



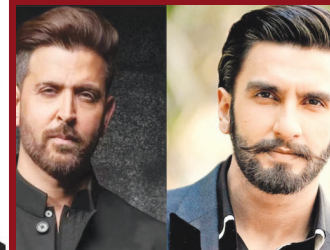
The South Asian



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Voice of South Asian Community Since March 2002

Mrithik Roshan in talks to lead Don 3 after Ranveer Singh's exit: Report



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As the Trump administration begins its second year, internal jockeying and record-breaking fundraising highlight a premature start to the next presidential cycle.

Zohran Mamdani Inaugurated as New York City's 112th Mayor

The 34-year-old Democratic Socialist pledges an "audacious" agenda of rent freezes and free transit during a historic ceremony at an abandoned subway station.



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Air India pilot offloaded before take-off in Canada, 'smell' triggered probe

(News Agency) An Air India pilot was offloaded before take-off in Vancouver on December 23 after Canadian authorities raised concerns over a suspected "smell," prompting further checks. The incident, which took place on December 23, 2025, resulted in a delay for passengers on board flight AI186. According to Air India, the pilot was offloaded prior to departure following suspicions raised due to a "smell" associated with the crew member. This prompted further enquiry by local authorities and sparked an internal airline investigation. Canadian officials specifically cited



concerns over the pilot's ability to perform duties safely, following which the individual was taken for further enquiry. "In accordance with safety protocols, an alternate pilot was rostered to operate the flight," an airline

spokesperson said, adding that process of identifying and assigning a replacement pilot required additional time, contributing to the overall delay of the flight. Despite the inconvenience, the airline reiterated that these steps were necessary to ensure all safety requirements were met before takeoff. Air India apologised for the inconvenience and affirmed its cooperation with Canadian officials. "Air India regrets the inconvenience caused to its passengers and is fully cooperating with the local authorities," the spokesperson said. Passengers were provided with refreshments and support during the wait, and the airline assured them that their safety and comfort remained a priority throughout the incident. Pending the outcome of the ongoing investigation, the pilot has been removed from

flying duties, Air India confirmed. "Air India maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards any violation of applicable rules and regulations."

The airline has assured that any confirmed violations will be met with "strict disciplinary action in line with company policy," and reiterated its commitment, saying that "safety remains Air India's highest priority at all times." It also said that it will review its internal procedures, if necessary, to prevent similar incidents in the future and uphold the trust of its passengers.

Best Bollywood Movies of 2025: The Complete Must-Watch List

(News Agency) Bollywood in 2025 marked a turning point for Hindi cinema, blending box office ambition with layered storytelling and thematic depth. The year stood out not just for massive commercial successes but also for films that pushed conversations around history, justice, relationships, and identity. From large-scale espionage spectacles to intimate rural dramas, Hindi cinema displayed a renewed confidence in tackling diverse narratives while still drawing audiences to theatres.

At the commercial forefront was *Dhurandhar*, which emerged as the highest-grossing Indian film of the year, crossing ₹1,128 crore worldwide. Its mix of espionage, crime, and international intrigue helped it dominate multiplexes and mass circuits alike. *Chhaava* followed closely, delivering a powerful historical portrayal of Sambhaji Maharaj that resonated strongly with audiences across regions. Meanwhile, *War 2* continued the spy-universe trend, offering large-scale action and star power that kept it among the year's most discussed releases despite mixed critical reactions.

Critically Acclaimed Storytelling and Social Drama

Beyond spectacle, 2025 was equally notable for its grounded,



emotionally resonant cinema. *Homebound* earned widespread acclaim for its realistic portrayal of rural ambition and friendship, becoming one of the most respected films of the year. *Sitaare Zameen Par* returned with a socially conscious lens, using

sports to explore neurodiversity, empathy, and personal redemption. Films like *Santosh* and *Tanvi: The Great* further highlighted Bollywood's growing commitment to meaningful, character-driven narratives.

The New Year of Harappa: A Story of Earth, Stars, and Survival

(News Agency) The year is 2400 BCE. Dawn is about to break over Harappa, one of the greatest cities in the world, and the jewel of Indus Valley Civilisation. The city stretches out in perfect order: street after street of identical red-brick houses, all aligned in a precise grid. The streets are paved with fired bricks. The drainage systems run underground. Everything is mathematical, everything is planned.

But right now, the city is silent. Waiting.

On a giant brick wall stands



what today would be called the chief astronomer. He is an old man, his face weathered by years of standing

(News Agency) The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued show-cause notices to four Air India pilots over alleged violations of safety procedures during recent operations of two flights. The move comes after the regulator identified multiple safety concerns, including repeated technical issues and non-compliance with equipment standards on aircraft. The pilots -- Nishant Tholia, Rishi Kumar Badole, Arun Mehra, Priyank Bainsla -- have been instructed to submit their responses within 14 days of the notice issued on December 29, 2025. According to official documents, the pilots operated flights despite prior knowledge of recurring technical snags and system degradations.

The DGCA highlighted that during the operation of Tokyo-bound Flight AI 358 from Delhi, a smoke smell was detected near one of the aircraft doors. The occurrence raised further questions about the safety protocols observed during the flight. "Repetitive snags related to the same systems had been recorded on five previous sectors, indicating a known history of system degradation," the show-cause notice said and suggested the aircraft had a documented pattern of problems affecting its operation. Key finding in the investigation was the use of the aircraft with equipment not meeting minimum standards. This contravened requirements outlined in Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) for aircraft dispatch and equipment functionality.

on this exact spot, watching the sky. He doesn't speak. His eyes are locked on a specific point on the eastern horizon, a "V" shaped notch between two hills, barely visible in the pre-dawn darkness. His eyes are following the movement of celestial bodies. But the cluster of stars he is looking for is nowhere to be seen.

THE "SEVEN SISTERS"
VANISH Winter ended a few weeks ago. The sun has returned

to the Taurus constellation. But the Harappans would know that a full cycle of seasons is over only when a cluster of seven stars or seven sisters—we call them the *Krittika* nakshatra today—appear again on the horizon just before dawn. For nearly fifty nights, the *Krittika* (the *Pleiades*) have been missing from the sky. They haven't been destroyed. They're simply hidden, swallowed by the overwhelming brightness of the Sun.

India test-launches two indigenous Pralay missiles off Odisha coast

(News Agency) Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday successfully conducted the salvo launch of two Pralay missiles in quick succession from the launcher coast of Odisha at 10.30 in the morning. The flight test was conducted as part of DRDO's user evaluation trials, and both missiles followed the intended trajectory, meeting all the objectives as confirmed by tracking sensors deployed by the Integrated Test Range in Odisha's Chandipur.

developed solid propellant quasi-ballistic missile employing state-of-the-art

missile is capable of carrying multiple types of warheads against various targets. The

Hyderabad in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories - Defence Research and Development Laboratory, Advanced Systems Laboratory, Armament Research and Development Establishment, High Energy Materials Research Laboratory, Defence Metallurgical Research Laboratory, Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory, Research & Development Establishment (Engineers) and Integrated Test Range), Development-cum-Production Partners (Bharat Dynamics Limited &

Bharat Electronics Limited) and other Indian industries. The salvo launch of the two missiles was witnessed by senior scientists of DRDO, representatives from the Indian Air Force and the Indian Army, as well as industry representatives, including the Development-cum-Production Partners. Following the successful salvo launch, the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh complimented the DRDO, Indian Air Force, Indian Army, DPSUs and the industry. Samir Kamat, the research and development chairman of DRDO, also congratulated the DRDO teams associated with the test.



WHAT IS PRALAY?

Pralay is an indigenously

guidance and navigation to ensure high precision. The Research Centre Imarat,

cum-Production Partners (Bharat Dynamics Limited &

the test.

26/11 hero Sadanand Date, who took on Ajmal Kasab, is new Maharashtra top cop

(News Agency) Sadanand Vasant Date, a soft-spoken yet tough taskmaster and a decorated officer of the 26/11 terror attacks, was on Wednesday appointed as the new Director General of Maharashtra Police (DGP). A 1990-batch IPS officer, 59-year-old Date will succeed Rashmi Shukla, who retires on January 3. He will have a fixed tenure of two years as the head of the over two lakh strong Maharashtra Police force. Date's appointment follows his recent premature repatriation from central deputation where he was heading the National Investigation Agency (NIA). Date is widely hailed as one

of the heroes of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. On the fateful day of November 26, 2008, known as 26/11 terror attacks, Date was serving as the Additional Commissioner of Police (Central Region) in 2008. He had led a police team that pinned down Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists Ajmal Kasab and Abu Ismail on the rooftop of Cama Hospital and despite being severely injured by grenade splinters, he continued to engage the terrorists. He was later honoured with the President's Police Medal for Gallantry. Even today, Date carries metallic splinters from that night embedded in

his body, especially one near his eye and he describes them as "medals" from a war zone rather than injuries. The officer brings a wealth of experience across state and central agencies as he has served in the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and the first Commissioner of Police for Mira-Bhayandar, Vasai-Virar.

Date also served the Mumbai Police as Joint Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) and Crime. He has also served as DIG in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and IG (Operations) in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). A doctorate in



Economic Offences from Pune University, Date takes charge at a crucial time for the state's

law and order machinery when local body elections are being held.

Top 6 Cricket News Stories of 2025: Glory, Grief, and a Generational Shift

(News Agency) Indian cricket in 2025 lived through one of its most emotionally complex years. On one hand, it delivered historic triumphs across men's and women's formats. On the other, it faced leadership transitions, geopolitical controversies, and a heartbreaking tragedy that forced the sport to confront safety and responsibility beyond the boundary rope. These ten stories defined Indian cricket's year on and off the field.

1. India Wins ICC Champions Trophy

The India national cricket team reaffirmed its dominance in white-

ball cricket by winning a record third ICC Champions Trophy. India went unbeaten through the competition and defeated New Zealand national cricket team in the final in Dubai. Captain Rohit Sharma anchored the title clash with a commanding 76, earning Player of the Match and setting the tone for a year of silverware.

2. Indian Women's Team Wins Maiden ODI World Cup

History was made when the India women national cricket team lifted their first-ever ICC Women's ODI World Cup, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. Led by

Harmanpreet Kaur, the triumph marked a watershed moment for women's cricket in the country. Packed stadiums, record broadcasts, and nationwide celebrations reflected the sport's growing cultural and commercial footprint.

3. Royal Challengers Bengaluru End 18-Year IPL Drought

After nearly two decades of heartbreak, Royal Challengers Bengaluru finally won their maiden Indian Premier League title, defeating Punjab Kings in the final. Virat Kohli's emotional celebrations became iconic.

However, the joy was overshadowed by a tragic stampede outside Bengaluru's Chinnaswamy Stadium, which claimed 11 lives and cast a long shadow over the historic win.

4. India Defends Asia Cup Title Amid Geopolitical Tensions

India successfully defended their Asia Cup crown, but the tournament was marred by controversy. Matches against Pakistan saw repeated no-handsake incidents, sparking global debate over sportsmanship and the "spirit of cricket." The tensions underscored how deeply

geopolitics continue to intersect with cricket in the subcontinent.

5. Rise of Teenage Sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi

At just 14 years old, Vaibhav Suryavanshi stunned the cricketing world by becoming the youngest List A centurion in history. The Bihar prodigy dominated age-group and domestic competitions and emerged as Google's most-searched Indian personality of 2025. Comparisons to past greats came quickly, but selectors and coaches urged patience as India watched the rise of a generational talent.

Iran's Tightrope Walk: A Nation on Edge, an American Warning

How to 'Mamdani-proof' New York City and save it from socialism



The flickering images emerging from Iran in late 2025 paint a stark and familiar picture: a populace, pushed to its breaking point by a failing economy, rising up against an entrenched clerical regime. Reports of widespread protests, tragically met with lethal force, underscore the deepening chasm between the Iranian people and their government. This latest wave of dissent, fueled by pervasive economic hardship and a profound sense of disenfranchisement, marks a critical juncture not just for Tehran, but for international diplomacy, particularly in the wake of a stark warning from the United States.

President Trump's declaration that the U.S. is "locked and loaded" to intervene if Tehran continues its lethal crackdown on protesters signals a significant escalation in rhetoric. This is not merely a statement of solidarity; it's a direct challenge to the Iranian regime's sovereign authority to manage internal unrest and a promise of potential, albeit unspecified, action. While the immediate intent is to deter further violence against demonstrators, such strong language inevitably raises the specter of external interference and the complex geopolitical ramifications that would follow.

The historical context of U.S.-Iran relations, marked by decades of mistrust, sanctions, and proxy conflicts, makes this warning particularly potent. For the Iranian government, any perceived foreign intervention is likely to be framed as an attack on national sovereignty, potentially galvanizing hardliners and making it more difficult for internal reformists to gain traction. The regime's immediate response, branding Trump's support for protesters as a "red line," illustrates this defensive posture.

Domestically, the Iranian authorities face an unenviable dilemma. A forceful

suppression of protests risks alienating an already frustrated population further, potentially igniting a broader, more intractable conflict. Yet, any perceived weakness in maintaining order could embolden dissent and challenge the very foundation of the Islamic Republic. The killing of protestors is not just a human tragedy; it's a strategic blunder that provides external actors, like the U.S., with moral and political leverage.

The international community watches with bated breath. The humanitarian imperative to protect civilian lives is clear, but the pathways to achieving this without exacerbating regional instability are fraught with peril. A genuine resolution must come from within Iran, driven by the legitimate aspirations of its people for economic stability, political freedom, and human dignity.

President Trump's warning, while dramatic, highlights a crucial point: the world is observing. The tragic loss of life in these protests demands attention and accountability. While direct military intervention carries immense risks, the United States, alongside its allies, holds significant diplomatic and economic levers. Coordinated international pressure, coupled with robust support for human rights and independent media within Iran, could offer a more sustainable path to supporting the Iranian people without tipping the region into further chaos.

Ultimately, the future of Iran rests with its citizens. However, the world, and indeed the United States, has a profound interest in ensuring that their voices are heard and that their peaceful calls for change are not met with deadly silence. The promise of action, though ambiguous, serves as a stark reminder to Tehran that the world is watching, and the cost of repression may be higher than ever before.

(By TSAI Editorial Team)

New York City has elected its first socialist mayor, and Albany now faces a test of whether it will let his radical policies take down the city as well as the state. Zohran Mamdani's far-left proposals, from city-run grocery stores to massive tax hikes, will be tested in the Big Apple — a laboratory for ideological experimentation. As the state capital, Albany can and must use its legal and constitutional authority to protect the city and the state from the Mamdani agenda. Albany's power over New York City is not just symbolic — it is enshrined in the very structure of state government. Like every other local government in New York, the Big Apple is a political subdivision of the state. And because the state created the Big Apple, it retains tremendous authority over how the city governs itself. That gives lawmakers wide latitude to check a mayor whose policies are irresponsible or dangerous. Albany has many tools at its disposal to rein in Gotham's new mayor. For instance, many city functions are actually controlled by state public authorities. Take the Metropolitan Transportation Administration. It operates the city's subways and commuter rail service, yet it is governed by a board primarily controlled by the governor. The state legislature could easily establish new public authorities to manage other vital city functions, keeping them beyond the reach of a radical mayoral administration. And if existing checks seem insufficient to halt Mamdani's most radical policies, Albany can establish new ones. The state may, in many circumstances, enact laws that supersede the New York City charter. The charter outlines the basic functions of city government, including the vast powers of the New York City mayor. The state legislature, on certain issues of state concern, can enact laws to transfer much of the mayor's authority to state officials or other New York City officials. Albany doesn't necessarily need to legislate to stop Mamdani; it can also simply refuse to play along. The simplest way to halt Mamdani's agenda is for the state legislature to withhold its consent for any proposal that requires state approval. Mamdani's proposed tax hike and rent freeze, for example, cannot take effect without state legislation. Albany can kill these simply by doing

nothing. Likewise, Mamdani's expensive ambitions for free city buses and universal child care will almost certainly need state funding that Albany can deny. Even in an overwhelmingly Democratic city where he was the Democrats' nominee, Mamdani's victory came with approximately half of all voters backing other mayoral candidates. That result should serve as a warning to Albany: New Yorkers were not looking for a socialist revolution. Mamdani and his comrades seem to have drawn a different conclusion. Since his surprise primary win in June, Mamdani has shown little interest in moderation. He has made no effort to distance himself from his most extreme statements and proposals. Many of his top administration appointees come from the far-left nonprofit and political advocacy machine that elected him. Compromise and conciliation will have no place in Mamdani's City Hall. And the mayor-elect has shown that he isn't interested in undertaking the important yet mundane work of a municipal leader. Instead, he is interested in imposing a radical, out-of-the-mainstream agenda on New York City. State lawmakers — who all must run for reelection themselves in 2026 — should remember that their first duty is to the people of New York, not to the ideological ambitions of one radical mayor. Albany has the power and the responsibility, to put the brakes on New York's new socialist mayor. The state has stepped in before to save the city from ruin. With Mamdani about to become mayor, it must do so again and Mamdani-proof New York City. Joe Burns is a partner with the Holtzman Vogel law firm, with a focus on election cases in New York State. He previously served as deputy director of election operations at the New York State Board of Elections.

(By Joe Burns, As appeared in and courtesy of The Hill) Joe Burns is a partner with the Holtzman Vogel law firm,

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Between Washington And Beijing, India Is Quietly Rewriting The Space Race

From Sriharikota's launch pads to orbiting skies, India's space agency ISRO has quietly become the go-to commercial launcher for dozens of countries. In the past decade, Indian rockets have placed nearly 390 foreign satellites into orbit. The United States is by far the biggest client: 232 US-built satellites have hitched rides with India since 2014, but others are close behind. For example, Britain has sent roughly 83 satellites via ISRO, Singapore about 19, with Canada and South Korea also among the customers (8 and 5 satellites respectively). Space-industry analysts note that ISRO "has become a symbol of reliability and innovation, with rockets praised for precision, efficiency and affordability".

This reputation for dependable, cost-effective launches helps explain why a dozen nations now entrust key payloads to India's launchers. At the heart of ISRO's appeal is its workhorse rocket, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). Decades of development have yielded an unusually high success rate — about 94 per cent over 63 missions to date — and even occasional world records. In 2017, for instance, a single PSLV mission put 104 satellites into orbit at once, shattering the previous record and demonstrating ISRO's scheduling precision and multi-payload management. As ISRO executives have noted, each launch showcases India's growing expertise and boosts international confidence. This technical reliability comes with a financial edge. ISRO's launch prices are substantially lower than many competitor rates. One survey finds PSLV missions run on the order of \$21–31 million apiece, compared with roughly \$62–67 million for a SpaceX Falcon 9 and \$178 million for Europe's Ariane 5. Even for very small satellites, India is pushing the cost down. Its new Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is advertised at around \$3.7 million per flight — a tiny fraction of Western ride-share prices. In short, ISRO offers clients a low-cost, high-reliability launch op-

tion. No wonder space agencies and companies in emerging markets often choose India when budgets are tight or mis-

(AST SpaceMobile's BlueBird satellite) and French company data-relay microsats, all trusting PSLV or India's heavy-lift

line to use the upcoming Sriharikota New Spaceport as well as the older coastal range. Meanwhile, partner-



sions are sensitive. Countries and companies have leveraged ISRO's launchers across a range of applications. In Europe–India collaborations, the UK's Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd contracted ISRO to orbit two remote-sensing satellites in 2018: NovaSAR (an S-band synthetic-aperture radar craft) and S1-4 (a high-resolution optical imager) to monitor forests, floods and ships. Likewise, Brazil launched its Amazonia-1 Earth-observation satellite on a PSLV in 2021, gathering critical imagery of Amazon deforestation and agriculture. Singapore has also joined the client roster: in 2023, PSLV carried the TeLEOS-2 radar satellite and a small experimental payload (LUMILITE-4) for Singapore's government, both intended for maritime and environmental data collection. American commercial entities make heavy use of India's ride-shares. For example, a single 2017 launch carried 96 cubesats built by US companies — 88 from Planet Labs for high-resolution Earth imaging and 8 from Spire Global carrying weather and ship-tracking sensors. ISRO's track record gives confidence even for sensitive payloads, from Earth-observation craft to communication satellites. Recent missions have included US tech-firm communications spacecraft

GSLV rocket to deliver them to precise orbits. In every case, India's rockets deliver their payloads efficiently, attracting clients from around the globe. Back home, this international success has coincided with a boom in India's private space industry. Since 2020, the PM Narendra Modi-led government has opened the sector, launching an independent regulator (IN-SPACe) and a dedicated \$1.2-billion venture fund to back innovation. The result: over 200 new space start-ups have emerged, from launch-vehicle builders to satellite manufacturers and data-analytics firms. These companies are designing everything from small rockets to Earth-observation constellations. Government studies project India's space economy could quintuple, reaching around \$44 billion by the early 2030s as the country captures 8–10 per cent of a global market that could hit that size. Even global investors are taking notice: for example, Google's parent Alphabet has put \$36 million into one Indian satellite start-up to build a hyperspectral-imaging craft. Crucially, India's start-ups stand to benefit from ISRO's infrastructure even as they go commercial. By law, private launches must use ISRO launch pads, and new small-launcher ventures are in

ships abound: several start-ups work alongside ISRO labs (for avionics, propulsion or data downlinks), and some major projects (like the Gaganyaan astronaut flights) channel advanced R&D that will have civilian spin-offs. In short, India's home-grown space ecosystem is maturing just as global demand for satellites is exploding. This groundswell highlights the imperative that India is not just a launcher for others, but a growing hub of space innovation. In pure dollar terms, the satellite-launch business has so far yielded moderate sums for India. Official trade data show that ISRO's foreign-launch revenue from 2015–2024 totalled on the order of \$143 million. (By comparison, SpaceX alone earned tens of billions over the same period.) However, a more detailed breakdown highlights rapid growth: India's Minister for the Department of Space, Dr Jitendra Singh, recently reported about \$172 million in receipts from US satellite contracts and \$292 million from Europe in the last decade, with more launches on the manifest. Crucially, these revenues come from launch-service fees, not counting the wide range of data and technologies that follow. What matters more is momentum.

