



'The Winds of Guardians' at IAF 2026

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A4H launches Arizona State Chapter

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Huma Qureshi shares her 'best beauty hack'

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US HAILS INDIA TRADE DEAL

US hails India trade deal, \$500 billion investment pledge

WASHINGTON: The White House hailed a new trade agreement with India, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi has committed to ending purchases of Russian oil, buying energy from the United States, and investing \$500 billion across key American sectors.

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"India committed to not only no longer purchasing

Russian oil, but buying oil from the United States, also perhaps from Venezuela too, which will now have a direct benefit on the US and American people," Leavitt told reporters at the White House.

She said the Indian prime minister had also committed to large-scale investments in the United States. "PM Modi committed to an investment of \$500 billion into the United States, including energy, transportation, and agricultural products," she said.

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Thanedar's 2026 election race with \$6.4m cash

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Baloch fighters capture another Pak Army camp

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US RALLIES HIGHLIGHT VIOLENCE AGAINST HINDUS IN BANGLADESH



LOS ANGELES, CA: Thousands of Hindus across twenty five Pan-American cities demonstrated against the targeted killings of Hindus in Bangladesh in a nationwide humanitarian rally held on Saturday, January 31st, 2026.

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BAPS Sets Guinness World Record

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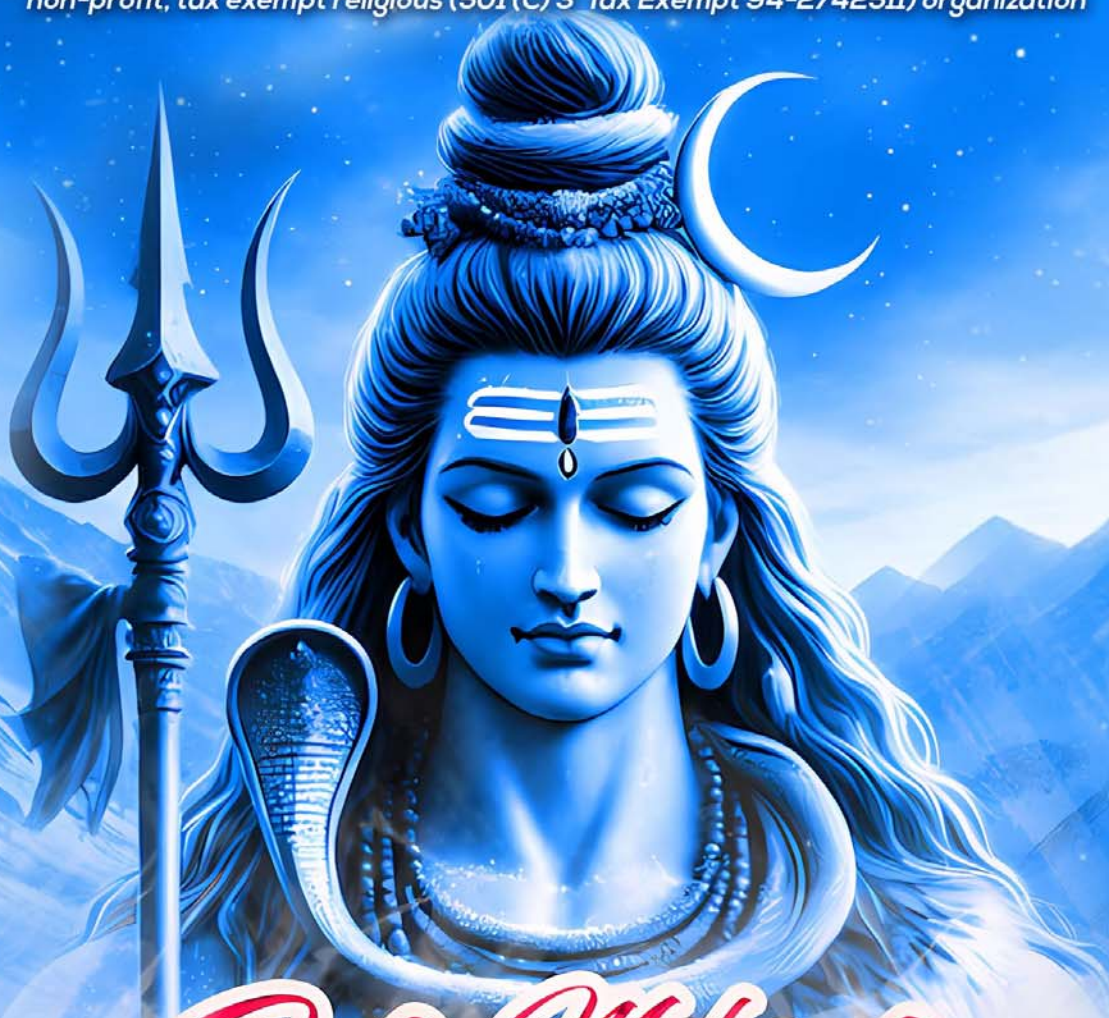
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WASHINGTON: The White House hailed a new trade agreement with India, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi has committed to ending purchases of Russian oil, buying energy from the United States, and investing \$500 billion across key American sectors.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said the agreement announced by President Donald Trump a day earlier would bring direct benefits to the US economy and American consumers.

"India committed to not only no longer purchasing Russian oil, but buying oil from the United States, also perhaps from Venezuela too, which will now have a direct benefit on the US and American people," Leavitt told reporters at the White House.

She said the Indian prime minister had also committed to large-scale investments in the United States. "PM Modi committed to an investment of \$500 billion into the United States, including energy, transportation, and agricultural products," she said.

