this Commission - and you rose to the challenge.

"My deepest thanks to our dear Chair, Her Excellency Ambassador Maritza Chan Valverde and to all the Vice-Chairs: Ms. Andreea Mocanu of Romania, Ms. Samah Dbouk of Lebanon and special thanks to Vice-Chairs Mr. Noah Oehri of Liechtenstein and Ms. Flavia Umulisa of Rwanda for facilitating the Agreed Conclusions. I know their efforts are appreciated by every one of you.

"This CSW70 Bureau served as an inspiration, showing leadership in action during a critical time for the Commission. Together, you led the first session of the revitalized CSW.

"I thank you, Member States, for your continued support to UN Women, as we support you and work with you to implement your national priorities and gender equality ambitions.

"My thanks also to the UN Women team, who work tirelessly, every day, here in New York, and around the world, to advance gender equality, and the rights and empowerment of all women and girls.

"UN Women's impact is measured in lives lived, in lives changed, in laws that protect, economies that are inclusive, and peace processes shaped by women's leadership. From development to conflict settings we see progress where women and girls are no longer left behind but leading forward.

"I would also like to recognize our sister entities across the United Nations system for their active engagement throughout this session and always on gender equality and women's empowerment. This is our collective effort also in the context of UN80, as we work towards a stronger, coherent and well-funded gender equality architecture at the heart of the UN system.

"Our collective focus must remain on the women and girls across crisis contexts. They pay the highest price, from Afghanistan to Gaza, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Myanmar, Ukraine, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, and as we speak now, across the Middle East. The long list is ever-growing.

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**India steps up diplomatic...**

exchanging perspectives to help ease tensions, even as international voices, including Finland President Alexander Stubb, have suggested that India could play a meaningful role in brokering peace.

Addressing the weekly media briefing, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has been in constant contact with his counterparts across Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and West Asia.

"The External Affairs Minister has spoken to his counterpart in the United Arab Emirates and several other foreign ministers in the region. They have exchanged perspectives on the developments," Jaiswal said, underlining that India has consistently called for an early end to hostilities.

"We have been reiterating that there should be an early end to this conflict, and the best way forward is through dialogue and diplomacy," he added.

Significantly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself has engaged in a series of high-level conversations with global leaders, reflecting India's calibrated yet proactive diplomatic posture.

On Thursday, Modi spoke with Haitham bin Tariq, Emmanuel Macron, Abdullah II and Anwar Ibrahim, focusing on the urgent need to de-escalate tensions and restore stability.

In his conversation with the Omani Sultan, the Prime Minister conveyed advance Eid greetings and emphasized the importance of prioritizing diplomacy. Both leaders agreed on the need for de-escalation and the restoration of peace, while Modi reiterated India's condemnation of any violation of Oman's sovereignty. He also appreciated Muscat's role in facilitating the safe return of thousands of people, including Indian nationals, and stressed the shared commitment to ensuring safe and free navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

In a separate call with French President Macron, the two leaders discussed the evolving situation and underlined the urgency of returning to dialogue. "We look forward to continuing our close coordination to advance peace and stability," Modi said, with Macron affirming that India and France are working together to keep diplomacy at the center of peace efforts.

During his conversation with Jordan's King Abdullah II, Modi expressed concern over the deteriorating security situation and strongly condemned attacks on energy infrastructure, warning that such actions could trigger avoidable escalation. Both sides supported unhindered transit of goods and energy, with India also appreciating Jordan's assistance in evacuating stranded nationals.

The Prime Minister also spoke with Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim, with both leaders reaffirming their shared commitment to de-escalation and the early restoration of peace through dialogue.

Parallel diplomatic engagements were also undertaken by Jaishankar, who held discussions with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar and met UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy. The

talks focused on the ongoing conflict and its wider regional and global implications, including the safety of the Indian diaspora.

The intensifying diplomatic activity comes against the backdrop of mounting international calls for India to leverage its growing global stature. Finnish President Stubb, who recently visited India for Raisina Dialogue, publicly suggested that New Delhi is well-positioned to contribute to easing tensions, particularly between the US and Iran, and to push for an immediate ceasefire.

Meanwhile, India has also strongly condemned the recent spate of attacks on energy infrastructure in the Gulf region, cautioning that such incidents risk destabilizing an already fragile global energy scenario.