The global space market is on a steep upward trajectory. Goldman Sachs analysts estimate up to 70,000 new satellites will be launched worldwide in the next five years, as low-orbit constellations multiply and nations seek independent capabilities. To capture a share of that market, India leverages its reputation for reliability and low-cost service. Policy planners note that India's portion of the global space economy (currently around 2 per cent) could realistically rise into the high single digits or 10 per cent range by the early 2030s. Now competing head-to-head with American and Chinese players, ISRO is no longer merely offering "low-cost" launches; it is carving out a durable commercial position where every additional mission translates into millions in revenue, deeper industrial capability, and steady demand for India's growing pool of aerospace talent. The larger point, though, is strategic: India has built a space proposition that scales. Decades of hard engineering, disciplined operations and relentless cost control have produced a launch system that customers treat as a safe bet — predictable schedules, precise insertions, and pricing that keeps capital free for what matters most: the satellite itself and the services it enables. As the world rushes to deploy constellations for communications, climate monitoring, logistics and security, ISRO's credibility becomes a form of national leverage — and a platform for Indian start-ups to climb the value chain, from propulsion and satellite manufacturing to the downstream data economy. In an era increasingly defined by a US–China contest for orbit, India's space wave is emerging as the third force: not just competitive, but trusted.

(By Rahul Pawa. This Opinion first appeared on and, is courtesy of News18.com)

The Scapegoating Of Indian Americans Has Begun—And It Will Intensify

The greatest irony of American democracy is on full display today. A nation that prides itself as a beacon of pluralism is systematically demonising one of its most economically productive and law-abiding communities—Indian Americans.

The evidence is stark. Hate crimes targeting people of Indian origin surged by 91 per cent over the past year. In recent months alone, Hindu temples have been vandalised repeatedly across California, Virginia, Texas, and beyond. In some cases, CCTV footage captured the perpetrators, yet police made no arrests. Racist memes depicting Indians as outsiders flooded social media platforms. Political figures (mostly Republicans) are openly questioning whether Indian Americans assimilate, demanding they "go back to India". This is not fringe extremism anymore. It is becoming normalised discourse.

Success Without Protection

Indian Americans comprise just 1.5 per cent of the US population—5.1 million people. Despite this tiny footprint, they contribute 6 per cent of all federal income taxes annually, amounting to \$250-300 billion. They lead 16 Fortune 500 companies, collectively employing 2.7 million Americans and generating nearly \$1 trillion in annual revenue. Sixteen Fortune 500 CEOs. Let that sink in. These individuals did not inherit dynasties. They climbed from nothing to the apex of American capitalism.

The economic reach extends far beyond the boardroom. Indian Americans own approximately 60 per cent of all US hotels. That's approximately 34,000 properties generating \$700 billion in annual revenue and creating over four million jobs. In states like Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana, this figure reaches a staggering 90 per cent. Walk into any convenience store across America, and there is a significant probability an Indian American owns it. They collectively run 35 to 50 per cent of the nation's convenience stores, generating \$350-490 billion annually.

These are not abstract statistics. These are jobs for American families, tax revenue for American towns, and economic activity that binds the American 'capitalist' nation together.

In innovation and research, the

contribution is equally remarkable. Indian-origin scientists now receive 11 per cent of National Institutes of Health grants, up from 6 per cent in 2015. That is \$4.8 billion dedicated to research that saves American lives. Indian Americans co-founded 20 per cent of America's billion-dollar startup companies. The list includes Cambridge Mobile Telematics, Reify

perceived as outsiders. Those with visible differences. Those who cannot effectively fight back through electoral politics or cultural dominance.

But here is what the architects of this hatred fundamentally miscalculate: any disruption to Indian-American economic participation would shatter American prosperity,

mob. No number of Fortune 500 positions guarantees your safety. No tax contribution buys you dignity when politicians question your loyalty.

A man like Vivek Ramaswamy, a leading voice in American conservative politics, is targeted with racial slurs and dehumanising language by far-right figures. A woman like Usha Vance, the wife of the Vice President, faces racist attacks based on her heritage. If even these pinnacles of American success offer no protection, what hope exists for ordinary Indian Americans?

The End of Assumptions

This is the stark realisation many in the community are confronting. There is no substitute for home. There is no haven in a nation that does not value your life or your contributions. This does not mean abandoning America or rejecting the genuine

Health, and Innovacer—companies solving critical problems in healthcare, transportation, and technology. They hold 10 per cent of all physician positions in America, with many serving rural communities that lack adequate medical care. They contributed roughly 8 per cent of all American technology startups and hold 13 per cent of patent contributions. They represent over 25 per cent of international students at American universities, contributing \$10 billion annually to the education sector.

Yet this is the community being scapegoated.

The timing reveals the real motive. Hate crimes spiked dramatically after political figures and media personalities began blaming Indians for job losses. In December 2024, following a debate about visa policy and immigration, 76 per cent of documented threats against Indians were explicitly tied to claims that "Indians are taking American jobs." This is the classical playbook of a desperate political class searching for external enemies to distract from internal failures.

The American dream is collapsing for millions of citizens. Inflation has eroded purchasing power. Job security has disappeared. Political polarisation has become toxic. The middle class is drowning. In this environment of despair and anger, who becomes the easiest target? Those

not enhance it. The hotels would close. The startups would collapse. The research would halt. The hospitals would lose physicians. The technology sector would lose engineers. Entire supply chains, entire industries, entire communities depend on Indian-American participation. America cannot function without this community, whether its political leaders acknowledge it or not.

America's Breaking Contract

This raises an uncomfortable question about American democracy itself. If the nation's most economically productive, law-abiding, educated and 'rich' minority can be threatened with deportation, violence, and institutional harassment simply because they have succeeded, what does this say about the supposed sanctity of American constitutional protections? What does it say about the country's commitment to diversity and equal citizenship?

For Indian Americans, the answer carries a different weight. For decades, the narrative has been straightforward: immigrate to America, work hard, achieve success, and secure a better life for your children. The implicit promise was safety and acceptance in exchange for contribution. Today, that promise is being shattered. No amount of wealth shields you from a

bonds many Indian Americans have formed. But it means recognising a fundamental truth: betting your future exclusively on a foreign nation, regardless of its promises or prosperity, is dangerous.

For Indian Americans, the path forward must be dual. Continue contributing to American society, absolutely. Fight against discrimination and hate crimes with the full force of law and public opinion. Take a leaf out of the Jewish community's playbook. But simultaneously, invest in India. Build enterprises here. Contribute to scientific research here. Create jobs here. Transfer skills and capital here. Strengthen India's economy, institutions, and security architecture. Because ultimately, India offers something no other nation can: an irreplaceable belonging that cannot be revoked by political winds or social upheaval.

America built its greatness partly on immigrant labour and ingenuity. The current trajectory suggests that era is ending. Indian Americans must adjust their strategies accordingly. The time for absolute reliance on Western democracies is over. The time for building parallel centres of power and prosperity in India has begun, for American democracy is being tested by its contradictions.

By Sanbeer Singh Ranhotra.
This Opinion first appeared on and, is courtesy of news18.com)



For 2026, you should make a resolution to know the Revolution

New Year's Day 2026 kicks off the 250th year of the United States of America. Our nation's founders planted the first seed of liberty on July 4, 1776, when they adopted the Declaration of Independence. This single act started our sovereign nation.

I started falling in love with true stories from our nation's founding era nearly 20 years ago. An editor at AMG publishing asked me to write a book for their series, "Battlefields and Blessings." Because they had already published a 365-day devotional about the Civil War, they encouraged me to choose another conflict, such as World War II or the American Revolution.

I dove into writing "Stories of Faith and Courage from the Revolutionary War." I was also pregnant at the time, but was soon put on bed rest after developing preterm contractions. As it turned out, bed rest allowed me plenty of time to research, think and write before I safely delivered my middle son.

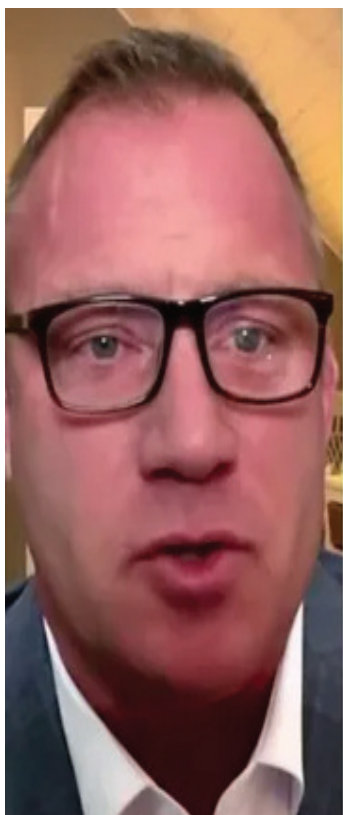
As I started researching, I was skeptical. Was George Washington overrated? Are stories from 1776 relevant to life today? How can we relate to people who lived 250 years ago?

I realized that technology changes, but the human heart does not change. The need for love, acceptance and freedom transcends time, whether we drive a Tesla or a horse-drawn carriage.

I cannot explain how transformative studying the American Revolution was for me. It completely changed my understanding of what the United States is all about and how it came to be. As a former White House staffer for President George W. Bush, I thought I knew enough about our country and its principles. But I was humbled by the founders' words.

Early in my research, I made a crucial decision. I prioritized original sources, such as letters, diaries and first-hand accounts, rather than the work of modern historians. I wanted to draw my own conclusions without being tainted.

Instead of finding Washington overrated, I developed a deep respect and appreciation for his selfless leadership style. We would not have won our independence from England if it had not been for Gen. Washington's strength, resolution, perseverance, faith and humility. Washington did not seek glory for himself. Rather, he prioritized his Army's needs and the American people over personal accolades.

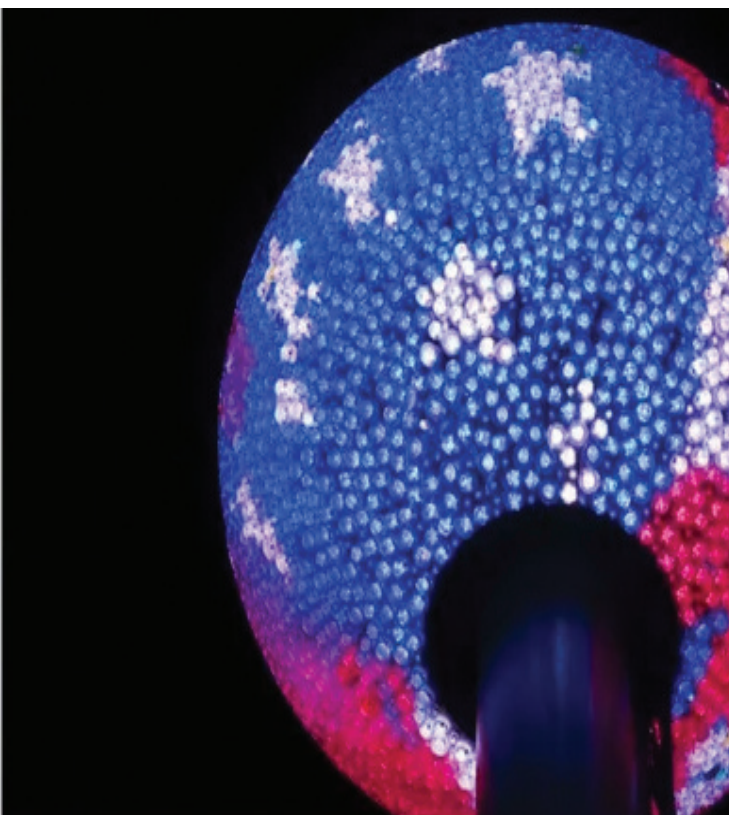


Likewise, Washington was not a static character. He grew and changed. For example, he transformed from being born as a slave owner into dying as an emancipator. Because of the war and his presidency, he wrestled with the realization that slavery was incongruent with the founding of the country that he had led. For most of his life, it was illegal to free slaves in Virginia. When he returned home and retired, he had time to reflect. He stopped buying and selling slaves. Then he freed his slaves in his will, which was published in its entirety in newspapers across the nation after his sudden death in 1799, less than three years after his presidency. Americans knew that Washington had freed his slaves.

Why does Washington or America 250 matter in 2026? Only 13% of our nation's 8th graders are proficient in American history. This is as scandalous as it is scary, a blinking red sign that something is very wrong.

Our culture is malnourished because of recent leftist propaganda that has demonized historical figures, torn down or vandalized their statues and canceled them at the altar of political correctness.

We are starving. We long to digest healthy perspectives about our history and our culture. No one alive today should be fearful or hopeless about their future based



on the sins in America's past. Rather, we need to teach history both inspirationally and truthfully.

My wish for my fellow Americans is that they will take some time this year to discover stories from our nation's founding. Make it a New Year's resolution to do at least one thing related to the American Revolution. Watch short videos, documentaries and movies. Attend museums and local celebrations in your city or state. Watch historical reenactments. Choose to read at least one book about the Revolutionary War. I have nearly 20 books in the marketplace, including four about the American Revolution, for both adults and children. I have also recorded several America 250 videos on TikTok and YouTube through America250Jane.

One of the best movies that captures this spirit of liberty is called "The American Miracle." Available through AmericanMiracleMovie.com, this is an inspirational docudrama that I was grateful to participate in as an on-camera storyteller. This fascinating film shows many miraculous moments during the American Revolution. It also champions a healthy perspective by revealing the heroics of Black Americans from this era.

We need to remember the words of President Washington as he said farewell to America in 1796, when he declined to run for re-election. Washington encouraged his fellow Americans to view

differences in their religion, manners, habits and political principles as "slight." He did not want their differences to be stumbling blocks to their unity. He believed that "the independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils, and joint efforts—of common dangers, sufferings and successes." After all, Americans had "fought and triumphed together" in a common purpose.

He wrote: "Citizens by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of AMERICAN, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism, more than any appellation [name] derived from local discriminations [states and cities]."

If Washington were alive today, he would say the same thing to us, the unborn millions to come as he called us.

We need to remember that our founders planted the seed of liberty 250 years ago on July 4, 1776, not a fully grown tree. Despite cultural thorns, droughts and floods, the seed of liberty has grown and flowered over the years, leading to this historic new year. Our job is to not merely celebrate this year, but to nourish love of country in our culture so our descendants can celebrate 250 years from now.

.By Jane Hampton

MORNING GLORY: The president ends 2025 with a clear declaration of the Trump doctrine

America has many allies in what promises to be a decades-long Cold War 2.0 between the U.S. and its allies and the alliance of tyrants, led by the People's Republic of China's Xi Jinping, Russia's Vladimir Putin, Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei and North Korea's Kim Jong Un. This quartet of dictators has some fourth-string powers allied with it in our hemisphere, like Venezuela's Maduro and Cuba's Miguel Diaz-Canel, who succeeded the Castro brothers (though Raul is still doddering around at 94 with some influence.)

President Donald Trump is in the process of securing the Western Hemisphere against this alliance by placing a quarantine on Maduro's oil and drug exports from Venezuela. Cuba can only export sugar and secret police and is already in an advanced state of economic collapse. It is heavily dependent on Venezuelan oil, and the spigot for that has been turned off by 45-47. Xi, Putin and Khamenei can't live forever, and succession battles within tyrannies are never guaranteed to run smoothly for the bad guys.

So the United States, already in possession of the most powerful military in the world, is modernizing it — especially its Navy — and can count on its allies around the world to contain "the evil-doers," as President George W. Bush once memorably and accurately put it.

President Trump's willingness to use deadly and overwhelming force in defense of Americans was on display over the past few days as he ordered the Pentagon to pummel elements of ISIS remaining in Syria that had dared kill Americans. The president has also put the screws on Venezuela's Maduro and the network of narco-terrorists of which he is a part.

Our allies are very much in the effort to keep Ukraine standing against the savagery of Putin, and while President Trump has tried again and again to bring Putin to the table, the Russian dictator isn't budging from his imperial ambitions.

China has always played the long game, thinking in centuries, not generations or decades. To Xi, President Trump presents a formidable deterrent to his ambitions for three more years.

The president has the great asset of being very unpredictable. The ruins of Iran's nuclear program are a testament to that, and Operation Midnight Hammer, which crushed the mullahs' underground nuclear weapons facilities, is the certain guarantee

that the second Trump term is already a success. That single order to send the B-2s will never not be significant in world history because it kept the most powerful weaponry known to mankind out of the grips of theocrats with a crazed "end-times" theology. The world has breathed so much easier since June 22, 2025.

Our allies are many and varied and spread across the globe, but make no

destructive course.

President Trump will not allow the U.S. or its citizens to be threatened or killed. President Trump posted on Truth Social on Friday as strikes on ISIS in Syria were underway — in all caps — the core "Trump Doctrine":

"YOU WILL BE HIT HARDER THAN YOU HAVE EVER BEEN HIT BEFORE IF YOU, IN ANY WAY, ATTACK OR

some of these elections around the country, and that's really unfortunate, because support for Israel is a time-honored policy of this country. And our greatest ally in that part of the world and an ally with whom we have so much in common going back to faith tradition, to the economy and national security interests and to democracy, there are just so many reasons why our support for Israel needs to be unequivocal, especially at a time when they are constantly under attack. And so, yeah, it's hard to explain where the Dems are, but we will continue here, at least in the Senate on the Republican side of the aisle, with continuing a very strong message of support [for Israel] and backing it up with actions."

As 2025 comes to a close, the GOP is united on the most important of issues: national defense. That's a Christmas present for everyone, whether they know it or not. Hugh Hewitt is host of "The Hugh Hewitt Show," heard weekday mornings 6am to 9am ET on the Salem Radio Network, and simulcast on Salem News Channel. Hugh wakes up America on over 400 affiliates nationwide, and on all the streaming platforms where SNC

can be seen. He is a frequent guest on the Fox News Channel's news roundtable hosted by Bret Baier weekdays at 6pm ET. A son of Ohio and a graduate of Harvard College and the University of Michigan Law School, Hewitt has been a Professor of Law at Chapman University's Fowler School of Law since 1996 where he teaches Constitutional Law. Hewitt launched his eponymous radio show from Los Angeles in 1990. Hewitt has frequently appeared on every major national news television network, hosted television shows for PBS and MSNBC, written for every major American paper, has authored a dozen books and moderated a score of Republican candidate debates, most recently the November 2023 Republican presidential debate in Miami and four Republican presidential debates in the 2015-16 cycle. Hewitt focuses his radio show and his column on the Constitution, national security, American politics and the Cleveland Browns and Guardians. Hewitt has interviewed tens of thousands of guests from Democrats Hillary Clinton and John Kerry to Republican Presidents George W. Bush and Donald Trump over his 40 years in broadcast, and this column previews the lead story that will drive his radio/ TV show today.

By Hugh Hewitt



THREATEN THE U.S.A."

That's it. In less than 25 words, President Trump put the whole globe on notice. The key word he included in his post: "THREATEN."

This is deterrence. And while the U.S. has many allies it can count on to join in retaliation for attacks on U.S. citizens, it has one that it can, for sure, rely upon when it comes to regimes that threaten us: Israel.

This is why support for Israel is a key part of the GOP's core values. There is a surge of antisemitism around the world and the massacre at Bondi Beach in Australia, as well as the many attacks on Jews in Europe, and indeed in New York City this month, are both tragic and also deeply alarming. There is even a very small slice of anti-Israel voices within the GOP and a much louder and larger wing of the Democratic Party that is not just anti-Israel but hides its antisemitism behind slogans and chants.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune discussed with me one of the key differences between the GOP and the Democrats last week: "But they [the Democrats] have their political left, the pro-Hamas wing of the Democrat Party, [and it] is ascendant right now. It's where the energy is and a lot of the money is in Democrat politics. You see it playing out in

mistake: Israel is our most important strategic ally.

That is because Israel is a nuclear and intelligence superpower with the will and ability to project deadly force over vast distances. It is also home to, along with emerging American defense companies like Anduril and Palantir, the crucial defense-tech industries of the free world. That President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu are such close friends is of great importance to both countries. So are the president's relationships with the leaders of our major Sunni allies.

For the next three years, this partnership between the U.S., Israel and the Gulf States is the most important one for our country's near and medium term. That's because fanatical theocrats run Iran. A second round of blows may be headed soon towards Iran, because the fanatics who lead it are rushing to rebuild and expand the regime's ballistic missile program, which poses an existential threat to Israel as well as our Gulf allies and Europe.

The U.S. is not in the regime change business. We are not exporting democracy to lands that are balancing modernity with deeply traditional cultures. But, neither will President Trump stand aside if Iran continues on this self-

2025: The Year India Boarded The 'Reform Express'

In the recent past, India has demonstrated an ability to act decisively and boldly in moments of crisis - and 2025 was no exception. Confronted by a fresh geoeconomic shock triggered by Trumpnomics, New Delhi returned to a familiar playbook, using the pressure of external disruption to push through a fresh wave of long-pending economic reforms.