Leavitt described the agreement as a significant achievement for the Trump administration. "As you all saw yesterday, President Trump struck another great trade deal, with India," she said, adding



File photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. President Donald Trump, at The White House in Washington, DC (ANI Photo)

that the deal reflected Washington's push to secure tangible economic gains from major partners.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer told CNBC that the agreement would retain some tariff measures while opening Indian markets in several sectors. "We'll continue to maintain some level of tar-

iff against India," Greer said, according to a statement shared by Rapid Response 47.

At the same time, he said India had agreed to lower trade barriers for American exporters. "They've also agreed to re-

duce their tariffs for us on a variety of agricultural products, manufactured goods, chemicals, medical devices, etc.," Greer said.

Calling the agreement "a very exciting opportunity," Greer said it struck a balance between market access and domestic protections. "On the one hand, we'll continue to maintain some level of tariff against India," he said, "but they've also agreed to reduce their tariffs for us on a variety of agricultural products, manufactured goods, chemicals, medical devices, etc."

Greer also made clear that India would retain safeguards for sensitive farm sectors. "India, like every country in the world, including the United States, has some protection around some certain key areas in agriculture, and they will continue to control that," he said.

The administration has framed the deal as part of President Trump's broader trade strategy aimed at reducing deficits, protecting US workers, and securing new export markets for American producers. IANS

India gains edge over regional export competitors after tariffs drop to 18%, beats China, Bangladesh

NEW DELHI: Following the announcement of the India-US trade deal, in which Washington reduced tariffs on India to 18 percent, New Delhi now faces lower tariffs than its regional export competitors in South and Southeast Asia.

With the new tariff structure, India now has a clear advantage over competing export economies in the region, with lower tariff rates compared to Indonesia at 19 percent and Bangladesh and Vietnam with 20 percent each.

Compared to China, India now enjoys significantly lower tariffs, with tariffs levied on Beijing at 34 percent.

India also enjoys a slight edge over Pakistan, with tariffs on Islamabad currently levied at 19 percent.

Earlier, US President Donald Trump said that US and India "have agreed to a trade deal" with Washington reducing the reciprocal tariff from 25 percent to 18 percent, "out of friendship and respect" for PM

Modi. He further stated that the deal will come "effective immediately".

In his Truth Social post, Trump referred to his conversation with PM Modi earlier in the day, noting that the Prime Minister was one of his closest friends and a powerful, respected leader of India.

The US President also claimed that PM Modi had agreed to "stop buying Russian oil" and to buy much more from the US.

Trump further noted that India would reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers against the US.

"It was an Honor to speak with Prime Minister Modi, of India, this morning. He is one of my greatest friends and, a

Powerful and Respected Leader of his Country. We spoke about many things, including Trade, and ending the War with Russia and Ukraine. He agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela. ANI

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India-US ties imperative to future of peace, prosperity for entire world: US Congressman McCormick after trade deal

WASHINGTON DC: US Congressman and co-chair of the India Caucus, Rich McCormick, has emphasized that the India-US strategic partnership is crucial for global "peace and prosperity" following the recent trade deal announced between the two countries.

Speaking to ANI after Washington agreed to lower tariffs on Indian goods to 18 percent, McCormick highlighted the personal rapport between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump, saying their strong relationship underscores the importance of New Delhi as a key partner for Washington.

He noted India's status as the world's most populous nation, one of the fastest-growing major economies, which is on track to become the third-largest GDP globally in the near future, stating that the collaboration between the world's two largest democracies can help usher in "an era of peace".

McCormick also acknowledged recent misunderstandings on issues such as energy purchases and immigration but said that improvements, including India's transition from buying Russian oil to sourcing from the United States, would "stabilize the world".

"I know that Prime Minister Modi and President Trump have spent time together in the past... I know President Trump is very fond of him and understands what an important influence he is on the world's largest population, on one of the fastest-growing economies, and on what's soon to be the third-largest GDP in the world, probably in the next few years. I want to see India thrive. I think it can

combine the world's largest and oldest democracies. I think we can usher in an era of peace," the Congressman said.

"I think there have been some unfortunate misunderstandings recently, from where you would purchase energy to immigration to just misunderstandings in the general public... I think that as India transitions from buying

Russian oil to the United States, it will once again stabilize the world. These kinds of relationships are imperative to the future of peace and prosperity for the entire world," he added.

His remarks came after Trump said that US and India "have agreed to a trade deal" with Washington reducing the reciprocal tariff from 25 percent to 18 percent "out of friendship and respect" for PM Modi.

In his Truth Social post, Trump referred to his conversation with PM Modi earlier in the day, noting that the Prime Minister was one of his closest friends and a powerful, respected leader of India.

The US President also claimed that PM Modi had agreed to "stop buying Russian oil" and to buy much more from the US, and further noted that India would reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers against the US.

"It was an Honor to speak with Prime Minister Modi, of India, this morning. He is one of my greatest friends and, a Powerful and Respected Leader of his Country. We spoke about many things, including Trade, and ending the War with Russia and Ukraine. He agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela," Trump said in his post. ANI



Congressman and co-chair of the India Caucus, Rich McCormick

Baloch fighters capture another Pakistani Army camp under Operation Herof-2

QUETTA: The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has expanded its control in Balochistan's Nushki district by capturing a Pakistani Army camp in Ahmad Wal area following its earlier takeover of a local base in the Galangur area of the province, local media reported 4 February.

As the second phase of 'Operation Herof' launched by BLA entered its fifth consecutive day, internet and train services and major public events in several parts of the province remained disrupted.

Citing local sources, The Balochistan Post reported that fresh explosions and heavy gunfire erupted late Tuesday night near a Pakistani forces' camp close to the Nushki bus terminal, amid ongoing clashes linked to the BLA's Operation Herof.

