

# The South Asian INSIDER



Voice of South Asian Community Since March 2002

"Do one film a year", Akshay responds to advise



Story on Page 28

Vol. 23

Issue 40

Friday 10 January to 16 January 2025

\$1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

## Justin Trudeau's Allegations Against India Set Stage For His Downfall



Story on Page 25

## What smartphones are doing to kids' mental health?



Story on Page 10

Trudeau knew this and resigned: What Trump said after Canadian PM's move



Story on Page 26



## The Kejri splurge

Story on Page 25

House renovation row dents ex-CM's image

Rape Convict Asaram Gets Interim Bail



Story on Page 26

Make Canada 51st state, retake Panama Canal: Trump's US expansion agenda

Story on Page 24

Amandeep Singh of Long Island Pleads Guilty



Story on Page 25



# Suchir Balaji, Indian-origin OpenAI whistleblower, autopsy reveals 'murder' not suicide: Parents

(Sai Bureau)-The parents of Indian-American techie Suchir Balaji, who was found dead in his San Francisco apartment on December 14, 2024, have rejected the official suicide ruling, alleging that their son was murdered. Suchir, a former OpenAI employee, had made headlines for his whistleblowing revelations about the ethical concerns surrounding generative AI. In an interview with NDTV, his parents claim that the second autopsy report indicates "signs of struggle," including a head injury and trauma, which contradict the suicide verdict by the medical examiner's office. Suchir's mother, Poornima Ramarao, expressed disbelief at the suicide ruling, citing the absence of a suicide note and the findings of the second autopsy. "We have facts with the second autopsy -- head trauma and signs of struggle. This is not a suicide; it's a murder," she stated. His father, Balaji Ramamurthi, recounted their last conversation on December 22, when Suchir returned from a trip to Los Angeles in good spirits.

**"He seemed happy," he said.**

When asked if Suchir picked up another job, his mother said, "No, he didn't. They (OpenAI) probably threatened him. They didn't allow him to work somewhere else.

He also consulted a copyright attorney and figured out that he was not doing anything wrong and they were just



suppressing him. That made him give the New York Times interview and resulted in his death." "He was working in the core group of the ChatGPT; he was kind of an architect of the whole thing. He knows a lot of information about ChatGPT. There were some restrictions on him to not work in other AI companies," the father added. His mother mentioned that Suchir was working on personal research which he wanted to get published, in which he explains that "modulated answer is not exactly as the information pegged to ChatGPT, giving an example of a black and white cat coming out as a coloured

cat." "Additionally, the work of artists and journalists were all stolen, which is unethical. This is what we talked about the last time I met him," she mentioned. The parents are demanding an FBI investigation to uncover the truth. "There was a struggle; he did not take his life. Now, who and why need to be explored," Poornima said, urging the Indian government to support their cause. They also welcomed Elon Musk's support but said they had not reached out to him. Describing Suchir as a caring and brilliant individual, his parents said his death is a "loss to humanity and the tech industry." Suchir had worked at OpenAI for nearly four years before resigning over ethical concerns. In an October post on X, he criticised the misuse of copyrighted materials in generative AI, stating, "Fair use seems like a pretty implausible defence for a lot of generative AI products." An OpenAI spokesperson expressed condolences, "We are devastated to learn of this incredibly sad news today. Our hearts go out to Suchir's loved ones during this difficult time." Suchir, a University of California, Berkeley graduate, was a prominent figure in the tech industry, with his whistleblowing revelations sparking global discussions on AI ethics.

## Trump backs H-1B visas, but reform looms for immigration system in US

(Sai Bureau)- Of all the rich and powerful people cosyng up to US President-elect Donald Trump, few have rushed to Mar-a-Lago faster than the crowned heads of big tech, including California's own chiefs of Google and Meta, local media reported. "And few have a stronger motive to curry Trump's favour than Silicon Valley: the fate of the H-1B visa program that permits foreign-born computer scientists, engineers and other highly skilled workers to migrate to the United States hangs in the balance," noted the report on Tuesday.

Support for retaining H-1B from Elon Musk, the incoming president's new closest associate, has stirred rage through much of Trump's MAGA base, which is against immigration in almost any form. But keeping the pipeline open for tech and other skilled workers is seen by many business leaders as critical for the American economy, especially in California, reports Xinhua news agency, quoting the Los Angeles Times. The state is by far the biggest user of the H-1B. In fiscal 2024, more than 9,600 employers in California sought clearance for at least one H-1B



worker, and 78,860 visa applications for new and continuing employment were approved, according to data from US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). "They include all kinds of skilled work in various industries, including nurses and science teachers. But the top 10 beneficiaries of H-1B visas in California -- accounting for almost one-third of all the approvals -- were dominated by tech giants, most of them in the Bay Area," it added. Earlier, Trump declared that he is a "believer in H-1B" visas, quashing the opposition to the programme for qualified professionals to work in the US that pitted the right-wing fringe against his advisers Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy. "It's a great program," he told the New York Post in a phone interview on Saturday. He said, "I've always liked the visas; I have always

been in favour of the visas. That's why we have them." "I have many H-1B visas on my properties. I've been a believer in H-1B. I have used it many times," he told the newspaper that is a part of the Rupert Murdoch-controlled News Corp. Trump has supported reforming the immigration system to make it merit-based, adopting a points system like Canada's or Australia's that gives weight to academic and employable qualifications.



# Seattle Police Officer Who Killed Indian Student With Patrol Car Fired

**Jaahnavi Kandula was struck by a police vehicle driven by Officer Kevin Dave when she was crossing a street in Seattle**

(News Agency)- In a significant development, a Seattle police officer who killed Indian student Jaahnavi Kandula in January 2023 when the patrol vehicle he was driving struck her, has been fired from the police department, officials said. Kandula, 23, from Andhra Pradesh, was struck by a police vehicle driven by Officer Kevin Dave when she was crossing a street in Seattle on January 23, 2023. He was driving 74 mph (more than 119 km/h) on the way to a report of a drug overdose call. Kandula was thrown 100 feet when she was struck by the speeding police patrol vehicle. According to a report in The Seattle Times on Monday, Interim Seattle Police Chief Sue Rahr said that she had fired Dave from the Seattle Police Department. The report, citing an email sent by Rahr to employees, said she fired Dave on Monday after the Seattle Office of Police Accountability found he had violated four department policies. "I believe the officer did not intend to hurt anyone that night and that he was trying to get to a possible overdose victim as quickly as possible," Rahr said. "However, I cannot accept the tragic consequences of his dangerous driving. His positive intent does not mitigate the poor decision that caused

the loss of human life and brought discredit to the Seattle Police Department," the report said. The development comes months after another Seattle police officer Daniel Auderer was fired following his insensitive comments and laughter after Kandula's death. In bodycam footage released by the Seattle Police Department, Auderer was heard laughing after the deadly crash and had remarked "Uh, I think she went up on the hood, hit the windshield, and then when he hit the brakes, flew off the car...But she is dead." After making these comments, Auderer "laughed hard for four seconds," the department's Disciplinary Action Report said. Auderer's body-worn camera also captured him as saying that "Yeah, just write a check. Just, yeah (laughter). USD 11,000. She was 26, anyway. She had limited value." When asked at an Office of Police Accountability interview about his comments that Kandula had "limited value", Auderer claimed he was "ridiculing the city attorneys who would be tasked with litigating a potential wrongful death lawsuit." Rahr had said in an internal email, seen by PTI, that the hurt Auderer's words inflicted on Kandula's family "cannot be erased. The actions (of) this individual



police officer have brought shame on the Seattle Police Department and our entire profession, making the job of every police officer more difficult." The King County Prosecutor's Office had said that they would not move forward with criminal charges against Dave. The Seattle City Attorney had issued a USD 5,000 traffic infraction against him, according to KomoNews. The Consulate General of

India in Seattle had been working consistently with authorities and law enforcement officials to ensure justice in the case. They have been in regular touch with Kandula's family representatives and had said that it would continue to extend all possible support in ensuring justice for Kandula and her family. The Consulate said that it would continue to monitor the progress of the case.

## Trump appoints Indian-American entrepreneur as policy advisor on AI

(Staff Reporter) US President-elect Donald Trump on Sunday named Indian-American entrepreneur, venture capitalist and author Sriram Krishnan as



Senior White House Policy Advisor on Artificial Intelligence. "Sriram Krishnan will serve as the Senior Policy Advisor for Artificial Intelligence at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy," Trump said on Sunday as he announced a number of appointments on artificial intelligence or AI. Krishnan, who has previously led product teams at Microsoft, Twitter, Yahoo, Facebook and Snap, will work along with David O

Sacks who will be the White House AI & Crypto Czar. "Working closely with David Sacks, Sriram will focus on ensuring continued American leadership in AI and help shape and coordinate AI policy across government, including working with the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. Sriram started his career at Microsoft as a founding member of Windows Azure," Trump said. Krishnan said, "I'm honoured to be able to serve our country and ensure continued American leadership in AI working closely with David Sacks." Krishnan's appointment has been welcomed by the Indian-American community. "We heartily congratulate Sriram Krishnan and are delighted that he has been appointed by President-elect Donald Trump as Senior Policy Advisor in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy," said Indiaspora's executive director Sanjeev Josphipura. "For several years, Sriram has been an insightful thinker and influential commentator in the artificial intelligence realm.

## 5 Indian-origin men charged with murder in US

(Staff Reporter) Five Indian-origin men have been charged with murder in the US in connection with the death of a 35-year-old man from India. Sandeep Kumar, 34, of South Ozone Park, New York, was charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder in connection with the death of Kuldeep Kumar in Manchester Township around October 22, 2024, according to a statement by Ocean County prosecutor Bradley Billhimer and Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police Colonel Patrick Callahan. Investigation into Kuldeep's death revealed that Sandeep acted in concert with other defendants in carrying out Kuldeep Kumar's murder. Other defendants in the case are Sourav Kumar, 23, Gaurav Singh 27, Nirmal Singh 30, and Gurdeep Singh 22, all from Greenwood, Indiana. On December 14, 2024, the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office Major Crime Unit was contacted for a report of a deceased located in the Greenwood

Wildlife Management Area of Manchester Township. According to a postmortem examination, the cause of the individual's death was multiple gunshot wounds to the chest, and the manner of death was homicide. The individual was identified as Kuldeep Kumar. Following an investigation, it was revealed Kuldeep had been reported missing by family members on October 26, 2024, and Sourav, Gaurav, Nirmal and Gurdeep acted together and in support of one another in carrying out his murder. They all were charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder. They were transported to Johnson County Jail in Franklin, Indiana, where they will remain lodged pending their extradition to New Jersey. Sandeep was taken into custody on January 3 and processed at the New Jersey State Police Barracks in Holmdel. Kumar was later transported to the Ocean County Jail, where he is presently lodged pending a detention hearing.



# ED probing role of Canadian colleges, Indian entities in human trafficking

(News Agency)- The Enforcement Directorate is investigating the alleged involvement of some Canadian colleges and a few Indian entities in a money-laundering case linked to the trafficking of Indians into the US from the Canada border. The investigation is linked to the death of a four-member Indian family, hailing from Dingucha village in Gujarat. The four died of extreme cold while trying to cross the Canada-US border illegally on January 19, 2022. The ED said it took cognisance of an Ahmedabad Police FIR against Bhavesh Ashokbhai Patel, who emerged as the main accused in the matter, and a few others, to file a complaint under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Patel and others are alleged to have "hatched a well-planned conspiracy to send people (Indians) to the US through Canada via illegal channels thereby committing the offence of human trafficking," it said. The agency had earlier found that as part of the racket, the accused "arranged" admission for people, desirous to go to the US illegally, in colleges and universities based in Canada. A Canadian student visa was

applied for such people and once they reached that country, instead of joining the college, they "illegally" crossed the



US-Canada border, the agency said in a statement on Tuesday. "In view of this, the fee received by colleges based in Canada was remitted back to the individuals' account," the ED alleged. Indians were "lured" into the racket and charged between Rs 55 lakh and Rs 60 lakh per person, according to the ED. The agency said it undertook fresh searches

in this case on December 10 and December 19 at eight locations in Mumbai, Nagpur, Gandhinagar and Vadodara. It was found, the ED said, that two "entities", one based in Mumbai and the other in Nagpur, entered into an "agreement" for admission of Indians in universities based in foreign countries on a commission basis. The agency said the latest searches found that about 25,000

students are being referred by one entity and more than 10,000 students by the other to various colleges based outside India every year. "Further, it is gathered that there are around 1,700 agents/partners based in Gujarat and around 3,500 agents/partners of other entities all over India out of which around 800 are active. "It is further revealed that 112 colleges based in

Canada have entered into an agreement with one entity and more than 150 with another entity. Their involvement in the instant case is under investigation," the ED said. A Canadian student visa was applied for such people and once they reached that country, instead of joining the college, they "illegally" crossed the US-Canada border, the agency said in a statement on Tuesday. "In view of this, the fee received by colleges based in Canada was remitted back to the individuals' account," the ED alleged. Indians were "lured" into the racket and charged between Rs 55 lakh and Rs 60 lakh per person, according to the ED. The agency said it undertook fresh searches in this case on December 10 and December 19 at eight locations in Mumbai, Nagpur, Gandhinagar and Vadodara. It was found, the ED said, that two "entities", one based in Mumbai and the other in Nagpur, entered into an "agreement" for admission of Indians in universities based in foreign countries on a commission basis. The agency said the latest searches found that about 25,000 students are being referred by one entity and more than 10,000 students by the other to various colleges based outside India every year.

## Karnal youth dies mysteriously in US, family seeks govt help to bring body back



(News Agency)- The family of 27-year-old Manish from Kunjpura village in Karnal district is reeling in shock after he died under mysterious circumstances in the US. Manish had travelled to the US around 18 months ago to improve his family's financial situation. His family had taken a loan of Rs 38 lakh to fund his trip. According to his family, Manish died of a heart attack. However, they received no prior indication of any health issues, as he had spoken to them just a day before his death. "Manish seemed perfectly fine when he spoke to us yesterday. He didn't mention any health problems. Everything seemed normal,

but today we received the devastating news of his death," a family member said. Manish had travelled to the US through irregular channels ('donkey routes'). His family had pinned their hopes on him to alleviate their financial struggles, but now they are burdened with both grief and the weight of an unpaid loan. The family has appealed to the Union Government to assist them in bringing Manish's body back to India for his final rites. "We are devastated. Our only request to the government is to help us repatriate his body so we can perform his last rites in our homeland," a grieving family member said.



**INDO US EXPRESS, INC.**

**Worldwide Couriers / Freight Forwarders**  
**Domestic Rush Delivery / Import / Export**  
**Custom Clearance / Trading Consultant**

Gurinder Singh  
CEO

**SALES OFFICE**  
 224 West 30th St., #604, New York, NY 10001  
 Mail: P.O. Box 7304, Hicksville, NY 11802

Office: 212.447.5720 Fax: 516.932.3750  
 Delhi: 98.1849.0552  
 Mumbai: 92.2453.1807  
 New York: 347.538.7041

Visit US Online: [www.indousexpress.com](http://www.indousexpress.com)  
 Email: [indousexpress@gmail.com](mailto:indousexpress@gmail.com)



# Taj Security Alert About 2 Cars With Same Number Leads To Bizarre Loan Tale

(News Agency)- A Mumbai cab driver's desperate attempt to escape the car loan cycle by forging his number plate set off a chain of events that led to a big security scare at the iconic Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Colaba today. Around noon today, two Maruti Suzuki Ertiga cars reached the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel. Both MUVs had yellow registration plates -- this means they were registered for commercial use. One of the vehicle owners spotted an identical car with the same number plate and alerted the cops. The iconic Taj Mahal hotel, which was one of the targets in the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, is a sensitive area and multiple security agencies keep a close watch here. So, as soon as police were alerted about two identical vehicles with the same number,



they moved swiftly and tracked down the MUVs. The two vehicles were brought to the Colaba police station and drivers questioned. What emerged was a bizarre tale. A String Of Challans Sakir Ali owns an Ertiga SUV that plies commercially. For over six months, he had been receiving frequent intimations about challans and fines against the car's registration number. Sometimes, these challans were as frequent as twice a week. What surprised Ali was the fact that the car never visited the areas where the challans were issued. He also

received intimations about the evasion of toll charges. Ali approached traffic police with a complaint, but no solution could be found. "I would keep receiving intimations about fines. We registered a complaint too. He has finally been caught." Earlier, a driver working for Ali had spotted the doppelganger car in Bandra and clicked a photograph. But the car could not be tracked down then.

#### When 2 Ertiga Cars Crossed Path

Around 11.30 am today, Ali was dropping a passenger at Taj when he spotted the other Ertiga with the same

number plate. He stepped out and tried to stop it, but the driver sped away. When Ali alerted the cops, they stopped the car and brought it to the Colaba police station. "I tried to stop him, I also took the key, but the driver snatched it back and sped away. He stopped only when cops blocked the way," said Ali, who reached the police station with his car too. Asked if he knew the driver, Ali said he did not.

#### A Shocking Confession

The registration number of Ali's car is MH01EE2388 and that of the other car, belonging to Prasad Kadam, is

MH01EE2383. Kadam told police that he changed the last digit of his number to '8' to escape loan recovery agents. He said he was struggling to pay EMIs to settle the loan he had taken for the car. So he thought of a way out, he changed the number. Police have said in a statement that a preliminary probe had revealed no security breach motive. "Accused has primarily done it to save car being seized by a financial establishment," a police statement said, adding that a case was being registered against him. Kadam has now been arrested.

## Man shoots 8-year-old boy for refusing to buy cigarettes in Bihar's Munger

(News Agency)- An eight-year-old boy was shot in the forehead in Bihar's Munger district, after he refused to buy cigarettes for a man. The incident occurred in the Dharhara police station area in Govindpur village on Sunday afternoon. The boy was warming himself by a fire near his home when a local man, identified as Nitish Kumar, approached and asked him to fetch cigarettes from a shop. When the boy declined, citing the cold weather, Nitish allegedly pulled out a pistol and shot the boy in the forehead before fleeing the scene. Hearing the gunshot, family members and neighbours rushed to the spot and found the boy lying in a pool of blood.

He was taken to the Dharhara Community Health Centre with the help of villagers.

Doctors there referred him to Munger Sadar Hospital for advanced treatment.

Due to his critical condition, he was later referred to a

higher medical facility. Dr Anurag, a physician at Munger Sadar Hospital, said that the bullet was lodged in the boy's forehead near his nose. He confirmed that the boy's condition was critical and required immediate specialised care. Police officials, including Sadar DSP Rajesh Kumar, visited the scene and recovered a bullet casing. DSP Kumar said that Nitish Kumar, a resident of Govindpur village, fled after the shooting. He added that the accused has a criminal record and was already wanted in another case. Efforts are underway to arrest him.

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader and former Union Minister Jayprakash Yadav criticised the state government over the incident, calling it an example of lawlessness in Bihar. He said the rising crime rate reflects administrative failure and described the state as being in a state of "jungle raj."

The police have intensified their search for the accused, while the child remains under critical care. Further investigations are ongoing.





# 3 arrested for secretly filming guests, extorting money from them at Diu hotel

Three people, including a woman, were arrested in Diu for running an extortion racket. Hidden cameras in a hotel recorded victims' private moments. Police uncovered over 20 videos and urged victims to come forward.

(Staff Reporter) Three people, including a woman, have been arrested for allegedly extorting money from people after secretly filming them with hidden cameras as they got intimate in a hotel in Diu, near Gujarat, police said on Tuesday. Diu, often referred to as Diu Town, is a historic-fortified settlement located in the Diu district of the union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. According to the police, the accused operator of Diu's Keshav Hotel, Sanjay Rathod, and manager Altaf were running a sex racket under the garb of a spa. The identity of the woman, who used to honeytrap customers to visit the hotel in the name of a spa, has not been disclosed. The unsuspecting customers visited the hotel and were filmed while getting intimate by cameras hidden

inside the electric switchboards in the rooms. The accused would then threaten such customers with consequences if they did not pay them as demanded. "Customers were being called to the hotel by the woman in the name of a spa. These people had hidden a camera in the switchboard in the hotel room and through a woman, both of them ran an extortion racket," a senior police official said. The police raided the hotel after receiving information and uncovered the truth about the extortion business run from the hotel to trap innocent people.