However, what makes this moment stand out is the politically sensitive nature of some of these measures. Reforms such as changes to labour laws have long been acknowledged as necessary, yet avoided by successive governments - precisely because they are politically sensitive.

The crisis triggered by Trumpnomics created the space, and a spate of key electoral wins in assembly elections provided political momentum to finally convert intent to execution. And clearly, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is not done.

A few weeks ago, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman told a public gathering that the upcoming Union Budget will press ahead with more reforms, including effecting a complete overhaul of the customs duty structure - bringing it on par with the soft touch employed by regulators while randomly scrutinising direct tax filings. And then this weekend, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to X to renew his government's commitment to economic reforms. The context was the conclusion of the annual meeting of chief secretaries convened in New Delhi and addressed by the Prime Minister. "This conference of Chief Secretaries," the PM posted on X, "has taken place at a time when India is witnessing next-generation reforms. India has boarded the Reform Express. And, the primary engine of this Reform Express is India's youth, our demography. That is why, it is our endeavour to empower this demography."

The obvious question then: has India, under NDA, pivoted from reforms of stealth to one

of conviction?

The Reforms Playbook

India's previous approach to reforms followed a pattern. Inevitably, the inducement for walking the talk was triggered by a crisis. They seem to have had taken cue from Winston Churchill's famous remark: "Never waste a crisis."

This approach to economic reforms reflected the lack of political appetite in regimes to initiate such structural changes. This pattern was established well before 1991, when India undertook the big burst of reforms.

The second oil shock in 1979 triggered a severe external-sector crisis, leaving the then incoming Indira Gandhi's government with little choice but to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The \$6-billion IMF loan approved in November 1981 - the largest ever for a developing country at the time - was not a policy preference but an economic compulsion.

To blunt the stigma around IMF, especially an institution dominated by the United States, Gandhi pre-empted the narrative. The Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-85) committed India to competitiveness-enhancing reforms - fiscal correction, public sector restructuring, import liberalisation and selective dismantling of the Licence Raj - before IMF conditionalities formally kicked in. These loan conditions, crucially, were back-ended.

The sequencing mattered. By the time the harsher conditionalities were due, the economy had stabilised, allowing India to exit the IMF programme in 1984 without fully submitting to externally imposed reform. Gandhi correctly sensed that the political system was not yet ready for a wholesale structural reset - a template that subsequent regimes were similarly politically reticent to test.

But the crisis had forced the door open to the idea of reforms. It was carried forward under Rajiv Gandhi, with public sector restructuring - the corporatisation of the



telecom networks in Mumbai and Delhi through the creation of the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd - selective industrial delicensing, the launch of the Long-Term Fiscal Policy of 1984, and the first tentative steps toward disinvestment from public sector undertakings.

However, continued mismanagement of the economy triggered another crisis in 1991. Facing an unprecedented balance-of-payments emergency and the country mere weeks away from default, India launched a sweeping programme of economic reforms - most notably dismantling the Licence Raj - to pull itself back from the brink under the leadership of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao.

But, once the crisis had faded, the political leadership of the country reverted to reforms-by-stealth or, at best, went after low-hanging fruit. The unfinished reforms agenda would, however, frequently test India's economy throughout the next few decades.

Matters came to a head when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020. What began as a public health emergency quickly spiralled into economic devastation, with national income contracting by 23.9% in the first quarter of 2020-21. Worse, geopolitics took an ugly turn, especially after China openly challenged the hegemony of the United States as the world's primary anchor and later launched a skirmish with India in Ladakh.

Once again, this crisis induced a combination of bold policy interventions and structural reforms helped India stabilise the economy and re-emerge as one of the fastest-

growing large economies in the world. And, like before, the ruling NDA eased the gas pedal on tougher economic reforms thereafter, particularly after it had to walk back its progressive farm laws in the face of protests.

Earlier this year, India faced another external shock when "Trumpnomics" returned to the White House. The United States imposed a 50% tariff on Indian imports during the early months of President Donald Trump's second term. While the full impact is still unfolding, New Delhi quickly recognised that tariffs were only part of the challenge.

The deeper issue lay in the lack of competitiveness of Indian goods - constrained in part by structural bottlenecks, including persistent shortcomings in ease of doing business, both at the level of the union and state governments.

But there was a catch: unlike in the past, this was not low-hanging fruit. The desired reforms agenda would be structural in nature and hence required strong political will. Further, most of them required states to be on board - a big ask given the deep divide in domestic politics.

Turning Point?

This is why what the NDA has undertaken in the second half of 2025 is remarkable. It began with the Union Budget for 2025-26, initiating a makeover in the income tax rates with the intent of putting more money in the hands of those at the bottom of the salary pyramid. Later, the government introduced a new direct tax code that aligned with the new growth trajectory of the Indian economy.

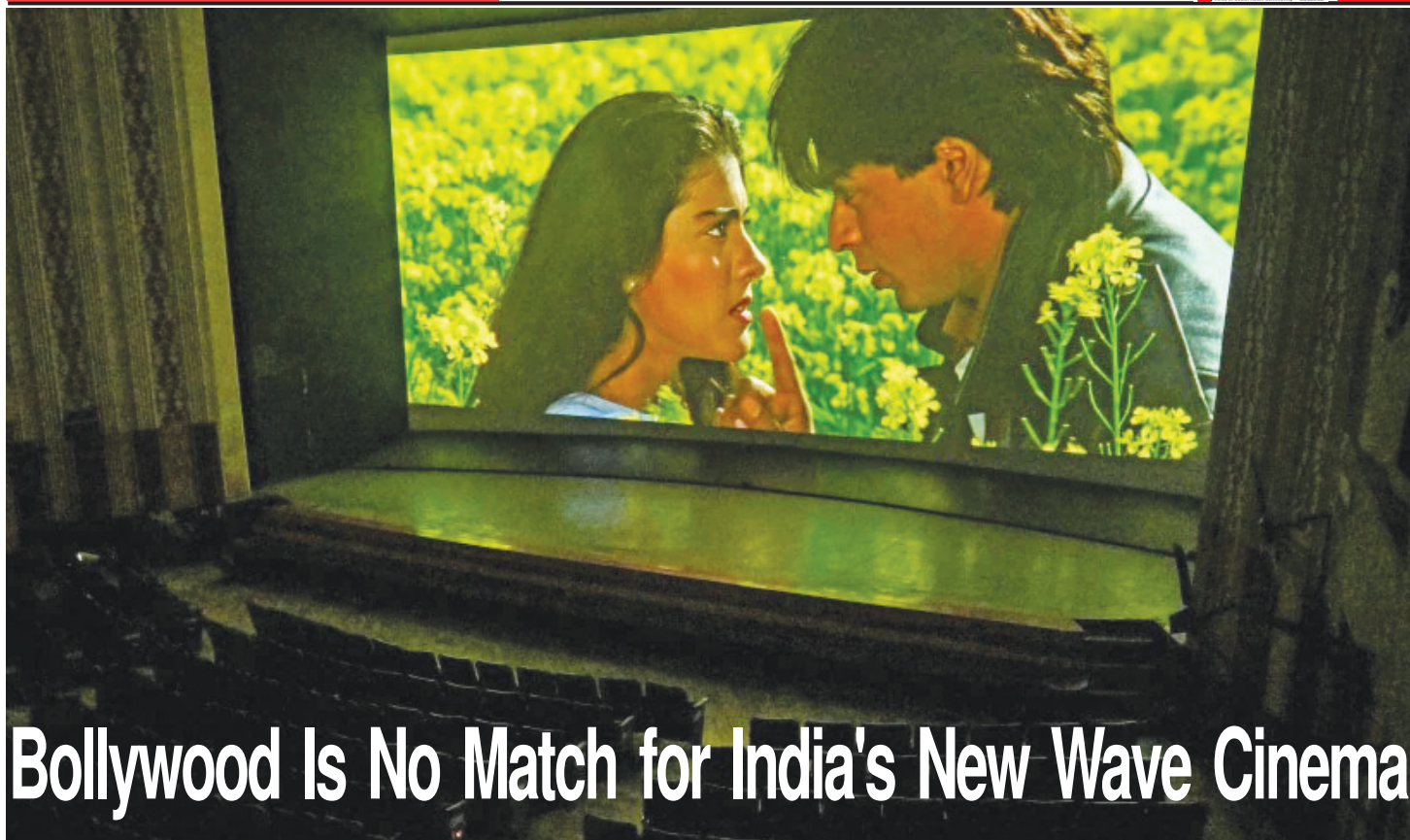
The long-overdue rationalisation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) followed.

Among other things, it shrank the number of tax slabs and rationalised the rates. Since this was piloted by the GST Council - the apex body made up of the union and state governments that oversees this indirect tax - the bipartisan consensus was an important bonus.

From November, the NDA upped the momentum for economic reforms, particularly with respect to ease of doing business (EoDB) - something that PM Modi had promised in his Independence Day address. The labour reforms - which consolidated 29 laws into four labour codes - were a marquee measure to improve EoDB. Since it is a state subject, a lot will depend on whether states take the cue. Some ambitious states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan have signalled their intent to move forward.

In the last few weeks, a flood of new laws - including allowing 100% FDI in insurance, opening up of the nuclear sector to private players - and a slew of free trade agreements (FTAs), suggest that the NDA is more than willing to walk its talk on reforms. The big question is whether the union government will back-pedal if the political momentum, which is so much in its favour at present, reverses. If not, then indeed India has buried another ghost: the idea of reforms by stealth. Instead, it will have adopted reforms with conviction, a precondition if India has to realise its audacious ambition to become a developed economy in the next 22 years.

By Anil Padmanabhan.
This Opinion first appeared on and, is courtesy of [ndtv.com](https://www.ndtv.com)



Bollywood Is No Match for India's New Wave Cinema

The signature motif of *Kantara*: A Legend — Chapter 1, India's second-biggest box-office success of 2025, is a primordial scream. It may as well be the sound of old Bollywood in its death throes or the birth pangs of a new industry.

Kantara, described by its writer-director Rishab Shetty as "faith, culture, and devotion in all its glory", isn't standard Bollywood fare. For one thing, the film wasn't made in Mumbai, India's financial and entertainment capital. Nor is it targeted primarily at a Hindi-speaking audience.

Filmed in Kannada, a southern Indian language spoken by more than 50 million people, the story is about a mysterious forest — and the preternatural forces that reside in it. The overall experience is a bit like *The Northman*, except that the Viking legends have been replaced by homegrown deities and an animistic tradition of spirit worship that has spawned an art form. When they aren't fighting a greedy landlord, forest dwellers dress up in colourful costumes and exotic headgear and enter a trance through their dance. That's when they let out their bloodcurdling screams.

Kantara follows the commercial success last year of *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, a violent, stylised action drama about sandalwood smuggling, and *Kalki 2898 AD*, a futuristic dystopia. The two Telugu-language thrillers came out of Hyderabad in southern India. The *Kantara* franchise — the new movie is a prequel to a 2022 sleeper hit — is also from the south: It has been produced by a studio in Bengaluru, India's outsourcing capital. What used to be confined earlier to the boundaries of regional cinema—with

limited exhibition elsewhere—is now mainstream.

This is the new, multilingual Bollywood, and its main offering is fresh stories, set in new cinematic universes. They can be exotic folklore or fantasy, like *Lokah Chapter 1: Chandra*, a superhero franchise in Malayalam, another major southern Indian language. Meanwhile, the old Bollywood, the world's most prolific moviemaking industry, where big-name Mumbai entertainers delivered 5-billion-rupee-plus (\$55 million) Hindi blockbusters to a pan-India audience, remains mired in an existential crisis, the kind I described in my review of 2024.

The numbers tell the story. Although audiences have finally shrugged off the pandemic blues and returned to theatres, for PVR Inox Ltd, the country's biggest exhibitor, the high point of the September quarter was the 97 per cent surge in collections from Hollywood hits like *F1: The Movie*, supplemented by a 110 per cent jump in revenue from Kannada cinema. The haul from Malayalam films increased by 49 per cent. Meanwhile, Hindi and Hindi-dubbed movies brought in just 4 per cent more than the same period last year. Audiences no longer expect a Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, or Ranbir Kapoor blockbuster to hit the theatres around the annual Diwali festival. Quite literally, the language of Bollywood has changed.

The old industry is surviving on nostalgia. The song that Zohran Mamdani's team played after he won the New York mayoral race was *Dhoom*, from a Bollywood film by the same name — it was released 21 years

ago.

As southern India turns myths into money, and as Mumbai flounders with a fluke hit here and there, another kind of cinema, rooted in the lives of 1.4 billion Indians, is straining to be seen. One such movie is *Homebound*, based on a true story of two young village boys trying to become police constables amid an epidemic of youth unemployment. Beyond the security of a government job, the two friends, Chandan and Shoaib, are searching for dignity. Where *Kantara* offers the audience escape into a mythical past, *Homebound*—inspired by a 2020 New York Times article by the journalist Basharat Peer—forces them to confront an ugly reality of the present: caste.

At *Homebound*'s New York premiere in November, director Neeraj Ghaywan explained caste with an analogy from the pandemic. To be born a Dalit, the lowest rung of the hierarchical social order, is to be gaslit into believing that one is infected with an incurable virus. What comes next is unending social, educational, and occupational discrimination. Chandan wouldn't disclose his family name to outsiders because his caste identity is seared into it. For fear of abandonment by his peers, Ghaywan, himself a Dalit, used to do the same. "We've been socially distanced for 2,000 years," the director said in a chat with Martin Scorsese, who helped produce the film. "We're never told why."

Millions of families on the fringes of the society will identify with the struggle, though they'll perhaps never get to watch India's entry in the best international feature

film category at the upcoming Academy Awards.

Local theatres have no use for realism. Payal Kapadia's *All We Imagine as Light* won last year's Cannes Grand Prix and was nominated for two Golden Globes, but the economics of movie exhibition favoured escapist fantasies over a story of two nurses from Kerala sharing rooms in Mumbai. The most recent Bollywood hit, which has overshadowed *Kantara*'s success, cashes in on this year's military hostilities with Pakistan by serving up a gory revenge plotline in the garb of a spy thriller. Dhurandhar has reportedly been banned in much of the Middle East.

Arthouse cinema everywhere grows in the crevices of popular culture. In India, however, a paucity of public funds is no longer the only hurdle. Ticket prices have gone up more than 50 per cent in three years. Public perception of what's worth watching is being distorted by manipulated social media reviews and inflated box office figures, deepening a crisis of credibility for the \$60 billion industry, AFP reported in November. Instead of helping, streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime have "homogenised our worst tendencies of making bets on films," Shaunak Sen, an Oscar-nominated indie filmmaker, told the *Hindustan Times* recently. One hopes that movies like *Homebound* will have better luck finding an audience in 2026, even though the anguish that they bring to the screen—contemporary, urgent, and silent—may be no match for the loud screams of *Kantara*.

(By Andy Mukherjee. This Opinion first appeared on and, is courtesy of [ndtv.com](https://www.ndtv.com))

How A Pak-Friendly BNP Is Now In Pole Position In Bangladesh

The baton has passed. Bangladesh's first woman Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, breathed her last this morning in Dhaka. Her legacy includes keeping the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) firmly together, even strengthening it, after the death of her husband, President Ziaur Rahman. She will be remembered for joining hands with Sheikh Hasina in bringing a peaceful end to President Hussain Muhammad Ershad's dictatorship and ensuring Bangladesh's return to democracy through the 1991 elections, which she won. Relations with India under the BNP rule have never been comfortable, and the legacy of BNP's strong links with Pakistan and with Jamaat-e-Islami has a lot to do with this.

On the face of it, Tarique Rahman's return to Dhaka on Christmas Day 2025, and now the passing away of his mother, Begum Khaleda Zia, have placed

the BNP in pole position to win the forthcoming general elections in Bangladesh, scheduled for February next year. However, it is important not to get carried away by the media hype generated by print, electronic and social media outlets, most of which are thoroughly controlled and managed by the Yunus regime.

The BNP And the Jamaat

The BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami have been political allies for a quarter century, since 2001. Their ideological alliance is far older, going back to their shared support for the tenets and values that sided with Pakistan and opposed everything that the 1971 Liberation War stood for. The constitution of Bangladesh, adopted in 1972 under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had, as its four pillars, the principles of democracy, secularism, socialism and nationalism. In addition, Sheikh Mujib banned religion-based political parties and revoked the citizenship of Ghulam Azam, the Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami during the Liberation War, responsible for untold war crimes against the minorities, against women, against intellectuals and all those supporting the Awami League. Under President Zia (who seized control after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib and later founded the BNP), all these provisions were reversed. Ghulam Azam returned to Dhaka on a Pakistani passport in August 1978, during the military rule of General Zia. The ban on religion-based

political parties was reversed, and a special "Citizenship Act" enacted in 1978 provided the legal framework for Ghulam Azam to eventually regain his Bangladeshi citizenship through a court order in 1994 (when Begum Khaleda Zia was Prime Minister) after a long legal battle.

It was under President Zia (father of Tarique Rahman) that the Constitution of Bangladesh was amended to replace the word secularism with the phrase that



"absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah shall be the basis for all actions", thereby legitimising political Islam. Today, the BNP does have a moderate faction. This group has fought hard for early elections in Bangladesh, resulting in the Yunus regime being forced to declare the dates of February 2026 after their initially declared plan (supported by Jamaat-e-Islami) of no elections for four years, and elections only after completion of the so-called "reform process". The moderate group within the BNP also opposed the ban on the activities of the Awami League (imposed by the Yunus regime in May 2025) and supported the Awami League's participation in the February 2026 elections. However, this faction's position within the BNP is weak, and they are inevitably overruled by the much stronger pro-Jamaat-e-Islami faction. It is estimated that more than half the BNP membership is pro-Jamaat.

Tarique's Closeness To The Jamaat

Tarique Rahman has almost always been associated with the pro-Jamaat faction of the BNP. He has been politically active since the late 1980s but came into prominence during his mother Begum Khaleda Zia's second term as Prime Minister, from 2001 to 2006, when the Jamaat-e-Islami was the principal alliance partner. During these years, Tarique ran Hawa Bhaban, the power centre recognised as the de

facto PMO. His involvement in directing/coordinating the Chittagong Arms Haul (April 2004), and equally in the grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina's political rally in Dhaka (August 2004), has been written about extensively. However, what often escapes attention is the close involvement of Pakistan in the planning of each of these incidents, including participation in meetings with Tarique Rahman in Dhaka and overseas. These were highlighted during the separate hearings (for each of these two incidents) in the legal trials held in Dhaka after 2009. During Begum Khaleda Zia's second term (2001-06), Pakistan's activities in Bangladesh were at an all-time high, not seen since the 1971 Liberation War.

Tarique Rahman's closeness to the Jamaat-e-Islami and to Pakistan (said to be through the ISI) has continued through the 17 years' exile spent in London (2008-25), including in the planning and execution of the regime-change operation of July/August 2024. That is why the elections of February 2026, if held without the participation of the Awami League, with BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami as the principal contenders, can only be described as a 'friendly fight' with a pre-determined outcome.

Islamists Have The Upper Hand

For the February elections, the Jamaat-e-Islami has formed a ten-party alliance bringing together all the Islamist parties of Bangladesh. The most recent addition, bringing this group to ten, has been the students' party, the NCP (National Citizens' Party), formed by the 'student leaders' of the regime-change operation, an embarrassing admission of their shared ideological leanings. Most observers in Bangladesh give credence to the results of the survey conducted during the period September 13-October 12, 2025, by the US's International Republican Institute (IRI), ubiquitous and very active in Bangladesh. The IRI survey concluded that of those questioned, the BNP was favoured by 33%, while the Jamaat by 29%. The race seems to be a close one - perhaps too close to call. However, if one adds

to the Jamaat tally, the 5% vote the survey assigns to the Islami Andolan Bangladesh, and the 6% vote in favour of the NCP, then the Islamist parties already have the upper hand.

As expected, the IRI survey strongly favours a post-election government led by the Jamaat. Should this come to pass, the pro-Jamaat faction of the BNP will be accommodated in the government. And if the BNP gets more seats than the Jamaat, the formula said to have been finalised between Mohd Yunus and Tarique Rahman in London in June 2025 envisages the former as the President of Bangladesh, with Rahman as Prime Minister and the Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami as the Deputy Prime Minister. Each of these options would give Pakistan every opportunity to continue with the central role it has already created for itself in taking Bangladesh back to the pre-1971 command-and-control relationship it enjoyed with the then East Pakistan.

India's Concerns

India has repeatedly and strongly spoken in favour of free, fair and inclusive elections in Bangladesh. The Awami League, the Jatiya Party and others must be allowed to contest on an equal footing with the BNP and the Jamaat. Without this, the election results will be rejected by the people of Bangladesh, and the present lawlessness, violence, and brutalities against minorities will continue. So far, Tarique Rahman has not said a word in condemnation of the eighteen-month-long unrelenting violence against minorities, not even on the bestial lynching of Dipu Chandra Das. The minorities, on their part, have never forgotten the 2001 post-election violence unleashed against them by the Khaleda Zia regime.

Sheikh Hasina has mourned the death of Begum Khaleda Zia, describing it as an 'Irreparable loss'. It will be a fitting tribute to the legacy of Begum Khaleda Zia if the February elections are allowed to be free, fair and inclusive, with the participation of Awami League, Jatiya Party and others. There is no legitimacy to the ban imposed on the participation of the Awami League. Through his eulogy of the slain Osman Sharif Hadi, Chief Adviser Mohd Yunus has shown himself to be completely partisan. The need of the hour is to have a new caretaker government, which will then ensure free, fair, inclusive, and, therefore, credible elections in Bangladesh.