"Recent attacks against energy installations... are deeply disturbing and only serve to further destabilize an already uncertain energy scenario for the whole world. Such attacks are unacceptable and need to cease," Jaiswal said.

With global energy markets on edge and key maritime routes such as the Strait of Hormuz under scrutiny, India, one of the world's largest energy importers, has underscored its stake in regional stability, safe transit, and uninterrupted supply chains.

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**Vikram Doraiswami appointed. India's next Ambassador to China**

Doraiswami brings extensive diplomatic experience, with prior postings in South Korea, Uzbekistan and at India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. He has also served in the Prime Minister's Office and held senior positions within the MEA, reflecting a wide-ranging career in India's foreign policy establishment.

Significantly, he has experience in China-related affairs, having earlier served at Indian missions in Beijing and Hong Kong, and is known to be proficient in multiple languages, including Chinese.

His appointment comes at a crucial juncture in India-China relations, which have remained strained since the Galwan Valley clashes in 2020. However, recent months have seen cautious efforts by both sides to stabilize ties through continued diplomatic engagement.

There have been renewed attempts to rebuild bilateral relations, including the resumption of direct flights, easing of visa procedures and promotion of people-to-people exchanges. These steps indicate a gradual effort by both countries to restore normalcy while managing underlying strategic differences.

Doraiswami is expected to play a key role in navigating this complex relationship, balancing competition and cooperation between the two Asian neighbors. Experts say his diplomatic experience and familiarity with multilateral and regional issues are likely to be significant assets as New Delhi seeks to recalibrate its approach to Beijing.

# Ram Navami: the divine birth of Lord Rama

The sacred festival of Ram Navami stands as one of the most spiritually profound occasions in the Hindu calendar, commemorating the birth of Lord Rama—the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Celebrated on the ninth day of the bright half (Shukla Paksha) in the month of Chaitra, this auspicious day also coincides with the culmination of Chaitra Navratri, amplifying its spiritual energy and significance. Ram Navami is not merely a celebration of a divine birth; it is a reminder of cosmic balance, moral order, and the timeless victory of righteousness over chaos.

Ram Navami in 2026 will be observed on Thursday, 26 March 2026 in India.

## The Sacred Legend: A Divine Promise Fulfilled

The origins of Ram Navami are deeply embedded in the epic narrative of the Ramayana, composed by the revered sage Valmiki. The story begins in the prosperous kingdom of Ayodhya, ruled by the noble king Dasharatha. Despite his power and prosperity, Dasharatha was burdened with sorrow due to the absence of an heir.

On the counsel of sages, he performed the sacred Putrakameshti Yajna, a powerful Vedic ritual invoking divine blessings for progeny. From the sacrificial fire emerged a celestial being bearing a divine potion (payasam), which was distributed among his queens—Kaushalya, Kaikeyi, and Sumitra. In due time, four sons were born, with Rama, the embodiment of divinity, taking birth to Queen Kaushalya at the sacred hour of noon.

This divine incarnation was not random—it was a cosmic response to the tyranny of evil forces, particularly the demon king Ravana, whose growing power had disturbed the balance of the universe. Lord Rama's birth symbolized the descent of divine energy to restore harmony and righteousness on Earth.

## The Spiritual Narrative: Life as a Sacred Ideal

The life of Lord Rama unfolds as a spiritual scripture in motion. Revered as Maryada Purushottam—the ideal man—Rama exemplifies the highest standards of virtue, discipline, and compassion. His unwavering commitment to truth and duty is seen when he willingly accepts exile to honor his father's promise, accompanied by his devoted wife Sita and loyal brother Lakshmana.

The trials of exile, the abduction of Sita, and the ultimate battle against Ravana are not merely historical or mythological events; they are symbolic representations of the human journey. Ravana, with his ten heads, signifies the many vices—ego, anger, greed, attachment—that cloud the human mind. Rama's victory is thus the triumph of inner purity over these destructive forces.

Equally significant is the role of Hanuman, whose unwavering devotion to Rama represents the ideal relationship between the devotee and the divine. His strength, humility, and selfless service highlight the power of faith and surrender.