After arresting Sanjay Rathod and Altaf, police found more than 20 videos of private moments of many people on their phones.

The police have appealed to people who fell prey to this racket to come forward



and provide them with more information, registered a case and an investigation assuring them that they would be given has been launched to find out how many protection. eanwhile, police have people were targeted by the accused.

## Bangladesh Army objects to fencing near Bengal border, Indian villagers step in

(Staff Reporter) Tensions flared at the Indo-Bangladesh border in West Bengal after a verbal altercation broke out between Border Security Force (BSF) personnel and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) over ongoing fencing work. According to local sources, the incident took place near Sukdebpur village in Malda district when BSF jawans were engaged in fencing operations on the Indian side of the border and Bangladesh personnel raised objections to it. The dispute quickly escalated, prompting a group of villagers from the Indian side to gather and chant pro-India slogans in support of the Border Security Force

jawans. A video of the incident is going viral on social media which showed a group of villagers chanting slogans like "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", "Vande Matram" and "Jai Shri Ram". It is reported that the situation was temporarily disrupted as the BGB raised concerns. However, BSF said that the issue was swiftly resolved as the Indian side reassured the BGB that the fencing work had been pre-approved by both nations. The work resumed following the brief disruption, with the standard Border Management communication protocols being followed. "During the fencing, there was a temporary disruption as the Bangladesh Border Guards raised

objections to the activities. However, the BSF assured the BGB that the work had been pre-approved by both countries," BSF sources told India Today TV. "The fencing work has resumed following the brief interruption. The Border Management communication mechanism is being adhered to," they added. Sharing the viral video, BJP leader and West Bengal leader Suvendu Adhikari praised the local villagers and BSF for their swift response, noting that the presence of nationalist sentiments among the public helped drive the BGB personnel to retreat. "The Local Indian Citizens of the area along with the @BSF\_India. Personnel scared them off

and made them realize that no nuisance will be tolerated, when it comes to National Security. Chants of Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Vande Mataram and Jai Shree Ram were reverberating when the BGB personnels were forced to flee. This is the effect of the Public Awakening in West Bengal and Nationalism is flowing in the veins," Adhikari posted on X. The incident took place amid the ongoing nationwide crackdown by authorities on the illegal stay of Bangladeshi migrants in the country. Scores of such illegal immigrants have been arrested in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and other parts of the country and deported to Bangladesh.

## Man clicks photos inside Ram Mandir with camera-equipped sunglasses, detained



objections to the activities. However, the BSF assured the BGB that the work had been pre-approved by both countries," BSF sources told India Today TV. "The fencing work has resumed following the brief interruption.

The Border Management communication mechanism is being adhered to," they added. Sharing the viral video, BJP leader and West Bengal leader Suvendu Adhikari praised the local villagers and BSF for their swift response, noting that the presence of nationalist sentiments among the public helped drive the BGB personnel to retreat. "The Local Indian Citizens of the area along with the @BSF\_India. Personnel scared them off and

made them realize that no nuisance will be tolerated, when it comes to National Security. Chants of Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Vande Mataram and Jai Shree Ram were reverberating when the BGB personnels were forced to flee. This is the effect of the Public Awakening in West Bengal and Nationalism is flowing in the veins," Adhikari posted on X.

The incident took place amid the ongoing nationwide crackdown by authorities on the illegal stay of Bangladeshi migrants in the country. Scores of such illegal immigrants have been arrested in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and other parts of the country and deported to Bangladesh.

# UP Police reject man's claim about wife eloping with beggar: 'Untrue, baseless'

(Staff Reporter) Uttar Pradesh Police on Tuesday evening issued a clarification over the complaint filed by a man who alleged that his wife left him and eloped with a man, whom he claimed to be a beggar. The police clarification came after the woman in question appeared before the cops, refuting her husband's claims and revealing her side of the story. The woman's husband, Raju, had filed a complaint with the Harpalpur police station in Hardoi district, alleging that his wife left their home on January 3 under the pretence of going to the market to buy vegetables and clothes but never returned. He further accused her of taking Rs 1.6 lakh in cash, collected from the

sale of buffaloes and soil, along with jewellery and other valuables. The



husband claimed the money was meant for the family's sustenance. According to Raju, he had observed his wife interacting

with the beggar, identified as Nanhe Pandit, on multiple occasions but never suspected the situation would escalate to this extent. Nanhe Pandit, hails from the Khidkiyan neighbourhood in Sandhi. "Nanhe Pandit, the beggar, took my wife away. When I checked, their phone numbers were switched off. Later, I searched the house and found that not only was

my wife missing but also our valuables and cash. There was at least Rs 1.6 lakh in cash, along with jewellery. We have

six children, and I have been married for 20 years. Nanhe Pandit is the son of Prem Sagar. We want the police to find him, register a case, and ensure my wife is returned to us," Raju had claimed. However, in an official statement, Hardoi Police rejected Raju's allegations, describing them as "untrue and baseless." The woman, upon learning of the complaint, appeared before the authorities and provided her account of the events.

According to her statement, she left home to stay with a relative due to regular abuse and physical assault by her husband. She denied the allegations of theft and elopement.

## Why Tamil Nadu CM Stalin pledged USD 1 million for decoding Indus script

(Staff Reporter) The enigmatic script of the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation, which has remained undeciphered since its discovery in the early 1920s by archaeologists led by Sir John Marshall, now carries a USD 1 million reward for anyone who decodes it. The substantial cash reward comes from Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin, thousands of kilometres away from the geographical region of the Indus Valley Civilisation (3300 BCE to 1300 BCE), which flourished in the north and northwestern parts of the Indian Subcontinent some 5,000 years ago. If the script is decoded, it could unveil the true history of the Indus Valley Civilisation, and its socio-economic connections. This could shed light on potential migration out of the Indus Valley civilisation southwards, coinciding with the decline of the late Harappan phase. Is Stalin's bid aimed at addressing these questions, or does it have political undertones?

### TAMIL NADU CM MK STALIN ANNOUNCES USD 1 MILLION FOR A SUCCESSFUL HARAPPAN SCRIPT DECODER

During the inauguration of a three-day international conference in Chennai to commemorate the centenary of the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilisation starting in 1921, Tamil Nadu CM Stalin on Sunday announced the big prize. "We are still unable to clearly understand the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation that once flourished. Efforts are on to this day by scholars to solve the riddle and, in order to encourage such efforts, a prize of USD 1 million will be provided to individuals or organisations that solve the riddle," said Stalin.

Moreover, Stalin also laid the foundation stone for the statue of Sir John Marshall,

the British archaeologist who led the excavation of the first site of the urban culture starting in 1921, Harappa.



"John Marshall's discovery completely changed the perception. His argument that the Indus Valley Civilisation predated the Aryan Civilisation [Vedic age] and the language spoken in the Indus Valley could be Dravidian has been strengthened further," Stalin was quoted as saying by the newspaper The Hindu. The big announcement on Sunday came alongside a study by Tamil Nadu's archaeology department that said there were several similarities between the signs that we call the Indus Valley script and those discovered during excavations in Tamil Nadu's sites. The study 'Indus Signs And Graffiti Marks of Tamil Nadu – A Morphological Study' said that "more than 90% of the graffiti marks of South India and the graffiti marks of the Indus Valley Civilisation had parallels". The study also revealed that while the Indus Valley civilisation, which was predominantly a Chalcolithic culture (marked by the use of copper), South India, particularly the

Vaigai river valley, was placed in the Iron Age, representing a more advanced stage. The announcement and the study by Stalin

reflects his attempt to position himself as a guardian of Dravidian culture and to oppose the BJP, which he claims is against Dravidian interests and values. WHAT'S THE MYSTERY AROUND THE INDUS VALLEY SCRIPT? The Indus Valley Civilisation, famous for its sophisticated urban planning and advanced water management systems, is also known for its unique script or writing system, which has long fascinated epigraphers and archaeologists. But even after a hundred years, the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation remains undeciphered. The script, which is a @collection of some 600 symbols discovered so far, has been found on seals, tablets, and most importantly, an odd sign board from Gujarat's Dholavira. Unlike the alphabets of modern day, these alphabets are more like symbols such as arrows, fishes etc. The absence of a bilingual inscription, like the Rosetta Stone for Egyptian hieroglyphs, has further

complicated efforts at its decoding. The script also does not totally align with subsequent scripts of the subcontinent, signalling a break in continuity of cultures and migration. The lack of consensus on the language or languages (not to be confused with the Indus Valley script) spoken by the Indus Valley people add to the complexity. The symbols themselves are complex and represent a mix of logographic and syllabic elements, which also makes the assertion of the script's precise function unclear. This has continued to intrigue researchers for decades. It is in this pursuit that archaeologists, linguists and researchers have postulated various theories linking the Harappan script to other contemporary and succeeding cultures and their scripts in the region. Scholars such as Iravatham Mahadevan and Asko Parpola are the ones who have argued that the script had a relation to a Dravidian language. Mahadevan has held that the language of the Harappan Civilisation "was an early form of the Dravidian script". It is against this backdrop that MK Stalin has announced the cash prize for a researcher and a body that decodes the proto-historical script (Proto-history refers to the time period for which literary evidence exists but cannot be deciphered. It follows the pre-historical period, during which no literary evidence is available). In recent years, the DMK-led Tamil Nadu government has intensified archaeological excavations in the state. One such excavation in Tamil Nadu's Keeladi in the Vaigai basin, revealed that urban centres flourished in the region during the Sangam age, a period earlier associated with agricultural settlements. A 2019 report dated some of the Keeladi artefacts to a period between the sixth century BCE and first century BCE.



## Why was Justin Trudeau forced out? With Trump on the horizon, his party wasn't sure he could win

Justin Trudeau has announced he will step down as Canadian prime minister after his successor is chosen, probably by the end of March. Trudeau says he is leaving because despite being “a fighter”, he cannot lead his party into the forthcoming election while facing internal party divisions. In sum, his caucus, his Liberal party and the country want him gone. So off he goes, perhaps better late than never. But despite his reasoning, his resignation remains difficult to understand. Up until Christmas Trudeau had repeatedly said he was staying on, ready and eager to fight Pierre Poilievre and the Conservative party – who are up by more than 20 points in polls – in this year's election. But calls for him to resign had been creeping into the public view, from former members of parliament, cabinet ministers and even current MPs.

So why was he forced out? What were the internal party divisions he cited as he stood in front of his home at Rideau Cottage in Ottawa on Monday and announced his departure? When Chrystia Freeland, then finance minister and deputy prime minister, quit just before Christmas, on the day she was due to present the government's economic update, pressure for Trudeau to step aside grew louder and more frequent. Freeland couldn't abide Trudeau's fiscal ways – too keen to spend in the face of a growing deficit and tariff threats from the incoming Trump administration; too gimmicky, with the government's sales tax holiday plans (fulfilled) and intention to send working Canadians a \$250 stimulus cheque (unfulfilled). By the new year, the Liberal party's regional Atlantic and Quebec caucuses had abandoned Trudeau, as the prime minister had lost the support of most of his supporters. The Liberals swept every seat in Atlantic Canada in 2015 on their way to a sizeable majority and they are unlikely to form a government without robust support in Quebec. The position had become utterly untenable for Trudeau. Global News says every MP it spoke to said Trudeau had gone too far left. It's a risible claim, but a grievance that had been circulating for some time among a cadre of more fiscally austere Liberals. In a way, that concern was echoed in Freeland's resignation letter, where she wrote that in the face of Donald Trump's threat of big tariffs, Canada must “keep our fiscal powder dry today, so we have the reserves we may need for a coming tariff war”. Keeping the powder dry meant, Freeland wrote, “eschewing costly political gimmicks, which we can ill afford and which make Canadians doubt that we recognize the gravity of the moment”. A first reading of the moment might confirm that Trudeau had indeed gone “too far left” for some in his party, whatever that

means, but it misses the deeper fact that as he passed a decade in power, the prime minister had contracted a common and often-deadly political ailment – he became saddled with the baggage one accumulates over time, resulting in dwindling popularity. Trudeau won a majority in 2015, but he was relegated to minority governments after the 2019 and 2021 elections, each of which he won with fewer votes than the Tories. His government was left relying on intermittent support from whichever party it could court that day, but particularly the leftwing New Democratic party. The dynamic only added to the sense of decline, the feeling that the Liberals were becoming a spent force. Of Canada's 23 prime ministers, Trudeau ranks seventh in length of tenure, just behind Stephen Harper, whom he beat to form government in 2015. Harper made it nine years and 271 days. Jean Chrétien, who ranks fifth, lasted just over 10 years before being forced out by an internal party faction. The man who ranks just below Trudeau, the late Brian Mulroney, made it nearly nine years before resigning ahead of the 1993 election that saw his party almost obliterated.

What all these men share is that by the end of their time, they had become a spent force. A quotation attributed to the former UK prime minister Harold Wilson tells us “a week is a long time in politics”. That's true. So how long, then, is a decade? It's an eternity, a length of time during which citizens can – and will – project on to a leader every perceived irritant or issue of concern, fairly or unfairly, from the state of the economy to the lousy weather.

A politician might be forgiven – or at least understood – when they are down in the polls and counted out, for relying on political gimmicks in an attempt to survive the inevitable, but by the end it was all rather desperate for Trudeau and bad for the country. Having managed to make it through the rise of Trump, the pandemic and more mundane political challenges, Trudeau was trying to achieve four election wins in a row, something no Canadian prime minister, including his father, has done since Wilfrid Laurier accomplished it more than 100 years ago. The Liberals will now choose a successor to Trudeau and that person will probably learn the hard lesson that the party's fortunes aren't primarily about anything so complicated as ideology or policy agendas at this point; rather, they're a function of time and its inexorable march forward. And while it may be cold comfort today, the Liberals may be the beneficiaries of the iron law of time when it inevitably comes for their opponent, though they may have to wait a decade or so.

## Trump Is Back. Does That Mean A Saudi-Israel 'Deal'?

Donald Trump exited the White House in January 2021, secure in the knowledge that he had sown the seeds of peace in West Asia by getting Israel and a clutch of Arab nations to sign peace deals under the framework of what is known as the Abraham Accords. Perhaps Trump's only regret was that he could not get enough time to get Saudi Arabia to be a part of this regional peace deal with Israel. It was expected that Riyadh was next in line. By October 2023, it was widely believed that Saudi and Israeli leaders were inching closer to a historic handshake. But the fact is that Riyadh hadn't even held formal talks with Tel Aviv, clinging firmly to one condition: there'd be no deal without a credible resolution to the Palestinian question.

Regardless, West Asia seemed on the left to the incoming administration to finish the job. Four years on, President Joe Biden is about to pack his bags, lugging the weight of unfulfilled promises and dashed expectations. Not only did he fail to expand Trump's pet project, but his tenure will also be remembered for watching Israel unleash devastation in Gaza while murmuring half-hearted disapproval. Biden also stood by as China stroled in to broker peace between sworn enemies, Saudi Arabia and Iran, leaving the US looking like a sidelined bystander in the geopolitical game it once was a glaring miscalculation that dominated everyone's face. West Asia Has original dealmaker, just days away from Changed

his White House comeback, the question It is being reported that Trump and his teams are working overtime to dust off the drafts of the agreement and prepare Saudi Arabia? The Abraham Accords, a new one with a view to paving the way set of US-brokered agreements that brought Israel and several Arab nations— the Saudis and the Israelis.

like the UAE and Bahrain—into a Today's West Asia, however, has shifted diplomatic embrace, were a Trump-era intensely on the Arab-Palestinian issue distaste for Iran, Trump dangled security guarantees and the promise of regional economic cooperation to seal the deal. But the real jackpot was Saudi Arabia, promising that he would bring peace to the sole custodian of Islam's two holiest places—Mecca and Medina—and the world's biggest oil exporter. After the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan jumped aboard, it was only natural to

## The South Asian Insider Weekly

(Published since March 2002) A Publication of Nu Way Media Group Inc.

ISSN No. 1554 06X

**Editor in Chief & Publisher: Sharanjit Singh Thind**

**Email: [editor@thesouthasianinsider.com](mailto:editor@thesouthasianinsider.com)**

**Mailing Address:**

**Nu Way Media Group Inc.**

**Suite 223, West 32nd Street**

**Manhattan, New York 10018**

**For General and Advertising Inquiries:**

**[thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com](mailto:thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com)**

**Tel: 646 875 8495**

**[www.thesouthasianinsider.com](http://www.thesouthasianinsider.com)**

**Disclaimer** The South Asian Insider is a weekly newspaper published every week by The South Asian Insider. It's available in community & religious centers, ethnic grocery stores and also available by mail, email & online to subscribers. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers, authors and forum participants in The South Asian Insider do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editor. All advertisers advertising in The South Asian Insider assume responsibility for accuracy of their advertisements. The South Asian Insider and/or people associated with it are not responsible for any claims made by the advertisers and don't endorse any product or services advertised in The South Asian Insider. We strongly urge consulting your lawyer before buying/contracting /hiring through the ads published in the newspaper. We are in the business of selling space and claims made by the advertisers are not authenticated or confirmed by an independent source.





# Justin Trudeau's reluctant departure will leave his Liberal party in freefall

**His protracted refusal to quit as PM could even result in the demise of Canada's 'natural governing party'**

Justin Trudeau's decision to resign as prime minister has jolted his ailing Liberal party, kicking off a leadership race that could determine the future – or the demise – of Canada's "natural governing party". On a frigid Monday morning, Trudeau said that while "every bone in my body tells me to fight", a procedural standstill in parliament, as well as his dismal polling numbers, meant there was no path forward to contest a fourth term as leader. His decision to step away from a job he has held for nearly a decade comes as the party's political fortunes are in freefall, suffering the loss of key political strongholds in recent byelections and the abdication of prominent cabinet ministers. All opposition parties have vowed to bring down Trudeau's minority government given the chance, and recent polling has the Liberals at 16% support, the party's worst pre-election standing in more than a century. With eyes on the looming leadership contest, Trudeau's dramatic reshaping of the Liberal party into a political entity tightly arrayed around its

leader – and one with no heir apparent – offers a glimpse into the challenge prospective candidates face in vying for the top job and the damage the prime minister has done in delaying that process. All politicians seek out allies for advice and support, but Trudeau's decision to surround himself with close friends within his inner circle was unusual and probably played a role in convincing him he could contest the next election effectively even when public opinion suggested otherwise, said Lori Turnbull, the director of Dalhousie University's school of public administration. A number of ministers were at his wedding party and the current finance minister is his former babysitter. "This is somebody who has packed the place with his friends, people he trusts on a personal level, who won't be transactional with him. You have to be loyal to him. You have to be devoted to him. But he is not loyal and devoted to you," she said. Turnbull pointed to his recent decision to force Chrystia Freeland, his closest political ally, out of her role as finance minister after failing to recruit the

former Bank of England and Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney to replace her. Freeland stepped down in mid-December amid a row over the appropriate response to Donald Trump's looming economic nationalism. Her scathing resignation letter accused Trudeau of "costly political gimmicks" and cast doubt on his understanding of the "gravity of the moment". "He will throw you away in a heartbeat because of what he wants to do ... yet he expects this completely undying loyalty from people," said Turnbull. "Whoever inherits this mess will have just a shell to work with. It's in tatters." Trudeau's decision to step down follows immense pressure from lawmakers from within his own party, including one who decried the "small cabal" of the PM's inner circle that pursued "a reckless strategy of mutual assured political destruction". His reversal of fortunes has been in the works for years as the public slowly turned sour on a political figure whose historic surname – he is the son of the former prime minister Pierre Trudeau – good looks and charisma elevated him

into a global celebrity, or, as a 2016 Vogue profile put it, the "new young face of Canadian politics". When he became Liberal leader in 2013, Trudeau inherited a party reeling from a string of defeats. He made swift changes – including changing how party membership was handled – that in effect severed ties to a previous generation of party brass. And he defied expectations, overturning a three-way race to secure a surprise majority government. But a leader seemingly attuned to the mood of the country found himself embroiled in series of personal scandals, including a family trip to the Aga Khan's private island, and skipping the country's first national day of truth and reconciliation for a surfing vacation. Three damning images of the Canadian prime minister in blackface and revelations that members of his family were paid hundreds of thousands of dollars by a charity to which his government recently awarded a substantial contract also eroded his carefully crafted public image. Trudeau's apparent inability to understand public outrage in each case

offers an explanation for his protracted refusal to step down and his seeming blindness to growing dissatisfaction within his party and the broader public. "Every day he remained silent, he increased the number of voices saying 'you need to depart'. His silence diminished the impression that he made a choice of his own volition and that delay has likely taken a shark-sized bite out of the prime minister's legacy," said Scott Reid, a political adviser and former director of communications to the Liberal former prime minister Paul Martin. "But the inherent self-confidence required to be a successful prime minister, be the kind of person that can compete to lead the country and succeed at it always, always makes you vulnerable to having a blind spot, especially when recognising the end is nigh. And so what we thought was going to be a political story about a man who resurrected his political party is now at risk. "He won't just not be the hero of that story, but he may return [the Liberal party] to the same dismal place that he discovered it – or worse."