(By Veena Sikri. This Opinion first appeared on and, is courtesy of ndtv.com)

Will Haryana CM Dare to Order High-Level Probe into Rs.1,500-Crore Scam?



JAG MOHAN THAKEN

A major scam worth Rs. 1500 crore in Haryana's labour department has unearthed the fraudulent working in the Haryana government, which publicizes itself as the government having its motto 'Zero Tolerance Against Corruption' and claims that there is no difference between its words and actions. Political observers analyse that it may shake or even uproot the BJP led state government, if a proper investigation is ordered pertaining to the last ten-year period, the scam may go onto sky height as this amount of Rs. 1500 crore is being reported for the small duration between August 2023 and March 2025.

Former Union Minister and present Member of Parliament, Kumari Selja, has commented that the scam of nearly ₹1,500 crore in the Haryana Labour Welfare Board, along with the detection of 91 percent fake work slips and 87 percent fake labour registrations across 13 districts, is the biggest proof of the BJP government's corrupt governance. These figures clearly show that the BJP government has turned schemes meant for the welfare of workers into a means of loot. The schemes that were intended to provide dignity, security, and support to hardworking labourers have been sacrificed to corruption under political patronage. This is not merely negligence, but a well-planned and organised act of corruption, amounting to a direct attack on the rights of the poor and the working class. The Congress party demands a high-level investigation into the entire scam and strict action against those responsible.

Former Haryana Chief Minister and presently Leader of the Opposition, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, said that the BJP government is setting a new record in corruption every day. A recent report reveals that there has been a 186 percent increase in corruption cases between 2021 and 2023. This revelation is based on the NCRB report, which mentions cases registered under the Prevention of Corruption Act

and relevant sections of the IPC. This situation exists even though the government suppresses major corruption cases and prevents their investigation. Despite this, a new scam surfaces almost daily, which the government cannot hide despite its best efforts.

Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that the BJP has hollowed out Haryana's economy through a series of scams. Today, the common people, as well as economists and intellectuals, have lost faith in the government because Haryana's economic situation has become extremely worrying. From 1966 to 2014, the state had a debt of approximately 60,000 crore rupees, which has now increased to more than 5 lakh crore rupees. This reflects the state's dire economic condition. In the NITI Aayog's Fiscal Health Index, Haryana has slipped to 14th position among 18 states. A debt-to-GSDP ratio of over 31% indicates that the state is trapped in a deep debt crisis.

Indirectly indicating through another example that the scam in question is not limited to a particular department, Hooda highlights the recent paddy procurement scam and alleges that this is a case in point, which occurs every harvest season. The revelations in this scam are shocking. In the Asandh mandi (grain market), 570 trips by 112 vehicles were shown on paper, but no actual paddy was transported. The paddy was only bought and transported on paper. This resulted in a scam of Rs 39.24 crore.

In the Gharaunda mandi, the revelations regarding paddy procurement were so shocking that everyone was left stunned. Here, 11,628 quintals of paddy were shown as purchased through fake gate passes without any actual arrival of paddy. Not only that, even motorcycles and autorickshaws were shown as being used for paddy transportation, resulting in a scam of Rs 2.56 crore.

This entire paddy scam amounts to hundreds of crores of rupees, but the government is trying to suppress it by taking action only against small employees, while the big culprits, the real perpetrators, are being protected.

While exposing Rs.1,500-Crore Work Slip Scam in his own department and further recommending for a High-Level Probe to the Chief Minister, Haryana Labour Minister Anil Vij has landed the CM Nayab Singh

Saini in hot waters, who always claims a corruption-free Haryana.

A press release, on 29th December, by Haryana's Labour Minister Anil Vij, reportedly claims that due to the vigilant and stringent oversight serious irregularities related to work slips (work receipts) prevailing for a long time in the Haryana Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, functioning under the Labour Department, have come to light. Preliminary investigations suggest that the scam could amount to approximately Rs.1,500 crore. Considering the gravity of the matter, minister Vij has written to the Chief Minister, recommending a thorough investigation by a reputed agency.

Sharing details, the Labour Minister said that recently he chaired a meeting of the Board, during which irregularities were found not only in the appointment of Board members but also in the distribution of benefits under welfare schemes meant for construction workers. Following this, he ordered an immediate inquiry.

Modus Operandi

Minister Vij stated that initial investigations were conducted in Hisar, Kaithal, Jind, Sirsa, Faridabad and Bhiwani districts, where large-scale irregularities were detected. Subsequently, instructions were issued to Deputy Commissioners of all districts to constitute district-level committees comprising a Labour Department officer along with three other officers. These committees are carrying out physical verification of online work slips issued between August 2023 and March 2025. The verification process began around four months ago, and 100 percent verification has been completed in 13 districts so far.

The Labour Minister informed that in the 13 districts—Karnal, Rewari, Nuh (Mewat), Mahendragarh, Gurugram, Jhajjar, Palwal, Panipat, Rohtak, Sonapat, Panchkula, Sirsa and Kaithal—a total of 5,99,758 work slips were issued. Of these, only 53,249 were found to be valid, while 5,46,509 were declared invalid. Similarly, out of 2,21,517 labour registrations, only 14,240 workers were found eligible after verification, whereas 1,93,756 registrations were found to be invalid.

Mr. Vij said it has become clear that in many places entire villages were fraudulently registered and work slips were generated so that ineligible persons could avail benefits of

government schemes. On an average, a worker receives benefits worth around Rs.2.5 lakh under various schemes, which could result in a massive financial loss to the government. He said that "Those who are not eligible are availing benefits. This is outright loot, causing the government a financial loss running into hundreds of crores."

He further said that the verification committees are examining all aspects, including authenticity of workplaces, actual participation in construction activities, employer details, local inquiries and field inspections. During the verification period, RTS timelines were stopped, SARAL Centres were instructed not to accept new applications, and necessary information was issued to all grievance redressal platforms including CM Window, Jan Samvad, CPGRAMS, HHRC, HRTSC etc. Vij clarified that already approved pension schemes have not been stopped, while benefits under death, accident and funeral assistance schemes are being released on priority.

Minister Vij added that the Haryana Government implements several welfare schemes for construction workers, including maternity and paternity benefits, education assistance, scholarships, reimbursement for technical education, pensions, marriage assistance, medical aid, housing loans and accident compensation, aimed at empowering genuine workers. These benefits should reach only those workers who are duly registered after verification of at least 90 days of work. The Labour Minister reiterated that there will be no compromise on corruption at any level and strict action will be ensured against those found guilty.

Which Schemes are under scanner?

The Minister Vij outlined the various benefits provided to registered construction workers in Haryana including Maternity benefit of Rs. 36,000, Paternity benefit of Rs.21,000, Educational financial support for workers' children ranging from Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 20,000 annually (from primary to higher education), Merit-based scholarships between Rs. 21,000 and Rs. 51,000 for children scoring 60% to 90% in 10th/12th exams, Reimbursement of full academic expenses for children pursuing professional or technical courses as per actual government

expenses, Hostel facility aid up to Rs.1.2 lakh for children of workers in vocational institutes, Coaching assistance for vocational courses from Rs.20,000 to Rs.1 lakh, Incentive of Rs. 50,000 for registered workers' daughters to purchase an electric scooter and Laptop grant of Rs. 49,000 under the CM Shram Yogi Pratibha Yojana.

Additionally, the other benefits, which are being given to the workers including Rs. 5,000 for bicycle purchase, Rs. 8,000 tool grant, Rs. 4,500 for a sewing machine, Rs. 5,100 under the CM Women Construction Worker Samman Scheme, under the Kanyadaan Yojana Rs.1,01,00 for the marriage of up to three daughters of registered workers, Rs. 50,000 for the self-marriage of a female worker, Full reimbursement of actual second-class train or regular bus fare for pilgrimages or visits to historical sites, Reimbursement of travel expenses for visiting one's ancestral home, Medical assistance including wage compensation based on minimum wage, Financial assistance up to Rs.1 lakh for treatment of Chronic diseases, Disability support ranging from Rs. 1.5 lakh to Rs. 3 lakh, Disability pension of Rs.3,000/month, Rs. 3,000/month for children with disabilities, Old age pension (after age 60) of Rs.3,500/month, Family pension of Rs. 1,750/month, Widow pension of Rs. 3,000/month, Under the Mukyamantri Shramik Samajik Suruksha Yojna Rs. 5,15,000 compensation for accidental death at the workplace, Rs. 1.5 to 3 lakh for disability at the workplace for unregistered workers and Rs. 4 lakh in case of death of an unregistered worker at the workplace.

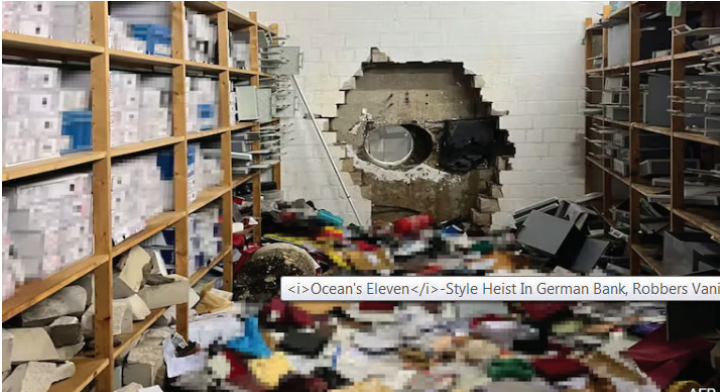
He also said that Interest-free loan up to Rs. 2 lakh for house purchase/construction and Rs. 1,100 incentive under the Mukyamantri Panjikaran Protsahan Yojna. He clarified that to receive these benefits; workers must register with the labour board. Registration is granted only after verification that the worker has been working for over 90 days.

Will the Chief Minister take cognizance of the minister's recommendation and order a thorough investigation by a reputed agency? Will the issue shake the government and its machinery or just settle down like the dunes' dust?

(Submitted by Jagmohan Thakan)

Ocean's Eleven-Style Heist In German Bank, Robbers Vanish With \$35 Million

The heist in the western city of Gelsenkirchen saw thieves break into more than 3,000 safe deposit boxes containing money, gold and jewelry, police said, adding that the criminals



<i>Ocean's Eleven</i>-Style Heist In German Bank, Robbers Vanish

(News Agency) Robbers used a large drill to break into a German bank's vault room during the extended Christmas break and steal cash, gold and jewellery worth 30 million euros (\$35 million), police and the bank said Tuesday. The spectacular heist in the western city of Gelsenkirchen, North Rhine-Westphalia state, saw thieves smash open more than 3,000 safe deposit boxes and make off with the loot. While the criminals remained at large, hundreds of distressed bank

customers massed outside the branch on Tuesday demanding information. According to police, the robbers drilled their way into the underground vault room of the Sparkasse savings bank from a parking garage. The bank said the branch was "broken into over the Christmas holidays" and that "more than 95 percent of the 3,250 customer safe deposit boxes were broken into by unknown perpetrators". German businesses were closed for Christmas on

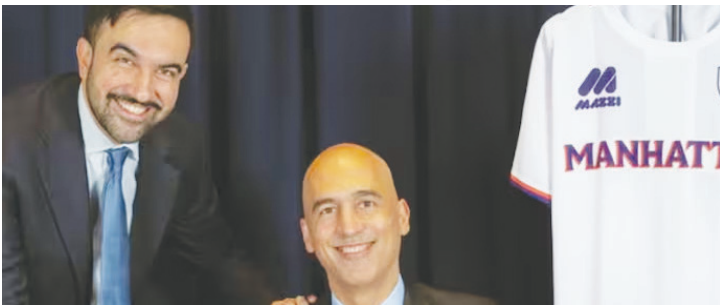
Thursday and Friday last week, and investigators suspect the gang may have spent the holidays and weekend inside, breaking open the deposit boxes. The robbery came to light after a fire alarm was triggered in the early hours of Monday and emergency services discovered the hole. Witnesses reported seeing several men carrying large bags in the stairwell of the parking garage during the night from Saturday to Sunday, police said. Footage from security cameras showed a black Audi RS 6 leaving the parking garage early Monday morning, with masked persons inside.

'Professionally executed'

The car's licence plate had been stolen earlier in the city of Hanover, police said. A police spokesman told AFP that the break-in was "indeed very professionally executed", likening it to the heist movie "Ocean's Eleven". "A great deal of prior knowledge and/or a great deal of criminal energy must have been involved to plan and carry this out,"

he said. Police said the thousands of boxes had an average insurance value of more than 10,000 euros, and therefore estimated the damage at some 30 million euros. Several victims had told police that their losses far exceeded the insured value of their safe deposit boxes. The police spokesman said that "disgruntled customers" were outside the bank branch which did not open for security reasons, after threats had been made against the employees. "We're still on site, keeping an eye on things," he said, adding that "the situation has calmed down considerably". The bank said it had set up a hotline for customers and that all those affected would be informed in writing as soon as possible while it was working with the insurance company to determine how to process the claims. "We are shocked," said bank press spokesman Frank Krallmann. "We are standing by our customers and hope that the perpetrators will be caught."

'Al-Qaeda lawyer, anti-Israel': Zohran Mamdani's legal advisor pick ignites fire



(News Agency) New York Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani set off loud conservative backlash by appointing a lawyer who once defended an al-Qaeda terrorist as the city's next Chief Counsel, one of the most powerful roles in City Hall. Mamdani tapped Ramzi Kassem, a polarising civil rights lawyer and law professor at City University of New York (CUNY), as the Mayor's top legal advisor. He described his pick as a lawyer committed to protecting those "too often abandoned by our legal system". "Welcome to A New Era, Ramzi Kassem!" Mamdani wrote on X, and lauded his work defending immigrants and students detained by ICE through a legal clinic he co-founded. Kassem, a Syrian-born academic, previously served as an

immigration adviser in the Biden administration. He has also defended controversial figures, including Ahmed al-Darbi, a close associate of al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden. Al-Darbi was convicted in the 2002 bombing of a French oil tanker off the coast of Yemen. Adding to the controversy surrounding his appointment, Kassem's past writings and campus activism have also surfaced. According to a New York Post report, he attended Columbia Law School on a fellowship funded by members of the Soros family, a frequent target of right-wing attacks. In 1999, Kassem wrote a letter to the Columbia Spectator objecting to the naming of a sandwich as an "Israeli wrap," saying it was offensive to Muslims and Arabs.

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Jaishankar to attend Khaleda Zia's funeral amid strained ties with Bangladesh

(News Agency) Amid strained ties between India and Bangladesh, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will attend the state funeral of Khaleda Zia, the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), on December 31. Zia's death comes on the heels of her son and BNP's de facto chief, Tarique Rahman, returning to poll-bound Bangladesh after 17 years in exile. The act is seen as New Delhi's outreach to Dhaka at a time when India's relationship with its South Asian ally has plunged, ever since Sheikh Hasina was ousted in a student uprising last year. The act is seen as New Delhi's outreach to Dhaka at a time when India's relationship with its South Asian ally has plunged, ever since Sheikh Hasina was ousted in a student uprising last year. During both her terms, Zia strengthened Dhaka's ties with Beijing, much to New Delhi's chagrin. Her second

The act is seen as New Delhi's outreach to Dhaka at a time when India's relationship with its South Asian ally has plunged, ever since Sheikh Hasina was ousted in a student uprising last year



term also saw Bangladesh gravitating further toward China, which became the country's main supplier of military equipment. Distanced by Muhammad Yunus's government, India is wary of Bangladesh growing

dangerously close to both Pakistan and China. Zia's son, Rahman, who is the frontrunner for the upcoming polls in Bangladesh, has made the right kind of noises so far ahead of his return to Dhaka. In May, Rahman questioned the

legitimacy of the interim administration taking long-term foreign policy decisions without an electoral mandate. Later, at a rally in Dhaka, he made it clear that Bangladesh would not align itself closely with either India or

Pakistan. "Not Dilli, not Pindi (Rawalpindi), Bangladesh before everything," he declared. He has also sharply criticised radical political forces such as the anti-India Jamaat-e-Islami, once an ally of the BNP, and highlighted its support for Pakistan during the 1971 war. India is also aware that it was under Zia that Dhaka warmed up to Islamabad. However, that decision was influenced by the BNP's then ally Jamaat, which is now at loggerheads with Zia's party, offering New Delhi some space to manoeuvre unlike in previous instances. Bangladesh's long-standing view of India under Zia and her father, Ziaur Rahman, was that the country's foreign and political policies should not operate under India's shadow, despite New Delhi's role in Bangladesh's liberation in 1971. In that context, Rahman's recent call for "Bangladesh first" over both India and Pakistan is merely an extension of his family's political legacy.

Hadi's killing sparks anti-India unrest ahead of Bangladesh polls: Who gains?

Bangladesh once again slipped into turmoil after Sharif Osman Hadi, spokesperson of the radical student group Inquilab Mancha and a key figure in the July 2024 uprising, died on Thursday from gunshot wounds sustained in an attack by unidentified assailants on December 12.

(News Agency) Fresh unrest has erupted in Dhaka in the aftermath of the death of radical student leader Sharif Osman Hadi – a visible face in the students' movement that led to the ouster of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Once again, Delhi finds its eastern frontier on the boil with anti-India sentiments being fanned by the interim Muhammad Yunus government ahead of the crucial elections – in which Hadi was also a candidate – due in the country. It started with the death penalty on Sheikh Hasina, sheltered in India since she fled Bangladesh in August last year. Immediately after the announcement, the Yunus government started mounting pressure on Delhi to extradite Hasina to face the verdict of the International Crimes Tribunal. When it became clear that India would not send back Hasina and oblige Yunus and his Islamist backers, radicals hit the streets blaming India for sheltering Hasina. And this

was just the teaser. The interim government's confrontational posture towards Delhi provided Islamist groups the ideological cover to convert diplomatic tension into street mobilisation.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THE ANTI-INDIA UNREST

This well-orchestrated anti-India frenzy is aimed at facilitating a takeover of the streets to boost political mobilisation by the Jamaat-e-Islami and smaller Islamist parties in the run-up to the Feb 12 parliament elections. For the Jamaat-e-Islami, which has spent the last fifty years on the margins of Bangladesh politics because it was seen as a participant in the Pakistani genocide during the 1971 Liberation War, this anti-India frenzy is the only political capital in its quest for power. One of its leaders, Muhammad Taher threatened Jihad against India with five million supporters during a public speech in New York on a US tour with Yunus earlier this year. With the

Awami League banned and BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) desperately trying to get its act together, the Jamaat-e-Islami leadership feels they are in with a golden chance to grab power. The violence helps them both ways. If the situation spins out of control and leads to the postponement of the parliament elections, the Jamaat-e-Islami remains in control through its stranglehold on the Yunus administration, and use the delay to further consolidate. But if the polls are indeed held in February as scheduled, the violence helps in aggressive mobilisation, that scares away all opposition and leads to an electoral victory.

UNREST AFTER HADI'S DEATH APPEARS PLANNED

What looks like an organic reaction to Hadi's death was actually in the works for much longer and started with the release of the report of the Enquiry Commission

investigating the 2009 Mutiny in Bangladesh Rifles which blamed the mutiny on the Awami League government and found 'strong evidence' of Indian connivance. This whipped up the existing anti-India narrative and prepared ground for another violent uprising piggybacking on propaganda against Delhi. The anti-India tirade assumed frenzied proportions after the assassination of Osman Hadi, chairperson of the Inquilab Mancha. Hadi was a vocal but marginal figure in last year's July-August agitation that brought down Hasina. He recently filed nomination from a constituency that has consistently returned BNP stalwart Mirza Abbas to Parliament. So, Yunus and his backers in Jamaat-e-Islami could use Hadi's assassination to simultaneously attack both Awami League (and India) and

BNP leader Mirza Abbas. That is exactly what Yunus's student-youth brigade and the Jamaat-e-Islami have done. Abbas was heckled and then had to vacate his residence while residences of Awami leaders like Mohibul Hasan Choudhury Naufel were vandalised. Simultaneously, Indian missions and visa centres across Bangladesh came under attack with one former advisor of Yunus, Sarjis Alam, even suggesting that Indian diplomatic missions should be closed down until "India handed back the killer of Osman Hadi." For India, the prospect of an Islamist takeover is a daunting one. No wonder, the parliament committee on External Affairs has observed in its latest report that the developments in Bangladesh pose the "greatest strategic challenge" to India since the Liberation War of 1971.