## Rituals and Observances:



## Devotion in Practice

Ram Navami is observed with deep devotion and elaborate rituals across India, especially in Ayodhya, where the atmosphere becomes charged with spiritual fervor.



The day typically begins with early morning purification rituals, followed by the decoration of temples and homes. Devotees observe fasts, either complete or partial, as a means of self-discipline and spiritual cleansing. The recitation of sacred texts, particularly the Ramayana and the Ramcharitmanas composed by Tulsidas, continues throughout the day. At noon—the believed moment of Rama's birth—the most significant ritual takes place. Idols of infant Rama are ceremonially bathed, dressed in fine garments, and placed in cradles, symbolizing the divine birth. The air resonates with the sound of bells, conch shells, and the collective chanting of "Jai Shri Ram," creating a deeply immersive spiritual experience.

Processions known as Shobha Yatras bring the streets to life, with beautifully adorned idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman carried through towns and cities. Devotional songs, dramatic enactments of scenes from the Ramayana, and community feasts further enhance the celebratory spirit.

## Regional Expressions: A Festival Across Cultures

While the essence of Ram Navami remains the same, its expression varies across regions. In North India, grand celebrations and temple rituals dominate, particularly in Ayodhya. In South India, the festival often includes the ceremonial wedding of Rama and Sita, symbolizing divine union. In eastern regions, devotional music and community gatherings take precedence.

Across the diverse cultural landscape of India, Ram Navami becomes a unifying thread, connecting millions through shared faith and devotion.

## Philosophical and Spiritual Significance

At its core, Ram Navami is a festival of deep philosophical meaning. It teaches that dharma is not merely a concept but a way of life—one that requires courage, sacrifice, and unwavering integrity.

Lord Rama represents the ideal ruler, son, husband, and human being, offering a blueprint for ethical living. His life underscores the importance of duty over desire, truth over convenience, and compassion over power.

On a deeper spiritual level, Rama symbolizes the inner self—the divine consciousness that resides within every individual. The journey of Rama, therefore, becomes the journey of the soul toward self-realization and liberation.

## Ram Navami in Contemporary Times

In the modern world, where moral dilemmas and ethical challenges are increasingly complex, the teachings of Lord Rama remain profoundly relevant. Ram Navami serves as a moment of introspection, encouraging individuals to align their lives with higher values.

It inspires people to cultivate patience in adversity, humility in success, and faith in the face of uncertainty. The festival transcends religious boundaries, offering universal lessons on righteousness, harmony, and the power of good over evil.

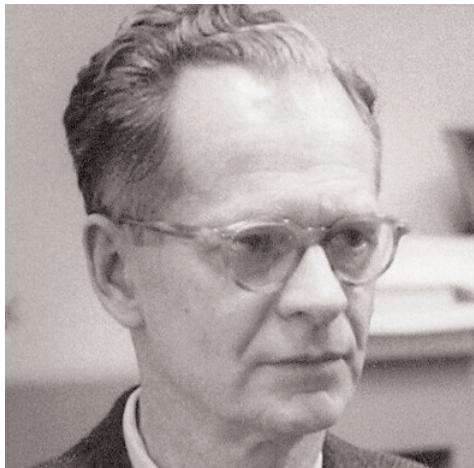
## Awakening the Divine Within

Ram Navami is not just a celebration of a divine birth—it is an awakening of the divine consciousness within every heart. It reminds us that the principles of truth, justice, and compassion are eternal and must be upheld in every age. As devotees immerse themselves in prayers, chants, and rituals, they reconnect with the timeless message of Lord Rama—that true victory lies not in conquering the world, but in mastering oneself.

## History This Week MAR 20 - MAR 26

### MARCH 20

March 20, 1995 - A nerve gas attack occurred on the Tokyo subway system during rush hour resulting in 12 persons killed and 5,000 injured. Japanese authorities later arrest the leader and members of a Japanese religious cult suspected in the attack.



Birthday - American psychologist B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) was born in Susquehanna, Pennsylvania. He pioneered theories of behaviorism and developed the Skinner box, a controlled environment for studying behavior.

### MARCH 21



March 21, 1918 - During World War I, the Second Battle of the Somme began as German General Erich von Ludendorff launched an all-out drive to win the war. The battle began with a five-hour artillery barrage followed by a rush of German troops. The offensive lasted until April 6th and resulted in the Germans gaining about 35 miles of territory. Allied and German casualty figures for both battles approached 500,000.