# As a child psychiatrist, I see what smartphones are doing to kids' mental health – and it's terrifying

Smartphone use among children has reached a critical moment. Many of us in the UK are increasingly aware of the dangers associated with them – and as a child and adolescent psychiatrist, I am more worried than most. I am witnessing at first hand the sheer devastation that smartphone use is wreaking on our young people's mental health. The majority of children over 10 I see at my NHS clinic now have a smartphone. An increasingly large proportion of patients have difficulties that are related to, or exacerbated by, their use of technology.

We are seeing profound mental illness stemming from excessive social media use, online bullying, screen addiction, or falling prey to online child sexual exploitation. We are seeing children who are disappearing into online worlds, who are unable to sleep, who are increasingly inattentive and impulsive, emotionally dysregulated and aggressive. Children crippled by anxiety or a fear of missing out. Who spend hours alone, cut off from those who love them, who spend hour upon hour speaking to strangers. Children and adolescents are increasingly seeking comfort and validation from peer groups online. Unfortunately,

some of these encourage self-harm, eating disorder behaviours and even suicide. I looked after a young person last year who struggled significantly with their mental health and prolific self-harm. I was later informed that they were uploading their experience and behaviours on TikTok and had livestreamed content from within A&E departments and an inpatient psychiatric ward to thousands of followers and well-wishers. Children's self-esteem and self-image is also at an all-time low, and levels of depression and suicidal thoughts have never been higher. It is no secret among mental health professionals that there is a direct link between smartphone use and real-world harms. The average UK 12-year-old now spends 29 hours a week – equivalent to a part-time job – on their smartphone. To have access to the amount of information they do at such a young age is having a profound impact on their neurological development. Where in the past we might have received a handful of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) referrals each week, we are now inundated. Parents can't get their children to sleep or sit still. They



struggle to concentrate in school and education has taken an all-time hit. As adults, we see how our attention span has been affected in the years since our lives have gone online. I can't remember the last time I saw someone watch a film without scrolling through their phone or checking their messages. Our brains are changing – and children are not immune to this. At the same time, our young people are increasingly isolated and insular. The average time that teens spend with friends each day has plummeted by 65% since 2010. For hundreds of years, adolescence has triggered a period of social "pack mentality". Historically, that might have meant pressure to join a football team or go out with friends. But now, this socialising is happening more and more on WhatsApp groups and social media – with terrifying consequences. In these closed spaces, free from adult oversight, children can fall down disturbing rabbit holes. In clinic, we hear about viral suicide pacts and self-harm challenges being shared by children as young as 10.

For very vulnerable children, who may not have many friends in the classroom, the lure of being accepted online can feel intoxicating, even if it

means participating in something hugely dangerous. In recent years, there have been numerous high-profile cases of child suicides linked to social media. Most striking is that often their parents have no insight into what is happening before tragedy occurs. This needs to be a watershed moment. As an advocate for children's mental health, it is clear to me that we are forcing children to grow up long before they are ready. My heart sinks whenever I encounter yet another young person in clinic feeling hopeless about their future, who is deeply embedded in an alternate reality created by their phone. In my own family, I hope I'll be able to keep my children away from smartphones and social media until they are at least 16. Our brains continue to develop up until the age of about 25, and prior to that our ability to think rationally, make decisions based on fact rather than emotion, plan, problem-solve and exhibit self-control is limited. Countless adults struggle to mediate their phone use and maintain productivity, make impulsive purchases online and fall for the many scams out there – why are we expecting our children to cope? But I'm aware how difficult this will be if all their friends have access to one. That's why it's not

enough for parents to have to make individual choices. As a society, we urgently need to reckon with this problem. Campaigns such as Smartphone Free Childhood are gaining momentum in encouraging parents to take decisions en masse for their children's wellbeing. But the state must now also intervene. I hope the government wakes up to what is happening to our young people and takes these tough decisions out of our hands.

#### As told to Lucy Pasha-Robinson

Dr Emily Sehmer is a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist in the NHS (and mother of two children). In the UK, the youth suicide charity Papyrus can be contacted on 0800 068 4141 or email [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org), and in the UK and Ireland Samaritans can be contacted on freephone 116 123, or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie). In the US, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is at 988 or chat for support. You can also text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis text line counselor. In Australia, the crisis support service Lifeline is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [befrienders.org](http://befrienders.org)



# Is India Ready For A Looming Battle Of The Sexes?

Pushpa II, a mega-hit with record box office collections, is a typical masala film filled with overt misogyny. So are Animal



and Kabir Singh. Together, they have elevated sexism and misogyny to unprecedented levels. And yet, they have drawn audiences much bigger than most other films. Why? Is it because a growing segment of men, feeling sidelined and frustrated, are finding some vicarious pleasure in such portrayals of skewed gender dynamics on screen? Has the rapid ascent of women in recent years irked them? How are these frustrations going to affect India's sociopolitical dynamics? While the world is far from achieving true gender equality, the pace of change in recent years has indeed unsettled some. Girls consistently outshining boys academically has been an old trend. Now, accelerated changes are taking place. More women have begun

to enter boardrooms; they are excelling at IITs and IIMs, challenging the gender pay gap in the entertainment industry, and winning accolades in sports. All this is unfolding right now and at a pace India has not seen before. In 2014, women accounted for only 6% of board members in NIFTY-500 companies, a figure that has since tripled to 18%. Female enrolment in BTech programs at IITs was a mere 8% in 2017 but has risen to 20% now. Similarly, the share of women at IIMs has increased from 13% in 2004 to 31% today. At the recent Paris Olympics, Manu Bhaker became the first Indian athlete to win two medals at the same event. Had it not been for Vinesh Phogat's unfortunate disqualification, women would have outperformed men in India's Olympic medal tally with a coveted gold. Globally, too, the push for gender parity has gained momentum in recent years. In the United States, for example, the proportion of women in corporate boardrooms has risen from 16% in 2012 to 30% in 2022. A Bank of America Securities report cited by CNBC noted that women comprised 20% of boardroom members in Asia in 2022, a seven-percentage-point increase from 2010. Female representation in boardrooms is widely regarded as a critical

benchmark for gender equality. However, the world over, this assertion of women's equal rights has coincided with a growing sense of resentment, particularly among younger men who feel things have gone too far. A 2024 Ipsos global survey found that over half of Gen Z and Millennials believe that efforts to achieve gender equality in their countries have gone too far, to the detriment of their own interests. Older men, the survey shows, do not share such sentiment as they grew up in an era with fewer challenges to male dominance. Ipsos surveys have observed that the attitudinal change is intensifying over the years. "More people think that when it comes to giving women equal rights with men, things have gone far enough in their country (41% in 2019 vs. 54% in 2023 / 2024)." The proportion of GenZ and millennial males with such views is much higher at 60% and 57%, respectively. The attitudinal changes are getting reflected in political outcomes across the world, from the US and the UK to South Korea, Poland, Germany and France. Analysing the US presidential verdict, a columnist for The Guardian writes: "In 2024, men aged between 18 and 29 turned out in force for Trump, with the Republican winning the demographic by 14 points, overturning a generational trend that has for decades seen young people favour left-

leaning candidates.... Trump's victory in the 'manosphere' is just one part of an unprecedented phenomenon across the world, in which the politics of a single generation has split across the gender divide."

## A Young Population

With such sweeping changes worldwide, can India remain insulated? Highly unlikely. Millennials and Gen Z (essentially those born in the 1980s and later) comprise 52% of the population of India—a significantly higher share than the global average of 47%. This will have a profound impact on India. Given that a majority of India's population is susceptible to attitudinal shifts driven by the quest for gender parity, the issue of gender justice—or the lack thereof—is poised to become one of the most significant political flashpoints during elections.

While predicting the future is inherently risky, we can venture a few guesses about the impending changes. The dominant theme of campus politics may shift. Traditional left, right, and centrist divisions may give way to party alignments based on what they offer to specific genders. Highly desirable pro-women initiatives, which are increasingly gaining traction and winning elections, may need to be balanced with incentives targeting other segments.

## After 2024, Indian Pollsters Must Learn Something About Voters This Year

Among the sources of entertainment this holiday season was viewing the many YouTube compilations of the election night coverage of major TV networks in the United States. Curated by small-time poll aggregators and angry MAGA (Make America Great Again) supporters, the hour-long videos provided vivid examples of the vacuousness of mainstream political punditry.

### The Debacle In America

It was funny to observe how, when the polls closed, networks such as CNN, CBS and MSNBC were highlighting the surge in voter turnout among Puerto Ricans and on college campuses. It was suggested that these sections would tilt the balance in the five crucial swing states in favour of Kamala Harris who, the pundits felt, had run a "flawless campaign." At this point, various opinion polls were produced to show that Donald Trump was the least acceptable candidate. Trump's pariah status was garnished by pious comments centred on the belief that an overwhelming majority of women attached greater priority to reproductive rights over the state of the economy. If these pious certitudes appear, in hindsight, to be quite ridiculous, the underlying humour behind the meltdown

once it was clear that Trump had beaten Harris conclusively, was inescapable. The political analysts moved from analysing the votes to debunking the intelligence of voters and lamenting the future of the US. If the global liberal fraternity failed to anticipate the underlying support for Trump and needed 'safe zones' and counselling on the campuses to get over the trauma of an unpalatable electoral verdict, much of the responsibility lies with the pollsters. In poll after poll, these so-called independent pollsters had suggested that the outcome on November 5 was within the margin of error, and thus, too close to call. Was this due to sampling errors or social pressures that made those who voted for Trump wary of admitting this openly? This was certainly the case in the 2016 presidential election, and it speaks volumes for the political environment of the world's most powerful democracy, that supporters of the winner have to keep their preferences under wraps for fear of social ostracism. Learning From Trump's Victory The victory of Trump should, ideally, be a lesson to the presiding deities of the so-called 'legacy media' and the polling industry to review their political assumptions. But the

lessons aren't necessarily limited to the US. The three sets of elections held last year in India also warranted a clinical post-mortem which, alas, has not been forthcoming. Instead, the mismatch between what was projected and what transpired has been brushed aside casually, till the blunder the next time. The most important lesson from the Lok Sabha poll and the subsequent assembly elections in Haryana and Maharashtra is the diminishing faith in pollsters. Most polls predicted a resounding BJP win in the Lok Sabha, a win for the Congress in Haryana and a small advantage for the BJP-led formation in Maharashtra. The pollsters failed to anticipate the big setbacks for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Haryana. Likewise, the BJP victory in the Odisha assembly was unanticipated. Subsequently, the victory of the BJP in Haryana and its clean sweep in Maharashtra went against prevailing conventional wisdom. It is entirely possible that the main problem with Indian polling outfits is shoddy or, in some cases, non-existent fieldwork. To pursue a truly random sampling, as demanded by statisticians, is both time-consuming and

expensive. Instead, what is being pursued is either telephone polls of questionable authenticity or findings based almost entirely on the judgments of a new breed of political analysts. Since many of those in media organisations and political parties are untutored in the art of analysing poll findings, it is possible for a growing tribe of charlatans to pull the wool over the eyes of their clients. No Introspection In the aftermath of the actual results, there has hardly been any known instance of those who commission opinion (and exit) polls doing a post-mortem of the quantum of variation with the actual results. This suggests that the errors (methodological or wilful), not to mention fraud, will be repeated in the next round of elections. Unless media organisations develop a culture of accountability to their consumers, they, too, will experience the same ridicule that has been heaped on their liberal counterparts by the growing tribe of irreverent YouTubers. As the party that experienced the most strategic setback in the Lok Sabha poll, it is to be expected that the BJP must have undertaken the most rigorous post-poll dissection to understand where it went wrong and what remedial steps to take.



# Why does modern life often feel like the seven circles of digital hell?

In many ways, I love living in the digital age. As someone who grew up in the analog world (my first journalism job, as a college intern, involved a manual typewriter and carbon paper), I am still delighted to be able to find out, within 10 seconds, whether a particular movie star is still alive or to share my latest column with the entire world through a social media post. But the downside of digital life is driving me batty – so much so that I sometimes consider trying to go off the grid altogether to seek a less frustrating existence. I have a fantasy of this simple life that I describe as Full Bore Thoreau. It involves listening to birdsong and reading Russian novels while occasionally using a landline to maintain contact with other humans. What has brought me to this point? Consider, as one of many examples, my recent adventures with usernames and passwords, involving E-ZPass, the device that allows you to travel through toll barriers without stopping to hand over cash. When I signed up for it many years ago, I apparently got a username and password. And I gave them my credit card information so that it could be charged when necessary. All went well



for years; I would get hard-copy statements in the mail from time to time, but never kept them around for long. I gave this arrangement no thought, until the day I got a voicemail message, claiming to be from a law firm, saying I had accrued massive E-ZPass debt. I thought it might be a scam so decided to check my account balance, something I had never felt the need to do before. Signing in involved that original username and password. But, horrors! It turned out that

my username was not my email address. I tried to retrieve it via my cellphone number or email address but only descended into concentric circles of digital hell. A phone call – old-school, I know – to customer service resulted in a demand for my account number, but in order to get that, I needed to, yes, sign on to my account. Round and round I went. Of course, an issue like that is minor, one tiny piece of the daily puzzle that involves all the ways that we (and institutions like

banks or employers) try to protect digital security. Two-factor authentication now stops us at every turn. To log in, you need to put in the code that's just been sent to your phone, but as you go to your text messages to find it, the original question somehow has disappeared into the ether. Those of us who do any freelance work descend to a special torture chamber that comes with registering as a "vendor" with part-time employers. This involves layers upon layers of proving your identity, submitting tax forms and navigating multilayered payment systems with weird names and byzantine processes. Not long ago, I got an email from the accounts payable department of a large media company that began with this less than promising line, including the capitalized F: "Your Form has been received and forwarded for processing." It then directed me to the "secure onboarding portal", where many other incomprehensible steps awaited. All of this, I remind myself, is a result of privilege. These are the very definition of first-world problems, and I'm lucky – in a sense – to have them. But it doesn't feel that way. Often, I wish I could step off the digital merry-go-round.

WORKING CAPITAL R US

## EIDL/PPP Money Gone?

Talk to us for Funding Options for your Business

### SOLUTIONS

SBA FINANCING

ASSET BASED LOANS

EQUIPMENT FINANCING

ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLES

BUSINESS LINES OF CREDIT

We look forward to your valued inquiry for our Business Solutions.

## Call (646) 897 3016

[info@workingcapitalrus.com](mailto:info@workingcapitalrus.com)  
[www.workingcapitalrus.com](http://www.workingcapitalrus.com)

When you want to read **News that matters**  
**The South Asian Insider Weekly**

## Uncompromised and Unbiased

\*21 Glorious Years \*Always a Step Ahead  
 \*Journalism of Courage  
 \*Fearless Voice of the Community

www.thesouthasianinsider.com



# The hidden health fallouts of a warming world



Climate change has is the single largest global health challenge in the 21st century. The Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere beyond the natural variations." A multi-country study has suggested that climate change is responsible for four lakh additional deaths each year and will contribute to seven lakh annual deaths by 2030. As per the UN, the world has endured a "decade of deadly heat", with 2024 capping 10 years of unprecedented temperatures. It is almost certain that it will exceed the Paris Agreement threshold of 1.5 degrees above the preindustrial levels of temperature for the first time. The World Meteorological Organisation has warned that the new year is likely to be worse, with the greenhouse gas levels growing to record highs. India also recorded its warmest year in 2024. It witnessed extreme weather on 255 of the 274 days of the year's first nine months, according to the Centre for Science and Environment. The detrimental climatic factors for human health include an increase in the frequency and intensity of heatwaves, precipitation, floods and droughts. The floods in Spain, hurricanes in the US, drought in the Amazon and floods across Africa are just a few examples. In West Asia, 1,300 Haj pilgrims died due to extreme heat in

2024.

High temperature is known to increase the 'ground level ozone' and 'climate altering pollutants' other than carbon dioxide. They exacerbate cardio-respiratory and allergic diseases and certain cancers. Between 2000-2004 and 2017-2021, heat-related deaths increased by 55 per cent in India. Due to heat exposure, it lost 167.2 billion potential labour hours in 2021, with income losses equivalent to 5.4 per cent of the GDP. An increase in the transmission and spread of infectious diseases and changes in the distribution of water-, food- and vector-borne diseases have also been seen. A 2022 study published in the 'Nature Climate Change' found that nearly 60 per cent of the infectious diseases are aggravated by climate hazards. A warmer climate causes water-borne diseases, including cholera, and diarrhoeal diseases like giardiasis, salmonellosis (including typhoid) and cryptosporidiosis. It is estimated that one-quarter of children's deaths in South Asia are due to diarrhoeal diseases. As temperatures increase, bacterial survival time and proliferation increase. Further, contamination of water during floods makes things worse. A relationship has been observed between an increase in the sea-surface temperature and cholera epidemics. Malaria, dengue, chikungunya and leptospirosis have become more common in India with a longer duration of infectivity in the last two decades. Chikungunya and dengue

are influenced by climate change as both are transmitted by the same vector: *Aedes aegypti*. In 2023, some six million cases of dengue were reported worldwide — more than ever before. Alarmingly, in 2024, this number exceeded 12 million. Mosquitoes are exothermic or cold-blooded. So, when the temperature rises, everything that their body does speeds up. They grow faster and replicate the dengue virus in their guts more effectively. Between 1951-1960 and 2012-2021, the number of months suitable for dengue transmission has risen by 1.7 per cent. Changes in temperature, humidity and rainfall are altering the global malaria map. In Africa, on either side of the Equator, there has been an increase by several miles of areas that are suitable for breeding mosquitoes each year due to deforestation and changes in temperature and rainfall. It has populations with low immunity to malaria. The warming atmosphere has been melting glaciers and ice sheets. Experts fear that micro-organisms of yet unknown significance may get activated after staying dormant for thousands of years. The increase in zoonotic diseases (diseases spread from animals to humans) is also threatening mankind. With changes in the forest cover due to human activity, there has been a migration of certain bird and mammal species which are hosts to an array of pathogenic organisms that can cause diseases in humans. They include tick-borne encephalitis, haemorrhagic fever brucellosis and leptospirosis. Although

low- and middle-income countries are responsible for only a small percentage of global greenhouse gas emissions, the adverse health effects fall disproportionately on them because of poor health infrastructure, lack of funds and overpopulation. This is the reason that at the COP-29 (29th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC), held in November 2024, India and other developing countries objected to the \$300-billion per year funding agreed upon to prevent climate change. It fell way short of the demand of \$1.3 trillion to meet the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting the global temperature rise. While the India has formulated the National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health and the National Action Plan on Climate Change, how can individuals help? One of the most impactful ways to do so is to eat less meat. Meat animals release methane and nitrous oxide, which have a much stronger effect on global warming than carbon dioxide. Air travel is responsible for one-sixth of all emissions globally. Using other modes of transport can, thus, be helpful. Clothes also account for sizeable emissions. Recycling clothes and having a smaller wardrobe is a good idea. Using heating devices not based on fossil fuels is easy. Reducing the use of plastics is another way to contribute to sustainable living. It is important to increase awareness about climate change since everyone is affected by it and every small measure counts. We owe it to the coming generations to save the planet.