Protests erupt in Iran as currency hits record low, central bank chief quits

Iran's largest protests in three years erupted after the rial plunged to a record low, driving up prices, forcing the central bank chief's resignation and intensifying anger over inflation and economic



(News Agency) Iran was jolted by one of its biggest protests in three years on Monday after the rial, the country's currency, collapsed to a record low against the US dollar, triggering fresh anger over soaring prices and forcing the resignation of the country's central bank chief. State television reported that Mohammad Reza Farzin, head

of Iran's Central Bank, had stepped down as demonstrators poured into parts of Tehran and other major cities. Traders and shopkeepers rallied along Saadi Street in downtown Tehran and in the Shush area near the capital's main Grand Bazaar — a powerful symbol of political change since merchants there helped fuel the 1979 Islamic

Revolution, the news agency Associated Press reported. The IRNA news agency confirmed the protests, while witnesses said similar rallies broke out in Isfahan, Shiraz and Mashhad. In some areas of Tehran, police fired tear gas to disperse crowds. Monday's demonstrations were the largest since 2022, when nationwide protests erupted after the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Jina Amini in

police custody. Amini had been detained by Iran's morality police for allegedly violating hijab rules, sparking months of unrest. Witnesses told the Associated Press that many traders shut their shops in protest and urged others to do the same. The semiofficial ILNA news agency reported that business activity slowed sharply, even though some shops remained open. A day earlier, protests had been limited to two mobile markets in downtown Tehran, where demonstrators chanted anti-government slogans. The unrest follows a dramatic plunge in the rial, which fell to 1.42 million to the dollar on Sunday before recovering slightly to around 1.38 million on Monday. When Farzin took office in 2022, the currency was trading at roughly 430,000 to the dollar. The rapid depreciation has intensified inflationary pressures, driving up the cost of food and daily essentials and squeezing household budgets. According to Iran's state statistics centre, inflation stood at 42.2 per cent in

December, up from a year earlier and higher than in November. Food prices rose 72 per cent year-on-year, while health and medical items jumped 50 per cent, figures many critics say point toward looming hyperinflation. Iran's economic woes are closely tied to sanctions. The rial traded at about 32,000 to the dollar when the 2015 nuclear deal eased international restrictions in exchange for limits on Iran's nuclear program. The agreement collapsed after Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the deal in 2018, unleashing renewed economic pressure. Uncertainty has also grown after June's 12-day war involving Iran and Israel, with fears of a broader conflict that could draw in the United States weighing on markets. In September, the United Nations reimposed nuclear-related sanctions on Iran through the so-called snapback mechanism, freezing assets abroad, halting arms transactions and imposing penalties linked to Iran's ballistic missile program.

The Beginning

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About the Author



Sharanjit Thind Singh, for more than 29 years has spent his career immersed in the world of advertising, marketing, and media. His professional journey includes working with well known Media, FMCG and Telecom Companies in India and the US.

Hailing from a small postal stamp size city in Punjab, Thind's academic background reflects his drive for excellence. After completing a Bachelor of Commerce degree, he pursued an MBA. He further strengthened his expertise with a Post Graduate Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication. This combination of business knowledge and media insight became the foundation of his career.

He founded and, is CEO of Nu Way Advertising in Manhattan now known as Nu Way Media Group Inc. He has served as a Commissioner of the Nassau County Human Rights Commission in New York.



The Beginning

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Sharanjit Thind Singh

The Beginning

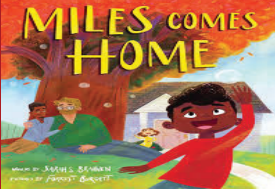
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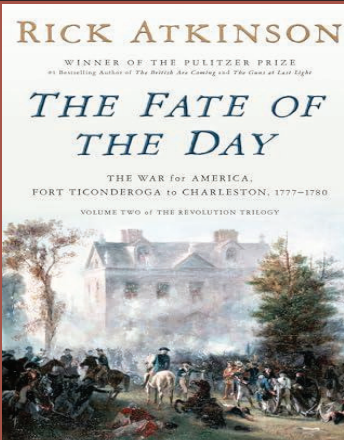
The Everlasting

First things first, The Everlasting is not a book you're going to get over easily. It's razor sharp and designed to cut you deeply. You'll be moved, you'll probably cry, and by the end you'll say thank you for delivering my suffering so beautifully. This story follows a scholar and a mythical (lady) knight who have lived the same story countless times – caught in a historical time loop. It's a book about storytelling, and how nationalism cannot exist without the support of a well-told myth. It's a thrashing examination of how we choose our heroes. And, most importantly, it's a love story – about two people who learn over and over again that they're doomed in every possible way but still choose each other anyway. What exquisite agony, wonderfully delivered.



This Beautiful, Ridiculous City: A Graphic Memoir

If you're new to New York City, you'll find few as passionately written as Kay Sohini's latest work. It traces her journey moving from India to New York – and with it comes joy, excitement, heartbreak and anguish. It's a visually gorgeous work that brings both of Sohini's worlds alive, from her family kitchen table in India to the bustle of Manhattan. And as an immigrant who made a similar journey years ago, I found myself nodding along to every word.

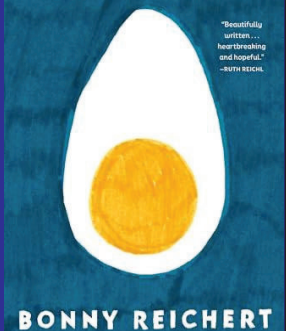


The Fate of the Day: The War for America, Fort Ticonderoga to Charleston, 1777-1780

I've been eagerly waiting years for this book! This is the second volume of Rick Atkinson's trilogy on the American Revolution. Atkinson makes good use of letters and diaries. You feel like you're in the middle of a battle, with all the sights, sounds and tragedy. Harrowing tales of hand-to-hand fighting, scalping and desperate evacuations. Fine detail: the waxed mustaches of the Hessian forces, the number of rum barrels distributed to weary and ill-clad troops, the dull thud of cannonballs smacking into ships. The stench of makeshift hospitals, with piles of limbs stacked outside. He carefully lays out how the battles began, and the successes, mistakes and missed opportunities – on both sides.

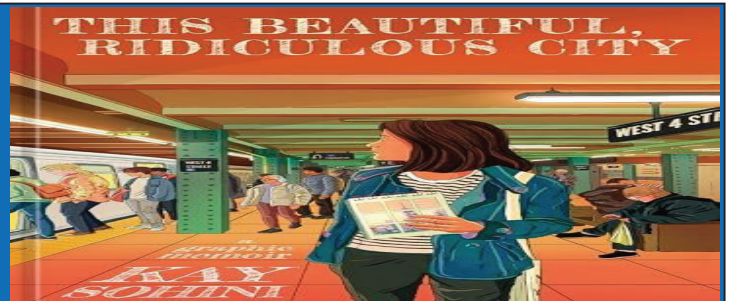
HOW TO SHARE AN EGG

A TRUE STORY OF HUNGER, LOVE, AND PLENTY



How to Share an Egg: A True Story of Hunger, Love, and Plenty

The moment you finish, you'll want to share this book with family and friends, just like a good meal. Journalist and chef Bonny Reichert grew up loving food. She also grew up the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, Saul Reichert, who had nearly starved to death when he was a boy. There is pain but so much joy – and readers will love spending time in the Reicherts' kitchen. As the author writes in her introduction, it's "about a family that lost everything and built itself up again, one meal at a time."



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Iranian Authorities Face Deadly Unrest Amid Growing Public Anger Over Economy

U.S. President Signals Potential Military Response if Iran Fails to Protect Peaceful Demonstrators Amid Economic Unrest

(By our staff reporter) New York—Tensions Spike as Trump Threatens to Step In Following Reports of Fatal Clashes Between Protesters and Security Forces. Washington Demands Restraint From Tehran as Trump Pledges Support for Protesters Facing Armed Security Forces Near week-long protests against Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have taken a violent turn with the onset of the New Year, leaving several protesters and at least seven people dead, news agency Associated Press reported, citing Iranian media and rights groups. With the turn of the New Year, the protests have spilled into rural parts of the country as security forces and protesters clashed on the streets across Iran. Earlier, university students took to the streets of Tehran, chanting "Death to the dictator" and slogans in support of Reza Pahlavi, the son of the late Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, a US ally who was ousted during the 1979 Islamic Revolution. As chants of "Long live the Shah" echoed across parts of Tehran, Reza Pahlavi, who lives in exile in the United States, took to X and wrote, "I am with you. Victory is ours because our cause is just and because we are united." "As long as this regime remains in power, the country's economic situation



will continue to deteriorate," he added. The country is witnessing its largest protests in three years over soaring inflation, sparking violence across several regions. Deaths were reported in Lordegan, Kuhdasht, and Isfahan, reflecting the spread of the unrest since shopkeepers began demonstrating over the government's handling of a currency slide and rapidly rising prices. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-affiliated Fars news agency and rights group Hengaw reported fatalities in Lordegan, a western city, with authorities confirming at least

one death in Kuhdasht and another in Isfahan province. The clashes between protesters and security forces reflect a significant escalation as demonstrations expanded to new regions. Fars reported two people had been killed in Lordegan during clashes with security services and what it described as armed protesters. Hengaw stated that several people were killed and wounded there by security forces. The Revolutionary Guards announced that a member of its affiliated Basij volunteer paramilitary unit was killed in Kuhdasht and another thirteen

wounded. The Guards blamed demonstrators, accusing them of "taking advantage of the atmosphere of popular protests." Hengaw identified the killed Basij member as Amirhossam Khodayari Fard, stating he had been protesting and was killed by security forces. The same group also reported that a protester was shot dead on Wednesday in Isfahan province. Reuters could not immediately verify these accounts. Protests also occurred in Marvdasht, in southern Fars province, according to activist news site HRANA. Hengaw reported detentions of demonstrators on Wednesday in Kermanshah, Khuzestan, and Hamedan provinces. The unrest coincides with a critical period for Iran's clerical leadership, as Western sanctions have severely impacted the economy, driving inflation to 42.5% in December. Recent Israeli and US airstrikes in June further strained Iran's nuclear infrastructure and military leadership. Tehran responded to the protests with a dual approach, offering dialogue while maintaining security measures. Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said Thursday that authorities would engage in direct dialogue with trade union and merchant representatives, though no further details were given.

Zohran Mamdani Inaugurated as New York City's 112th Mayor

The Oath: He was first sworn in just after midnight on January 1, 2026, by Attorney General Letitia James at the decommissioned Old City Hall subway station.

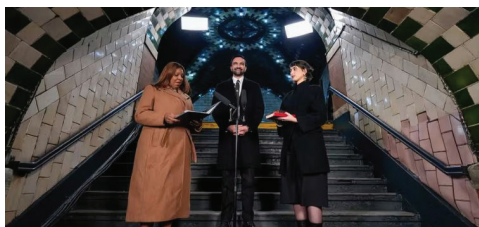
Mamdani used a centuries-old Quran from the New York Public Library that once belonged to historian Arturo Schomburg.

Public Ceremony: A second public ceremony was held later that afternoon on the steps of City Hall, administered by Senator Bernie Sanders.

(By our staff reporter) New York—Surrounded by family and political allies, Mamdani takes the oath from Senator Bernie Sanders, vowing to govern for the "working people who keep our city running." The new administration begins its term with a focus on affordability and community safety, following a private midnight ceremony and a public celebration in the "Canyon of Heroes." Just after midnight, Zohran Kwame Mamdani was sworn in as New York City's first Muslim mayor in a modest ceremony held in a historic subway station under City Hall. Mamdani's astonishing rise over the last year took him from a marginal role as a backbench New York state lawmaker to the pinnacle of power in the largest city in the U.S. "Thank you so much to everyone for being here, Happy New Year to New Yorkers," Mamdani said, flashing his trademark grin. "This is truly the honor and privilege of a lifetime." The oath was administered by New York state Attorney General Letitia James, a fellow

Democrat and a close Mamdani ally. "Congratulations, Mr. Mayor," she said, to cheers. A much larger public ceremony will be held later on New Year's Day on the steps of City Hall, with Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders — one of Mamdani's political mentors — and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez expected to take part. An immigrant's victory, a focus on affordability. An immigrant born in Uganda to parents with roots in India, Mamdani's political triumph in 2025 came at a time when President Trump and his top advisors were rapidly reshaping U.S. policy to sharply limit immigration, especially for Muslims and people from African countries. Mamdani's critics, including Trump but also many leaders in the Democratic Party, also raised concerns

about his membership in the Democratic Socialists of America as well as his



frequent criticism of Israel and the war in Gaza. Trump falsely described Mamdani as a "communist" and said his growing influence was "a disaster waiting to happen. We can't have a communist in charge of a great, supposedly free enterprise kind of a representative city," he said. Those attacks didn't slow Mamdani's march to victory. In the general election, he defeated Andrew Cuomo, once a

Democratic Party titan, by nearly ten points. "The future is in our hands," Mamdani said during his victory speech in November. "In this moment of political darkness, New York will be the light." Much of Mamdani's campaign focused on kitchen table issues and affordability. He promised free bus service, universal child care, government-run grocery stores, and a freeze on rents for apartments that fall under the city's authority. While focusing on pocket book concerns, Mamdani also managed to charm many of his early opponents, building a broad coalition of supporters — many of them young — and winning endorsements from some of New York City's most influential Jewish leaders. In a meeting that followed his November win, even Trump promised to support Mamdani, despite his harsh rhetoric during the campaign: "I expect to be helping him, not hurting him - a big help, because I want New York City to be great," Trump said.

U.S. Judge Allows \$100,000 Fee for Skilled Worker H-1B Visas Under Trump Policy

(By our staff reporter) New York-A U.S. federal judge upheld the president's authority to implement the fee on new H-1B petitions, rejecting a legal challenge from business groups. WASHINGTON – A federal judge has rejected a lawsuit from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that opposed President Donald Trump's \$100,000 fee on visas for highly skilled foreign workers. U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell in Washington ruled that Congress gave the president the authority to "impose on the entry of aliens any restrictions he may deem to be appropriate." "Congress could have, but did not, impose the limit on presidential authority that plaintiffs' urge," Howell wrote in the 56-page opinion. The chamber, which advocates for 300,000 businesses, and the Association of American Universities, which advocates for 69 research-based institutions, argued that Trump's administration lacked the

authority to impose the fee on new H-1B visa applications, which the president imposed in September. Trump's fees are part of a broader strategy to favor U.S. citizens over foreign workers. The higher visa fees came amid a broader crackdown on illegal immigration, which includes mass deportations of undocumented immigrants and an end to allowing asylum seekers into the country while their cases are pending. The H-1B visa program is reserved for people who are employed in specialty occupations, frequently in technology, such as software engineers, tech program managers and other information technology professionals. The visas are approved for a period of three to six years. India was the largest beneficiary of H-1B visas last year, with 71% of approved beneficiaries, according to government data. China was a distant second at 11.7%. Before Trump imposed the fee, the federal

government distributed 85,000 H-1B visas a year, mostly for tech jobs, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services said the agency has already received enough petitions for the year starting Oct. 1. Amazon had more than 10,000 of the visas approved last year, while Microsoft and Meta each had more than 5,000 of the visas approved, according to the agency. America's largest private employer, Walmart, announced in October that it was pausing job offers to foreign candidates in need of H-1B visas. Walmart, which has a rapidly growing online marketplace similar to the one run by Amazon, employed more than 2,000 H-1B visa holders at that point, according to government data obtained by USA TODAY. Despite fee, Trump says H-1B visas needed for 'certain talents' Trump has been criticized by some of his own supporters for defending H-1B visas, which he told Fox News in November are needed to "bring in talent."

The Ruling: Issued on December 23, 2025, by Judge Beryl Howell in the District of Columbia.

The Legal Basis: The court found the fee fell under the President's authority in Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Current Status: The U.S. Chamber of Commerce filed a notice of appeal on December 29, 2025, moving the battle to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"You don't have certain talents," he said.

Former Trump adviser Elon Musk, a tech billionaire, advocated for the H1-B program, drawing a rebuke from Steve Bannon, who served as White House chief strategist during Trump's first term and is a prominent MAGA figure.

The Protest Economy: How The Subcontinent Has Turned Legitimacy Into Narrative Warfare

This is the defining political shift underway in the Indian subcontinent. Protests are no longer primarily instruments of domestic bargaining. They are mechanisms for external signalling, designed to force diplomatic reaction, international visibility, and narrative dominance. What appears as disorder is, in fact, a system: a protest economy where outrage substitutes governance and attention becomes leverage. To understand why this works, one must look beyond individual incidents and examine incentives, data, and history. For much of the last decade, Bangladesh was held up as an economic success story. Between 2010 and 2022, GDP growth averaged above 6 per cent. Poverty rates fell sharply. Export earnings crossed \$50 billion. Yet institutional trust moved in the opposite direction. Election participation declined. Opposition space narrowed. Courts and regulatory bodies lost credibility in public perception. This divergence — economic growth without institutional consent — created a vacuum. Political science has a name for this: institutional exhaustion. When formal channels cease to absorb dissent, protest becomes the only remaining site where power can be seen and felt. But protest itself has evolved. In an algorithmic media environment, its success is no longer measured by policy concessions but by reach. That is why protest language escalates so quickly. Student leaders invoke geopolitics not because they control borders or armies, but because such language

travels. A slogan framed in domestic terms mobilises thousands. A slogan framed in sovereignty terms mobilises millions across borders, screens, and newsrooms. The goal is not execution. It is circulation. India enters this narrative not by accident but by historical design. Since 1971, India has occupied a dual position in Bangladesh's political memory: indispensable to liberation, yet perpetually available as a symbol of dominance. This duality is empirically visible. Text analysis of Bangladeshi political discourse over decades shows that references to "interference" and "sovereignty" spike during periods of electoral stress and opposition fragmentation. Cooperation is reframed as control precisely when legitimacy is weakest at home. This pattern is not unique to Bangladesh. The Indian subcontinent has seen it before — most clearly in Pakistan. Pakistan offers the longest-running dataset of narrative substitution. From the late 1980s onwards, as civilian governance weakened and economic reform stalled, external antagonism filled the legitimacy gap. Anti-India rhetoric became a domestic adhesive. The results are measurable. Over the same period, the divergence was clear in the data: between 2010 and 2024 Bangladesh's per-capita GDP nearly tripled from about \$882 to \$2,625, while Pakistan's per-capita GDP stood at roughly \$1,643 in 2024, illustrating that despite similar starting positions in the early 2010s, Bangladesh's per-person economic output grew substantially faster and now exceeds Pakistan's by more than

60 per cent — a structural difference that helps explain why economic capacity has translated into differing political dynamics. Social-sector spending underperformed regional averages. Internal fractures deepened even as foreign policy posturing intensified. The most revealing evidence lies not in what travels globally, but in what does not. In recent years, Pakistan's Hindu minority has repeatedly protested land seizures, forced conversions, and temple demolitions. In Sindh, families, including women and children, have blocked national highways demanding protection from local power brokers. By classical human rights standards, these episodes are severe, sustained, and well documented. Yet they rarely become international causes. They do not trend. They do not generate panels or statements. This asymmetry exposes the true structure of the protest economy. Suffering is not amplified based on severity. It is amplified based on narrative compatibility. Victimhood must implicate the "right" antagonist, fit existing ideological frames, and offer moral clarity to distant audiences. When it does not, silence becomes policy. This is what can be called the silence industry: a system that does not lie outright but manages attention so selectively that some realities never fully enter public consciousness. Information controls during unrest intensify this distortion. Across the Indian subcontinent, governments increasingly restrict internet access during protests. The stated aim is stability. The observed effect is narrative acceleration. When verifiable information collapses, rumours gain authority. Diaspora actors — often well-

intentioned, sometimes ideological — fill the vacuum. International media, deprived of local verification, relies more heavily on activist framing. Empirical studies show that misinformation spreads faster in low-information environments, not slower. During Bangladesh's unrest, claims travelled internationally within hours, while corrections lagged by days. Diplomatic reactions formed on perception rather than policy. Foreign ministries responded not to legislative change, but to narrative momentum. This is how domestic protest becomes foreign policy without passing through institutions. The choice of embassies as protest destinations follows the same logic. Historically, crowds gathered at parliaments because that is where decisions were made. Today, embassies are targeted because they are where narratives crystallise. A protest near a foreign mission compresses complexity into imagery. It forces reaction without negotiation. It internationalises grievance without resolving it. Data across the region and beyond show that diplomatic-mission-adjacent protests are a structural feature of political stress, not isolated eruptions of extremism. Earlier in 2024, in Islamabad, police prevented a large pro-Palestinian sit-in from reaching the US Embassy's high-security district; the rally, organised by a major Islamist party, was explicitly bound up with domestic reactions to geopolitical developments in Gaza and was only contained near the embassy perimeter after law-enforcement intervention.

Vance and Newsom Emerge as Early 2028 Frontrunners Amid Post-Election Maneuvering

The Republican Frontrunner: Vice President J.D. Vance ended 2025 with a significant lead in internal GOP polling and a 61% win in the CPAC straw poll.

The Democratic Field: While Gavin Newsom and Kamala Harris remain the most recognized names, a "wide lane" of governors—including Josh Shapiro, Wes Moore, and Andy Beshear—has begun actively touring swing states.

Trump's Influence: Despite being constitutionally barred from a third term, the President has publicly toyed with the idea of a "Trump 2028" run, complicating the succession plans for other GOP hopefuls.

The 2026 Factor: Most analysts view the upcoming midterm elections as the first true "primary" for 2028, where potential candidates will test their national messaging on affordability and the economy.