According to residents, loud blasts and sustained gunfire were heard across multiple areas of the city, deepening the fear of civilians already confined to their homes.

Furthermore, locals alleged that Pakistani forces are deliberately targeting populated civilian areas, raising serious concerns about potential civilian casualties. However, severe restrictions on movement and communications made independent verifications of claims difficult. IANS

Pakistani court again issues non-bailable warrants for Imran Khan's sister

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Rawalpindi once again issued non-bailable arrest warrants for former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's sister Aleema Khan and her two guarantors for the November 2024 protest, local media reported.

The court also issued a show-cause notice to the Superintendent of Police (SP) Rawal for not executing the non-bailable arrest warrants against Aleema Khan. The court issued non-bailable warrants for two guarantors - Nadeem Bilal and Wahid Mehmood, ordering SP Rawal to arrest and present them before it, Pakistan's leading daily The Express Tribune reported.

The court ordered SP Rawal to be present and give an explanation for not arresting and presenting Aleema Khan despite the clear orders. In addition, the court directed arrest of Aleema Khan and presenting her before it on February 4 without fail, as her application requesting exemption from appearing in the court was rejected.

The case has been filed at Sadiqabad Police Station and is linked to a protest held at D-Chowk in Islamabad on November 24, 2024. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan on November 13, 2024 issued a "final call" for protests on November 24. IANS

India, US likely to issue joint statement on trade agreement this week: Govt sources

NEW DELHI: India and the US are likely to issue a joint statement on the trade agreement this week, according to government sources.

"We are under final stages of detailing with the negotiating team. A joint statement of the India-US trade deal is likely to be issued this week," said the source.

The deal involves reducing reciprocal tariffs from 25% to 18% and eliminating the additional 25% duty on Russian oil imports into India. India has also agreed to increase imports from the US by \$500 billion, covering sectors like energy, technology, agriculture, and defense.

The agreement will boost India's export competitiveness, attract investments, and strengthen economic ties with the US.

Earlier, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that the India-US Trade Agreement brings tremendous opportunity to the country and is the best deal India has received compared to all its neighbors.

Addressing a press conference a day after the India-US trade deal was announced, Goyal said that India's interests have been prioritized.

"We all know that the Prime Minister, leveraging his friendly relationship and close ties with President Trump, has finalized a trade deal with the United States of America that is the best deal India has received compared to all our neighbors, all the surrounding countries, and all the countries that compete with us. This is a great deal for all of us," he said.

The Commerce Minister also said that the sensitive sectors of India's economy, particularly agriculture and dairy, have been protected in the India-US trade deal.

Addressing a press conference here, Piyush Goyal said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always championed the agriculture and dairy sectors, safeguarding their interests and working tirelessly to ensure a bright future and ample opportunities for their workers.

"I am pleased that the entire country understands and appreciates this, and it resonates deeply with them. The sensitive factors of India's economy, particularly agriculture and dairy, have been protected. We have seen reports from across the country; there is widespread enthusiasm," he said.

The trade deal with the United States comes just a week after India signed a landmark agreement with the European Union.

PM Modi spoke with US President Donald Trump and later said it was wonderful to speak with his "dear friend President Trump" and expressed delight that Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18%.

"Wonderful to speak with my dear friend President Trump today. Delighted that Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18%. Big thanks to President Trump on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India for this wonderful announcement," PM Modi said in a post on X. ANI

Social justice key to Viksit Bharat goals: India at UN

NEW DELHI: Social justice is central to India's Viksit Bharat goals, said Minister of State for Women and Child Development Savitri Thakur at the 64th session of the UN Commission for Social Development in New York, US.

Leading the Indian delegation, Thakur highlighted its rights-based, inclusive, and people-centric development approach at the UN discussion.

"Social justice remains central to India's national vision of Viksit Bharat@2047," the Minister said.

Recalling that the Copenhagen Declaration placed people at the heart of development and that the Doha Political Declaration reaffirmed this commitment amid emerging global challenges, the Minister noted that India's governance philosophy of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' reflects a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to ensure dignity, equity, and opportunity for all.

Highlighting India's large-scale social protection and inclusion measures, Thakur shared that over 800 million people are covered under food security programs.

More than 550 million citizens access free healthcare through an extensive network of health and wellness centers.

Further, affordable medicines and medical devices are also provided through 16,000 Jan Arogya Kendras. Over

1.45 million elected women representatives serve in local governance, reflecting India's commitment to grassroots democracy.

Flagship initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Sukanya Samridhi Yojana are strengthening education and financial security for girls.

Labor reforms are promoting equal pay, safe workplaces, and women's workforce participation in the country.

Moreover, large-scale collateral-free loans have enabled millions of women, entrepreneurs, and street vendors to enter the formal economy.

Targeted schemes such as SMILE are supporting the rehabilitation and inclusion of transgender persons and other vulnerable groups.

"India's development journey integrates digital public infrastructure, direct benefit transfers, and citizen participation, ensuring transparency and last-mile delivery," Thakur said.

Reaffirming India's civilizational ethos of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" -- the world is one family -- the Minister expressed India's readiness to strengthen global partnerships and share its development experience to advance social justice worldwide. *IANS*

US Treasury Secy, EAM Jaishankar hold talks on securing supply chains, mutual interests

WASHINGTON DC: United States Secretary of the Treasury, Scott Bessent, held talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar recently and addressed the importance of securing supply chains.

Bessent and Jaishankar also discussed economic security issues of mutual interest.

In a post on X, he said, "Enjoyed today's meeting with Minister S Jaishankar of India. During our talks, we addressed the importance of securing supply chains, as well as other national and economic security issues of mutual interest."