# Pakistan punishes Taliban for TTP attacks

(Staff Reporter) ON December 24 last year, Pakistan launched targeted attacks

the US and other countries in the name of Afghanistan. The two countries have



also differed on the installation of a fence by Pakistan in the bordering areas as Afghanistan does not accept the Durand Line

against Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) hideouts in the Paktia province of Afghanistan, killing dozens of people, mostly women and children. This was in response to the TTP's raids against Pakistani security forces on December 21 in south Waziristan, which resulted in the killing of 16 Pakistan soldiers. As US-made weapons seized during the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 became available to the TTP, it increased its attacks inside Pakistan in 2024, killing 1,612 security personnel and others in 444 terrorist attacks. Last year was the deadliest in terms of terror attacks, as per Pakistani sources. Pakistan's reading of the Taliban — whom it reared and supported for more than two decades against the US-led international security forces in the expectations of having a friendly regime in Kabul, which would provide it with "strategic depth" — has turned out to be completely wrong. The Taliban has accused Islamabad of pocketing much of the international aid it got from

marking the border, claiming that it was an artificial line dividing the Pashtuns unfairly on both sides. In 2021, the then Imran Khan government of Pakistan engaged in peace talks with the TTP, which were facilitated by the Taliban. The year-long negotiations, which included a brief ceasefire, failed without the ceasing of attacks by the TTP. According to some Pakistanis, these talks provided useful time to the TTP to regroup and boost its strength. Pakistan has given several warnings to the Taliban at the highest levels, but the latter has shown no serious intent to control the TTP. The Taliban and TTP share ethnic ties and have fought together against the West for years. The Taliban has ideological sympathy with the TTP's objective of establishing a Sharia state in the tribal areas of Pakistan and uses TTP's militant activities to pressure Pakistan whenever it wants. Also, if the Taliban were to take harsh action against the TTP, the latter's fighters could defect to the Islamic State of

Khorasan (ISK), an offshoot of ISIS, with whom they share jihadist beliefs and deep-rooted bonds and which is active in several parts of eastern and north-western Afghanistan. It would, thus, weaken the Taliban and strengthen its enemy. At present, the Taliban has given a decisive blow to the ISK, killing several of its senior commanders and keeping the group's terror activities under check. The TTP attacks have increased destabilisation and insecurity in Pakistan and encouraged other dissident groups, such as the Balochs and Pashtuns, to fight against the Pakistani state. Pakistan's hopes of attracting foreign investment from Saudi Arabia and the UAE have not borne fruit. China, which is Pakistan's "iron brother" is unhappy about inadequate security arrangements for its 1,200 workers who are building critical infrastructure in Pakistan as the TTP and Baloch separatists have targeted Chinese experts in several attacks. With Pakistan unable to pay China's loans and provide foolproof security to its personnel, China has stalled work on most projects. The TTP attacks leave Pakistan with few viable options. Pakistan has no desire to mount a full-scale war — which it is unlikely to win — against the Taliban. It has seen how the Afghans have fought valiantly against the Soviets and Americans in the last four decades. The Taliban may not have a big army like Pakistan, but it has a brilliant record of mounting guerrilla operations, with its human suicide bombers and hit-and-run attacks. Even Pakistan's allies like China and the US would not favour that option for their own reasons. The US would not like the Taliban to be distracted from its fight

against the ISK. China nurtures the ambition to extend its Belt and Road Initiative to Afghanistan and carry out projects in mining, oil exploration and infrastructure sectors. Also, then the Taliban will not be able to control the China-centric terror group, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, in Afghanistan. The deterioration in Pakistan's relations with the Taliban has allowed India to reassess its policy towards the Taliban, reopen its embassy and provide emergency assistance to the Afghan people and consider resuming work on its economic projects in Afghanistan. The Afghan Embassy in New Delhi is now being run by the representatives of the Taliban government. Pakistan has taken a few steps to increase the cost for the Taliban in allowing the TTP. These include the repatriation of about 8,00,000 Afghan refugees and disruption of Afghanistan's land trade via Pakistan. These measures were not liked by the US and others as they felt that the Taliban was already facing a grim humanitarian situation, with a shortage of food, energy and other essential items, and was hardly in a position to look after so many more people. The Taliban has also not relented in any of its policies about broad-basing its government, allowing education to women beyond the middle school or other human rights despite facing severe sanctions and near-total isolation on the world stage. It has enforced its religious codes of conduct in an authoritarian manner, oblivious of the global public opinion. It has become clear that the Taliban regime is not collapsing or being thrown out of power. More sanctions on the Taliban will only compound the misery of the Afghan people.

## Envy, ego, pride and pain: what I learned from publishing my first book

(Staff Reporter) here are only two types of people who make the mistake of writing a book: non-writers, who don't know any better; and writers, who can never be happy and therefore must always seek out pain in order to feel alive. Either way, every book is the product of suffering. The best thing a new author can hope for is to discover that he is a masochist. After two decades as a journalist, I published my first book in 2024. This does not make me special. In the same way that people in relationships often wake up one day married with kids due purely to peer pressure, all professional writers bear the burden of the expectation that they will write a book. With each passing year, those who haven't done so are regarded with increasing suspicion. Typing all those words, but not a single book? Why, don't you have anything to say? As a young man, I regarded the book-publishing industry as an unapproachable bastion of

erudite literary sophisticates. I was relieved of this notion during the years that I wrote for a popular blog, and regularly received solicitations from agents and editors encouraging me to turn my latest viral blogpost into a book. Though flattered, I was always struck with skepticism at their enthusiasm. "Really?" I would wonder. "You think that 'Ten Best Breakfast Sandwich Breads, Ranked' could be a good book?" This is how I learned that many people in the publishing industry spend their days browsing the internet in boredom, like every other office worker. Their daily consumption of listicles and celebrity gossip is what qualifies them as more literate than the average American. When you do decide to write a book, you must first write a book proposal, which your agent must use to convince a publisher to give you a book deal. This entails a series of meetings with editors that are ostensibly editorial in nature, but which in fact

give them a chance to look you over to decide whether you look sober enough to actually write the damn thing on time. This is reasonable enough on their part: writers have been known to take their advance and fuck off to the French Riviera to smoke cigarettes and go to dinner parties, playing out the fantasy of looking like a writer without doing the dreary work of typing all those words. It can be an appealing lifestyle, until the money runs out — which, given the average size of book advances today, will happen in a few months. Like many creative industries, publishing makes all of its money on a small number of big hits, while most books sell shockingly few copies. On one hand, this is nice, because it is a form of socialism for all of us who write about less popular topics. (For some reason, few reported analyses of the labor movement appear on the New York Times bestseller list.) On the other hand, it is excruciating, be-

cause the books that do become bestsellers are generally either awful ghostwritten works of celebrity self-fellatio, or are written by your personal nemesis, who is suddenly rich enough to purchase a "writing cottage" in the Hamptons. Indeed, coming to terms with the fact that you will not be the next Stephen King — or even the next Stephen Kang — is a critical part of being an author. This task is easier for non-fiction writers, who can dismiss our sales numbers simply as proof that the frivolous general public doesn't care about the critical but nuanced topics that our books are about. Novelists have little choice but to experience low sales as a direct rejection of their own, personal, heartfelt art, something I imagine is psychologically crushing. This — and the fact that I don't have any ideas and don't know how to write fiction that doesn't sound like I am trying to rip off A Confederacy of Dunces — is why I am not a novelist.



# China reiterates stand on Brahmaputra dam project, says it will help India, Bangladesh

(Staff Reporter) China reiterated its stand on Tuesday to build dam project in upstream belt of Brahmaputra in its own territory, saying it will "help" downstream countries, including India and Bangladesh, with their "disaster prevention and reduction and climate response". In a statement, Chinese spokesperson Yu Jing said Beijing's decision to build the hydropower project in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo (the name of Brahmaputra before entering India) was made after rigorous scientific evaluation.

"The project will not have a negative impact on the ecological environment, geological conditions and the rights and interests related to water resources of downstream countries," she said. She further added rather the China's dam project "to some extent,

help with their disaster prevention and reduction and climate response." Earlier, India has raised its concern over the China's dam building project in upstream belt of Brahmaputra. India's reaction came nearly two months after New Delhi and Beijing reached an understanding in October last year on the troop disengagement along "friction points" on the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

This development followed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping's meet on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Russia's Kazan in October last year. The meet was aimed to chalk out mechanisms for revival of normal bilateral relations. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal during a press briefing, last week, had said that the matter was formally taken up



with China. Jaiswal referred about the China's plan to build a hydropower project on Tsangpo in the Tibet and

said the matter was taken up with Beijing to emphasise on the need for consultations with downstream countries.

# Chinese tech companies Tencent, CATL and others protest US listings as army-linked companies

(Staff Reporter) HONG KONG (AP) — The U.S. Defense Department has added dozens of Chinese companies, including games and technology company Tencent, artificial intelligence firm SenseTime and the world's biggest battery maker CATL, to a list of companies it says have ties to China's military, prompting some to protest and say they will seek to have the decision reversed. In recent years, Washington has sought to restrict sharing of advanced technology, including semiconductors and AI, deeming it to be a threat to national security. The U.S. Defense Department

updates its list of "Chinese Military Companies," or CMC list, annually. With the latest revision, it includes 134 companies. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2024 bans the Defense Department from dealing with the designated companies beginning in June 2026. Tencent's Hong Kong-traded shares fell 7.3% on Tuesday and the company said it would "initiate a reconsideration process to correct this mistake," seek talks with the U.S. Defense Department and if need be take legal measures to get it removed from the list. Tencent is the world's largest video gam-

ing company and operates Chinese messaging platform WeChat.

"As the company is neither a Chinese military company nor a military-civil fusion contributor to the Chinese defense industrial base, it believes that its inclusion in the CMC List is a mistake," Tencent said in an announcement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. "Unlike other lists maintained by the U.S. Government for sanctions or export control measures, inclusion in the CMC List relates only to U.S. defense procurement, which does not affect the business of the Group," it said. Battery

maker CATL said in a statement posted on its website that the company "has never engaged in any military-related business or activities," and said that the designation wouldn't have adverse impact on its operations. Like Tencent, CATL maintains that its inclusion to the list was a "mistake" and that it would proactively engage with the Pentagon to "address the false designation" and take legal action if necessary to protect company and stakeholder interest. CATL's stock fell 2.84% in Shenzhen. AI company SenseTime said in a statement that the decision to include it on the list had "no factual basis."

# Old video of chopper attack falsely linked to Afghan-Pakistan border clashes

(Staff Reporter) As deadly skirmishes broke out on the Afghan-Pakistan border in December, an old video made the rounds in social media posts that falsely claimed it showed an Afghan soldier shooting down a Pakistani helicopter. The video racked up tens of thousands of views, but in fact previously surfaced in 2016 in reports about a Kurdish fighter downing a Turkish army chopper. "When America fled Afghanistan, it left all its equipment and modern weapons at military bases there. Among them is the dangerous Stinger missile which is a very effective heat-seeking missile fired from the shoulder," read a Hindu-language X

post from December 29. "Yesterday, the Afghans shot down a Pakistan army helicopter with the Stinger missile, killing 15 soldiers inside." The post, which garnered more than 150,000 views, showed footage of a man launching a missile from a shoulder-mounted weapon, before the camera pans to a helicopter that spins out of control and crashes to the ground. The video spread on Facebook and X after a Pakistani paramilitary soldier was killed and seven others wounded in December in the latest cross-border exchanges of fire with Afghanistan's forces (archived link). Border tensions between the two countries have escalated since the

Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 2021. During the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan that year, weapons and heavy military equipment were left behind by foreign troops -- but there have been no reports of Afghan forces shooting down a Pakistani helicopter.

Turkish chopper However, a reverse image search of the video on Google found it was filmed years before the skirmishes on the Afghan-Pakistan border. A longer version of the clip was published by The Washington Post newspaper on May 15, 2016 (archived link). "Video appears to show Kurdish militants shooting down Turkish military helicopter," the video is titled. "Media

affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a leftist militant group battling the Turkish state, posted a video purporting to show a fighter downing a Cobra attack helicopter with a man-portable air-defence system -- or MANPADS -- in the mountains of southeastern Turkey on Friday morning," the description said. Below is a screenshot comparison of the video as seen in the false post (left) and on the Washington Post website (right): The video was credited to Gerilla TV, which is associated with the PKK and whose logo can also be seen on the top-left corner of the video.



# The TTP and the Pakistan-Afghanistan Conundrum

(Staff Reporter) Late in the night on December 24, 2024, Pakistani jets targeted locations in the Barmal district of the bordering Paktika province of Afghanistan. Authorities in Pakistan believed the targets were hideouts of terrorists affiliated with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a group responsible for most of the terrorist attacks in Pakistan. While Pakistani officials asserted that the airstrikes had resulted in the death of 71 terrorists, the Taliban government of Afghanistan claimed that 46 people, mostly women and children, were killed. The veracity of the divergent claims regarding the victims is yet to be ascertained, but the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) backed the Taliban government's assertion of civilian casualties, including women and children. However, the Taliban's Information Minister Khairullah Khairkhwa also hailed his government's support for the TTP "guests" in a rare official admission of the group's presence on Afghan soil. The strikes did not sit well with the Taliban government of Afghanistan, which lodged a strong protest with Pakistani diplomats. That was followed by border clashes between Pakistani and Afghan security forces on December 28. Even though the situation at the border subsequently de-escalated, tensions persisted as the TTP continues to conduct terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Pakistan's airstrikes inside

Afghanistan are usually sparked by a high-profile terrorist attack targeting security forces personnel in Pakistan. For instance, the December airstrikes



came days after a TTP terrorist attack resulting in the death of 16 security forces personnel in the restive South Waziristan district on the border with Afghanistan. Pakistan had conducted similar airstrikes in March last year as well after terrorists struck a paramilitary camp in the North Waziristan district, killing seven personnel including two senior-level officers. That episode also followed the same pattern of the Taliban government's demarches, border skirmishes, and subsequent de-escalation. Whether the March 2024 airstrikes resulted in the deaths of its purported targets or not, the TTP launched one of its deadliest high-profile terrorist attacks against foreigners, resulting in the death of five Chinese

engineers, within days following those strikes. The fallout of the December airstrikes in terms of subsequent high-profile terrorist attacks is yet to emerge.

Even so, given the outcome of the March 2024 strikes – an increase in terrorist attacks in Pakistan – it's hard to imagine that such airstrikes will serve the desired goal of ending the rising level of violence and lawlessness in the areas of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan.

Despite the lack of success of cross-border kinetic operations in terms of reducing terrorism in Pakistan, Islamabad has been shying away from talks with the TTP. Policymakers in Pakistan are now openly critical of the Afghan Taliban-mediated talks between the TTP and Pakistani interlocutors in May 2022. Pakistani military's spokesperson as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar separately voiced disapproval of the 2022 dialogue with the TTP recently. Quite ironically, the latest airstrikes came at a time when a Pakistani delegation, led by recently reappointed Special Representative for Afghanistan Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq, was in Kabul. At the time of the strikes, the delegation had already held

meetings with the Taliban's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, and Minister for Industry and Commerce Noorullah Azizi. The delegation even went on to have its scheduled meeting with the Taliban's Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Maulvi Abdul Kabir the very next day. Nevertheless, the airstrikes shut the diplomatic window that had opened after a hiatus of 15 months, narrowing the prospects of any negotiations with the Taliban government of Afghanistan on the TTP or any other subject. Absent the kinetic action, the delegation's visit could have set the ball rolling for continued high-level engagements to resolve the differences between the two neighboring states.

Conducting negotiations with any adversary cannot be termed as a wasteful exercise in itself. The fault usually lies in the way the negotiations are conducted. Islamabad's checkered history with conducting negotiations with terrorist groups indicates that Pakistan has not had much success with it. This means that the only option left with Pakistan for now is to continue with the operations of its security forces against the TTP inside the country to address this increasingly complicated challenge.

Such an approach, however, comes at a heavy cost.

## Myanmar's drug empire poses growing threat to Bangladesh

(Staff Reporter) The ongoing civil war in Myanmar, now spanning over three years, has provided an opportunity for drug cartels to thrive, with Shan State emerging as a major hub for illicit narcotics production. This situation poses a significant threat to neighbouring Bangladesh, which is increasingly becoming a key destination for these dangerous drugs. According to the Department of Narcotics Control, the largest shipments of Yaba (methamphetamine tablets) entering Bangladesh are sourced from Myanmar's Shan State. Alongside Yaba, the region has become a hotspot for the production of other potent drugs, including crystal meth (ice) and heroin. Although the spread of ice in Bangladesh was once rare, recent reports indicate a surge in seizures by law enforcement agencies. In one of the most recent instances, in November last year, Bangladesh's Coast Guard seized one kilogram of crystal meth, worth approximately Tk5 crore, from Shahporir Island in Teknaf. Earlier in August, large consignments of Yaba and ice, worth Tk21 crore, were intercepted by the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) along

the Teknaf and Naikhong border areas. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that Myanmar has ascended to the top of global opium production in 2024. Poppy flowers, which grow on the slopes of Shan State's mountains, are used to produce heroin, while nearly fifty factories in the region manufacture Yaba and ice. While 37 Yaba production factories were previously identified in Myanmar, the number has more than doubled in recent years due to the ongoing conflict. Shan State shares borders with China, Thailand and Laos, and drug production thrives in this region due to a steady supply of raw materials such as methamphetamine and caffeine from the Golden Triangle. Besides, ephedrine, a key ingredient in the production of ice, is largely sourced from China. The growing network of drug factories in Shan State reflects the extent to which the region has become a major illicit narcotics hub. Recent reports from The New York Times describe Shan State as a central node for warlords, smugglers, and drug traffickers. Despite being initially hindered by local and central government forces, drug cartels in the region have flourished,

partly due to bribes and the weakening of governmental authority in the wake of civil unrest. Armed insurgent groups have also capitalised on the drug trade to fund their operations. In interviews with the media, drug dealers revealed that while the government and military had previously posed obstacles, the collapse of the state apparatus has allowed these illegal operations to flourish. According to them, the insurgent groups operating in the region rely heavily on profits from the drug trade to sustain their armed activities. With the market growing, competition between traffickers has intensified, leading to a drop in prices. For instance, while a can of beer costs around \$10, a single Yaba tablet can be bought for as little as 25 cents. Bangladesh's struggle with drug proliferation The spread of narcotics in Bangladesh has been accelerating since 2006, when the price of Yaba was over Tk1,200 per tablet. The price has since plummeted, with current rates ranging from Tk100-120 per tablet in Cox's Bazar, and between Tk200-250 in Dhaka. The Narcotics Control Department and law enforcement agencies are facing increasing challenges in curbing the trade, which predominantly flows into the

country through the Teknaf border. According to Khondokar Mostafizur Rahman, Director General of the Narcotics Control Department, the vast majority of Yaba entering Bangladesh is sourced from Myanmar. "The drug trade is flourishing, and we are struggling to control it," he said. The department's intelligence reports reveal several hotspots in Dhaka for Yaba trade, including railway stations, bus terminals, and launch ghats. Areas such as Mohammadpur's Geneva Camp, Mirpur Kalshi, Old Dhaka, Kamrangirchar, and Karwan Bazar are also identified as active drug hubs. In addition to Yaba, there has been a rise in the circulation of ice in affluent areas of the capital, including Gulshan, Banani, and Uttara. Some dealers are even selling ice online, further complicating enforcement efforts. Despite the growing concern, many people mistakenly believe that heroin use has declined in the country due to the widespread availability of Yaba and cannabis. But the Department of Narcotics Control reports that heroin is once again gaining traction. Since Myanmar's opium production has increased, heroin shipments to Bangladesh have also surged.