(By our staff reporter) New York- The Trump Organization may sell Trump 2028 hats, but even President Donald Trump bowed to the Constitution and acknowledged earlier this month that he would not be the next Republican presidential nominee: "It's not going to be me." It's clear to everyone that the jockeying for presidential primary position in the post-Trump era — in both major parties — has already begun. Ambitious contenders are seizing on book deals, magazine profiles, podcast appearances, policy pronouncements and more than a few low-key beefs to find the spotlight and try to elbow into what will be a crowded race. So which potential 2028ers jockeyed the best in 2025? In the spirit of this year's "FIFA Peace Prize — Football Unites the World" award delivered to Trump, POLITICO Magazine is ready to bestow trophies on some of the likeliest presidential contenders. Here are the Democrats and Republicans eyeing the White House who spent the past year maneuvering — some better than others. Let the ceremony commence! In 2025, sometimes Gavin Newsom made Democrats mad. Sometimes Gavin Newsom made Democrats exhilarated. But more than any other potential Democratic presidential candidate, Gavin Newsom made Democrats think about Gavin Newsom. He made them mad when he invited the late conservative activist Charlie Kirk on his podcast and said "I completely agree with you" on barring transgender women from competing in women's sports. Ditto for when Newsom was asked in April about the erroneous deportation of Kilmar Abrego Garcia in flagrant violation of a court order; he downplayed it as "the distraction of the day" and suggested Democrats should resist talking about immigration because it's an "80-20 issue" for Republicans. But many Democrats thrilled to his adoption of a bombastic social media strategy that walked a fine line between parodying and emulating Trump. And he delighted partisans by jumping into the redistricting war Trump started, successfully convincing California voters to pass a ballot initiative suspending the state's independent redistricting commission and redrawing district lines

to favor Democratic candidates. The net result of all of Newsom's frenetic activity is that, despite being based 3,000 miles away from Washington, Newsom has unofficially achieved the status of the party's chief attack dog — and arguable 2028 Democratic frontrunner. The proof is in the polls, in which Newsom is the only potential Democratic nominee who has shown clear momentum. During the first five months of the year, Newsom was mired in single digits. Since then, he's consistently earned double-digit support and has led polls sampled by Yahoo/YouGov, Emerson College and AtlasIntel. Kamala Harris had a busy year, writing and promoting her 2024 campaign memoir *107 Days*, which quickly became a New York Times best-seller and sold more than 600,000 copies. Her book tour was a success too; as the New York Times observed, "Only two politicians in America have pulled off nationwide tours this year and packed so many venues" — Sen. Bernie Sanders and Harris. Yet the former vice president saw her potential 2028 standing ebb. In the first eight 2028 primary polls sampled this year, Harris led in six, averaging 27 percent share of support. In the last eight, she led in three and averaged 21 percent support. Why the slippage? Likely because Harris spent most of the year looking backward, performing an autopsy on her 2024 presidential campaign and picking some intra-party fights in the process.

Harris never distanced herself from President Joe Biden during the campaign, but did air some tensions between them in her book, and wrote "at 81, Joe got tired." Critics wondered why she hadn't acknowledged reality before.

She also rage-baited Josh Shapiro, writing that the Pennsylvania governor "mused that he would want to be in the room for every decision" during her running mate vetting process. That prompted Shapiro to accuse Harris, in an interview with *The Atlantic*, of "blatant lies" to "sell books and cover her ass." And she rankled former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg by saying she passed over him for veep because she thought pairing a Black woman with a gay man was "too big of a risk," adding that Buttigieg "knew that — to our

mutual sadness." After publication, Buttigieg told POLITICO he was "surprised" to read that and retorted, "The way that you earn trust with voters is based mostly on what they think you're going to do for their lives, not on categories." Harris even threw shade at the entire party's record of delivering for voters at a December speech before the Democratic National Committee, declaring "both parties have failed to hold the public's trust."

Whether a former vice president can, in the eyes of voters, sufficiently separate herself from the Washington establishment, remains to be seen. But by spending so much energy on the past, she wasn't putting in as much time taking on Trump or offering an alternative vision for the future. There's a reason why Newsom gained ground and Harris lost ground this year; he seized the mantle of chief attack dog and she didn't.

Pete Buttigieg maintained a campaign-lite schedule in 2025, participating in an Iowa town hall and making appearances on right-leaning podcasts — burnishing a reputation as a smooth debater able to connect with red-state voters. (In case anyone missed the point of such appearances, Buttigieg wrote a Substack post titled, "Why I Sat Down for a Two-Hour Podcast That Recently Hosted Trump.") After ending his four-year stint as Transportation secretary, he and his family left Washington for Michigan, where he passed on running for open seats for governor or senator, a sign he's interested in a bigger prize like the presidency. He also grew a salt-and-pepper beard, which could help the soon-to-be 44-year-old shake the perception that he's too young to be Commander-in-Chief.

What he didn't do in 2025 is anything to address his biggest political weakness: scant support among Black and Latino voters.

In an August poll from Emerson College gauging Democratic support for 2028 possibilities, Buttigieg earned a promising second place with 16 percent. Yet the number of African American respondents who said they support Buttigieg was zero. Not that the percentage of support for Buttigieg

among Black people rounded down to zero. Literally zero African Americans contacted by Emerson said they supported Buttigieg. And the number of Hispanic respondents was only slightly better: one. Every Democratic presidential nominee since Michael Dukakis in 1988 has needed Black support, particularly Southern Black support, to secure a sufficient number of delegates. Furthermore, Buttigieg's support was heavily consolidated among the college-educated, with little support from voters with only high school diplomas or vocational degrees. He remains a quintessential "wine track" candidate, and such candidates have often struggled to win the Democratic nomination. Buttigieg ends another year as a contender but without a clear path to forging a diverse base of support.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the democratic socialist insurgent who had once been known for encouraging primary challenges to Democratic House incumbents, continued her intra-party fence-mending operation in 2025. Last year, she began paying dues to her party's House campaign arm for the first time. She also gave a full-throated endorsement to Kamala Harris at the Democratic National Convention when others in democratic socialist circles were withholding support to protest the Biden administration's military support for Israel's war with Hamas.

This year she helped raise money for the Democratic nominee for the governor of Virginia, Abigail Spangberger, a moderate who has disparaged the "socialist" label that Ocasio-Cortez still dons with pride. She also solidified her position as the unofficial heir to the democratic socialist movement built up by Bernie Sanders' two presidential campaigns by joining the 84-year-old Vermont independent for 11 stops on his Fighting Oligarchy tour, which took her to the early primary state of Nevada and the swing state of Arizona.

In another nod to the left, Ocasio-Cortez also didn't suppress her frustration in November when a faction of Senate Democrats broke ranks to end the government shutdown without a deal to renew expiring Affordable Care Act subsidies.

The lost art of flirting is finding its way back in India

(News Agency) There's music, drinks, food, some awkward smiles, and plenty of nervous laughter. It's just a room with some people, games, food, drinks, and a flirtatious vibe. No bios, no filters, no opening lines rehearsed in your Notes app beforehand. It's a party. It's a flirting party. The name pretty much gives it away: a party where the agenda is to meet, flirt, and maybe build a connection. It's not a new concept, but people seem ready to return to it. What's different this time is the timing. A recent story by The Guardian brought the chatter back into focus. Why? Because exhaustion from online dating is a real deal. If you pause and ponder, pretty much from the Victorian era — right, Bridgerton fans? — humour me for a minute here. When a young woman was formally introduced to society in years of yore, balls and soires were where connections were made. Flirting happened through lingering glances, smiles, and witty one-liners exchanged while dancing, often followed by a gentleman caller the next day. Now, fast-forward a few centuries. The dance cards are gone, but the desire to connect, flirt and be seen remains. The difference? Back then, these gatherings were simple social and familial occasions, with chaperones hovering around women. In the modern day, flirting is the whole point. Just swap the ballroom for a nice venue, the chaperone for house rules, and the dance card for a name tag, maybe. Interestingly, there are also specially curated, fun, low-key flirtatious ice-breakers or games. With evolution came the lure of dating apps, which now seems to be ebbing away, too. Ghosting, situationships, shrekking, bio-baiting, catfishing...unfortunately, there's an endless vocabulary that has dulled the excitement of online dating. While the swipe game is still on, the fatigue is real. According to a Forbes Health survey, around 78 per cent of users reported feeling worn out and exhausted by it all. Hence, flirting parties feel like a refreshing break from the monotony of it all. Rise of flirting parties in India It's not just something the West has been doing for ages, or something you've seen on an OTT show or movie. Indians are at it too—probably more than you realise. Don't believe us? Check out the BookMyShow website. It has a

dedicated category for dating events, complete with city-wise listings of upcoming mixers. (Did you just go whaaat?!) Call them Cupid, but society has always found ways to bring eligible people together. Today, some organisations are taking it upon themselves to do just that—tapping into the warmth of human connection that has otherwise been lulled by our always-on world. People want to be seen and empathised with, not just scrolled and judged. "People are tired of dating apps, and rightfully so. I call it the commodification of dating. We just wanted to bring back the good old fuzzy feeling of a meet-cute, a smile at a bar, making out with strangers on the dance floor, and a flirtatious glance. We miss those connections," says Isha Singh Sawhney, a partner at Strangr Delhi, a Delhi-based venue that organises mixers. Wondering who actually shows up to these mixers? Event planners say the crowd largely falls between their 20s and 40s—the very age when people move out, move cities, and start over. When you arrive in a



new place knowing no one beyond a few workplace acquaintances, the social odds aren't exactly in your favour. For those migrating to cosmopolitan cities like Delhi, finding genuine connections can feel especially daunting. No wing person by your side? That's where flirting mixers step in as an easy, low-pressure way to meet people without having to swipe your way through the city. q There's science behind why

these parties feel so good. Communities with strong social bonds tend to be safer, healthier, and more resilient, according to a 2025 World Health Organisation report. Studies also note that face-to-face interactions catalyse social connection and psychological well-being. That's because flirting activates the nervous system, something dating apps simply can't replicate.

"When you meet someone in person, you can read micro-expressions, tone of voice, warmth and intent. This leads to actual attraction rather than something virtual. Your subconscious gauges energy—what we call vibe—and decisions are made based on energy, not algorithms," psychotherapist and relationship expert Namrata Jain tells India Today.

Inside Salman Khan's Rs 80 Crore Panvel Farmhouse Where Bollywood Star Rang In His 60th Birthday: Private Gym, Pool

(News Agency) Salman Khan is 60 years old today, and the star celebrated his birthday at his Panvel farmhouse. Who attended the bash? The actor's parents, Salim and Salma Khan, Arpita Khan, Ayush Sharma, Arbaaz Khan, Sshura Khan, Nirvaan Khan, and others were spotted. But Bhaijaan's celebration cannot be just about family. His close friends, Randeep Hooda, Lin Laishram, Genelia Deshmukh, MS Dhoni with wife, Sakshi, Tabu, Nikhil Dwivedi, Mahesh Manjrekar, and Huma Qureshi were also spotted at Arpita Farms. While everyone is busy celebrating Salman's 60th, let's take a stroll along his Panvel farmhouse - the actor's Rs 80 crore escape pad, according to Zoom, is where he relaxes, turns into a farmer, and spends time with animals. Salman Khan's Rs 80 Crore Panvel Farmhouse: Private Gym Irrespective of where Salman Khan goes, he has to work out. Did you see his post a week before his birthday? Hence, the actor has a fully-equipped

gym at his 150-acre farmhouse. Even when he is relaxing, he makes sure to keep up with his fitness regime by working on all the modern machinery. Salman Khan's Rs 80 Crore Panvel Farmhouse: Swimming Pool Did you know that Dabangg actor's farmhouse has a swimming pool? There is no farmhouse

host, and producer. But did you know that he is also a farmer? If you followed his Instagram during the pandemic, you must have seen him sharing a glimpse into his farm life at Arpita Farms. He is often spotted in the fields sowing seeds, taking care of plants, and harvesting the crop.

Salman Khan's Rs 80 Crore

Panvel Farmhouse: Animal Shelter

Salman's Panvel farmhouse is the best example of countryside living. Since the actor is an animal lover, Arpita Farms also has an animal shelter. The actor has shared images with horses a couple of times. According to reports, there are enclosures for dogs and private shelters for other animals.

Salman Khan's Rs 80 Crore Panvel

Farmhouse: The Bungalow

Where does Salman and his family live at Panvel farmhouse? The 150-acre property not only has a gym, pool, and farms, but also a bungalow. Equipped with modern amenities and all the luxuries, the space exudes rustic charm.



without one. It is no short of a resort, where the actor can enjoy some quiet time, away from the hustle and bustle of Mumbai. He once shared a picture from the pool.

Salman Khan's Rs 80 Crore Panvel Farmhouse: Lush Green Farms

Salman Khan is an actor, artist, biker,

OTT shows sparked a Northeast travel boom in 2025

If there's one trend that stood out in 2025, it's how much more Indians are travelling. From millennials gravitating towards slow, luxury experiences to Gen Z hopping across cities and countries by booking flights on EMLs, travel has firmly moved to the top of everyone's priority list. Even spiritual getaways and wellness retreats saw a renewed interest this year, with many travellers seeking not just a break, but meaning and inner peace. In one form or another, travel became a shared aspiration across age groups. However, with travel comes the inevitable question: where to go next? Choosing a destination is no longer just about ticking off popular tourist spots. We live in the age of OTT, where shows and films transport viewers to visually stunning locations, often sparking a desire to experience those places beyond the screen. Scenic backdrops, immersive storytelling, and authentic settings now play a significant role in shaping travel inspiration. According to AI-based travel platform ixigo's The Great Indian Travel Index 2025, India's binge-worthy OTT hits are doing far more than driving viewership; they're actively reshaping travel choices. The Northeast, in particular, emerged as a major beneficiary of this screen-led curiosity. Popular shows such as The Family Man (season 3), Paatal Lok (season 2), and Delhi Crime (season 3) brought the region into the spotlight, showcasing its lush landscapes, layered cultures, and raw, unfiltered settings. This on-screen exposure helped spark fresh interest in destinations that were once considered niche or lesser explored. The impact was clearly reflected in real-world travel patterns. In 2025, ixigo recorded strong year-on-year growth in flight bookings to key Northeastern cities, with Dimapur (Nagaland) seeing a surge of 77 per cent, followed by Agartala (Tripura) at 48 per cent, Guwahati (Assam) and Imphal (Manipur) at 44 per cent each, and Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh) at 42 per cent. Earlier, digital travel platform



Agoda also highlighted a travel interest towards the insights, Darjeeling (West Bengal) emerged as the most domestic travellers.

searched destination in the region on Agoda for the October to December 2025 travel period. The evergreen hill station was followed by Gangtok (Sikkim) in second place and Shillong (Meghalaya) in third, with the trio attracting travellers for their scenic landscapes, pleasant weather, and distinctive cultural experiences. The data, based on accommodation searches made by Indian travellers between July and September 2025, further underscores the enduring appeal of these hill destinations as go-to holiday retreats during the festive and winter season. Following closely were Guwahati (Assam) and Siliguri (West Bengal), which secured the fourth and fifth spots respectively, reinforcing the Northeast's

Explore India's Coldest Village Where Temperature Drops Below Minus 25 Degrees Celsius



In winters, headlines often read - 'Delhi freezes at 5°C', 'Shimla witnesses the coldest day of the year at -2°C', or 'Srinagar's Dal Lake freezes at -6.2°C'. Despite the temperature drop that the North Indian plains and hill stations witness, they are not the coldest places in the country. The coldest place in India is Drass, also referred to as Dras, situated just 64 km from Kargil in Ladakh. Imagine the lowest temperature here. It is colder than the minimum temperature at which you keep the deep freezer, which is -20°C. In fact, if you visit this place, you will witness snow freezing on your beard

and hair. In winters, headlines often read - 'Delhi freezes at 5°C', 'Shimla witnesses the coldest day of the year at -2°C', or 'Srinagar's Dal Lake freezes at -6.2°C'. Despite the of options to stay and spend a few days temperature drop that the North Indian freezing in the cold. Many people even plains and hill stations witness, they book accommodation in Kargil and visit are not the coldest places in the village for a day. Even during summer country. The coldest place in India is and monsoon, the maximum Drass, also referred to as Dras, temperature in Drass does not cross situated just 64 km from Kargil in 25°C. Places to visit here include Zoji Ladakh. Imagine the lowest La Pass, Dras War Memorial, Draupadi temperature here. It is colder than the Kund, Mushko Valley, Stagsboo, and minimum temperature at which you Ningoor Masjid. If you want to learn keep the deep freezer, which is -20°C. more about the 1999 Kargil War between In fact, if you visit this place, you will India and Pakistan, you can visit the witness snow freezing on your beard Brigade War Gallery.

Year Ender 2025: Sabyasachi Jewellery Makes A Statement On The Global Stage

Rooted in heritage with a global narrative, Sabyasachi Jewellery won hearts across the globe in 2025. Heritage necklaces were met with High Jewellery statement earrings, embracing the best of Sabyasachi's world. "Some of the most superlative jewellery ever made in India has been handcrafted by the master goldsmiths of Calcutta, colloquially known as the 'babus'. I want to make this legacy thrive again,"

Kareena Kapoor Khan expressed Sabyasachi Mukherjee on the brand's Instagram page. From Shah Rukh Khan to Julia Roberts, here's a look at stars who have celebrated the legacy of Sabyasachi Jewellery in 2025. The King of Bollywood made his first-ever appearance on the MET Gala 2025 carpet. Looking dapper in an all-black ensemble, Shah Rukh Khan's Sabyasachi High Jewellery statement pieces stole the show. From the layered chains with one sporting the iconic 'SRK' diamond-studded initials and another featuring an enormous 'K' pendant to Sabyasachi's signature Bengal Tiger Head cane crafted in 18k gold with tourmalines, sapphires, old mine cut and brilliant cut diamonds, Shah Rukh's jewellery game was on point.

Julia Roberts

The actress Julia Roberts and her million-dollar smile had competition when the actor was styled in Sabyasachi High Jewellery earrings and necklace for the premiere of her film *After The Hunt* in Los Angeles. Julia paired her hot pink dress with earrings crafted in 18k gold with apatite, tsavorite and brilliant cut EF VVS VS diamonds. The showstopper of this glamorous look was the 18k gold necklace featuring sapphire, tourmalines, thulite, labradorite and brilliant cut EF VVS VS diamonds.

Goldie Hawn

Goldie Hawn made a dazzling appearance at the 97th Annual Academy Awards 2025. Looking like a ray of

sunshine, the American actress and Oscar award winner, Goldie, sparkled on the red carpet in Sabyasachi High Jewellery. Goldie's necklace is from Sabyasachi High Jewellery's Bengal Royale Collection and is crafted in 18k gold with 20.71 carats of Asscher cut tourmaline, spinels with old mine cut and brilliant cut EF VVS VS diamonds.

Kareena Kapoor Khan

Kareena Kapoor Khan exuded regal opulence when she paired her animal print saree with a statement necklace from Sabyasachi Heritage Jewellery. Crafted in gold, the luxurious piece of art featured sapphire, emerald, tourmaline, garnet, turquoise, pearls and diamonds. Kareena paired the royal necklace with Sabyasachi High Jewellery earrings crafted in 18k gold with turquoise and brilliant cut EF



VVS VS diamonds. She completed the modern-day

Maharani look with a ring crafted in 18k gold with emerald, sapphire, turquoise, tourmaline, iolite, coral, pearl



Rani Mukerji

The reigning queen of Bollywood, Rani Mukerji, took home her first National Award this year. Dressed in Sabyasachi head to toe, Rani paired her saree with Sabyasachi High Jewellery earrings crafted in 18k gold with morganites, old mine cut and brilliant cut EF VVS VS diamonds and a necklace crafted in 18k gold with tourmaline, pearls and EF VVS VS diamonds.

All Things Green: How Emeralds Became India's Most Powerful Gemstone In 2025

Once considered a niche indulgence, emeralds are now commanding the spotlight across India's fine jewellery landscape. From bridal heirlooms and red-carpet statements to men's brooches and luxury collectables, the green gemstone has evolved into a powerful symbol of status, belief and modern luxury. Industry insiders agree that this is not a fleeting trend but a sustained shift in consumer preference, driven by cultural resonance, celebrity visibility and rising confidence in coloured gemstones as investment-worthy pieces. Ramit Kapur, Managing Director of Gemological Science International (GSI) India, notes that the gemstone category is on a strong growth trajectory. "The gemstone market in India is expected to witness sustained year-on-year growth, with a projected CAGR of 10-12 per cent, led by emeralds commanding the largest market share," he says. Kapur adds that with demand continuing to rise and no significant supply-side constraints, emeralds are positioned to offer enduring luxury, desirability, and value to Indian consumers. This growth is closely tied to changing perceptions. Where diamonds once dominated aspirational buying, emeralds are now viewed as equally prestigious – often more expressive and

distinctive.

A Stone That Blends Fashion And Belief

Dr. Saurabh Gadgil, Chairman and Managing Director of PNG Jewellers, points out that emeralds occupy a unique cultural position in India. "Over the last 18 to 24 months, emeralds have clearly emerged as the most preferred coloured gemstone, both in India and internationally," he notes, citing their increased visibility at red-carpet events, high-profile gatherings and weddings. Beyond fashion, emeralds also carry astrological significance as panna is worn for personal growth and prosperity. "This blend of belief and design has made emeralds far more than a passing trend," says Gadgil. He highlights that diamond-and-emerald combinations are performing especially well, and demand continues to grow year on year.

From Bridal Necklaces To Men's Jewellery

Emeralds are also redefining gender norms in jewellery. Gadgil observes that the gemstone has made strong inroads into men's jewellery, particularly brooches worn on sherwanis. For brides, emerald necklaces paired with diamonds and other precious stones have become an essential part of the

wedding trousseau. Natural emeralds, especially Colombian and Zambian stones, remain the most sought-after, with the trend expected to continue well into 2026.

Why Emeralds Thrive In Statement Jewellery

Amit Bandi, CEO of Kumari Fine Jewellery, explains that emeralds perform best in bold, statement-led designs rather than entry-level pieces. "Their rich colour, rarity and visual impact naturally lend themselves to heavier jewellery meant to be noticed," he says. While Hollywood icons like Angelina Jolie first propelled emeralds into global fashion consciousness, Bollywood celebrities like Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and leaders like Nita Ambani have reinforced the trend in India, amplified further by social media.