Speaking about the meeting, Jaishankar said, "Pleased to meet US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in Washington DC today. Had a useful discussion on advancement of India - US economic partnership and strategic cooperation."

Jaishankar also held talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and discussed facets of India-US Strategic Partnership.

In a post on X, he said, "Delighted to meet US Secretary of State Marco Rubio this afternoon. A wide-ranging conversation that covered our bilateral cooperation agenda, regional and global issues. *ANI*

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US lawmakers hail India-US trade deal as strategic reset

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers from both parties welcomed the new trade deal between the United States and India, calling it a reset in ties between the world's two largest democracies and a boost for trade, energy security, and geopolitics.

Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said the agreement marked an important shift after a difficult period. "The new US-India trade deal is an important step forward for one of America's most vital partnerships," he told IANS.

Krishnamoorthi said stronger trade with India would help both sides. "Deepening trade with India, a fellow democracy and strategic partner, will support workers, businesses, and innovation in both countries," he said.



Raja Krishnamoorthi

He added that the deal followed a phase when sweeping tariffs had "unnecessarily strain(ed) the relationship and harm(ed) both economies." The agreement, he said, allows both countries to "move past that chapter."

US Senator Steve Daines called the deal a clear win. "Today's agreement is a tremendous step in the right direction, a win for all sides," Daines said, praising President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Daines said India's market access matters for the US economy. "India is the fourth largest economy in the world and increased access to its market will benefit the American economy, including American agriculture," he said. He also pointed to energy ties, saying India's decision to buy oil from the United States instead of Russia sends a strong global signal. He said more work remains on trade imbalances. *IANS*

COMMUNITY ACROSS AMERICA

8 India Post

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February 6, 2026



US rallies highlight violence against Hindus in Bangladesh

LOS ANGELES, CA: Thousands of Hindus across twenty five pan-american cities demonstrated against the targeted killings of Hindus in Bangladesh in a nationwide humanitarian rally held on Saturday, January 31st, 2026.

A major gathering in Artesia, Southern California drew two hundred plus Hindus and multifaith communities. The aim of the rally was to raise awareness about the ongoing and escalating violence against Hindu, Buddhist and Christian minorities in Bangladesh. In 1947, Bangladesh had nearly 34% Hindus-today, they account for under 7% (2021 census).

"Innocent Hindus are being brutally attacked solely for their religious identity. This is not an isolated incident or a chapter of the past-this is a systematic Genocide of Hindus that must be recognized by the world community. Of note, the Bangladeshi Hindu American attendees at the rally said they are very fearful about the survival of Hindus attributed to the ongoing genocide in Bangladesh. Importantly, the complacency of the Bangladesh Government is concerning as it can't effectively address the safety of Hindus and other minorities," said Geeta Sikand, a lead coordinator of the Los Angeles rally and a key coordinator of the national steering committee of the 'Global Coalition for the Protection of Hindus in Bangladesh.

"There is much more that must be done to stop religious persecution, but raising our collective voices is the first-and most immediate-step to recognize this ongoing genocide of



Hindus in Bangladesh. In the past 24 years alone, the world has witnessed over 48,500 terrorist attacks driven by religious hatred. What we are seeing is an ideological war, where extremist religious ideologies fuel violence, persecution, and systematic brutality. The world must confront the root cause of these atrocities and act decisively before it is too late. The root cause is clear: violent extremist religious ideology," said Arun Dutt, a lead coordinator of the rally in Los Angeles.

"Innocent Hindus are being brutally attacked solely for their religious identity. This is not an isolated incident or a chapter of the past-this is a systematic Genocide of Hindus that must be recognized by the world community"

tor of the Los Angeles rally.

"Silence and passiveness only enable genocides. Hindu passiveness in the face of their own genocide should be a matter of grave concern, a dangerous illusion. Hindus must recognize and respond to the existential threats facing their community with urgency and unity," said Dr. Surendra Sharma, a key co-

ordinator of the rally in Los Angeles.

The rally initiative 'Global Coalition for the Protection of Hindus in Bangladesh' reflected unity across communities, faiths, and regions-peaceful voices coming together for justice and humanity. This nationwide multi faith initiative spanned simultaneously across twenty-five cities in the United States, uniting people of all faiths, backgrounds, and communities in a shared call for

peace, protection, and accountability. The rally was strictly peaceful, lawful, and non-political, grounded in universal human rights and humanitarian values.

Participating cities are:

West / Southwest: Albuquerque, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, San Diego
East Coast / Northeast: New

York, Boston, Philadelphia, Connecticut, Washington DC, Princeton, New Jersey

Southeast: Atlanta, Charlotte, Tampa

Midwest: Detroit, Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Dallas, Austin, Houston

How Can You Help

1. Contact your elected Senate and House Representatives to:

a. Highlight the cases of violence against minorities, especially Hindus, in Bangladesh. Cite the cases of victims such as Dipu Chandra Das in your call, email or letters.

b. Request that your representative either support or call for congressional hearings on the violence against minorities in Bangladesh

2. Raise awareness responsibly through social media and community forums, citing bona fide and verifiable sources

3. Consider donating or volunteer for relief to the minorities in Bangladesh via Sewa USA <https://sewausa.org/SupportVictimsHindusUnderAttackinBangladesh>

California expands Data-Driven Road Safety Initiative to save lives; designates Varner Road in Thousand Palms as a priority corridor

Pilot program launched last September aims to reduce severe crashes in high-risk areas; Varner Road follows Avalon Blvd in Los Angeles County as a designated corridor



Secretary Omishakin gathers with stakeholders, and state and local partners to announce Varner Road's designation as a State Priority Safety Corridor

THOUSAND PALMS: California Transportation Secretary Toks Omishakin, Caltrans Director Dina El-Tawansy, California Highway Patrol Commissioner Sean Duryee, California Office of Traffic Safety Director Stephanie Dougherty and other city and state partners today announced Varner Road in Thousand Palms (Riverside County) as the latest priority corridor in conjunction with the state's effort to decrease major crashes in high-risk areas.