# Trudeau let Canadians down, corporate greed ran wild: Ex-ally Jagmeet Singh

(Staff Reporter) Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jagmeet Singh came down heavily on Justin Trudeau following the latter's

run wild". In a statement shortly after Trudeau's announcement, Singh said, "Justin Trudeau's Liberals let down Canadians. They let you down on home

Chrystia Freeland stepped down following a dispute over US President-elect Donald Trump's proposed 25 per cent tariffs against Canada. Jagmeet

especially over the government's failure to deal with high prices at grocery stores. In September 2024, Trudeau suffered a massive blow after the NDP, which helped the minority Liberal Party-led government to stay in power, withdrew support. The move not only put the government at risk ahead of the 2025 general elections, but also forced the embattled leader to attempt new alliances to remain in power. In his statement on Monday, Jagmeet Singh also took a dig at the opposition Conservative Party, which is eyeing a victory in the national polls scheduled to take place later this year. "Canada's middle-class families have the biggest fight just ahead. Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives will cut from people to give more to CEOs. They will cut health care, pensions, dental care," he said, adding that people must oppose the party from coming to power and "build Canada's first government for working people". "People who oppose callous Conservative cuts to health care, and everyone who opposes the rich getting richer while everyone else falls further behind, I'm asking them all to stand together this time to stop the Conservatives."



announcement to resign as the Prime Minister and chief of the ruling Liberal Party. Without mincing his words, Jagmeet Singh, a former Trudeau ally, said the Prime Minister "let Canadians down" by allowing "corporate greed to

prices. They let you down on health care. They let you down by allowing corporate greed to run wild." The NDP leader had called on the Prime Minister to resign last month after Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister

high costs or crumbling health care. The Liberals do not deserve another chance, no matter who is the leader," he stressed. In recent months, Jagmeet Singh's NDP expressed growing frustration with Trudeau,

## Winter storm paralyses US with snow, power outages, and travel disruptions

(Staff Reporter) A powerful winter storm, named Storm Blair, is wreaking havoc across the United States, prompting seven American states -- Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Arkansas, and parts of New Jersey -- to declare an emergency. Fuelled by a Polar Vortex, the storm is causing disruptions on a scale not seen since 2011. Snowfall in Washington, DC, could reach up to 16 inches in isolated areas, with freezing rain and sleet adding to the chaos. The storm has already resulted in heavy snowfall, frigid temperatures, travel disruptions, over 1,300 flight cancellations, and power outages affecting more than 2,50,000 homes and businesses. A winter storm has forced the cancellation of over 1,300 flights nationwide, leaving travellers stranded. Washington, DC's airports are among the hardest hit, with Reagan National Airport reporting 416 cancellations, Dulles International 155, and Baltimore-Washington International 203. The storm has also caused significant power outages, with over 2.5 lakh homes and businesses left in the dark across central and southern US,

according to PowerOutage.us. Snowfall totals have already surpassed four inches in several areas. Woolsey, Virginia, reported 5.2 inches of snow, while La

Plata, Maryland, recorded 4.2 inches by Monday morning. The National Weather Service (NWS) predicts that parts of the Mid-Atlantic, including Washington, DC, could see 6-12 inches of snow before the

storm moves offshore. "Hypothermia is possible if precautions are not taken," warned the NWS, highlighting the risks of extreme cold in regions such as

### STATES OF EMERGENCY DECLARED

Governors in Kansas, Kentucky, Arkansas, West Virginia, and Virginia have declared states of emergency, enabling the mobilisation of resources to address the crisis. "We're preparing for the worst," said a spokesperson for Virginia's governor's office. The Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) has issued a weather watch from January 6-10, warning of increased energy demand that could strain the power grid.

### PRECAUTIONS AND ARCTIC AIR AHEAD

Residents are advised to stay indoors, dress in layers, and avoid travel unless absolutely necessary. "Dress in layers and avoid going outside unless necessary," local officials cautioned. As the storm moves eastward, Arctic air is expected to follow, plunging daytime temperatures significantly and prolonging hazardous conditions. Storm Blair, driven by a Polar Vortex, is the most disruptive winter event in over a decade, reminiscent of similar conditions last seen in 2011.



southwest and south-central Alabama, southeast Missouri, and northwest Florida. Wind chill values in these areas could plunge to 16°F (-8°C), accompanied by dangerous surf and rip



# Soldier who exploded Tesla outside Trump hotel used ChatGPT, generative AI: Cops

(Staff Reporter) The highly decorated soldier who exploded a Tesla Cybertruck outside the Trump hotel in Las Vegas used generative AI, including ChatGPT, to help plan the attack, Las Vegas police said Tuesday.

Nearly a week after 37-year-old Matthew Livelsberger fatally shot himself, officials said that, according to writings, he didn't intend to kill anyone else. An investigation of Livelsberger's searches through ChatGPT indicates he was looking for information on explosive targets, the speed at which certain rounds of ammunition would travel and whether fireworks were legal in Arizona. Kevin McMahill, sheriff of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, called the use of generative AI a "game-changer" and said the department was sharing information with other law enforcement agencies. "This is the first incident that I'm aware of on US soil where ChatGPT is utilised to help an individual build a particular device," he said. "It's a concerning moment." In an emailed statement, OpenAI said it was committed to seeing its tools used "responsibly" and that they're designed to refuse harmful instructions. "In this case, ChatGPT responded with

information already publicly available on the internet and provided warnings against harmful or illegal activities. We're working with law enforcement to support their investigation," the emailed statement said. Launched in 2022, ChatGPT is part of a broader set of technologies developed by the San Francisco-based startup OpenAI. Unlike previous iterations of so-called "large language models," the ChatGPT tool is available for free to anyone with an internet connection and designed to be more user-friendly. During a roughly half-hour-long news conference, Las Vegas police and federal law enforcement officials unveiled new details about the New Year's Day explosion. Among the specifics law enforcement disclosed: Livelsberger stopped during the drive to Las Vegas to pour racing-grade fuel into the Cybertruck, which then dripped the substance. The vehicle was loaded with 60 pounds (27 kilograms) of pyrotechnic material as well as 70 pounds (32 kilograms) of birdshot, but officials are still uncertain exactly what detonated the explosion. They said Tuesday it could have been the flash from the firearm that Livelsberger used to fatally shoot himself. Authorities also said they



uncovered a six-page document that they have not yet released because they're working with Defense Department officials since some of the material could be classified.

They added that they still have to review the contents on a laptop, mobile phone and smartwatch. Among

the items released was a journal Livelsberger kept titled "surveillance" or "surveil" log. It showed that he believed he was being tracked by law enforcement, but he had no criminal record and was not on the police department's or FBI's "radar," the sheriff said Tuesday.

## Not a snowball's chance in hell: Trudeau on Trump's US-Canada merger threat

(Staff Reporter) Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau firmly rejected US President-elect Donald Trump's suggestion of using "economic force" to make Canada the 51st US state, emphasising that such a situation is impossible to happen. "There isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States," the Canadian Prime Minister tweeted. He added, "Workers and communities in both our countries benefit from being each other's biggest trading and security partner". In

November, during a meeting with Trudeau, Trump suggested Canada become the 51st US state. This was in response to Trudeau raising concerns that Trump's threatened tariffs on Canada would damage Canada's economy. Commenting on the same on Tuesday at a press briefing in Mar-a-Lago, when asked if he was considering using military force to acquire Canada, the President-elect said, "No, economic force," he responded. "Because Canada and the United States, that would really be something".



## Massive wildfire rages through Los Angeles hillside, forces 30,000 to evacuate



A wildfire raged across an upscale section of Los Angeles on Tuesday, destroying homes and creating traffic jams as 30,000 people evacuated beneath huge plumes of smoke that covered much of the metropolitan area.

At least 1,262 acres (510 hectares) of the Pacific Palisades area between Santa Monica and Malibu had burned, officials said, after they had already warned of extreme fire danger from powerful winds that arrived following extended dry weather. The fire grew rapidly in a matter of hours as officials warned the worst wind conditions were

expected to come overnight, leading to concerns that more neighbourhoods could be forced to flee. Flying embers set alight a palm tree at the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway. Witnesses reported a number of homes on fire with flames nearly scorching their cars when people fled the hills of Topanga Canyon, as the fire spread from there down to the Pacific Ocean. "We feel very blessed at this point that there are no injuries that are reported," Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley told a press conference.



# Sam Altman says OpenAI is losing money because of ChatGPT Pro subscription

(Staff Reporter) OpenAI CEO Sam Altman recently made a surprising revelation on X (formerly Twitter) about the company's financial challenges with its ChatGPT Pro subscriptions. In his tweet, Altman stated, "Insane thing: we are currently losing money on OpenAI Pro subscriptions! People use it much more than we expected." The Pro subscription for ChatGPT, which offers access to the advanced GPT-4 model, has gained significant traction globally, including in India. In India, the subscription is priced at \$200 per month, which is about Rs 17,000. It is an attractive option for professionals, businesses, and students seeking enhanced productivity and creativity. The Pro subscribers of ChatGPT

receive benefits such as faster response times, priority access during peak usage hours, and advanced



capabilities powered by GPT-4. Despite the steady influx of subscribers, Altman's comments underline a major issue — usage levels that far exceed expectations. While the

Pro subscription was designed to offset the high operational costs of running large-scale AI models, the current usage rates are proving to be unsustainable for OpenAI's financial model. Large language models like GPT-4 require substantial computational resources, which lead to escalating cloud computing and server costs. The announcement sheds light on the

delicate balance tech companies must maintain between offering powerful, accessible tools and ensuring financial viability. OpenAI's pricing model for Pro subscriptions, aimed at democratising

AI access, now faces scrutiny as the company grapples with these unexpected challenges. India has emerged as a significant market for ChatGPT, with professionals across sectors such as education, IT, and content creation adopting the Pro subscription to streamline tasks and unlock AI-driven efficiencies.

The relatively affordable pricing in India compared to global rates has also contributed to its popularity. Altman's disclosure has sparked a wave of curiosity about OpenAI's next steps. The curiosity has especially been growing ever since Altman's recent post about his prediction of AI replacing humans at work in 2025.

## Getty Images buying Shutterstock to create a \$3.7 billion visual content company



(Staff Reporter) NEW YORK (AP) — Getty Images is buying Shutterstock to create a \$3.7 billion visual content company. The merger comes at a time when companies that use still images are facing increased competition from images generated by artificial

intelligence. The companies said Tuesday that they have complementary portfolios and that a merger will provide customers with a broader array still imagery, video, music, 3D and other media. "With the rapid rise in demand for compelling visual content across

industries, there has never been a better time for our two businesses to come together," Getty Images CEO Craig Peters said in a prepared statement. Peters will serve as CEO of the combined business. "We are excited by the opportunities we see to expand our creative content library and enhance our product offering to meet diverse customer needs," Shutterstock CEO Paul Hennessy said. Getty Images shareholders will own about 54.7% of the combined company at closing and Shutterstock stockholders will own approximately 45.3%. Shutterstock shareholders can choose to receive either approximately \$28.85 per share in cash for each share of Shutterstock common stock they own; about 13.67 shares of Getty Images common stock

for each share of Shutterstock common stock they own; or a mixed consideration of 9.17 shares of Getty Images common stock plus \$9.50 in cash for each share of Shutterstock common stock they own. The combined company will operate as Getty Images, and will continue to trade on the New York Stock Exchange under the 'GETY' ticker symbol. Its board will have 11 members, comprised of Peters, six directors designated by Getty Images and four directors designated by Shutterstock, including Hennessy. The chairman will be Mark Getty, current chairman of Seattle-based Getty Images. Shares of New York-based Shutterstock jumped more than 30% before the market opened, while Getty Images' stock soared more than 58%.

## Google widely rolls out QR code-based sharing via Quick Share on Android

(Staff Reporter) Google is widely rolling out a new feature for Android users that makes sharing files even easier. Now, you can use QR codes to share files through Quick Share, a tool already built into your Android phone. This update is part of the latest version (24.49.33) of Google Play Services and is available to users worldwide. The new feature works in a way that feels simple and familiar. Once you tap the Quick Share option in your phone's share menu, a fullscreen interface will appear. You'll now see a new option called "Use QR code" in the "Send to nearby devices" section. Selecting this

will bring up a unique QR code branded with the Quick Share logo. When the QR code appears, your screen automatically brightens to make it easier for other devices to scan. What makes this feature so handy is its simplicity. The person you're sharing with just needs to open the camera app on their Android phone and point it at your QR code. This will instantly generate a "quickshare.google" link on their device, and the file transfer will begin without any additional steps. Google says you don't need to add anyone as a contact, verify devices, or fiddle with sharing settings — it just

works. Another useful feature is that the QR code can be scanned by more than one device. This is great if you need to send the same files to multiple people, such as sharing event photos with friends or documents with colleagues. For anyone who's ever struggled with Quick Share not detecting nearby devices or simply not working, this QR code option could be a game-changer. This update is part of Google's December 2024 Feature Bundle, which focuses on making Android more versatile. While Quick Share itself isn't new, the addition of QR code support is a welcome improvement. It makes the

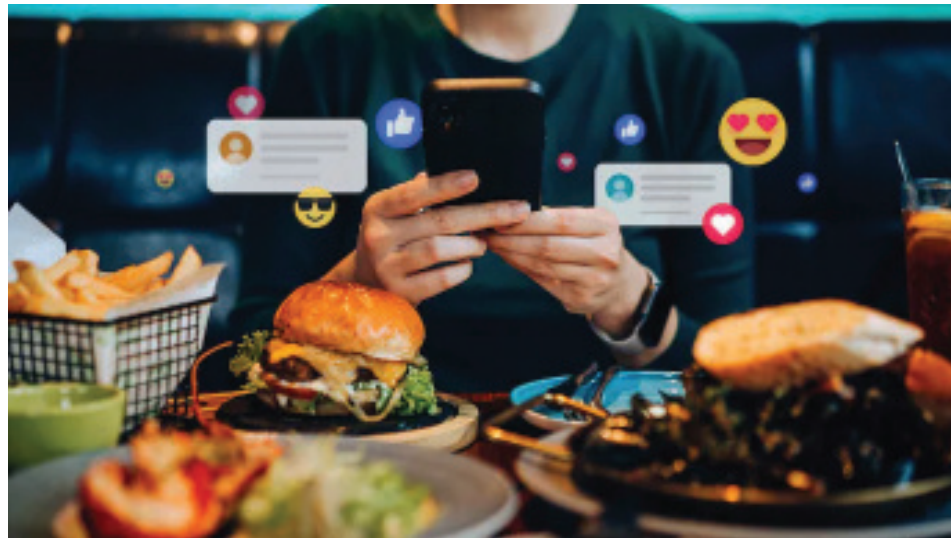
process more reliable, especially in situations where devices don't appear on the nearby list — a common frustration for many Android users. Interestingly, Samsung users might find this feature familiar. Galaxy devices have had their own version of QR code-based sharing in Samsung Quick Share for a while now. However, Samsung's version includes some extra features, like the ability to share files through Samsung Cloud. These extras are still exclusive to Galaxy devices, but Google's new update means that QR code sharing is now available on all Android phones, not just Samsung's.



# The expensive reality of social media's never-ending trends

(Staff Reporter) If there's one thing we have understood about social media trends is that they come and go at lightning speed. While social media offers us creative inspiration and a space to connect, the relentless chase to stay relevant can take a toll on mental health. Beneath the surface of these fleeting moments lies an increasingly common sentiment: exhaustion. The pace of trendsSocial media trends are designed to be fast-moving. Algorithms prioritise fresh, engaging content, which means creators are constantly under pressure to churn out new material. A dance trend might dominate TikTok for a week before being replaced by a cooking hack or a quirky meme. The result? An overwhelming cycle of consumption where even the most dedicated users struggle to keep up. Dr Arvind Otta, senior psychologist and mental health activist, points out that the rapid evolution of social media trends can leave people feeling overwhelmed. "The fear of not being able to keep up steals the joy of using social media," he says. This drive to fit into online communities often results in exhaustion and frustration. Similarly, Sumalatha Vasudeva, psychologist at Gleneagles BGS Hospital, Bengaluru, notes that the constant need to stay current creates fatigue, ultimately leading to burnout. Sanjina Bose, clinical psychologist at Lissun (an online mental health counselling therapy platform), describes this as the "algorithm versus real-life race". "People spend endless hours doom

scrolling, isolating themselves from real-world connections, and measuring self-worth through likes and followers. It's a



draining process that often leads to anxiety, depression, and imposter syndrome," she explains. The FOMO factor Fear of missing out (FOMO) has long been associated with social media, but it has intensified by the relentless pace of trends. Users not only want to be informed but also feel compelled to participate - whether it's recreating a trending video or posting about the latest viral topic. For some, this pressure to stay relevant can lead to burnout. Not too long ago, the internet was obsessed with the viral Dubai kunafa chocolate. Everyone wanted a bite of it. Since getting your hands on one was a challenge, people came up with the idea of creating their own versions of the viral chocolate, eager to taste or

replicate something close to the original kunafa chocolate bar from Dubai. That is exactly how impactful social media is today

- so much so that brands saw it as a brilliant business opportunity and have been milking the trend brilliantly. Gayathri G, a freelance consultant, says, "It's so jarring—one moment it's touted as a miracle, the next, it's a potential danger. This is just one of countless examples of opposing sides, each trying to scare you. It's mentally draining, and it makes me wonder how anyone can navigate all this without feeling overwhelmed." "For example, lately, there's been a lot of talk about the benefits of castor oil for digestion, detoxing, and skin health, with people insisting on using cold-pressed, hexane-free oil. But then today, I came across a reel warning that castor oil contains ricin, a deadly toxin, and

explaining how the seeds must be cooked to make the oil safe," she adds. It is not just exhaustive, it is expensive too. Every day, influencers introduce a new line of makeup, accessories, bags, or jewellery to their followers. Now, imagine millions of influencers urging you to buy something new, follow a trend, or even travel to a new destination daily. You're tempted, and you might even give in to the temptation, but how long can you keep doing this? It eventually becomes a significant drain on your bank account. Meneka Subramaniam, an IT professional, shares, "I love buying new makeup products to add to my vast collection. Initially, it was easy when options were limited, but now it's a struggle to keep up. Imagine having products from not just India but options were limited, but now it's a struggle to keep up. Imagine having products from not just India but also South Korea, Japan, France, the US, and Germany, all vying for your attention. We often forget to exercise restraint and fail to realise what this is doing to our minds." Social media burnout: A growing concern Hence, the phenomenon of social media burnout is becoming increasingly common. Dr Otta explains that burnout manifests in various ways - from stress and disinterest to resentment toward social media platforms. Physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, and disrupted sleep cycles are also prevalent. Emotionally, individuals may feel detached, inadequate, or overly conscious about their online presence.

## Does skipping baths in winter increase life span by 34%?

(Staff Reporter) The idea of taking a shower in winter might sound like a distant thought to a lazyhead. But of course, this isn't something anyone would want to boast



about in public because, agree with us or not, it is kind of unhygienic, to say the least. However, there might be some good news for those who detest the idea of a shower during winter months. You might even want to share it with your friends without them looking down on you. At least, that's what a viral Instagram video claims. A video shared by Dr Rebecca Pinto suggests that not having a bath in winter is not that bad after all because, apparently, it increases

your life expectancy by 34 per cent. The video, while seemingly too good to be true, has racked up an impressive 6.6 million views on Instagram. However, not everyone was on board with its claims. Many social media users were quick to express their skepticism. "Is there any research article on this? If yes, you should have shared it before making such a bold claim," one user remarked in the comments section. While the claim is astounding, the expert cites no journal or research paper in her video which talks about the claim. So, it was only right to do what we do best: dig deeper to find out if there's any truth to these claims.