March 21, 1943 - A suicide/assassination plot by German Army officers against Hitler failed as the conspirators were unable to locate a short fuse for the bomb which was to be carried in the coat pocket of General von Gersdorff to ceremonies Hitler was attending.

Birthday - Organist and composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was born in Eisenach, Germany. His output included thousands of compositions, many used in churches. Among his best known works; The Brandenburg Concertos for orchestra, The Well-Tempered Clavier for keyboard, the St. John and St. Matthew passions, and the Mass in B Minor.

### MARCH 22

March 22, 1972 - The Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed by the U.S. Senate and then sent to the states for ratification. The ERA, as it became known, prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender, stating, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," and that "the Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." Although 22 of the required 38 states quickly ratified the Amendment, opposition arose over concerns that women would be subject to the draft and combat duty, along with other legal concerns. The ERA eventually failed (by 3 states) to achieve ratification despite an extension of the deadline to June 1982.

### MARCH 23



March 23, 1775 - Patrick Henry ignited the American Revolution with a speech before the Virginia convention in Richmond, stating, "I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"

### MARCH 24

March 24, 1934 - The Philippine Islands in the South Pacific were granted independence by President Franklin D. Roosevelt after nearly 50 years of American control.

March 24, 1989 - One of the largest oil spills in U.S. history occurred as the oil tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound off Alaska, resulting in 11 million gallons of oil leaking into the natural habitat over a stretch of 45 miles.



Birthday - Harry Houdini (1874-1926) was born (as Erik Weisz) in Budapest,

Hungary. He came to the U.S. with his family as an infant and lived in New York City. He began as a Coney Island magician, then became a world famous escape artist, known for escaping from chains, handcuffs, straightjackets, locked boxes and milk cans filled with water. He died on Halloween 1926 from a burst appendix and was buried in Queens, NY.

### MARCH 25



March 25, 1807 - The British Parliament abolished the slave trade following a long campaign against it by Quakers and others.



March 25, 1911 - A raging fire erupted inside a garment factory in New York City killing 123 young women employed as low-paid seamstresses, along with 23 men. The fast-spreading flames engulfed the 8th and 9th floors of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company in lower Manhattan in just a few minutes. About 50 of the victims had jumped to their deaths rather than perish from the flames. The sensational tragedy spurred national interest concerning the rights of mostly-immigrant women workers of the New York garment industry who labored long hours six or seven days a week in cramped, dangerous conditions for about \$5 weekly pay.

### MARCH 26



March 26, 1979 - The Camp David Accord ended 30 years of warfare between Israel and Egypt. Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed the treaty of mutual recognition and peace, fostered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

March 26, 1992 - Soviet Cosmonaut Serge Krikalev returned to a new

country (Russia) after spending 313 days on board the Mir Space Station. During his stay in space, the Soviet Union (USSR) collapsed and became the Commonwealth of Independent States.



Birthday - American playwright Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) was born in Columbus, Mississippi. His works featured Southern settings and include; The Glass Menagerie, Night of the Iguana, and two Pulitzer Prize winning plays, A Streetcar Named Desire and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.



# Jaisalmer: The golden mirage of the Thar Desert

Rising like a shimmering illusion from the heart of the Thar Desert, Jaisalmer is a destination that feels as though it belongs to another era. Known as the “Golden City,” its honey-colored sandstone architecture glows under the desert sun, creating an ethereal landscape of forts, palaces, and dunes. This enchanting city in Rajasthan is not merely a travel destination—it is a journey into history, culture, and timeless desert life.

Founded in 1156 AD by Rawal Jaisal, Jaisalmer was once a thriving trading hub on ancient caravan routes linking India with Central Asia and the Middle East. The wealth generated through trade is still visible in the intricate carvings and grand mansions that dot the city. At the heart of Jaisalmer stands the majestic Jaisalmer Fort, also known as Sonar Quila or the Golden Fort. Unlike most forts in India, this one is alive—housing shops, temples, homes, and bustling streets within its ancient walls. Walking through its narrow lanes feels like stepping back in time, where every corner tells a story of valor and artistry.