The Varner Road safety corridor spans 2.3 miles from slightly north of Bob Hope Drive to just south of Monterey Avenue in the Coachella Valley. This stretch of roadway has experienced 17 fatal/serious injury (FSI) crashes between 2019 and 2023, resulting in four fatalities and 25 serious injuries. The pilot project is designed to implement safety measures that address low-visibility incidents identified in recent collision data. Raised medians, rumble strips, longitudinal striping, upgraded lighting and signage and a reduction in on-street parking represent a few potential safety improvements.

In October 2025, Secretary Omishakin and California Health and Human Services Agency Secretary Kim Johnson signed the Policy on Road Safety, committing California to a prevention-first Safe System Approach to eliminate fatal and serious traffic injuries. The Agency Secretaries shared that Avalon Boulevard would

serve as the first in a small, diverse set of corridors to allow for testing, learning and visible progress towards making roads safer in high-risk thoroughfares in the Golden State. This phased approach is building momentum for statewide expansion, making corridor-based interventions a routine aspect of California's transportation strategy.

"The best road safety initiative is prevention, and the State Priority Safety Corridor initiative will save lives," said Secretary Omishakin. "This data-driven collaboration with state and local government partners will guide us towards the best use

of transportation investments that align with community safety needs."

As part of the initiative, the state for the first time analyzed data from all public roads including state highways, city streets and county roads. The most recent statewide data, from 2023, confirms 3,612 fatalities and 14,392 serious injuries in California on both the State Highway Sys-

tem and local roads. Additional safety corridor locations are still being reviewed.

"This project represents exactly how we reduce severe and fatal crashes by working together and focusing our efforts where the data shows lives are at risk," said CHP Commissioner Sean Duryee. "Through strong collaboration with our state and local partners, this project will improve safety, enhance enforcement and help ensure everyone who travels this corridor gets home safely."

"This proactive effort targets the root causes of serious crashes and makes long-term, tangible investments that sup-

port our goal to deliver proven enhancements designed to save lives and create safer roadways for everyone," said Caltrans Director El-Tawansy.

The initiative brings together infrastructure improvements, public engagement and policy innovation to create safer, more connected corridors and may include:

Safe Crossings and Intersections: Ex-

pect high-visibility markings, upgraded signal timing and intersection designs that reduce conflict points and improve pedestrian safety.

Connected Options: Enhancements will support safe walking, biking and transit access-ensuring mobility for all.

Education and Engagement: The new SLOWCAL campaign will raise awareness and foster community involvement through outreach and education.

Law Enforcement Partnerships: Where desired by communities, law enforcement will play a supportive role shaped by local priorities.

Speed Management: Measures include speed safety cameras and other tools to promote safe operating speeds.

Corridors were identified in partnership with UC Berkeley SafeTREC using a High Injury Network method applied to five years of crash data (2019-2023, with 2023 provisional). Sites rose to the top based on analysis of safety data, varied contexts and partner readiness.

Success will be tracked through reductions in fatal and serious-injury crashes. Leading indicators - such as vehicle speeds, conflict points and telematics data (including braking and acceleration patterns) - will help detect risk early and guide proactive adjustments.

For information about transportation projects transforming communities throughout the state, visit: [Build.ca.gov](https://build.ca.gov).

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Napa Valley Asian-American Film Festival honors women with bold 2026 program

NVA AFF bridges traditional filmmaking with the newest frontiers of storytelling, while giving audiences a taste of Napa Valley's finest

NAPA, CALIF: The annual Napa Valley Asian American Film Festival (NVA AFF) returns Friday and Saturday, February 6-7, 2026, in Napa, California, amplifying authentic Asian and Asian American voices in cinema, and inviting audiences to celebrate through film, cuisine, and community connection. The event strengthens the local community through meaningful partnerships with local restaurants, vintners, artisans, and small independent businesses, as well as the greater Napa Valley College community.

This year's festival theme celebrates Asian American women in film and will be guest-directed by acclaimed filmmaker and director HIKARI. Her latest feature from Searchlight Pictures, *Rental Family*, starring Brendan Fraser, will be the festival's opening film. Through the curated lineup of female-led films and dynamic post-screening Q&A discussions, the festival will underscore the vital role women play in shaping and sustaining the art of filmmaking. Women's contributions to film—particularly those of Asian American women—are too often overlooked. This year's festival honors and celebrates their vital role as storytellers and creative visionaries.

Kieu Chinh will receive the festival's Lifetime Legacy Award for Courage in Cinema, honoring a career defined by resilience, truth, and groundbreaking representation. A pioneering icon of Vietnamese cinema, she rebuilt her life and artistic path after the fall of Saigon, ultimately breaking barriers in Hollywood through deeply human, powerful performances. Her acclaimed work includes *The Joy Luck Club*, as well as recent roles in HBO's *The Sympathizer* from Park Chan-wook and Apple TV+'s *Dope Thief*. To commemorate her extraordinary legacy, her early film *Warrior, Who Are You?* will be screened at this year's Napa Valley Asian American Film Festival.

The festival continues its partnerships with IW Group—an award-winning multicultural agency affiliated with Omnicom and led by founder Bill Imada—alongside Napa Valley College, filmmakers, producers, directors, and community leaders.