What other experts say While experts agree that bathing frequently can do your skin microbiome some harm, but skipping bath altogether in winter could be detrimental. Dr Balakrishna G K, HOD and senior consultant internal medicine, Gleneagles BGS Hospital Kengeri, Bengaluru, says, "The claim that skipping

baths can increase life expectancy by 34 per cent seems exaggerated and lacks strong scientific backing. While frequent baths can disrupt the skin's microbiome and natural defences, entirely skipping baths may lead to hygiene concerns and infections." Yes, temperature and exposure to cold significantly impact the body, and this holds true for various species. Research indicates that colder temperatures can reduce metabolic rates in some species, but to say that it actually happens for humans doesn't hold any strong proof. Dr H Guru Prasad, associate clinical director and HOD, department of general medicine, CARE Hospitals, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, adds, "Though the claim is alluring, but scrutinising research methodology and context before conclusions is key (if there's one at all). Bathing habits may indirectly connect to skin health preservation or hot water damage reduction but longevity relies on an intricate interplay of genes, lifestyle, and surroundings, making bathing alone

unlikely to significantly impact longevity." In fact, bathing is important, even in winters. While we're conditioned to think daily bathing is essential, hygiene standards vary widely across cultures. In colder climates, it's not uncommon for people to bathe just a few times a week. However, you should be able to strike a balance as bathing has its benefits too. Warm baths can improve blood flow and relaxation, indirectly aiding digestion. "Skipping bath occasionally likely causes minimal digestive effects, but consistent lack of bathing risks stress negatively impacting digestion," says Dr Prasad. In fact, skipping baths in winter can lead to a buildup of sweat, dead skin cells, and environmental pollutants, which may clog pores and increase the risk of skin irritation and infections. If you're not sweating much or engaging in activities that make you dirty, a quick sponge bath targeting key areas - like armpits and groin - can suffice, but you get the whole point, cleanliness is important.



# With the 21st century a quarter complete, illiberal democracy is the new global norm

(Staff Reporter) The three largest democracies in the history of the world will soon be ruled by intolerant authoritarians who leveraged celebrity and social media dynamics to achieve power. In 2024, India re-elected Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi as prime minister for the third time. The United States has elected Donald Trump as president for the second, non-consecutive time. And in October, Indonesia elected as president the millionaire Prabowo Subianto, a former special-forces commander who was once married to a daughter of late dictator Suharto. The 2020s are half over. The 21st century is a quarter complete. So it's the right moment to consider this century as one during which so much of what we assumed was given, solid and established by the end of the 20th century has cracked and crumbled. We spend a lot of time dissecting the possible causes of one electoral result or another. But we don't spend enough time pondering the longterm slide in the potential of a decent future for our species, one that respects human rights and allows for openness and deliberation about choices and policies. We are used to hearing stirring defenses of "democracy" from those who oppose corrupt or authoritarian forces. Joe Biden made defense of democracy a central theme of his time in office. So what do we make of the fact that the very structures and processes of democracy have so often yielded victories to those who would dismantle so many of the

institutions and norms on which democracy rests? We should not respond to the popularity and electoral ascension of Modi, Trump, or Prabowo – or for that post-second world war pronouncements by the center-left and center-right forces that took turns running both regions until just this decade. Liberalism has been



matter Ferdinand Marcos Jr in the Philippines, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Javier Milei of Argentina, or Giorgia Meloni in Italy – as anti-democracy phenomena.

More accurately, these electoral events are rejections of liberal democracy, not democracy in general. Voters across the globe are using democracy to turn against the values of tolerance, justice, fairness, openness, science and the rule of law. Liberal values never had deep roots anywhere in the world, even in places like North America and western Europe where one might assume they had because of

applauded, but it was never secured or adequately defended by its supporters or beneficiaries. By the turn of the century, too many just assumed that liberalism, capitalism and democracy were all that was left. As a planet we have not come to terms with the consequences of three catastrophic moments of the 21st century that combined to shake the foundations of all we had once believed was solid: the Islamist terrorist attacks on the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Spain between 2001 and 2015 and the subsequent brutal invasions and crackdowns on Muslim

countries and people, shook many out of what little tolerance they had for religious difference; the global economic collapse of 2008 to 2010, which wiped out trillions of dollars of wealth from middle classes around the world and dislocated millions from homes and jobs has left a deep bruise in faith in the future and caused real pain to families; the Covid pandemic that killed 10 million people between 2020 and 2022 and has never ceased its deadly spread, left us unable to comprehend such grief or heal from the social and economic disruption the lockdowns caused. Is it any wonder that after those three global traumas so many in every part of the world have lost faith in the tenets and promises of liberalism and its various applications, including globalization, financialization and equality? Those of us who do value the dignity and lives of those different from ourselves, who hold out hope for a decent future free of corruption and power imbalances and who wish for a better and more stable standard of living for the great majority of people instead of the wealthy few should occasionally step back from the urgent work of winning the next election here or there. We should realize that the malignancy we must fight is not a party or even a collection of parties. We must recognize the erosion of faith in the possibility of a shared human future. We must promote the sense of collective fate. We all breathe the same atmosphere, drink the same water and suffer from the warming of the planet.

## Will flattery get you everywhere with Donald Trump? Billionaires are determined to find out

(Staff Reporter) Reader, I was wrong. So terribly wrong. It pains me to admit this but, back in the distant past (last year), I wrote some very nasty things about Donald Trump and his family. Now that I am older and wiser I realise how misguided this was. So let me set the record straight: the incoming president is an exceptionally handsome man with an incredibly high IQ. We are all blessed that this very stable genius has taken time out of his busy golfing schedule to lead the free world to prosperity. What do you reckon ... was I sycophantic enough or do I need to lay the flattery on even thicker? I'm asking because, as you've no doubt noticed, genuflecting to the uber-transactional Trump is ramping up now that inauguration day is approaching. Business leaders are breaking records with the amount of money they're dumping into Trump's inaugural fund. "EVERYBODY WANTS TO BE MY FRIEND!!!" Trump wrote in a

post on Truth Social in December.

Mark Zuckerberg certainly does. Not only has he praised the incoming president as "badass", he's rejiggered Meta's leadership to be more Trump-friendly. Trump ally Dana White has been appointed to Meta's board. Meanwhile Nick Clegg, the former British deputy prime minister, is leaving his role (with millions in his pocket) as Meta's president of global affairs. Joel Kaplan, the most prominent conservative voice at the company – who is known for his support of Brett Kavanaugh when he faced assault claims – is taking Clegg's place. Meta is also removing fact-checkers and getting rid of restrictions on what people can say about topics such as immigration and gender. So if Trump wants to continue to spread lies about immigrants eating cats in Ohio, I guess it's all good with Meta. Jeff Bezos is giving Zuck a run for his money in the obsequiousness Olympics. At the

Bezos-owned Washington Post, editorial cartoonist Ann Telnaes recently resigned in response to the newspaper refusing to publish a satirical cartoon depicting Bezos, along with other titans of industry, kneeling before Trump. While the Post's opinions editor said the decision to axe the cartoon was solely driven by the fact that they'd already published a column on the same topic, Telnaes seemed to think otherwise. In a substack post she called the decision "dangerous for a free press". Last year the Post also made headlines after a decision to prevent its editorial team from publishing an endorsement of Kamala Harris. It's not just Trump getting buttered up by Bezos. The streaming division of Bezos's other baby, Amazon, announced on Sunday that it is releasing an "unprecedented behind-the-scenes" documentary about Melania Trump. Brett Ratner is directing – it's the

filmmaker's first major project after being accused of sexual misconduct by at least six women in 2017. It's not clear whether the Trump family is being paid to participate in the film; the general consensus, however, seems to be that this is not so much a documentary as a puff piece. Melania is known for being extremely private, after all, so one imagines she wouldn't allow anyone behind the scenes unless it was very much on her terms. What other get-on-Trump's-good-side projects has Amazon got in the pipeline, one wonders? Might Ivanka Trump do a Duchess of Sussex, and create her own lifestyle show? Or perhaps Tiffany Trump (whose father-in-law is her dad's new Middle East adviser) can finally further her dreams of being a pop star. Who knows. One thing that does seem alarmingly clear, as economic elites jostle to get in Trump's good books, is that the billionaire takeover of the US is complete.



# Will Delhi Spring A Surprise For BJP This Year?

(Sai Bureau)- eader, I was wrong. So terribly wrong. It pains me to admit this but, back in the distant past (last year), I wrote some very nasty things about Donald Trump and his family. Now that I am older and wiser I realise how misguided this was. So let me set the record straight: the incoming president is an exceptionally handsome man with an incredibly high IQ. We are all blessed that this very stable genius has taken time out of his busy golfing schedule to lead the free world to prosperity. What do you reckon ... was I sycophantic enough or do I need to lay the flattery on even thicker? I'm asking because, as you've no doubt noticed, genuflecting to the uber-transactional Trump is ramping up now that inauguration day is approaching. Business leaders are breaking records with the amount of money they're dumping into Trump's inaugural fund. "EVERYBODY WANTS TO BE MY FRIEND!!!" Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social in December. Mark Zuckerberg certainly does. Not only has he praised the incoming president as "badass", he's rejigged Meta's leadership to be more Trump-friendly. Trump ally Dana White has been appointed to Meta's board. Meanwhile

Nick Clegg, the former British deputy prime minister, is leaving his role (with millions in his pocket) as Meta's



president of global affairs. Joel Kaplan, the most prominent conservative voice at the company – who is known for his support of Brett Kavanaugh when he faced assault claims – is taking Clegg's place. Meta is also removing fact-checkers and getting rid of restrictions on what people can say about topics such as immigration and gender. So if Trump wants to continue to spread lies about immigrants eating cats in Ohio, I guess it's all good with Meta. Jeff Bezos is giving Zuck a run for his money in the obsequiousness

Olympics. At the Bezos-owned Washington Post, editorial cartoonist Ann Telnaes recently resigned in

response to the newspaper refusing to publish a satirical cartoon depicting Bezos, along with other titans of industry, kneeling before Trump. While the Post's opinions editor said the decision to axe the cartoon was solely driven by the fact that they'd already published a column on the same topic, Telnaes seemed to think otherwise. In a substack post she called the decision "dangerous for a free press". Last year the Post also made headlines after a decision to prevent its editorial team from publishing an endorsement of Kamala

Harris. It's not just Trump getting buttered up by Bezos. The streaming division of Bezos's other baby, Amazon, announced on Sunday that it is releasing an "unprecedented behind-the-scenes" documentary about Melania Trump. Brett Ratner is directing – it's the filmmaker's first major project after being accused of sexual misconduct by at least six women in 2017. It's not clear whether the Trump family is being paid to participate in the film; the general consensus, however, seems to be that this is not so much a documentary as a puff piece. Melania is known for being extremely private, after all, so one imagines she wouldn't allow anyone behind the scenes unless it was very much on her terms. What other get-on-Trump's-good-side projects has Amazon got in the pipeline, one wonders? Might Ivanka Trump do a Duchess of Sussex, and create her own lifestyle show? Or perhaps Tiffany Trump (whose father-in-law is her dad's new Middle East adviser) can finally further her dreams of being a pop star. Who knows. One thing that does seem alarmingly clear, as economic elites jostle to get in Trump's good books, is that the billionaire takeover of the US is complete.

## He Posed As Army Captain To Dupe Women Of Lakhs, Luck Ran Out In Lucknow

(Sai Bureau)- A 40-year-old man has been arrested in Lucknow for allegedly posing as an Army captain to woo women into relationships and then duping them of lakhs. Police have said Haider Ali, originally from Odisha's Balasore district, would introduce himself as Hartik Beglo, an officer of the Army Medical Corps, and lure women into relationships. He would then ask them for money, citing various reasons. Once he got the money, he would end all communication, move to a different

state and look for the next target. The imposter, police said, would lead a luxurious lifestyle with money he made from such frauds. Luck ran out when he met a Lucknow woman and she smelled a rat. The woman registered a police complaint and a probe began. Police were shocked by the revelations. They found that Haider Ali had worked in security firms across several cities across Hyderabad, Kerala, Karnataka, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. In each of these cities, he targeted women and

then fled. Police have found that he would post photographs in Army uniform on multiple Instagram profiles with names such as 'Indiancommandoharik', 'armanbeglo', 'armybeglo', 'soldiers3889'. Police have recovered an Army uniform, three-star flaps, an Army beret, a fake Aadhaar card, an Army canteen card and other incriminating documents from Haider Ali and are now investigating if he has a criminal record. Senior police officer Nipun Agarwal said the complainant told police

that the accused cheated her into a physical relationship and then duped her of money. "We arrested him and questioned him. His original name is Haider Ali Beg. He hid his religion and introduced himself as Hardik Beglo and lured several women into relationships and duped them. He talked them into financing cars for him and also borrowed huge sums from them. We are also scanning his call records to locate the women he targeted. He has told us about four women so far," the senior officer said.

## Why Greenland? Remote but resource-rich island occupies a key position in a warming world

(Sai Bureau)- Remote, icy and mostly pristine, Greenland plays an outsized role in the daily weather experienced by billions of people and in the climate changes taking shape all over the planet. Greenland is where climate change, scarce resources, tense geopolitics and new trade patterns all intersect, said Ohio University security and environment professor Geoff Dabelko. The world's largest island is now "central to the geopolitical, geoeconomic competition in many ways," partly because of climate change, Dabelko said. Since his first term in office, President-elect Donald Trump has expressed interest in acquiring Greenland,

which is a semiautonomous territory of Denmark, a longtime U.S. ally and a founding member of NATO. It is also home to a large U.S. military base. Why is Greenland coveted? Think of Greenland as an open refrigerator door or thermostat for a warming world, and it's in a region that is warming four times faster than the rest of the globe, said New York University climate scientist David Holland. Locked inside are valuable rare earth minerals needed for telecommunications, as well as uranium, billions of untapped barrels of oil and a vast supply of natural gas that used to be inaccessible but is becoming less so.





# The Gen Beta era is here. What will define their journey?

(Sai Bureau)- When the clock struck midnight, we all welcomed the New Year with cheers and anticipation. A new year brings along fresh beginnings—be it a new look, renewed resolutions (yes, the same old ones with a sprinkle of extra hope), or new aspirations. But 2025 is particularly special because it marks the arrival of a brand-new cohort: Generation Beta, some of whom will live long enough to witness the dawn of the 22nd century. Before you scratch your head to do the maths, let us tell you, that Generation Beta includes those born between 2025 and 2039. By 2035, they are projected to make up 16 per cent of the global population, positioning themselves as a crucial demographic shaping the world's future. But what will their traits look like, and how will they be any different from the previous generations - Gen Alpha (2013–2024), Gen Z (1997–2012), Millennials (1981–1996), Gen X (1965–1980) and Baby Boomers (1946–1964)? Let us dig into it. Children of younger millennials and older Gen Z, Gen Beta will be born into a world dominated by technology and AI. Experts suggest this generation will start life differently from their predecessors. Dr Arvind Otta, a senior psychologist and mental health activist, explains that Gen Beta will grow up during significant advancements in technology. They might even have AI applications powerful enough to personalise their learning and entertainment experiences. These differences may enable Gen Beta to navigate complex digital environments from a young age. Additionally, with societal perspectives on technology evolving, there could be greater emphasis on privacy and mental health concerns for this generation. Riddhi Doshi Patel, a Mumbai-based child psychologist and parenting counsellor, agrees. She adds that learning, entertainment, and social interactions for Gen Beta will shift even further online.

According to demographer and futurist Mark McCrindle's blog post, another defining trait of Gen Beta will be their adaptation to a world grappling with significant societal challenges. With climate change, global population shifts, and rapid urbanisation at the forefront, sustainability will not just be a preference but an expectation. Environmental challenges will shape societal values during their formative years. In essence, Gen Beta might be seen as a 2.0 version of iPad or "Shephora kids," complete with a sprinkle of sass. However, like every generation, they'll face their own unique set of challenges. 'Indian six-year-old thinks blue eyes and fair skin are beautiful' Suriti Chakrabarti, a mum of a three-year-old and expecting her second child next month, reflects on how

parenting has evolved. Despite enjoying a "blessed childhood" with an open relationship with her parents, she admits her approach will differ due to changing



times. She anticipates a "generation gap" between her children, even though they'll only be three years apart. One concern she expects to remain consistent is the struggle to build interpersonal relationships in an era of rapid technological evolution. "As kids, we weren't as tech-savvy, but at least we could form meaningful relationships. That's something I feel is developing slowly in today's generations," Suriti says. Dr Otta concurs, adding that while automation and AI might make life easier for Gen Beta, skills like creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence will require deliberate nurturing. These skills may not develop naturally in an AI-saturated environment. Riddhi also points out that Gen Beta's reliance on AI could hinder their decision-making abilities. Virtual reality and the metaverse, which are just emerging now, will likely become commonplace for them. However, frequent immersion in virtual environments could blur the boundaries between real and virtual life, affecting their mental and emotional well-being. She recalls a troubling incident with a six-year-old patient who believed being "beautiful" meant having blue eyes and fair skin—a perception shaped by societal and technological influences. Such skewed ideals, if not addressed, could become more prevalent among Gen Beta. Growing up, many of us discreetly used landlines or mobile phones, careful not to let our parents find out. However, the dynamics of parenting are shifting, even in the Indian context, as younger generations take on this role. Sushmita Marik, a 30-year-old learning and development specialist and soon-to-be mum, shares her thoughts on parenting in this tech-driven era. She plans to embrace her child's curiosity by addressing their questions openly and fostering communication. While her child will grow up in an age dominated by

technology and social media, she intends to maintain a healthy balance and prevent over-dependence on it. Like Sushmita, experts like Riddhi suggest that

millennial and Gen Z parents may adopt parenting styles that are radically different from their predecessors. Unlike previous generations, they value flexibility, inclusivity, and mental health awareness. Modern parents are less embarrassed to discuss emotions and mental well-being with their children. This openness fosters vulnerability and communication. These new approaches, combined with the challenges of raising tech-savvy children, will likely define parenting in the Gen Beta era. Tips for parents to raise Gen Beta kids We asked the experts to share some tips that can be followed by the soon-to-be parents. Have a look:

### Foster self-love and acceptance

With AI and social media creating unrealistic beauty and lifestyle standards, parents must instil a strong sense of self-worth in their children. Encourage them to embrace their unique qualities and prioritise inner happiness over external validation. Balance technology and offline experiences Gen Beta will be surrounded by AI and tech from birth, making it crucial to create a balance between screen time and real-world activities. Introduce hobbies like sports, arts, and outdoor play to nurture creativity and social interaction beyond digital spaces. Teach digital literacy and critical thinking Prepare children to navigate the digital world responsibly. Teach them to question online content, recognise AI biases, and differentiate between fact and fiction. Equip them with tools to handle misinformation and make informed choices. Emphasise emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills In a world where social interactions are increasingly virtual, parents should focus on developing their child's emotional intelligence. Encourage open conversations, empathy, and collaboration to build meaningful human connections. Encourage creativity and

adaptability As automation transforms jobs and lifestyles, creativity and adaptability will become vital skills. Provide opportunities for exploratory learning, problem-solving, and experimenting with new ideas to help Gen Beta thrive in a fast-changing world. Set realistic expectations Avoid imposing unattainable standards influenced by social media or AI-driven content. Focus on your child's strengths and encourage gradual progress rather than perfection, helping them grow without undue pressure. Promote family connections Amidst the dominance of digital interactions, ensure that family bonds remain strong. Spend quality time together, involve children in family traditions, and create a support system that values human connections over virtual ones. A look back With a new generation coming up now, we took a look back at the previous generation, from an Indian perspective: Baby Boomers (1946–1964): The optimistic nation-builders India's Baby Boomers were born into the euphoria of independence and the challenges of building a young nation. This generation saw the establishment of institutions, the Green Revolution, and the Five-Year Plans. Their optimism was fuelled by Nehruvian ideals of self-reliance and progress. They valued education, family, and stable jobs, often in government sectors, as symbols of success. With Bollywood hits and transistor radios for entertainment, they were the dreamers of a new India. Generation X (1965–1980): The self-reliant pragmatists Gen X in India grew up in a country navigating economic constraints, the Emergency, and the early seeds of liberalisation. They were but the first generation to experience satellite TV, Doordarshan classics, and the rise of consumer goods. With limited resources but growing aspirations, they developed a knack for independence and adaptability. Many sought security in stable careers, but they also began exploring entrepreneurial paths as India opened up its markets. Millennials (1981–1996): The liberalisation pioneers Indian Millennials came of age during the economic reforms of the 1990s, a time of globalisation, technology, and opportunity. This generation embraced the rapid influx of cable TV, computers, and international brands. They were shaped by a mix of traditional family values and exposure to global cultures. Focused on education and career growth, they leaned into the IT boom and startup culture. Their love for travel, gadgets, yet building interpersonal relationships (in real life, not online) and experiences reflects the optimism of growing up in a liberalised economy.