## Jaisalmer Fort

This fort is a world heritage site. Forts' walls and grounds include: Four massive gateways through which visitors to the fort must pass, situated along the main approach to the citadel, The Raj Mahal palace, Jain Temples, The Laxminath temple, Numerous Merchant Havelis.

## Government Museum

This museum has a unique collection of sculptures from townships of that era of Kairadu and Lodurva of 12th century, marine and wood fossils. It is established by the Department of Archeology with an aim to highlight the diverse tradition, culture of Thar Desert and its heritage.

## Nathmal Ji ki Haveli, Salim Singh ki Haveli and Patwon ki Haveli

The construction of this Nathmal Ji ki haveli is done by two brothers who started from two different points at the same time. Elephant carvings on yellow stones, and intricately carved exteriors and interiors are remarkable. A huge statue of an elephant made of yellow sandstones welcomes every tourist and shopper in this Haveli.

Salim Singh Ki Haveli was built in 18th century by Salim Singh. The construction is done with help of the stones that are connected with strong iron rods. The architecture of this mansion is inspired by dancing peacock. Patwon ki Haveli is the most important and the largest haveli. It is renowned for its ornate wall paintings, intricate yellow sandstone-carved jharokas or balconies, gateways and doorways. The haveli is built using yellow sandstone and the main gateway is brown in colour. The walls also feature beautiful mirror work and several paintings.

## Gadisar Lake

Artificial water reservoir, the



Gadisar Lake was constructed by the first ruler of Jaisalmer, Raja Rawal Jaisal, It is one of the most famous tourist places in Jaisalmer. The bank of the lake is surrounded by artistically carved Chattris, Temples, Shrines, and Ghats.

## Desert National Park

The Desert National Park is an perfect example of the ecosystem of the Thar Desert. Around 20 % part of park is covered by sand dunes , jagged rocks, dense salt lake bottoms and inter-medial areas. Various species of

animals such as black buck, chinkara and desert fox inhabit the Park. The highly endangered Great Indian Bustard, one of the world's heaviest flying birds, can also be seen here. In winter, the park hosts an incredible variety of migratory raptors such Himalayan and Eurasian Griffon Vultures, Eastern Imperial Eagle, and the Saker Falcon.

## KULDHARA

Kuldhara is an abandoned village in the Jaisalmer located about 18 km from the city by its villagers in the 1800s. It

was like the entire town vanished in the course of a single night. It remains a mystery as to how no one saw them leave; in fact, even to this date, no one knows where all of them went either. The village remains uninhabited to the day, in the same state that the villagers had left it, hundreds of years ago. The location has become a major tourist destination as people from all over the world travel here to revel in the mysteries of the past.

## Jaisalmer War Museum

The Indian Army has commemorated the sacrifices of their soldiers in a beautiful display at this war museum, situated at the Jaisalmer military base. This exhibit is primarily to pay respect to all the soldiers who took part and lost their lives in the battle. Located on the Jaisalmer-Jodhpur Highway, the museum has free entry, and holds a very important part of our country's history.

A visit to this museum lets you see a number of captured tanks and other memorabilia with many war trophies and vintage equipment, along with tanks, guns, and military vehicles, murals of soldiers who lost their lives in the war, and weapons which were used during the same. You can also watch an interview with Major Kuldip Singh Chandpuri who was a crucial part of the Longewala battle.

## Longewal War Museum

This is around 130 Kms from Jaisalmer city and This is the spot of the battle of Longewala in 1971 between India and Pakistan, on which the movie “Border” is based. It is also the last point up to which civilians are allowed, just 12 km from Pakistan. There is an audio visual show chronicling the Longewala battle, giving out interesting details of those days. They have the actual battle tanks, jeeps and weapons from the battle displayed over here, both from Indian and Pakistani sides. They have also preserved photos of and after the battle.

## Tanot Mata Temple

There are many stories of how during the 1965 India-Pakistan war, Tanot was under heavy attack and shelling. However, none of the shells or bombs fired at the temple exploded. After the war the Pakistani General actually asked his counterpart in India about this incident and on knowing the story of the power of the temple that apparently protected the area he asked to see this place.

This request was granted and the Pakistani General actually went to the temple and paid his respects and acknowledged the supernatural happening.