As one of the top three coloured gemstones in terms of rarity and value, emeralds occupy a sweet spot in aspirational luxury. Bandi notes strong demand in the Rs 2 lakh to Rs 7 lakh range, especially for occasion-led designs that celebrate scale, craftsmanship and presence. "Consumers today view emerald pieces as expressions of status and individuality," he adds.

Janhvi Kapoor To Ananya Panday: Stylist Meagan Concessio Picks Her Best Looks Of 2025

Janhvi Kapoor, Rashmika Mandanna, Ananya Panday, Bhumi Pednekar and Aneet Padda had a great year in style and fashion.

While Janhvi celebrated Indian couture in Mayyur Girotra, Bhumi Pednekar and Rashmika kept it edgy and chic in AKJOK, and Ananya Panday set a glamorous tone in Roberto Cavalli. The most loved star of the year, Saiyaara actor Aneet Padda, made her House of Lakme runway debut.

Do you know what's common between all these Bollywood divas and their iconic looks? They were all styled by celebrity stylist Meagan Concessio, who made each ensemble a showstopping moment and made it an extension of the celeb's personality.

Speaking to News18 about styling the Bollywood actresses, Meagan Concessio says, "Each of these looks came together very organically. The jewels and accessories, the clothes. They were all in

perfect harmony. I'm proud of how beautiful all of my muses look."

She further adds, "2025 has been a rollercoaster! From getting married earlier this year to working with the brightest stars of Bollywood; it's been a very challenging but fruitful year. I'm glad I got to work with some of the nicest people in the industry."

Rashmika Mandanna, for the promotions of her film, *Thamma*, was styled in a co-ord set from AKJOK Anamika Khanna. The printed set featured a cropped blazer and a pick-up skirt. What we love about this ensemble is the jewelled detailing embroidered on the blazer, adding sparkle to Rashmika's overall look.

For the promotions of *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri*, Ananya Panday was styled in a beige mermaid dress with marble print from Roberto Cavalli's FW 2025 collection. The striking all-over marble effect print in a versatile neutral palette added a distinct



style to Ananya glamorous look.

Janhvi Kapoor

Janhvi Kapoor looked exquisite in Mayyur Girotra's signature mulmul zaradozi kalidar. Every element of the look styled on Janhvi exudes regal grace. The jewellery from Amrapali Jewellers blended perfectly with the intricate embroidery of the Indian ensemble.

Bhumi Pednekar

Bhumi Pednekar has had a year full of stylish looks, and we love the fact that the actor loves to explore new styles. This AKJOK Anamika Khanna look is effortlessly chic. Edgy yet timeless, Bhumi's ensemble featured a white shirt paired with a high-waisted black skirt enhanced with layered ruffles and embellished with statement gold coins.

Aneet Padda

A vision of modern couture rooted in Indian elegance, Aneet Padda made her runway debut at House of Lakme Grand Finale in a bespoke Tarun Tahiliani showstopper ensemble. Crafted in metallic sequins, the saree-inspired silhouette is sculpted with structured corsetry and enhanced with Swarovski crystals.

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Anil Kapoor Turns 69: How The Actor Stays Fit, Active, And Disciplined

Anil Kapoor has always been known for his energy and youthful vibe. Even after spending decades in Indian cinema, the actor continues to surprise everyone with how fit and fresh he looks. As Anil Kapoor turns 69 today on December 24, his fitness routine is once again in the spotlight. The secret is not magic or shortcuts. It is discipline, consistency and a lifestyle he has followed for years. Running Is His Go-To Workout Anil Kapoor enjoys running and treats it as a serious part of his routine. In 2020, the actor shared a video of himself sprinting by the beach. It was not just a workout clip, but also a reminder of his mindset. "During the lockdown I was dreaming about the beach...dreaming of escaping...finally I get to the beach and my trainer



@marcyogimead, makes me sprint...fitness always comes first...It's not about the location but about the dedication," he wrote in the caption. Strength Training Matters Too Cardio is important to him, but Anil Kapoor does not stop there. Weight training is a big part of his fitness routine. He often shares gym videos that show

his workout sessions. In one such clip, he was seen pushing himself during leg day. The actor's routine included exercises like leg curls, prime leg curl, and weighted lunges with a cable row. These workouts help build strength and support overall body balance.

Eating Right Is A Priority

Along with workouts, Anil

Kapoor pays close attention to what he eats. He strongly believes that food plays a bigger role than exercise. In an Instagram video shared in July 2022, the actor spoke about his food philosophy. "Food is not for taste, but it's for you to build your strength and stamina. You consume as much as you need for your body as well as for your

mental and physical strength," he said.

A Disciplined Lifestyle

Anil Kapoor's fitness also comes from the choices he makes every day. The actor does not smoke or drink. In 2024, during the launch of Dr Shiv K Sarin's book *Own Your Body: A Doctor's Life-saving Tips in New Delhi*, Sonam Kapoor spoke about her father's disciplined habits. She also credited her mother, Sunita Kapoor, for keeping him on track. "My mother, who has been very, very healthy from the very beginning, my dad would love to indulge sometimes, but my mother kind of controls him like a very good Indian wife," she revealed, as quoted by Firstpost. Anil Kapoor's journey shows that staying fit does not need fancy tricks. It just needs consistency and dedication.

How can obstructive sleep apnea be life-threatening if left untreated?



Often dismissed as "just loud snoring," Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is emerging as one of the most underdiagnosed yet dangerous sleep disorders in India. Doctors warn that untreated OSA does not just disrupt sleep, it quietly damages the heart, brain and metabolism, and in severe cases, may even lead to sudden death during sleep. Speaking to this correspondent, Dr. Loveleen Mangla, Senior Consultant and Head of Respiratory, Critical Care & Sleep Medicine at Metro Hospital, Faridabad, explained that OSA is far more serious than most people realise. "Obstructive sleep apnea is the most common sleep-related breathing disorder. It is characterised by repeated episodes of partial or complete blockage of the upper airway

during sleep, leading to pauses in breathing and a drop in oxygen levels," Dr. Mangla said.

WHY OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA HAPPENS

OSA occurs when the muscles of the throat relax excessively during sleep, causing the airway to collapse. According to Dr. Mangla, several anatomical and lifestyle factors play a role. "The main causes include excess weight around the neck, narrow airways and lifestyle habits like alcohol consumption," she explained. Medical evidence shows that fat deposits around the upper airway can narrow the breathing passage, while alcohol further relaxes throat muscles, worsening airway obstruction, especially at night.

SYMPTOMS THAT DIFFER

BETWEEN NIGHT AND DAY

One reason OSA often goes undiagnosed is that its symptoms vary between night-time and daytime, and patients are frequently unaware of what happens while they sleep. "Night-time symptoms include loud snoring, breathing pauses noticed by others, and gasping or choking awakenings. Restless sleep, frequent awakenings and night sweats are also common," Dr.

Mangla said. Daytime symptoms, however, often affect daily functioning and quality of life. "Excessive daytime sleepiness, morning headaches, dry mouth or sore throat on waking, and difficulty concentrating are typical daytime complaints," she added. Experts note that chronic sleep deprivation caused by repeated oxygen drops can impair memory, reaction time and work performance, increasing the risk

of road and workplace accidents.

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

OSA can affect anyone, but certain groups are significantly more vulnerable. "Middle-aged and older individuals are at higher risk. Obesity, especially a BMI over 30, excess neck fat that narrows the airway, family history, smokin, current or former, and anatomical traits like a large neck circumference all increase susceptibility," Dr. Mangla said.

Inside India's wellness reset – the trends that will shape 2026

The health reset that began in India after COVID-19 is no longer just about avoiding illness. It has quietly evolved into something deeper and more intentional. As we enter the second quarter of the century, well-being is being redefined—not as an occasional goal, but as a daily practice. In 2026, the conversation around health is likely to shift yet again. This time, the focus won't only be on how we eat or how much we exercise, but on how deliberately we rest our bodies, how precisely we correct micronutrient deficiencies, and how open we are to emerging science-led interventions like peptides and NAD+. What we're seeing is a move from generic wellness advice to targeted, personalised health strategies. And this shift is happening not just in elite circles, but increasingly in mainstream

India. So what are the trends that are likely to dominate the well-being conversation in 2026? Let's have a closer look.

PEPTIDES TAKE CENTRESTAGE

If there's one word that keeps popping up in global wellness conversations right now, it's peptides. Most people are already familiar with GLP-1 therapies—medications originally developed for diabetes management that are now widely used for weight loss. These include drugs like semaglutide and tirzepatide, which have gone from niche prescriptions to household names in record time. But GLP-1s are just one small part of a much larger peptide story. So what exactly are peptides? At their core, peptides are short chains of amino acids—the same building blocks that make up proteins.

Fitness Coach Who Lost 7 Kg in 40 Days Shares 5 Easy Home Workouts

Weight loss often seems confusing. There are fancy workouts, strict diets, and endless advice coming from every direction. But the truth is simple – consistency matters more than complexity. You do not always need a gym or heavy equipment to burn fat. Sometimes, a basic stepper can do the job if done right and regularly. Stepper/stair workouts are popular for a reason. They raise your heart rate quickly, work your legs and core, and burn calories fast. They also fit easily into daily life. That is exactly what fitness content creator Diya showed in her recent Instagram post. Diya, who lost 7 kgs in 40 days, shared her stairs or stepper workout consisting of five exercises. In the video, she can be seen performing each move



and clearly mentioning the repetitions and sets. Here is a simple breakdown of what Diya did and how you can follow it:

1. Side To Side Steps (30 Reps, 3 Sets)

Stand facing the stepper or stairs. Step one foot up to the side, then bring it down. Switch sides with each repetition. Keep your core tight and chest upright.

2. Up Down Jump (20 Reps, 3 Sets)

Start with both feet on the ground. Jump up onto the step with both feet together. Then jump back down softly. Land gently to protect your knees.

3. Walk Up Down (30 Reps, 3 Sets)

Step one foot up, bring the other foot up, then step back down in the same order. Alternate the lead foot after every few reps.

4. Cross Jumping (20 Reps, 3 Sets)

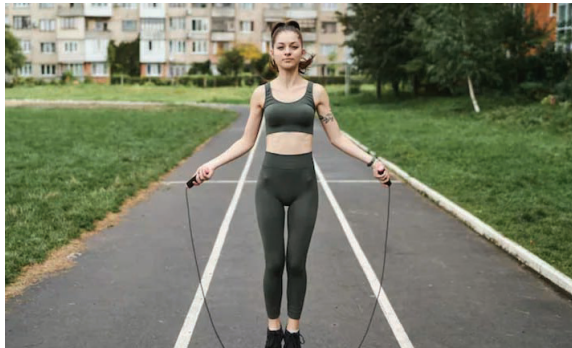
Stand beside the step. Jump sideways onto it while crossing one leg over the other. Jump back down and switch sides.

5. Jumping Squats (15 Reps, 3 Sets)

Stand on the step with feet shoulder-width apart. Lower into a squat and jump up. Land softly back into a squat position.

Diya's workout proves that simple moves, done with discipline, can lead to real results. You do not need perfection. Just start, stay consistent, and let your body do the rest.

Fitness Coach Shares 3 Jumping Exercises To Lose 4-5 Kg Weight



Weight loss does not always need fancy gym machines or complicated workout plans. Many people struggle to stay consistent simply because workouts feel too long, too hard, or too confusing. The truth is, simple movements done the right way can bring real results. Especially for those who want to lose a few kilos, build stamina, and stay active without spending hours exercising. That is exactly the idea behind an Instagram video shared by fitness coach Neha. In the clip, she talks about losing around 4 to 5 kilos by doing just three simple exercises. No equipment. No heavy weights. Just bodyweight movements. She keeps it realistic and beginner-friendly.

In the video, Neha performs three exercises – half jack with butt kicks, standing oblique crunches, and single-leg jumps with under-knee claps. The fitness suggests doing 30 repetitions of each movement for 3 sets. Wrapping it up, she motivates viewers by saying, "So start these 3 exercises from today."

If you want to follow this routine, here is how you can do each exercise properly:

1. Half Jack With Butt Kicks
This move is a fun twist on regular jumping jacks. Start by standing straight with your feet together. Jump slightly and kick one heel towards your glutes. Switch legs with each jump. Keep your core tight and land softly.

2. Standing Oblique

Crunches

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Place your hands behind your head or keep them near your ears. Lift your right knee up and crunch your right elbow down towards it by bending sideways. Return to the

starting position and repeat on the other side. Keep the movement controlled.

3. Single-Leg Jumps With Under-Knee Claps

Stand on one leg and lift the other knee up in front of you. Jump slightly on the standing leg

and clap your hands under the lifted knee. Land gently and repeat before switching legs. This routine can be done anywhere and takes very little time. Just remember to warm up before starting and stretch once you are done.

5 Sleeping Mistakes To Avoid: Frequent Naps, Sleep Schedule, Disturbed Sleep Needs And More

Doomscrolling problems: Blue light from computers, smartphones, and televisions suppresses the production of melatonin, which can delay sleep. For instance, doomscrolling can divert your attention, which prolongs REM sleep, keeps you awake, and stimulates your brain. Your brain can actually keep you awake for hours after your typical bedtime when it's working hard, per the Cleveland Clinic. But using a phone is not the only thing that can interfere with your sleep. What matters more is how you use technology, such as actively using your phone. Long and frequent naps might interfere with sleep, but short naps can increase productivity. Experts advise limiting naps to thirty minutes. Longer naps later in the day might have a detrimental effect on the length and quality of your sleep. Short naps can be revitalising and restorative, particularly if you are sleep-deprived. Timing is one of the most important factors in napping well. A 30-minute snooze is ideal for most people, per Sleep Foundation. Sleep schedule The general quality of sleep is impacted by

irregular sleep schedules. Set your sleep-wake schedule for the same times each day. According to a recent study, the body's metabolism, which regulates how we operate and consume energy, can be adversely affected by irregular sleeping habits, including catch-up sleep. Additionally, it increases our risk of developing long-term conditions like diabetes, reports the NIH magazine. Disturbed sleep needs Adults typically require seven to nine hours of sleep, according to the Mayo Clinic. Individual differences exist in sleep requirements, nevertheless. While eating too much right before bed might result in pain and indigestion, eating too little can make you feel hungry, which can also disrupt sleep. Overeating might affect sleep as well. Eating too much, especially heavy or spicy foods, can cause digestive problems and raise the risk of heartburn, which can interfere with sleep. The majority of experts advise against eating too much or too soon before bed because of this, according to the Sleep Foundation.

These Indian billionaires added the most wealth in 2025

The year 2025 was not just a strong one for precious metals. It was also a period when the wealth of India's richest people moved sharply, with some billionaires adding large sums to their fortunes while others saw their net worth fall. India's billionaire club saw clear winners and losers in 2025. At the top, wealth rose fast for those linked to strong stock market rallies and steady business performance. At the same time, some well-known names faced pressure due to weak share prices in sectors like IT, real estate and pharmaceuticals. Data from the Bloomberg Billionaires Index shows how sharply fortunes changed over the year.

THE BIGGEST WEALTH GAINER OF 2025

According to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, Mukesh Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Industries was the biggest wealth gainer among Indian billionaires in 2025. Ambani added \$16.50 billion to his net worth during the year. This jump came as shares of Reliance Industries, India's largest listed company by market value, rose nearly

30%, marking their best performance since 2020. The rise in Reliance's share price was driven by several factors. Refining margins stayed firm, telecom tariffs moved higher, and the retail business continued to show steady growth. Investors also reacted positively to expectations of future value unlocking from different parts of the group. Together, these factors pushed Ambani's wealth sharply higher over the year.

LAKSHMI MITTAL AND SUNIL MITTAL SEE STRONG GAINS

Close behind Ambani was Lakshmi Mittal, chairman of global steel giant ArcelorMittal. His net worth rose by nearly \$12 billion in 2025, taking his total wealth to around \$31 billion. Mittal is currently ranked around the 70th richest person in the world. The gains came as global steel markets improved and investor interest returned to large metal producers. Sunil Mittal, founder of Bharti Enterprises, also saw his wealth rise sharply. His net worth increased by about \$6 billion

to \$29 billion in 2025. Bharti Airtel shares gained around 31% during the year. The telecom major also reported a strong jump in earnings, with consolidated Q2 net profit rising 89% year-on-year to Rs 6,792 crore. Strong subscriber additions and better pricing helped support the stock.

ADANI, BIRLA AND KOTAK ADD TO THEIR FORTUNES

Gautam Adani, Chairman of Adani Group, added around \$5.9 billion to his wealth in 2025, taking his net worth to about \$84 billion. A key reason behind the recovery was improved investor confidence after the market regulator Sebi gave a clean chit to the Adani Group in the Hindenburg case. Adani continues to remain the second-richest Indian, behind Mukesh Ambani. Kumar Mangalam Birla, Chairman of the Aditya Birla Group, also saw steady gains. With a net worth of about \$22 billion, Birla added nearly \$4 billion to his wealth during the year. Another strong gainer was Uday Kotak, founder of Kotak Mahindra Bank. He added more

than \$2 billion to his fortune in 2025, taking his net worth to around \$16 billion. This placed him among the top 10 richest Indians. The gains were supported by the steady performance of Kotak Mahindra Bank and investor trust in the lender's balance sheet. Several other business leaders also featured among the top wealth gainers. These include Vikram Lal, whose wealth is linked to the performance of Eicher Motors, and Nusli Wadia of the Wadia Group, which has interests in FMCG and aviation, including Britannia Industries. Rahul Bhatia, co-founder of IndiGo, India's largest airline by market share, also made the list as air travel demand stayed strong. Samir Mehta, chairman of the Torrent Group, rounded out the list with a net worth of around \$7 billion.

BIGGEST WEALTH DECLINE IN 2025

While many gained, some of India's richest saw their wealth decline. At the top of the laggards list is Shiv Nadar, founder and chairman of HCL Technologies.



AMERICA'S DEADLIEST SHOOTINGS ARE ONES WE DON'T TALK ABOUT

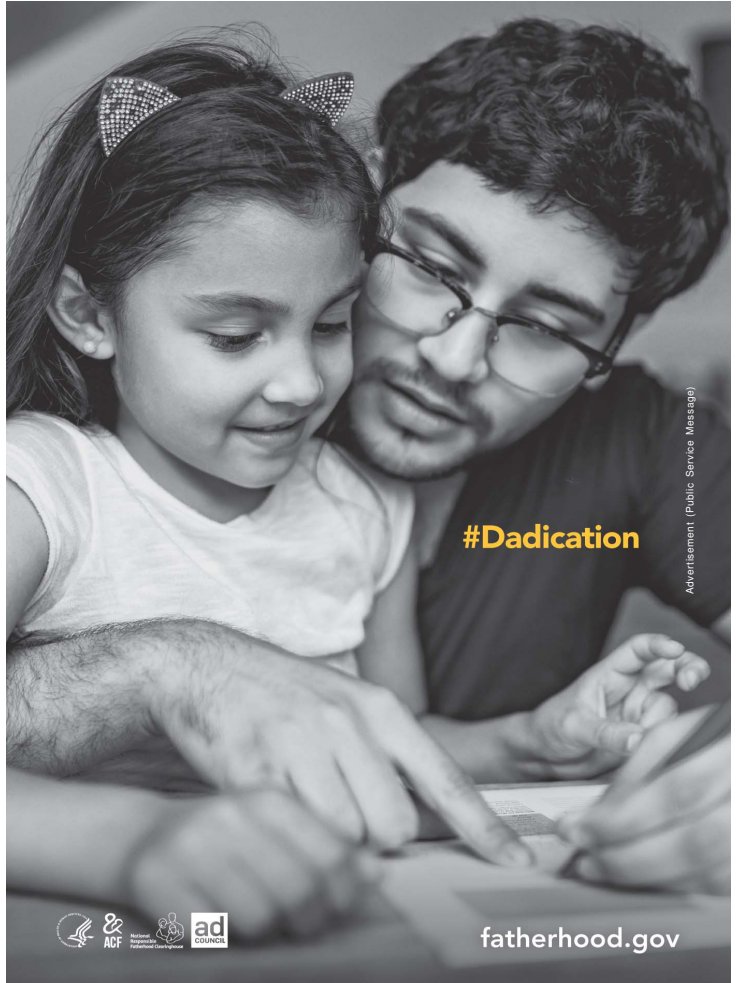
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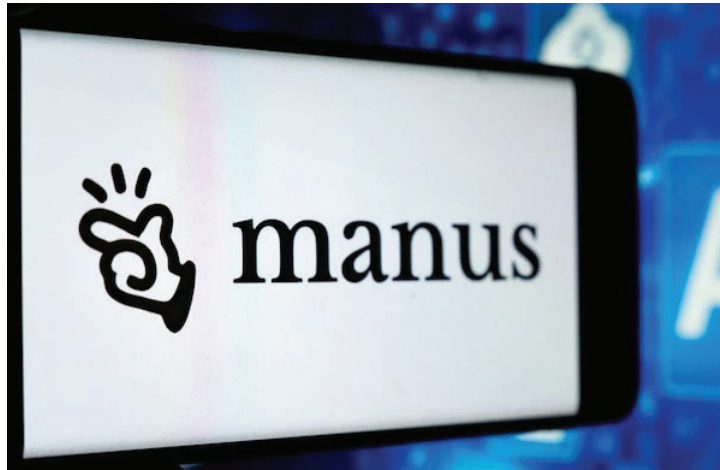
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What is Manus AI and why is Meta buying it: Full story in 5 points

Meta's AI ambitions are moving beyond chatbots and image tools into a space where software can independently plan, act, and deliver results. As competition heats up among global tech giants to build smarter and more useful AI systems, Meta has quietly made another strategic move by acquiring Manus, a fast-growing AI start-up that has been drawing attention for its autonomous agents. The deal comes at a time when businesses are looking for AI that can do more than answer questions, and instead handle complex work end-to-end. So what exactly is Manus AI, and why does Meta see it as important to its long-term AI roadmap? Let's find out in 5 five points. What is Manus AI and why is Meta buying it: Full story in 5 points



on.