# Make Canada 51st state, retake Panama Canal: Trump's US expansion agenda

With just about two weeks left for his return to the White House, US President-elect Donald Trump threatened that he might use "economic force" to make Canada the 51st American state, while refusing to military action to acquire the Panama Canal and Greenland. This is part of Trump's broader expansionist agenda that he has promoted since winning the November 2024 elections.

While speaking to reporters on Tuesday at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, Trump, who is scheduled to take office on January 20, also promised to rename the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America" and said he would demand far higher defence spending from Nato allies.

## MAKING CANADA 51ST US STATE

The President-elect has been floating the idea of making Canada the 51st American state ever since he met Prime Minister Justin Trudeau after winning the November 5, 2024 election. He has also mentioned this in several social media posts and, in some, also referred to the Prime Minister, who resigned on Monday, as "Governor Trudeau".

When asked by reporters at Tuesday's press conference if he would use military action to fulfil his idea of absorbing Canada into the US, Trump said, "No, economic force. Because Canada and the US, that would really be something." "You get rid of that artificially drawn line (US-Canada border), and you take a look at what that looks like, and it would also be much better for national security," he added.

Trump also slammed American spending on Canadian goods and military support

for the country, saying Washington "derives no benefits".

In November last year, Trump announced that he planned to impose 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian and Mexican goods upon taking office unless both nations address the flow of migrants and drugs into the US.

Trump's suggestion was, however, met with ridicule in Canada.

"There isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States. Workers and communities in both our countries benefit from being each other's biggest trading and security partner," Trudeau tweeted.

On her part, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said the President-elect's remarks "show a complete lack of understanding of what makes Canada a strong country ... We will never back down in the face of threats".

## WON'T RULE OUT MILITARY ACTION TO ACQUIRE PANAMA CANAL, GREENLAND

At the press conference, Trump also spoke of retaking the Panama Canal and acquire Greenland from Denmark and refused to rule out military action to carry out his expansionist plans.

When asked whether he could assure the world that he would not use military or economic coercion as he tries to gain control of the Central American trade route and the autonomous territory of Denmark, the President-elect replied, "No, I can't assure you of either of those two... We need them for economic security... The Panama Canal was built for our military."

Since winning the election, Trump has reiterated his desire to annex the Panama Canal and also slammed former President Jimmy Carter, who died last month, for negotiating the treaty that ultimately gave Panama full control of the 51-mile waterway.

Panama's Foreign Minister Javier Martinez-Acha pushed back on the incoming US leader's threat, saying "the only hands that control the canal are Panamanian and that's how it will continue to be".

The Republican has also suggested he would impose tariffs on Denmark if it resists his offer to purchase Greenland, which he said is "vital to US national security".

In response, Denmark said Greenland was "not for sale".

"I don't think it's a good way forward to fight each other with financial means when we are close allies and partners," Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said on Tuesday night.

## RENAME GULF OF MEXICO TO GULF OF AMERICA

At the same press conference, Trump announced that his administration would seek to change the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America".

"We're going to be changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, which has a beautiful ring. That covers a lot of territory. The Gulf of America. What a beautiful name. And it's appropriate," he said.

The petroleum-rich body of water is the world's ninth-largest, and has been identified on maps as the Gulf of Mexico

since the 1500s.

Trump's promise to rename the Gulf of Mexico echoed his previous vow to revert the name of Denali, the highest mountain peak in North America, to Mount McKinley.

Former President Barack Obama changed the name of the Alaskan mountain in deference to Native Americans.

## HELL WOULD BREAK OUT IF HAMAS DOESN'T RETURN HOSTAGES

The President-elect also reiterated his threat that if Hamas did not release all the hostages that it abducted when it waged war against Israel in October 2023, by the time he returned to the White House, "all hell will break out in the Middle East".

"It will not be good for Hamas, and it will not be good, frankly, for anyone," he said. During Hamas's attack on Israel, around 250 hostages were taken to Gaza, of whom 96 remain. According to the Israeli military, 34 of them are dead.

## NATO SPENDING

Trump said Nato members should spend 5 per cent of their gross domestic product on defence, a significant increase from the current 2 per cent target.

"I think NATO should have 5 per cent," he said. "They can all afford it, but they should be at 5 per cent, not 2 per cent."

The incoming US President has frequently complained that most Nato members are not paying their fair share, and he floated demanding an increase in defence contributions during the campaign.

# Anupam Kher on Emergency: We should treat this film above all the controversies

Veteran actor Anupam Kher shared his experience of playing late politician Jayaprakash Narayan in the upcoming film *Emergency*. The actor said that the film should be treated 'above all the controversies.'

Veteran actor Anupam Kher is quite excited about his upcoming film *Emergency*. Ahead of the Kangana Ranaut directorial's release, Anupam spoke about the film and shared how it is 'above all the controversies.' The actor even praised Kangana for being one of the 'finest directors' that he has worked with.

In an interview with ANI, Anupam discussed working in the upcoming film, which delves into the *Emergency* imposed by former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for 21 months from 1975

to 1977 and its aftermath. The 69-year-old actor revealed that he was a student at the National School of Drama when the *Emergency* was imposed in 1975. Speaking about preparing for his role, he shared his thoughts on whether he conducted any specific research before portraying it.

"I did not have to research much about my role because Kangana did all the homework for everyone. I think now is the time when people should start talking about this film's cinematic brilliance. Every film that the filmmaker

makes, he does a lot of research and I believe this could be one of the finest films made on any political subject cinematically. We should treat this film above all the controversies," Anupam said.

Adding, Anupam expressed his joy of working with one of the 'finest directors', Kangana. While praising her hard work, he said, "We should now watch the film and see how a girl (Kangana) worked so effortlessly. If we see Kangana as Indira Gandhi on the big screen, we might think 'Oh,

it's easy that she did it.' But, it's not actually. Starting from her internal approach to the external one, directing and acting, I think she is one of the finest directors that I have worked with."

Kangana, who was touched by Anupam's words, shared how she would not have made the film if he had not agreed to it. "He is my film's real hero and if he had not agreed to be a part of the film then I would not have made it. To have his personality on screen and the honesty on his face, one would think that if not him then who

could possibly play the role of Jayaprakash Narayan," she added. The film, set during the 1970s when the *Emergency* was declared, promises to offer a gripping exploration of one of the most pivotal and most spoken about chapters in Indian democracy. Other than Kangana and Anupam, *Emergency* features a powerful ensemble cast, including, Mahima Chaudhary, Milind Soman, Shreyas Talpade, Vishak Nair, and the late Satish Kaushik. It will release in theatres on January 17.



# How Justin Trudeau's Allegations Against India Set Stage For His Downfall

Now that Justin Trudeau has resigned, the Liberal Party's main challenge would be to find a leader with mass

(Staff Reporter) : New Delhi: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau faces a political crisis that led to his resignation. Increasingly isolated within his own Liberal Party, Trudeau has been accused of using allegations against India to deflect attention from mounting domestic challenges, including a falling economy, and dissent within his party.

## Liberal Party Rebellion

Over the past year, several high-profile Liberal Party MPs, including Sean Casey and Ken McDonald, have publicly called for Trudeau to step down, citing dissatisfaction with his leadership. Reports suggest that more than 20 Liberal MPs have signed a pledge demanding his resignation.

The resignation of Chrystia Freeland as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister in December marked a blow to Trudeau's government. Freeland's departure reportedly stemmed from policy disagreements, including Trudeau's handling of potential US tariffs and his economic strategy.

"Like most families, sometimes we have fights around the holidays," Trudeau said in December. "But of course, like

most families, we find our way through it. You know, I love this country, I deeply love this party, I love you guys, and love is what families are all about."

Freeland, who slammed Trudeau and his "costly political gimmicks" in her resignation letter, did not share that sentiment. Following Freeland's resignation, Trudeau largely disappeared from media briefings or public events while spending much of his time at a ski resort. Adding to the internal turmoil, the Liberal Party suffered losses in two recent by-elections.

Key allies like New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jagmeet Singh have said that he would introduce a motion in the Canadian Parliament to topple the government. Currently on Winter Break, the Canadian Parliament will resume its proceedings on January 27.

## Leadership Scenarios

If Trudeau resigns, the Liberal Party's main challenge would be to find a leader with mass appeal. In Canada, an interim leader cannot run for the party's permanent leadership. Names like Dominic LeBlanc, Melanie Joly, Francois-Philippe Champagne, and Mark Carney have been floated as potential contenders, but the timeline for

a leadership race could leave the party vulnerable in the lead-up to the federal elections scheduled later this year. Canada's Liberal leader is chosen through a special convention, a process that could take months. If an election were called before the Liberals have a permanent leader, the party would face risks at the ballot box. Trudeau's political troubles come as the opposition Conservative Party, led by Pierre Poilievre, enjoys a commanding lead in public opinion polls. Poilievre has capitalised on economic frustrations, vowing to repeal Trudeau's carbon tax and address Canada's housing crisis. Some polls show the Conservatives with a double-digit lead over the Liberals.

## Trudeau's India Gambit

Tensions between New Delhi and Ottawa have been simmering since Trudeau's September 2023 allegation of Indian involvement in the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Nijjar was shot outside a Sikh temple in Canada. India dismissed the accusation as "absurd." Trudeau's claims that India sponsors criminal activities have drawn sharp criticism both domestically and internationally. In the subsequent fallout, India expelled six Canadian diplomats

and recalled its envoy to Ottawa after Canada attempted to question Indian officials as "persons of interest" in the Nijjar case. Pro-Khalistan activities in Canada, including an attack on a Hindu temple near Toronto, further inflamed relations between the two nations.

India has consistently rejected any link to the murder of Nijjar, a designated terrorist by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), and accused Trudeau's administration of pandering to Khalistani sympathisers for

political gain. Despite multiple exchanges, including meetings at international forums like the G20 Summit, Canada has failed to provide any conclusive evidence linking India to the murder. Critics argue that these allegations are an attempt to appeal to a segment of the Khalistani Sikh vote base in Canada, a move that some perceive as politically motivated. However, this strategy appears to have backfired, with many Canadians viewing it as a distraction from pressing national issues

## Amandeep Singh was drunk, high on cocaine and driving 95 mph in crash that killed 2 teens in Jericho, new indictment alleges

As reported by CBS News, The driver in a wrong-way crash that killed two middle schoolers on Long Island pled guilty Friday. It was a reversal for Amandeep Singh, who pled guilty to the top charges of aggravated vehicular homicide and manslaughter. He had previously pleaded not guilty to a 15-count indictment including aggravated vehicular homicide, leaving the scene, and driving while drunk and impaired. Nassau County DA Anne Donnelly said there was no plea deal and no reduced sentence. Singh, a 36-year-old Roslyn construction executive, will receive the maximum 8 and a third-to-25 years on the top count of aggravated vehicular homicide. He also pled guilty to leaving the scene.

Sentencing is set for Feb. 7. Crash killed two teen tennis players Drew Hassenbein and Ethan Falkowitz, both 14, were killed in the crash. Their relatives packed the courtroom Friday and were sobbing as Singh answered "Yes, your honor," admitting that on May 3, 2023, he was impaired by alcohol and cocaine and was driving the wrong way in Jericho. Donnelly said Singh was "rocketing" at 95 miles per hour in a 40 mph zone.

"Surveillance video captured the crash and shows Singh's truck going airborne after striking the boys' car, violently flips and rolls,"

Donnelly said.

Police body camera video showed him hiding behind a dumpster.

"He was unsteady on his feet. He was disoriented. His speech was slurred," Donnelly said. "He was adamant he wasn't involved in a crash."

Hassenbein and Falkowitz were elite tennis players returning from a match when they were killed. They were doing everything right, Donnelly said, but shared the road with a drunk and drugged driver.

"He just killed them"

"He's a bad guy. Never said he was sorry. Killed two boys. It wasn't an accident, he just killed them. Never said he was sorry," Drew Hassenbein's grandfather Mitchell Hassenbein said.

Singh's attorney says there is remorse but until Friday they advised him not to speak.

"Today, Amandeep Singh accepted full responsibility for what happened on that tragic night. He will live with it for the rest of his life. Irrespective of the punishment the justice system gives him, he will feel his own punishment forever," defense attorney James Kousouros said. "He understands that by drinking and driving, it really is a lesson to the community on how dangerous it is and what can happen," defense attorney Edward Sapone said.

## The Kejri splurge

### House renovation row dents ex-CM's image

For once, the BJP and the Congress are on the same page. Their common rival in poll-bound Delhi is former CM Arvind Kejriwal, who is under fire for having renovated his official residence at a cost of at least Rs 33 crore. According to an audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, the expenditure quadrupled — the initial estimate was Rs 7.91 crore — by the time the work was completed in 2022. Moreover, the renovation was done in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, a turbulent period during which many development projects were stalled and the state government was supposed to be protecting Delhi residents from the deadly virus. Now that's what you call a classic case of misplaced priorities.

The damning report has dented Kejriwal's carefully constructed 'aam aadmi' image, giving the BJP and the Congress ample fodder to target the ruling AAP, which is eyeing a hat-trick in the

upcoming Assembly elections. Splurging Rs 96 lakh on curtains and Rs 66.9 lakh on marble stone for walls, and that too at a time when people were falling ill or dying, is simply unacceptable. Kejriwal, who has projected himself as a commoner CM from the outset, has a lot of explaining to do. The extravagance was avoidable, to say the least. The CAG report has also put the Public Works Department on a sticky wicket, citing irregularities in the remodelling of the ground-floor accommodation and the construction of an additional storey. A fair and thorough probe is needed to establish the complicity of officials. As of now, the case has become a hot-button poll issue in the Capital. At stake is the credibility of AAP, whose top leaders have been accused of corruption by Central agencies. The party has its work cut out to regain the trust of voters, who gave it a landslide mandate in 2015 and 2020.



# Trudeau knew this and resigned: What Trump said after Canadian PM's move

Trump revived his pitch to make Canada the 51st US state after Trudeau's resignation, sparking debate over trade, security, and sovereignty. Canadian officials remain silent on the bold proposal.

(News Agency)- Hours after the resignation of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, US President-elect Donald Trump on Monday renewed his offer of making Canada the 51st state of the United States. Trudeau, 53, announced to resign Monday as he was forced by his ruling Liberal Party amidst his growing unpopularity. General elections are scheduled this year. The Canadian prime minister said that he would stay on as prime minister till the party elected a new leader. Trump, 78, who never had a good relationship with Trudeau even during his first term from 2017-2021, has been floating the idea of making Canada the 51st state of the United States ever since



he met Trudeau after his November 5 electoral victory in Mar-a-Lago. Thereafter, he has mentioned this in his social media posts several times. "Many people in Canada LOVE being the 51st State. The United States can no longer suffer the massive Trade Deficits and Subsidies that Canada needs to stay afloat. Justin Trudeau knew this, and resigned," Trump said on Truth Social. "If Canada merged with the US,

there would be no tariffs, taxes would go way down, and they would be TOTALLY SECURE from the threat of the Russian and Chinese ships that are constantly surrounding them. Together, what a great nation it would be!!!" said the president-elect after the resignation of Trudeau on Monday. There has not been much reaction to Trump's proposal from the Canadian side. Trump has threatened to impose 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian imports if Toronto is not able to stop the flow of illicit drugs and illegal migrants from its southern border with the US. In some of the posts, Trump even mocked Trudeau as "Governor of the Great State of Canada".

# Rape Convict Asaram Gets Interim Bail From Supreme Court, But Will Remain In Jail

Rape Convict Asaram Gets Interim Bail From Supreme Court, But Will Remain In Jail Asaram, whose real name is Asumal Sirumalani Harpalani, was arrested for raping a teenage girl in his ashram in Jodhpur in 2013.

New Delhi:

A week after self-styled godman Asaram returned to prison in Rajasthan's Jodhpur after 17-day parole, the Supreme Court today granted him interim bail on medical grounds. Asaram, who was convicted in a 2013 rape case, will, however, remain in jail as he has to get interim bail in another rape case.

The 83-year-old, whose real name is Asumal Sirumalani Harpalani, was arrested for raping a schoolgirl in his ashram in Jodhpur in 2013. He was later also convicted of raping a woman at his ashram near Gujarat's Gandhinagar in 2013.

Supreme Court Justices MM Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal granted him interim bail till March 31 but ordered that he can't meet his followers after he is released.

The court also told police



officers to escort Asaram to hospital, but not dictate where he should go for the treatment. Asaram's lawyers requested interim bail on the grounds that he is suffering from serious medical ailments.

He returned to jail on January 1 after his parole (15 days of parole and 2 days for travelling) ended.

Last year, he took treatment in Pune. He was also admitted to AIIMS Jodhpur after he

developed some heart-related ailment.

## Asaram's Rape Case

A court in Jodhpur in 2018 sentenced Asaram to life in prison after finding him guilty of raping a 16-year-old in his

ashram in 2013. His two accomplices were sentenced to 20 years in jail by the court in the same case.

In January 2023, he was also convicted of raping a woman at one of his ashrams, near Gandhinagar, in 2013.

The Supreme Court had last year sought a response from the Gujarat government on a plea filed by Asaram seeking suspension of the life sentence imposed on him by a trial court in the 2013 rape case.

The court told the lawyer appearing for Asaram that it would examine the issue only if there were medical grounds.

The Gujarat High Court in August rejected his plea for the suspension of life imprisonment handed by a Gandhinagar court in 2023. Refusing to suspend the sentence and grant him bail, the high court had observed that no case for relief was made out.



# Diljit Dosanjh spreads monochrome magic with new pictures



Mumbai, Punjabi sensation Diljit Dosanjh has dropped several monochrome pictures posing alongside his chartered flight. Diljit took to his Instagram, where he posted a gamut of pictures in black and white. In the images, the actor-singer looks dapper in a black overcoat paired with black pants, a tie and a crisp white shirt. The "Lover" hitmaker is seen striking a pose next to the chartered flight and captioned it: "Mai Karda FLY Ferda." Recently, Diljit met PM Modi and the iconic leader lauded the contributions of Sikhs, Sahibzaades during the interaction. During the conversation, the Prime Minister touched upon the Sikh community's contributions and paid tributes to the sacrifices of the sons of Guru Gobind Singh who left a lasting mark on Sikh

history in their short but extraordinary lives. The conversation also touched upon the Sikh community's contributions to India and PM Modi paid tribute to the sacrifices of the Sahibzaades and shared his experiences in Punjab, stating, "I have seen how people sleep on the floor after a mother's demise. I celebrate Veer Baal Diwas and want every child in this country to understand what strength and faith truly mean." PM Modi also recounted his efforts to restore a Gurdwara in Kutch, Gujarat, where Guru Nanak Dev once stayed. He explained how the structure, destroyed in the 2001 earthquake, was rebuilt under his supervision before he became Gujarat's Chief Minister. In the conversation, Diljit also said that India

can have a bigger festival than Coachella courtesy the country's rich culture. "Sir, I feel that they have made Coachella or any other festival that take place (big). We can make it much bigger. People travel from all over the world for such festivals." "We have such a rich culture. If we are eating food in a dhaba, and someone is singing in Rajasthani, it is such a melodious song, that I say, 'I should stop singing'. He is singing such a good song. And I sing professionally, this person is not even singing professionally. And he is singing better than me. He has so much art in him." "If such a development happens here, people from all over the world can come."