# Cortina scripts another golden chapter to its 70-year-old Olympic history



BY  
PRABHJOT SINGH

As the curtain was rung down on the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Paralympics, a 70-year circle linking this mountainous Italian town had come to a complete close. The Cortina Curling Olympic Stadium, which played host to the closing ceremony, would be known to the progeny as games that saw opening and closing ceremonies held hundreds of miles apart. The ceremony, an emotional farewell to hundreds of athletes, minus para ice hockey athletes, was not only a farewell to the competitions but also an ideal bridge to the historic 1956 Olympic Winter Games.

A thread connects the black and white of 1956 to the vivid colors of 2026. It is the bond of memory in Cortina d'Ampezzo, as seventy years separate the Olympic Closing Ceremony of 1956 from the final Paralympic act, the Paralympic Closing Ceremony, on 15 March at the Cortina Curling Olympic Stadium.

The ceremony was all about the passing of the torch between generations that have learned to master the ice and turn challenges into legend. The link between these two eras does not live only in the venues of the ceremonies but also in the stories of those who experienced 1956 through family memories.

There are those families who have been witnesses to the events, both in 1956 and 2026. Jgor Scappin, who today manages the rental service at the departure station of the Faloria cable car, preserves the legacy of his father, a Venetian photographer who arrived in Cortina in 1953 to document the Olympic revolution.



The Cortina Curling Stadium, the venue of the historic closing ceremonies.

While in Cortina, one cannot miss small banners adorning the walls and buildings saying "Cortina 1956 2026 Host City".

"My father was one of the 'scattini,' as photographers who captured tourists and athletes were called at the time," Jgor recalls. "I remember his photos of cross-country skiing in Campo and the ski jumps. He always told me that until just a few days before the start, everything was uncertain because there was no snow. Then those 20 centimeters of snow arrived and saved both the atmosphere and the competitions."

That passion sparked in 1956 changed the destiny of many families: "My father became so passionate about cross-country skiing that my sister even made it to the national team. Before then, Cortina was a small village; elegant tourists came, but few foreigners. After the Olympics, the international boom began."

The Scappin family is not the only one to remember. Among Cortina's long-standing shopkeepers, there is a generation that, in 1956, was still in infancy but grew up with the myth of the success of that edition. Today, looking ahead to the Milano Cortina 2026 Games, the feeling is one of deep satisfaction: "We learned from our parents what it means to host the world," explain some shopkeepers from the town center.



A view of the town of Cortina.



The banner-Cortina 1956-2026 Host City that adorns houses in Cortina. Another building with the same banner

Photos / Maninder K. Chandhoke

"Seeing this participation today makes us proud; we have managed the event while enhancing the local economy."

Among the most evocative memories resurfacing during these closing days are those linked to the technical challenges of seventy years ago: the effort and skill required to level the natural ice of Lake Misurina, where the speed skating competitions were held. An achievement from another era that today, in the age of



A historic milestone of Cortina.

Paralympic technology, takes on the legendary flavor of humanity challenging nature. In 1956, the Closing Ceremony at the Olympic Ice Stadium was a triumph of elegance, featuring figure skating performances and the protocol that passed the Olympic flag to the United States. It was also the first Olympic Winter Games broadcast on television, transforming Cortina into an unprecedented media event.

This time, that venue-renovated and made fully accessible-has become the Cortina Curling Olympic Stadium. If back then pure technique was celebrated, today the celebration is of overcoming limits. The ceremony concept, "Italian Souvenir," will transform the stadium into a great album of shared memories. (see picture.)

Cortina, yesterday as today, remains the place where these stories find their final chapter before beginning to write a new page of the future.

Interestingly, it is the Winter Olympics that use old, small, and historic towns as host cities, while the Summer Olympics continue to be the prerogative of the big cosmopolises.

## USA asserts its complete supremacy in Olympic/Paralympic ice hockey

The US ice hockey teams have asserted their complete supremacy in all versions of the Olympics, including the Paralympics, by completing a credible hat trick of wins over their archrival and neighbor, Canada. The third and final summit clash between the two superpowers of the sport saw the US defeating Canada 6-2 for its 13th gold in the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Paralympics on Sunday.