"Last year's inaugural Napa Valley Asian American Film Festival was a resounding success, reflecting the community's enthusiasm for Asian American stories on the big screen," said Imada. "As we enter our second year, we're proud to return to Napa Valley

of our selections for this year's festival, for example, has been joined by Ridley Scott to Executive Produce."

The two-day festival will feature intimate fine-dining experiences prepared by Slanted Door, the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone, Empress M and Carabao. In addition to film screenings, the program will include moderated conversations at Napa Valley College with participating directors, writers and producers. Panel moderators will include Sanjay M. Sharma of MARGINAL and Michelle K. Sugihara, executive director and CEO of

An American actor in Tokyo struggling to find purpose lands an unusual gig: working for a Japanese "rental family" agency, playing stand-in roles for strangers. He rediscovers purpose, belonging, and the beauty of human connection.

HONOREE'S CHOICE

Warrior, Who Are You? | Directed by Hoang Vinh Loc

A beautiful reporter goes to the front line to find a soldier with whom she fell in love through correspondence.

SPECIAL SPOTLIGHT FEATURE

*F*cktoys* | Directed by Annapurna Sriram

A young woman seeks to break a curse by raising \$1,000 for psychics in a pre-millennium alternate universe. She navigates the seedy underbelly of Trastown via scooter, encountering bizarre characters along the way.

SPOTLIGHT AI-CINEMATIC SHORT FILMS

4 Seasons of Redthread Vision | Created by June Kim

Goddess | Created by Niceaunties

SPECIAL SPOTLIGHT FEATURE

Rosemead | Directed by Eric Lin

Inspired by a harrowing true story, Lucy Liu transforms in a riveting, career-redefining performance as an ailing woman who takes drastic measures to protect her troubled teenage son.

CAPE JULIA S. GOUW SHORT FILM CHALLENGE SELECTS

FLIGHT 182 | Directed by Rippin Sinder

A year after the deadliest attack on the holiest Sikh shrine, a woman must protect her husband from taking a flight that could end his life.

Full Service | Directed by Soma Helmi

An Indonesian woman gets more than she expects when she resorts to hiring an escort to bring to her cousin's engagement party.

You Left Me a Ghost | Directed by Kristy Choi

A strange spirit reunites Bennie Kim with her brother in a heaven for those who have died by suicide. Will Bennie stay, too?

SPECIAL SPOTLIGHT FEATURE

Yonsei | Directed by Rachel Michiko Whitney and Jeff Mizushima

The filmmaker examines her Japanese



NAPA VALLEY ASIAN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL

WHERE CULTURES INTERSECT

This year's festival theme celebrates Asian American women in film and will be guest-directed by acclaimed filmmaker and director HIKARI. Her latest feature from Searchlight Pictures, Rental Family, starring Brendan Fraser, will be the festival's opening film

College's Performing Arts Center to celebrate the filmmakers, artists, and innovators in this year's program, and to continue spotlighting the depth and diversity of Asian American storytelling."

CAPE (Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment) returns to curate a film block of three narrative short films by rising filmmakers. "I am so proud to partner with CAPE and Janet Yang Productions in championing the artistic voices of strong Asian American women in film," said Executive Producer Julia Gouw. "This year's Napa selections include projects that span the Asian diaspora and communities. As a platform, the program is launching careers and getting the attention of Hollywood—one

CAPE, among others.

Standout features for this year's festival include *F*cktoys*, starring and directed by Annapurna Sriram. "Annapurna is a bold, multihyphenate writer, actor and director whose genre-defying film draws inspiration from auteurs like Jim Jarmusch, Greg Araki, and John Waters. As independent filmmaking faces unprecedented challenges, we're honored to spotlight Annapurna's SXSW Special Jury

Award-winning debut feature and host an intimate conversation about her journey, craft and the evolving landscape of the film business," said Sanjay M. Sharma, founder and CEO of Marginal MediaWorks, who curated the film for this year's festival.

The closing film, *Diamonds in the Sand*, a Philippines-Japan-Malaysia co-production directed by Janus Victoria, will be making its United States premiere at the festival. Stars and directors from both films will hold Q&As after their respective screenings to dive deeper into their experiences bringing the projects to life.

FULL NVA AFF 2026 LINEUP OPENING FILM

Rental Family | Directed by HIKARI

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Americans4Hindus launches Arizona State Chapter in Phoenix

Arizona becomes the 24th State Chapter in A4H's rapid national expansion

PHOENIX, ARIZONA: Americans4Hindus (A4H), the nation's fastest-growing Hindu American political empowerment organization, proudly announced the launch of its Arizona State Chapter at a landmark event held in Phoenix.

With this milestone, Americans4Hindus now has an active presence in 24 states, underscoring its rapid growth and expanding national influence.

The ceremony was led by Dr. Romesh Japra, Founder & Chairman of Americans4Hindus, who formally installed Manish Gupta as President and Shamini Oza-Shah as Vice President of the Arizona Chapter. Dr. Japra emphasized the need of the hour to expand organizational reach, strengthen grassroots leadership, and accelerate political engagement to protect values, identity, and civic voice.

Accepting the role of President, Manish

Gupta described the appointment as a sacred responsibility guided by Hindu Dharma. He pledged to unite the community across Arizona and work relentlessly to empower Hindu Americans politically from local civic bodies to state and federal platforms.

cans born and raised in the United States are increasingly facing intimidation and threats. She called for unity, courage, and organized civic participation.

Kate Gallego, Mayor of Phoenix congratulated Manish Gupta on his appointment. Mayor Gallego praised his distin-

of recent chapter launches-such as Colorado-A4H leadership reiterated the organization's mission to remain independent, non-partisan, and centrist, while endorsing, funding, and supporting candidates who are aligned with Hindu values and supportive of the community's concerns. As seen across other states, the Arizona launch also inspired attendees to pledge their time, expertise, and resources to build a strong statewide presence.