## Tejasswi Prakash suffers injury on set

Mumbai, Television actress Tejasswi Prakash took to social media to inform fans that she suffered a burn injury on the sets of her upcoming show "Celebrity MasterChef."

On Sunday, the 'Naagin 6' took to her Instagram stories and posted a photo of herself with a burn mark on her hand. Sharing the image, she wrote, "The show must go on." Tejasswi is preparing for her return to television after a brief hiatus following her successful run on "Naagin 6."

The actress is widely known for her stint in shows like "Swaragini

—Jodein Rishton Ke Sur." In 2021, she participated in the reality show Bigg Boss 15 and emerged as the winner. She made her Marathi film debut with "Mann Kasturi Re." "Celebrity MasterChef" is a cooking-based reality show, similar to Laughter Chefs. The show will feature popular personalities such as Dipika Kakkar Ibrahim, Gaurav Khanna, Nikki Tamboli, Rajiv Adatia, and many others, alongside Tejasswi. The makers have already released promos for the show on social media. Choreographer and director Farah Khan

has been roped in as the host of the cooking-based reality show "Celebrity MasterChef." Farah revealed her passion for experimenting with recipes and discovering new cuisines. Speaking about the show, Farah said in a statement, "I've always been an avid foodie, I enjoy experimenting with recipes, exploring new cuisines, and adding my own twist. I've channelled my love for food by starting my own digital cooking channel. When I was approached to host 'Celebrity MasterChef', I jumped at the opportunity."

## Ram Charan pens heartfelt gratitude note for Pawan Kalyan



Mumbai, Actor Ram Charan recently expressed his heartfelt thanks to his uncle, Pawan Kalyan, for always being a source of support and guidance in his life. The actor took to his Instagram to share a heartfelt note, acknowledging Kalyan's unwavering presence and en-

couragement, which have played a significant role in shaping his journey. Charan shared a picture of himself with Pawan and wrote in the caption, "Dear Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan Garu, as your nephew, as an actor, and as a proud Indian, I immensely respect you."

## Here's how Karishma Tanna starts her Sunday morning

Actress Karishma Tanna starts

information (sic)."Last month,

her morning on a healthy note and shares that it is usually with a detox juice. Karishma took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a picture of herself holding a glass of healthy green juice, which normally includes ginger, spinach, lemon and apples. For the caption, she wrote:

"Goodmorning."

The actress on Saturday had shared a video of herself talking about some of her favourite makeup products and her experience using it. For the caption she wrote: "Lil joys... Heheheh also my voice is Donald duckish. (don't mind) Lemme know if you liked this



Karishma along with actress Sonakshi Sinha enjoyed the Boxing Day test match between India and Australia in Melbourne. Karishma shared pictures from the venue along with her husband Varun Bangera.



## Rubina Dilaik rings in 2025 with 'love, abundance and serenity'

Mumbai, Actress Rubina Dilaik has shared a glimpse of how she spent her New Years with her family and she said that she



welcomed 2025 with 'love, abundance and serenity.' Rubina took to her Instagram, where she shared a string of herself along with her husband Abhinav Shukla and their twin toddler daughters. The actress, Abhinav and their family were in a wellness retreat, where they enjoyed good food, workout for the soul and body. They also enjoyed some quality time with each other and their daughters Edhaa and Jeeva. She captioned the post: "Ringing In 2025 with Love Abundance and Serenity ! The joy we experienced @swastikwellbeing will stay with us forever! The food we savoured specially curated by @chefarvindjoshi has left a

sweet taste in our memories to cherish." Talking about the actress, she married her longtime beau Abhinav Shukla, an actor, in 2018. However, when she had entered the controversial reality show "Big Boss 14", the two had talked about how they wanted to walk their separate ways. After coming out of the show, the two shared that they are not going their separate ways. In 2023, the couple welcomed twin girls whom they have named Jeeva and Edhaa. On the professional front, Rubina started her work on the small screen with "Chotti Bahu". She then appeared in shows such as "Saas Bina Sasural", "Punar Vivah – Ek Nayi Umeed", "Devon Ke Dev...Mahadev", "Jeannie Aur Juju" and "Shakti – Astitva Ke Ehsaas Ki". Rubina had also participated in "Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 12" and "Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa 10". She made her film debut in 2022 with "Ardh" starring Rajpal Yadav and Hiten Tejwani. Coming up next for Rubina is "Laughter Chefs" Season 2.

The show will also have names such as Rahul Vaidya, Kashmira Shah, Samarth Jurel, Abhishek Kumar, Bharti Singh, Harpal Singh Sokhi, Sudesh Lahiri, Mannara Chopra and Krushna Abhishek to name a few.

## SHAHID KAPOOR'S WIFE MIRA RAJPUT REVEALS GOALS SHE AIMS TO ACHIEVE IN 2025



Shahid Kapoor's wife, Mira Rajput, known for her active social media presence, recently shared her goals for the year 2025. On Sunday, she took to Instagram to post a photo of herself at the gym. In the image, Mira is seen flaunting her washboard abs in a white crop top paired with black leggings and a jacket. The star wife is certainly setting some major fitness goals. Alongside the photo, Mira wrote, "Goals need to be met in 2025." Earlier, Mira had shared glimpses from her vacation in the Maldives, where she and Shahid, along with their children Misha and Zain, jetted off to the island paradise to ring in the New Year. Mira Rajput also posted a romantic snapshot from her getaway with husband Shahid Kapoor, showing the couple holding hands.

Accompanying the photo, she wrote, "Come away with me." In the picture, the 'Jab We Met actor' is seen shirtless while holding Mira's hand on the beach.

## Akshay Kumar reacts to people's advice about limiting himself to one film per year



Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar recently addressed the advice he often receives from people, urging him to limit his film releases to one or two per year. Speaking to the media at the trailer launch event of his upcoming film "Sky Force,"

the actor shared his thoughts on his work ethic and unwavering dedication to his craft. "This is not the first time this has happened. It has happened before as well," Akshay said, referring to the recurring advice to scale back his workload.

## 'Bade Achhe Lagte Hain' fame Chahatt Khanna reacts to her Instagram account being hacked

Television actress Chahatt Khanna, best known for her role in "Bade Achhe Lagte Hain," recently opened up about her Instagram account being hacked. After a significant amount of effort and with the help of security protocols, Khanna successfully regained access to her account. However, she was shocked to discover a dramatic drop of nearly 2.5 million followers. Speaking about the same, the actress shared, "This was quite a shock for me. Despite keeping everything in place and check, the hackers somehow got access to my account. The META team was proactive in helping me recover my account at the earliest. However, I see a drop of nearly 2.5 million followers amidst all



this and it's quite strange. The hacking is suspected to have taken place in Turkey. Thankful to the team of META for helping me get back access to my account at the earliest. Here's hoping everything remains fine now."

earlier, in 2020, Chahatt Khanna became a victim of cybercrime when her social media accounts were hacked by an old friend. According to reports, the actress revealed that the individual responsible for the breach was a former friend with whom she had a past conflict. Chahatt has since filed a police complaint regarding the incident. Last month, Khanna made headlines after she shared her photos with boyfriend Rohan Gandotra from their Dubai vacation. Although Chahatt has not officially confirmed her

## Sangeeta Bijlani's healthy morning includes ginger, turmeric shots and 'garam chai'

Mumbai, Veteran Bollywood actress Sangeeta Bijlani shared that she starts her day on a healthy note with ginger, turmeric shot and aloe vera hot water. Sangeeta took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a glimpse of her healthy morning. She shared a picture of aloe vera soaked in water and a small glass with her health shot. Sangeeta captioned it: "Good morning Ginger

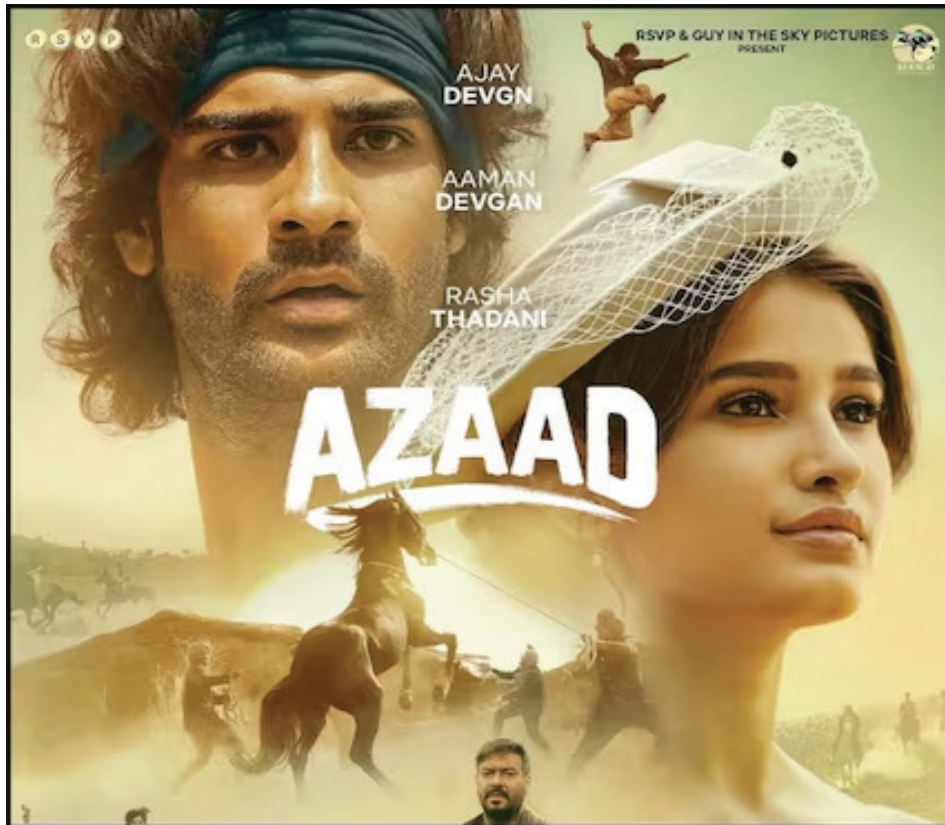
Turmeric shot with Aloe vera and hot water." She then shared a video of her pouring some hot tea and wrote: "Adrak and lemon grass ki garam chai." The veteran actress then shared a wish for all her fans. "Happiness to all my beautiful souls," she wrote. Last month in December, Sangeeta shared a glimpse of a heartfelt Christmas gift from her former boyfriend, Salman.





# Azaad trailer: Aaman Devgn-Rasha Thadani promise to gallop into audience's hearts

The trailer for Ajay Devgn's Azaad was unveiled on Monday. Directed by Abhishek Kapoor, the period drama introduces debutants Aaman Devgn and Rasha Thadani and centres around a majestic horse and its unwavering loyalty to its master.



second trailer showcases Azaad's unwavering loyalty, first to Ajay Devgn's character, a rebel, and later to Govind, played by Aaman Devgn, Ajay's nephew. Rasha Thadani portrays a royal family member who forms a bond with Govind. The film revolves around a fight for independence, driven by Azaad's bravery and loyalty. The trailer hints at potential romantic storylines between Aaman and Rasha's characters, as well as Ajay and Diana's characters.

Additionally, it sheds light on various aspects of life during the British Raj, including the Zamindari system and the circumstances that led people to become rebels or "baaghis." Directed by Abhishek Kapoor and produced by Ronnie Screwvala and Pragya Kapoor, the film promises an intense journey of love and loyalty. Azaad is set to release in theatres on January 17, 2025.

The trailer for the upcoming film Azaad, featuring debutants Aaman Devgn and Rasha Thadani, was released on January 6. Also starring Ajay Devgn and Diana Penty, this period drama highlights the courage and loyalty of a majestic horse named Azaad, devoted to his master, portrayed by Ajay Devgn. The two-minute-forty-three-

devoted to his master, portrayed by Ajay Devgn. The two-minute-forty-three-

## Hrithik Roshan thrilled for Kaho Naa... re-release, to watch with fans in theatres

Actor Hrithik Roshan is thrilled about the re-release of his debut film, Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai, hitting the theatres on January 10. Hrithik expressed his excitement and plans to watch the movie alongside fans in cinemas.

beautiful tale of Rohit and Soniya will be back again on the big screen. The musical romantic thriller, directed by Hrithik Roshan's father, Rakesh Roshan, was first released on January 14, 2000. It became a massive success,



Kaho Naa...Pyaar Hai's re-release on January 10 coincides with the actor's 51st birthday. The actor will be present for the film's fan premiere on January 9 at PVR Icon, in Andheri, Mumbai. Excited about the film clocking 25 years, the actor shared a video on X that highlighted all the amazing moments of the film. The clip stirred nostalgia among fans as the

celebrated for its gripping story and chart-topping music composed by the actor's uncle, Rajesh Roshan. The film's re-release will mark a double celebration for fans as they will watch the film with Hrithik in theatres. The actor plans to relive the magic again at the special fan premiere of his movie. The film will be available for screening at PVR INOX starting January 10.

## RGV's Satya to re-release this January in cinemas

Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma will be re-releasing his acclaimed 1998 gangster film, Satya, in cinemas on January 17, 2025. The film, which has achieved cult status over the years, originally starred Manoj Bajpayee, Shefali Shah, Urmila Matondkar, and JD Chakravarthy, among others. The news was shared by PVR cinemas on their social media handle with a caption that read, "The past can't be buried, and neither can the truth! Get ready to dive into the world of Satya once again at PVR INOX Satya, produced and directed by Ram Gopal Varma, was co-written by Anurag Kashyap and Saurabh Shukla. The film also featured a talented ensemble cast including Paresh Rawal, Makarand Deshpande, and Saurabh Shukla. The story followed the journey of the

titular character, played by JD Chakravarthy, as he navigates the criminal underworld of Mumbai after meeting gangster Bhiku Mhatre,



portrayed by Manoj Bajpayee. The movie is noted for its impactful storytelling and music, with Vishal Bhardwaj debuting as a music composer and Gulzar providing the lyrics. Ram Gopal Varma's recent work includes the Telugu political thriller Vyooham. Meanwhile, Manoj Bajpayee, who recently appeared in Kanu Behl's thriller The Despatch, is set to feature in the upcoming season of The Family Man on Prime Video India.



## Deva teaser: Shahid Kapoor is a trigger-happy cop in Rosshan Andrews film

Deva teaser: Zee Studios and Roy Kapur Films have unveiled the teaser for Deva, featuring Shahid Kapoor in an intense role. The film, directed by Rosshan Andrews, promises high-octane action and captivating performances.



Zee Studios and Roy Kapur Films have released the much-anticipated teaser of Deva, starring Shahid Kapoor in what promises to be one of his most intense and action-packed roles yet.

Directed by acclaimed Malayalam filmmaker Rosshan Andrews, Deva presents Kapoor in a raw and dynamic avatar, blending high-octane action, stunning stunts, and mesmerising dance sequences.

The teaser highlights thrilling high-speed chases, explosive fight scenes, and Kapoor's electrifying screen presence, leaving audiences eager for more. At the recent fan event, Kapoor expressed his gratitude for the overwhelming support, stating that Deva is a project close to his heart. With nods to Bollywood legend Amitabh Bachchan's iconic aura, Kapoor's performance aims to blend classic charisma with a modern twist. Produced by Zee Studios and Roy Kapur Films, Deva promises a gripping storyline paired with adrenaline-fuelled action, making it a highly anticipated release as the new year unfolds. Deva will release on January 31.

# Mufasa The Lion King OTT release: Here's what we know

Disney's Mufasa: The Lion King released in theatres on December 20, 2024. The film is expected to release digitally around March-April 2025.



Ever since the highly praised sequel, Mufasa: The Lion King, released in theatres on December 20, 2024, fans have been wondering about the film's digital run. The movie which grossed over US dollars 470 million worldwide, making it the ninth highest-grossing film of 2024, is expected to premiere on digital in March or April. According to the latest film schedules, the producers typically allow a 100-day exclusive theatrical window before the digital release, which places the anticipated date around March or April 2025. The film will exclusively stream on Disney+ Hotstar.

As with previous Disney releases, the company has

opted for Wednesdays for the digital launch. For example, The Little Mermaid became available for streaming after 103 days in theaters. Generally, Disney films are available for digital purchase two months after their theatrical debut. The journey of a beloved cub rising to become a king, Mufasa: The Lion King is a sequel to the 2019 classic The Lion King. Director Academy Award winner Jenkins previously told Reuters, "For 30 years, we've known Mufasa as the epitome of greatness and goodness, while Scar embodies pure evil." He emphasised that watching the original film is crucial to grasp the context fully.

## Zendaya and Tom Holland are engaged: Report

Actors Zendaya, 28, and Tom Holland, 28, are engaged.

According to TMZ, the couple got engaged during an intimate family gathering over the holidays. Sources close to the couple told the outlet that Tom proposed to Zendaya in an intimate setting at one of her family homes in the United States, sometime between Christmas and New Year's. Although the couple has remained tight-lipped about their relationship, Zendaya

proudly showcased her sparkling diamond ring at the 82nd Golden Globes on Sunday, sparking speculations. As pictures and videos of Zendaya's look

surfaced online, fans were quick to notice and comment



on the striking diamond ring. Although the engagement rumours remain unconfirmed, it's equally plausible that Zendaya was simply showcasing the jewellery, given her role as an ambassador for several luxury brands, including Bulgari. Zendaya and Tom Holland first met on the sets of Spider-Man: Homecoming in 2016. Four years later, they were photographed kissing each other in front of the paparazzi at an event. Later, they went public with their relationship. On the work front, Zendaya and Tom Holland will be sharing screen space in Christopher Nolan's Odyssey.

## Akshay Kumar soaks in Jaipur's winter sun with Paresh Rawal on Bhooth Bangla sets

Actors Akshay Kumar and Paresh Rawal, who have reunited for Priyadarshan's Bhooth Bangla, posted a photo together from the film's Jaipur schedule. After completing their shoot in Mumbai, the actors and the crew headed to the Pink City.

Akshay Kumar, shirtless, was seen basking in the winter sun in Jaipur on the film's sets. Paresh Rawal was a part of the frame too. Sharing their photo together, Rawal wrote, "A Shining star enjoying Winter Sun at Jaipur with Mr FIT @akshaykumar on the shoot of BHOOT BANGLA! Kumar shared the photo on X, and wrote, "It is an amazing day on set...good

weather and great company! Akshay Kumar and Paresh Rawal have co-starred in multiple films together such as Hera Pheri, B h o o l B h u l a i y a a , Garam Masala, OMG, and others.

Bhooth Bangla's Jaipur schedule will feature n u m e r o u s outdoor shoots at the city's iconic locations, providing a

vibrant cultural backdrop to the film. Bhooth Bangla promises an exciting mix of chills and chuckles, blending



the haunted house genre with a lighthearted comedic twist. Previously, the makers dropped a poster of the film featuring Akshay. Directed by Priyadarshan, Bhooth Bangla is produced by Shobha Kapoor and Ektaa R Kapoor's Balaji Telefilms and Akshay Kumar's production house, Cape of Good Films. The film is co-produced by Faara Sheikh and Vedant Baali. The story is written by Akash A Kaushik and screenplay by Rohan Shankar, Abilash Nair and Priyadarshan. The dialogues are by Rohan Shankar. Bhooth Bangla is slated for theatrical release on April 2, 2026.