Earlier, last month, the USA had won both men's and women's titles in the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics, defeating Canada in both the gold medal matches.

The Para Ice Hockey final, the last gold medal contest of the Games, witnessed a record turnout at any of the Olympic/Paralympic Ice Hockey events ever, as it was yet another extraordinary public response for the Para Ice Hockey tournament of the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games.

The final between the United States and Canada reached a full house with 11,500 tickets sold, setting a new all-time attendance record for this discipline in the



Team USA have won five straight Paralympic golds. Photograph: Marco Mantovani/Getty Images

history of the Paralympic Winter Games.

The absorbing final had many in the stands sitting on the edge of their seats as the game of swinging fortunes

saw the team making use of its chances while luck eluded the losers as they saw their chances either missing the target or being beautifully defended.

This figure further improves the record already reached during the preliminary round match between the United States and Italy-which had recorded nearly 9,000 tickets sold-and confirms the exceptional public participation at the Santa Giulia Ice Hockey Arena, now one of the symbolic venues of the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games.

The atmosphere in the arena has been vibrant since the very first games: school groups, families with children, groups of supporters, fans arriving from all over the world, and the enthusiasm of the volunteers have transformed the venue into an electrifying place. An energy that has carried everyone along in the stands and on the ice, making every match an unforgettable experience.

"The new attendance record for the Para Ice Hockey final is a very strong signal of the enthusiasm and



## Sam Curran set to miss IPL 2026 for Rajasthan Royals: Report

Sam Curran, England's charismatic all-rounder, is set to miss the upcoming Indian Premier League season for Rajasthan Royals due to a suspected groin injury, with the franchise exploring replacement options.

Curran, who was part of England's T20 World Cup side that recently lost to India in the semifinals, was traded by Chennai Super Kings to Rajasthan Royals last year along with Ravindra Jadeja in exchange for India wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson.

However, the 27-year-old all-rounder, who has previously represented Punjab Kings and Chennai Super Kings, and was the most expensive buy ahead of the 2023 Indian Premier League season at Rs 18.5 crore, has been sidelined by injury.

Curran, who played for Chennai Super Kings in 2020 and 2021 and rejoined the side ahead of last season for Rs 2.4 crore, finished the 2025 campaign with 114 runs and one wicket in five matches for the Chennai franchise.

In fact, former India pacer Lakshmipathy Balaji had expressed surprise that Rajasthan Royals did not appoint either of the experienced Ravindra Jadeja or Sam Curran as captain, opting instead for Riyan Parag as skipper.

Rajasthan Royals could be exploring several options to replace Curran. Apart from Jadeja, the franchise also has all-rounder Donovan Ferreira, a big-hitting batter who can contribute with handy off-spin.

# Iran striker Sardar Azmoun kicked off national team for disloyalty, say reports

TEHRAN (TIP), MARCH 20, 2026

Sardar Azmoun, one of Iran's top soccer players, has been expelled from the national team for a perceived act of disloyalty to the government, Iranian media has reported, making it unlikely he will play any part in the World Cup.

Iran's participation in the World Cup as a whole is under a cloud because of the ongoing conflict with the United States, who are co-hosting the June 11-July 19 tournament with Mexico and Canada.

If Team Melli do turn up for their opening-round group matches, they will undoubtedly be weakened by the absence of striker Azmoun, who has scored 57 goals in 91 internationals since making his debut as a teenager in 2014.

Azmoun, who plays his club football in the United Arab Emirates for Shabab Al-Ahli, upset the Iranian authorities this week by posting a picture on his Instagram feed of a meeting with Dubai's ruler Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

Iran has launched rocket and drone attacks on the UAE following air strikes by the United States and Israel, which killed the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

A report on the Fars News Agency, which has links to the hardline Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, cited "an informed source within the national team" as saying Azmoun had been expelled from the squad. Azmoun later removed the pictures but was still lambasted on state TV on Thursday with football pundit Mohammad Misaghi saying the striker's actions had been an act of disloyalty.

"It's unfortunate that you don't have enough sense to understand what kind of behaviour is appropriate at a given time," Misaghi said.

"We should not mince words with such people. They should be told that they are not worthy of wearing the national team jersey.