4. A global change and strong backers

Manus has an unusual journey. It began as part of a Chinese start-up called Butterfly Effect, also known as Monica.Im, before becoming a separate company and moving its headquarters to Singapore to focus on global expansion. The firm raised \$75 million in a Series B round led by Benchmark and is backed by big names like Tencent and HongShan Capital Group. It has also partnered with Alibaba's Qwen AI team, showing its deep links with Chinese tech players even after relocating.

5. What changes and what doesn't after the deal

Meta says Manus will continue running its subscription service without disruption, and its employees will now join Meta's AI teams. Manus CEO Xiao Hong said joining Meta gives the company a more stable base without altering how the product works or how decisions are made. For Meta, the acquisition adds proven AI-agent technology and talent, strengthening its push in areas like Llama models, AI-powered devices, and business automation.

1. Meta's latest AI buy fits a bigger plan

Meta has quietly added another AI start-up to its growing portfolio by acquiring Manus, a company known for building general-purpose AI agents. The deal is part of Meta's broader push to speed up AI development across its consumer apps and business tools, including the Meta AI assistant. While financial details were not shared, Meta made it clear the focus is on scaling advanced automation for real-world

use.

2. What exactly is Manus AI

Manus develops AI agents designed to handle complex, multi-step tasks that usually need human input. These agents can carry out market research, write and debug code, and analyse large datasets on their own. Manus first made headlines earlier this year when it launched its flagship AI agent and claimed it could outperform OpenAI's DeepResearch in certain tasks, helping it gain rapid attention

in the global AI space.

3. Rapid growth caught Meta's attention

Despite being a young company, Manus reported striking growth numbers. It said its annualised average revenue crossed \$100 million within eight months of launch, with a revenue run rate of over \$125 million. The platform already serves millions of users and businesses globally through free and paid subscriptions, something Meta clearly sees as a strong foundation to build

Satya Nadella channels Steve Jobs, says in 2026 AI must boost humans and not replace them at work



Artificial Intelligence (AI) was the talk of the town in 2025 and it will likely continue to be the most discussed topic in the tech space next year. But Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella believes that AI must be better integrated in 2026 to facilitate human productivity instead of replacing them. Nadella took inspiration from Apple cofounder, the late Steve Jobs by using the former's phrase, "bicycles for the mind." Satya Nadella draws inspiration from Steve

Jobs In a year-end message, Satya Nadella called for a shift in how artificial intelligence is integrated into daily life and the workplace. The Microsoft CEO asserted that in 2026, AI must empower rather than replace people. His message draws on the concept of technology as a "bicycle for the mind," originally coined by Steve Jobs. Steve Jobs had originally called computers the bicycle for the mind, as computers substantially boosted

human intellectual capabilities, similar to how bicycles made it easier for us to travel. Now Satya Nadella wants AI to be the next bicycle for the mind. Nadella wrote, "A new concept that evolves 'bicycles for the mind' such that we always think of AI as a scaffolding for human potential vs a substitute." Satya Nadella hinted that it was important to ensure that the developments made in AI help in bringing more productivity from humans, rather than replacing them in the workplace. His comments come at a time when major tech companies, including Microsoft have laid off thousands of workers to prepare for a more AI-ready future.

Satya Nadella believes we need to equip people with more AI tools

Satya Nadella observed that the industry has moved beyond the initial phase of AI discovery, entering a stage where widespread diffusion is beginning to separate spectacle from substance. He highlighted the unpredictability of this technological marathon, stating, "We are beginning to distinguish between 'spectacle' and 'substance'. We now have a clearer sense of where the tech is headed, but also the harder and more

important question of how to shape its impact on the world." He called for the development of a new equilibrium in how society understands the role of AI and cognitive tools, emphasising the need to move past debates on technical sophistication. According to the Microsoft chief, it was time to focus on equipping people with the tools they need for collaboration and achievement with AI.

Tech industry needs to evaluate AI's real-world impact

The Microsoft CEO further stressed the need for responsible deployment and diffusion of AI, remarking, "We need to make deliberate choices on how we diffuse this technology in the world as a solution to the challenges of people and planet." He added, "For AI to have societal permission, it must have real-world eval impact." According to Nadella, this includes how scarce energy, computing, and talent resources are deployed when it comes to the development of AI. Running artificial intelligence models is not cheap, with billions of dollars' worth of GPUs needed. Earlier this month, Microsoft announced a new \$23 billion investment in India for data centres.



Avatar Fire and Ash becomes 2025's biggest Hollywood hit in India, tops F1

Avatar: Fire and Ash box office Week 1 report: James Cameron's film has become the biggest Hollywood grosser of 2025 in India, surpassing F1 in just seven days.

James Cameron's Avatar: sci-fi epic grossed approximately Rs 116.50 crore by Wednesday and added around Rs 15 crore on Thursday, taking its first-week total to about Rs 131 crore gross. The Brad Pitt starrer F1, which released earlier this year, had grossed around Rs 129 crore, making it the highest-grossing foreign film of 2025 in India until now. The third instalment in the Avatar franchise opened to an underwhelming response at the box office in India -- Rs 23 crore. Apart from mixed reviews, one of the key reasons for the muted opening was the extraordinary run of Dhurandhar, which continues to draw packed theatres even in its third week. Despite the Dhurandhar wave, Avatar: Fire and Ash has remained steady, largely due to the franchise's loyal audience base. The film is now eyeing the Rs 200 crore gross mark in its second week, though it remains to be seen how far its theatrical run in India will go. Globally, the film has edged close to the \$400 million mark. In India, it crossed the Rs 100 crore milestone by the end of its first week, finishing at approximately Rs 109 crore nett.

Avengers Doomsday teaser: Chris Hemsworth's God of Thunder, invokes Odin before war

Chris Hemsworth is set to return as the God of Thunder, Thor in Marvel's Avengers: Doomsday: The film also features actor Chris Evans in a pivotal role.

Actor Chris Hemsworth is all set to return in Avengers: Doomsday as the God of Thunder, Thor. The actor is seen dressed in his superhero appearance, praying to his father, Odin for the final war. In the new teaser of Avengers: Doomsday, Hemsworth says, "Father, all my life I've answered every call, to honour, duty, to war. But now fate has given me something I never sought: a child, a life untouched by the storm. Lend me the strength of the All Fathers so that I may fight once more, defeat one more enemy, and return home to her — and not as a warrior but as warmth, to teach her not battle but stillness, the kind I never knew. Please, father. Hear my words." Prior to Hemsworth, actor Chris Evans was confirmed in an earlier teaser of



Avengers: Doomsday, in which he returns as Steve Rogers aka Captain America. The film is directed by Joe Russo and

successful outings. The film reportedly brings together two Avengers teams, one led by Anthony Mackie's Captain America and another comprising the New Avengers. Marvel has confirmed that Avengers: Doomsday will release in theatres on December 18, 2026, followed by Avengers: Secret Wars on December 17, 2027. Ahead of these releases, Avengers: Endgame will return to cinemas in September 2026, giving fans a chance to revisit the franchise's defining moment before the next phase begins. Recently, actor Tom Hiddleston also opened up on Loki's return in the upcoming superhero film. In an interview with GQ, he said, "It is monumental. The centre of the story is absolutely brilliant and was so surprising when I read it. It just has never been done before."

Tara Sutaria calls out alleged paid negative PR campaign against her and AP Dhillon



Actor Tara Sutaria has addressed allegations of a paid negative PR campaign aimed at damaging her reputation and personal life. On Wednesday, the actor shared a video posted by influencer Tanisha Malara, who claimed she was approached to participate in a coordinated smear campaign against Sutaria and singer AP Dhillon. Sharing the video on her social media, Tara directly accused unnamed parties

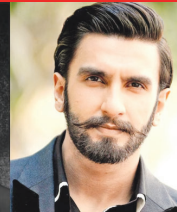
of attempting to malign her image through organised online attacks. "Thank you @tanisha__malara for speaking up and sharing how this is PAID PR and done to malign my reputation," Tara wrote. She further alleged that structured talking points and derogatory captions were circulated to content creators and meme pages with the intention of harming her career and relationship. "Disgusting that they've made a list of derogatory

captions and talking points to send to hundreds of content creators and thousands of meme pages All to ruin my career and relationship???" she added, concluding her note by stating that such attempts would not succeed. Tara's boyfriend, Veer Pahariya commented on the post and wrote, "Always with you," accompanied with an evil eye emoji. Dhillon also reacted to the post and wrote, "Against AP

Dhillon (laughing and bicep emojis)." In the video reshared by Tara, influencer Tanisha Malara claims she was offered money to defame the actor under the guise of content creation. According to Tanisha, influencers were allegedly provided with a fixed list of talking points and comments that were required to be included in videos and comment sections. She stated that these comments appeared repeatedly under viral

Hrithik Roshan in talks to lead Don 3 after Ranveer Singh's exit: Report

Hrithik Roshan is reportedly being considered as the new lead of Don 3 following Ranveer Singh's reported exit from the film. According to industry buzz, the makers are exploring the possibility of bringing Hrithik on board to take forward the iconic franchise. The idea of Hrithik stepping into the Don universe isn't entirely new for fans. Many will recall his stylish cameo in Don 2, where Shah Rukh Khan's character used advanced technology to disguise himself as Hrithik during a crucial heist sequence.



While it is still unclear if Farhan Akhtar and his team plan to connect that moment to the new storyline, the possibility has certainly fuelled excitement among audiences. According to a source quoted by Filmfare, the makers are actively considering Hrithik Roshan as a strong option to lead the franchise forward. "Following Ranveer's exit, Hrithik has emerged as a strong contender for the role. While discussions are still at a very early stage, it will be interesting to see

whether Hrithik ultimately comes on board," the source revealed. The pressure surrounding Don 3 is understandably high. The franchise carries a powerful legacy, having been led by Amitabh Bachchan in the

1978 original and later redefined by Shah Rukh Khan in the 2006 and 2011 films. The makers are reportedly keen on choosing someone with proven stardom and a solid body of work to live up to that legacy. Reports suggest that the search for a new lead began

after Ranveer Singh moved on from the project following the massive success of Dhurandhar. While there has been no official confirmation from either the actor or the makers, it is believed that Ranveer is now focusing on Jai Mehta's upcoming film Pralay. As speculation continues, all eyes are now on whether Hrithik Roshan will officially step into the role or if the makers will surprise audiences by introducing a completely new face to carry the Don legacy forward.

Bobby Deol honours Dharmendra at Ikkis screening, wears late father's iconic shirt

Actor Bobby Deol paid an emotional tribute to his birth anniversary on December 8, 2025, he had written an emotional post. Dharmendra died at the age of 89 in Mumbai. The actor was admitted to the Breach Candy Hospital with respiratory issues earlier this month. He last appeared on-screen in the 2024 rom-com, Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya, starring Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon. The late actor will next be seen in Sriram Raghavan's Ikkis, in which he portrays actor Agastya Nanda's grandfather. The movie narrates the story of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal,



India's youngest Param Vir Chakra recipient. Agastya, who previously appeared in The Archies in 2023, plays the

central character in his first major theatrical film. The film depicts Arun's journey through military training, personal

challenges, and significant moments with his family. Ikkis is set for a theatrical release on January 1, 2026.

Why Egg Shakshuka Is The Best Winter Breakfast, Reveals Nutritionist

As temperatures drop, our bodies naturally crave warm, comforting and nutritious meals to start the day. If you are bored with the usual eggs and toast, here is a flavourful and wholesome egg recipe that is gaining popularity for its impressive health benefits. Nutritionist Arjita Singh reveals why egg shakshuka is the perfect winter breakfast, packed with protein, vitamins and minerals. She shared the North African-inspired recipe on her Instagram handle. The side note reads, "Easy, comforting, one-pan, and honestly one of the healthiest breakfasts you can make: our go-to shakshuka and by now I have made so many versions of this! This is the most basic one."

Recipe

Nutritionist Arjita Singh shared a detailed recipe in her caption:

1. Add butter to a pan.
2. Using an electric chopper, finely chop onion, garlic, and green chilli and add them to the pan.
3. Let it cook till fragrant.
4. Add chopped red bell pepper,



cook for a bit, then add chopped tomatoes.

5. Season with salt, pepper, and red chilli powder.
6. Let everything cook down for 5–10 minutes until soft and saucy.

7. Make small wells in the same pan, crack in the eggs, cover, and let them cook.
8. Cook longer if you like well-done eggs, shorter if you prefer a runny

yolk. 9. Finish with fresh green garlic on top. You can add chilli flakes, oregano or seasoning of choice.

Benefits

According to nutritionist Arjita Singh, the benefits of egg shakshuka are as follows: Eggs provide high-quality protein, keeping you full and supporting fat loss. Tomatoes and bell peppers are rich in antioxidants and vitamin C, which

are great for immunity and skin health. Onion and garlic support gut health and digestion. Chillies boost metabolism and add flavour without extra calories. A little butter helps with nutrient absorption and adds satiety. Overall, egg shakshuka is a high-protein, high-fibre, gut-friendly, warming and deeply satisfying dish. It is perfect for a healthy and comforting breakfast. Pair it with a good sourdough, and you have the best winter breakfast ever.

Shakshuka – Origin and History

Shakshuka is a dish of eggs poached in a spiced tomato and pepper sauce. Originating in North Africa, the dish's name means "a mixture" in Arabic/Maghrebi dialect. It evolved from Berber stews after tomatoes arrived from the New World. Over time, it spread through migration and Ottoman influence, becoming a staple across the Middle East. The recipe is also related to other Mediterranean egg dishes like Turkish menemen.

5 Foods To Eat On Empty Stomach For Weight Loss, As Per A Fitness Coach

An unsweetened amla shot on an empty stomach can be beneficial for weight loss because it can boost metabolism, improve digestion, and control appetite



Starting your day with the right foods can have a profound impact on your weight-loss journey. When consumed on an empty stomach, certain foods can help jump-start your metabolism, suppress appetite and provide essential nutrients to fuel your body. Incorporating these foods into your morning routine can help set you up for success and support steady progress towards

your weight-loss goals. Fitness expert Neha Parihar shares five foods that can help you achieve a healthier and slimmer you when eaten on an empty stomach. In a post shared on Instagram, she writes, "Let's be honest. Most year-end weight gain doesn't happen because you 'overate once.' It happens because mornings go wrong ? cravings spike ? energy

crashes ? fat storage stays ON. If your goal is faster fat loss + flatter belly in the next few weeks, this is what your empty stomach should look like."

1. Soaked Almonds / Walnuts

The fitness coach recommends starting your day with soaked almonds and walnuts for weight loss. They are packed with protein, fibre and healthy fats that boost metabolism. These nuts help reduce mid-morning cravings and provide sustained energy for long hours.

2. Amla Shot (Unsweetened)

An unsweetened amla shot on an empty stomach can be beneficial for weight loss. It helps with weight management by boosting metabolism, improving digestion and controlling appetite.

3. Brazil Nut

Brazil nuts are rich in selenium, protein, fibre and healthy fats, making them great for metabolism and satiety. They also support

thyroid function, balance hormones and provide antioxidants. Pair them with water or other healthy options like soaked almonds for a powerful morning start.

4. Warm Turmeric + Black Pepper Water

Drinking warm water with turmeric and black pepper on an empty stomach is a popular wellness practice for supporting weight loss. It may enhance metabolic health and improve body composition when paired with a healthy lifestyle.

5. Chia Seed Water

Drinking chia seed water on an empty stomach is a simple yet effective tool for weight management. It does not directly burn fat but acts as a powerful appetite suppressant and digestive aid that supports a calorie deficit. The fitness expert recommends following this morning routine consistently, along with structured meals, simple at-home workouts, and daily accountability for the next 30–90 days.

India's Bandar Apna Dost Tops Global AI Video Charts With Rs 38 Crore Earnings: Report

A recent global study on AI-generated content on YouTube has revealed that the most-viewed channel of its kind is based in India and earns an estimated \$4.25 million (approximately Rs 38 crore) per year. The report, published by video-editing platform Kapwing, analysed 15,000 of the world's most popular YouTube channels and identified hundreds that consist entirely of AI-generated, low-quality "AI slop" content, videos created by artificial intelligence with minimal human input, often designed to maximise views rather than deliver meaningful storytelling. According to the report, 278 channels consist wholly of AI slop, and collectively they have amassed over 63 billion views and 221 million subscribers, marking a significant new frontier in online content creation. The most-viewed AI



slop channel identified in the study is Bandar Apna Dost, which features animated shorts depicting an anthropomorphic rhesus monkey and a muscular, Hulk-like character in humorous

and absurd scenarios. The channel has attracted more than 2.07 billion views and over 2.76 million subscribers, and its growth illustrates how cheaply produced AI content can achieve

massive reach. Rohini Lakshane, a researcher on technology and digital rights, told The Guardian, Bandar Apna Dost's popularity most likely stems from its absurdity, its

hyper-masculine tropes and the fact that it lacks a plot, which makes it accessible to new viewers. Kapwing's analysis also found that AI-generated videos make up a significant portion of what users see on YouTube, with over 20 percent of recommended content for new users classified as AI slop, raising questions about content quality on the platform. Researchers and industry observers have raised concerns that such mass-produced content may overshadow more thoughtful, creator-driven videos, as algorithmic recommendation systems continue to prioritise watch time and engagement over originality. Nonetheless, the success of channels like Bandar Apna Dost shows the potential for automated content to generate substantial audience interest and revenue on a global scale.

Salman Khan's 'Battle Of Galwan' Angers China. A Look Back At 2020 Clash

The deadly clash at Galwan between Indian and Chinese troops five years ago is still a sore point that stings from time to time. Like now, when a movie has been made on it. China has vehemently objected to what it called "misrepresentation of facts". India has retorted with "artistic license". Behind the artistic freedom, though, are chilling facts -- a pitched battle in the pitch dark in sub-zero temperature that involved batons and nailed clubs and led to many deaths: 20 from India, four from China, though Indian army sources have indicated that the actual Chinese casualty count is likely to be higher. The fallout was a chill in bilateral relations between India and China that is still not 100 per cent normal. It all started on June 15, 2020, when a small band of Indian troops moved to remove a Chinese tent in the Galwan river valley -- an area 15,000 feet above the sea level on the Karakoram range, located in

Ladakh, near the Line of Actual Control. China had agreed to remove the tent after talks that took place on June 6 and create a buffer zone. But a fight broke out after the Chinese soldiers targeted the Indian Colonel, BL Santosh Babu. Reinforcements were called in by both sides and the clash escalated. By the time it ended -- after nearly six hours -- around 40 Chinese soldiers were dead. India lost 20 bravehearts. Several Indian and Chinese soldiers had fallen into the Galwan river and the resulting hypothermia proved fatal. China though, said only four soldiers had died and of them, only one, Junior Sergeant Wang Zhuoran, had drowned. An accurate number was never arrived at. More than two years later, an Australian investigative newspaper "The Klaxon" reported that "at least 38 PLA (People's Liberation Army) troops along with Wang were washed away and drowned that night... of whom only Wang was declared among the four officially dead soldiers". Citing "several



Weibo users" as its sources, it said the Chinese soldiers had fallen into the river while attempting to cross it in the first minutes of the fight. What followed was a stern face-off, contradictory statements from China and years of chill that had only recently started thawing. India said the clash arose from "an attempt by the Chinese side to unilaterally change the status quo" on the border. Beijing

pointed fingers at the Indian troops. There was controversy over the number of dead as well. New Delhi officially acknowledged that it lost 20 soldiers while Beijing initially denied any casualties. Later, it claimed it lost just four soldiers. This time, an article in China's state-run newspaper, Global Times, alleged that Galwan Valley is located on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control. It also

placed the responsibility of the June 2020 clashes on India, claiming that Indian troops crossed over the LAC and provoked a fight. "The Bollywood films at most provide an entertainment-driven, emotionally charged portrayal, but no amount of cinematic exaggeration can rewrite the history or shake the PLA's determination to defend China's sovereign territory," the article read.

A New Year Message from The South Asian Insider Weekly

To our valued readers, partners, and the global South Asian diaspora,

As the sun sets on a historic 2025 and rises over the promise of 2026, all of us at The South Asian Insider Weekly wish you a year filled with prosperity, peace, and purpose.

Around the world, the South Asian community continues to redefine the global landscape. Whether it was celebrating the historic inauguration of Zohran Mamdani as New York City's mayor or witnessing the unprecedented rise of South Asian innovation in AI and tech, 2025 showed us that our voices are louder and more influential than ever before.

In the coming year, we remain committed to being your most trusted source for the stories that matter—bridging the gap between our roots and our future. May your 2026 be a chapter of breakthrough successes, cultural pride, and unwavering community spirit.



Happy New Year!



Happy New Year 2026

JANUARY

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