With the launch of the Arizona Chapter, Americans4Hindus continues to build a united, organized, and politically engaged Hindu American movement-strengthening representation from city halls to state capitols and Washington, D.C.

For more information about Americans4Hindus or to get involved, please contact the A4H leadership team. contact@americans4hindus.org, www.americans4hindus.org

The ceremony was led by Dr. Romesh Japra, Founder & Chairman of Americans4Hindus, who formally installed Manish Gupta as President and Shamini Oza-Shah as Vice President of the Arizona Chapter

The event was graciously hosted at the residence of Shamini Oza-Shah, who opened her home to community leaders and supporters. In her address, she spoke candidly about the crossroads facing the community, noting that even Hindu Ameri-

gished public service as a Planning Commissioner and his contributions on economic advisory boards, highlighting his impact as an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and champion of community service.

Drawing from the spirit and momentum

India condemns vandalism, theft, of Mahatma Gandhi's statue in Melbourne; urges authorities to recover and hold culprits accountable

NEW DELHI: India has strongly condemned the vandalism and removal of a Mahatma Gandhi statue in Australia and said it has taken up the matter with the Australian authorities, urging immediate action to recover the statue and bring the culprits to justice.

"We strongly condemn the vandalism and removal of the Mahatma Gandhi statue located at the Australian Indian Community Centre in Rowville, Melbourne, by unidentified people. We have strongly raised the matter with Australian authorities and urged them to take immediate action to recover the missing statue and hold the culprits accountable," Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Randhir Jaiswal said in response to media queries.

The statue, weighing 426 kg, was cut from its base using an angle grinder and stolen from the Australian Indian Community Centre in Rowville. The statue, a gift from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), was inaugurated by former Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison in 2021. This incident has raised concerns within the Indian-Australian community, especially since the statue was previously vandalized within 24 hours of its inauguration.

Victoria Police are investigating the theft, reviewing CCTV footage, and warning scrap metal dealers to be cautious about anyone attempting to sell the bronze statue.

According to 'The Australia Today', the bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi, located at the Australian Indian Community Centre in Rowville, Melbourne, was allegedly cut into pieces and stolen, triggering a police investigation and renewed concern within the Indian-Australian community.

The theft has revived memories of an

heightened tensions linked to Khalistan-related extremist activity, which has previously targeted Indian diplomatic missions, community spaces and symbols associated with India in several Western countries.

In earlier incidents in Australia and overseas, Khalistan supporters have attempted to damage or deface statues of Mahatma Gandhi, viewing them as symbolic targets despite Gandhi's global reputation as an icon of non-violence, The Australia Today reported.

Australia Today' reported.

Senior opposition leaders in Victoria have also condemned the incident and expressed solidarity with the Indian-Australian community. Shadow Minister for Multicultural and Multifaith Affairs Evan Mulholland described the theft as deeply distressing and called for those responsible to be held accountable, according to The Australia Today.

"Our multicultural communities should feel safe and respected in every suburb of this state. I stand with Victoria's Indian community at this distressing time and urge anyone with information to assist Victoria Police in bringing those responsible to justice. The perpetrators must be held to account," Mr Mulholland said.

He also extended support to community leaders and families unsettled by the theft, describing it as an attack on shared values of respect and inclusion.

"Crimes like this are an attack on all Victorians who value respect, inclusion and the strength of our diverse society," he said, adding that the Liberals and Nationals "express our sadness at this act of cultural vandalism and offer our support to the vibrant Indian-Australian community". ANI

"We strongly condemn the vandalism and removal of the Mahatma Gandhi statue located at the Australian Indian Community Centre in Rowville, Melbourne, by unidentified people"

earlier attack on the same statue, which was vandalized within 24 hours of its inauguration in November 2021. That incident had drawn condemnation in both Australia and India, though no public arrests were announced at the time, The Australia Today said.

According to The Australia Today, at the time, the vandalism occurred amid

Victoria Police confirmed that officers from the Knox Crime Investigation Unit are investigating the incident, which allegedly occurred in the early hours of January 12. Police said three unknown offenders are believed to have used an angle grinder to cut and remove the statue from the premises on Kingsley Close, Rowville, at around 12.50 am, 'The

Amid California's housing crisis, good news for first-generation homebuyers

VIDYA SETHURAMAN
India Post News Service

Even as housing costs soar amid California's affordability crisis, would-be first-generation homebuyers have a new way to reach the American dream. The California Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA) is rolling out the Dream For All shared appreciation loan program for qualified Californians to help would-be buyers meet down payment and/or closing costs on home mortgages.

CalHFA explains that the "Dream

Homes Shared Growth Loan Program" is a state-supported down payment grant program that provides eligible first-time homebuyers with substantial interest-free loans to cover their down payment and part of the closing costs. The loan is shared with the state government based on the increase in property value when the homeowner sells or refinances in the future. The application window for 2026 will be open from February 24th to March 16th, and it is expected to help approximately 1,500 to 2,000 families successfully enter

the housing market, explained CalHFA Information Officer Eric Johnson at a Thursday, January 29 American Community Media briefing.

During the meeting, Johnson pointed out, the core goal of the program is not only to help individuals complete home purchases, but also to bridge the wealth gap between generations. "For many immigrant and minority families, owning their first home is often the starting point for accumulating wealth across generations; it's a pivotal moment that changes their

lives." Many potential buyers actually have stable incomes and good credit, but are often forced out of the market due to excessively high down payment requirements. The Dream For All program does indeed lower the barrier to entry in practice, giving buyers more negotiating leverage in a highly competitive market.