"We have no patience for this sulking and childish behaviour. National team players should be people who proudly belt out the national anthem and deserve to wear the Iran jersey." There was no immediate response to a request for comment on the matter from the Football Federation of the



Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI).

Azmoun, 31, is one of the best-known footballers in Iran, where the game is a national obsession.

He has played his entire club career abroad with stints at Zenit Saint Petersburg, Bayer Leverkusen and Roma as well as featuring for Iran in the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

An unsourced report on the Novad News channel said on Thursday that an order had been issued for the seizure of the assets of Azmoun, another UAE-based national team forward Mehdi Ghayedi, and former international Soroush Rafiei.

Misaghi was speaking against the backdrop of pictures of a ceremony welcoming the Iranian women's national team back to Tehran on their return from Australia.

Seven of the delegation accepted asylum in Australia after the team was branded "wartime traitors" on Iranian state TV for not singing the national anthem before a Women's Asian Cup match. Five later decided to return to Iran.

Iran's men are scheduled to play friendly internationals in Antalya, Turkey against Nigeria on March 27 and Costa Rica four days later as part of their World Cup preparations.

**Iran will boycott the US but not the World Cup, country's football head says**

Iran will "boycott the United States" but "not the World Cup", the Iranian football federation president, Mehdi Taj, said in a video released by the Iranian press agency Fars.

Iran are scheduled to play their group matches in the US in this summer's tournament. "We will be preparing for the World Cup," Taj said. "We will boycott the United States but not the World Cup."

Iran's football federation said this week it had opened talks with Fifa about potentially relocating the team's matches from the US to Mexico, though the global governing body has maintained that the tournament's schedule remains unchanged.

Mexico's president, Claudia Sheinbaum, said on Tuesday that her country was prepared to host Iran's first-round matches if required, owing to the conflict in the Middle East.

Iran's participation at the finals in the US, Canada and Mexico has been in doubt since the US and Israel launched airstrikes on the country last month, with Donald Trump warning that the safety of Iranian players would be at risk if they travelled to the tournament.

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attention surrounding these Paralympic Games," said Andrea Varnier, CEO of Milano Cortina 2026. "Seeing more than eleven thousand spectators in the stands for a Paralympic final shows that the public's interest stems from the strength and quality of this discipline and from its ability to generate excitement. This is a legacy that goes beyond the numbers and marks the beginning of an enduring transformation in sports culture."

The milestone reached by the USA-Canada final confirms the growing popularity of para ice hockey, one of the most spectacular and highly competitive disciplines in the Paralympic program, and reinforces the strong public success of the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games.

With the Para ice hockey gold, the USA retained its

number two position in the overall medals tally by aggregating 24 medals, including 13 gold. The Asian giant, China, had its supremacy intact with an overall tally of 44 medals, including 15 gold.

After heartbreak losses in all three ice hockey finals, Canada had the consolation of finishing eighth in the overall medals tally with three gold, four silver, and eight bronze.

So dominant were the Chinese para-athletes that they made a clean sweep of medals in men's 20 km slalom freestanding, with Wang Chenyang, Huang Lingxin, and Liu Xiaobin taking gold, silver, and bronze medals, respectively.

In para ice hockey, after a tight and close-finished semifinal loss, it took the bronze, defeating Czechia 3-2.

The host, Italy, had the consolation of winning the gold in men's slalom VI through Giacomo Betagnolli. Russia, too, celebrated its return to the Olympic fold by finishing third in the medals tally with eight gold and a total of 12 medals. Aleksai Bugaev capped it with a gold in the 20 km slalom standing.

The USA, too, had a gold in men's slalom 20 km IS free when Jake Adicoff gave his country its 12th gold.

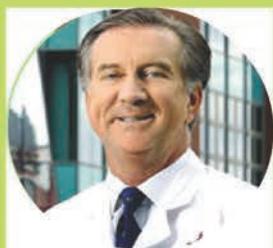
*(Prabhjot Singh, the Toronto-based senior journalist, has covered 11 Olympic Games. He was recently honored by AIPS, the international body of sports journalists, for his extensive coverage of multiple Olympics, spanning both summer and winter games. He can be reached at Prabhjot416@gmail.com)*



## An Eye Institute in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh combating avoidable blindness in children.

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Best Wishes, Peter



Peter J McDonnell, MD Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins



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