As the application deadline approaches, CalHFA reiterated that the "Dream Home for All" program is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but for many families, it represents a rare window of opportunity.

On cusp of 250th anniversary-the push to reclaim community narratives

VIDYA SETHURAMAN
India Post News Service

On March 30, American Social Media (ACoM) held an online briefing, inviting museum directors, civil rights advocates, and veteran media professionals to discuss how the official narrative is becoming increasingly homogenized as the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, and the role of social media and minority media in safeguarding historical truth.

Ann Burroughs, President and Executive Director of the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), stated that mainstream media has long failed to adequately present the historical experiences of ethnic communities, and that the work of eth-

"Anniversaries are never neutral moments because they shape collective social memory and influence how future generations understand"

unprecedented political pressure in recent years, including demands to adjust interpretations, avoid discussing "inconvenient history," and even threats of funding cuts. She pointed out that attacks on cultural institutions are essentially an erosion of the First Amendment and public discourse space.

Margaret Huang, a senior fellow at The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and Human Rights, shared her experience, pointing out that the U.S. education

system has long neglected key histories such as the Reconstruction period, Japanese incarceration, and the Civil Rights Movement, causing many people to realize, as adults, that they have "never been taught American history. She cited research from the

Southern Poverty Law Center, pointing out that there are still more than 2,000 Confederate monuments across the United States. These statues and names mostly appeared 60 to 80 years after the end of the Civil War, with the aim of countering the Civil Rights Movement and reinforcing the supremacist narrative, rather than simply commemorating history.

US Congressman Thanedar starts 2026 election race with \$6.4 million cash

WASHINGTON: US Congressman Shri Thanedar has entered the 2026 election cycle with a strong financial position, reporting \$6.4 million in cash on hand at the end of 2025, according to his year-end campaign finance filing released by his campaign.

The Detroit-area Democrat said the fundraising advantage would allow him to communicate his record to voters in Michigan's 13th Congressional District and highlight his legislative priorities ahead of the next election.

"This ensures Congressman Thanedar will have the resources to tell voters in the 13th District his record and how he is fighting for them," the campaign said in a statement announcing the filing.

Thanedar, who represents a district that includes Detroit and surrounding communities, framed his record around national security, immigration, and economic issues,

while sharply criticizing President Donald Trump and senior administration officials.

"Voters will know that I am leading the charge to protect our Democracy," Thanedar said. "I was the first to introduce seven articles of impeachment against President Trump, followed by impeachment efforts against Secretaries Hegseth and Noem."

Thanedar said he also targeted US immigration enforcement agencies through legislation. "I took on ICE by introducing legislation to end qualified immunity in 2025, and then introduced legislation to abolish ICE after the killings of citizens in

Minnesota," he said.

On economic policy, Thanedar said his focus was on tax equity and federal investment in his district. "On the economic front, voters will know I'm fighting to make millionaires and billionaires pay their fair share by introducing legislation that raises the top tax rate to 70 percent, eliminating the capital gains tax disparity, and proposing that families making \$100,000 or less don't pay a single dime in federal income tax," he said.

He added that his office had delivered tangible results locally. "All while I brought in \$25 million to projects across the district and while fighting against Trump's disastrous cuts to federal programs," Thanedar said.

The congressman also highlighted constituent services, saying, "My office has served over 3800 constituents as they faced

issues with federal agencies."

"I'm confident that my constituents in the 13th District will select me again to represent them in Congress in 2026," he said.

Thanedar was first elected to Congress in 2022 after a successful career as an entrepreneur. He has often highlighted his upbringing in poverty and his focus on social justice, economic opportunity, and equality.

Michigan's 13th District, centered on Detroit, is among the state's most diverse and economically challenged areas, with federal funding and constituent services playing a key role in congressional campaigns. *IANS*



Congressman Shri Thanedar

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BAPS Sets Guinness World Record for the Largest Simultaneous Hindu Text Recital

Record set by 12,723 children during Mahant Swami Maharaj's birthday celebration

The grand celebration of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj's birthday, the spiritual leader of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, took place on February 2, 2026, drawing more than 200,000 devotees from around the world. The event became the setting for a remarkable global achievement as BAPS set a Guinness World Record for the largest simultaneous Hindu text recital by children.

The record was set when 12,723 children gathered to recite the Satsang Diksha, a sacred Sanskrit scripture composed by Mahant Swami Maharaj. The recitation was officially recognized by Guinness World Records as the highest number of children simultaneously reciting Sanskrit verses. A Certificate of Recognition was formally presented to Mahant Swami Maharaj during the celebration. See the video of the event at baps.sl/worldrecord

Inspired by Mahant Swami Maharaj's guidance and encouragement, a total of 15,666 children between the ages of 3 and 13 completed the full memorization and recitation of the Satsang Diksha within one year. Out of these, 12,723 children participated in the live recitation at Vadodara, fulfilling the criteria set by Guinness World Records.

The Satsang Diksha consists of 315 Sanskrit shlokas and offers practical guidance for spiritual growth, moral conduct, social harmony, and disciplined living. Children participating in the record included hundreds from the United States and Canada, reflecting the global reach of BAPS and the growing interest among Indian American families in traditional learning.

Guinness World Records officials traveled from England to personally verify and confirm the achievement. Following a thorough review process, the officials formally declared the recital as a world record, honoring the children's dedication and the collective effort behind the initiative.

Although the event took place in India, its impact resonated strongly with Indian American communities. Parents described the experience as a meaningful alternative to screen-heavy routines common in modern education. In contrast to classrooms where students often shift between devices and notifications, the Sanskrit recitation required focus, memorization, discipline, and sustained effort over several months.



Param Patel, a participant from Edison, New Jersey, shared that the preparation took months of consistent practice. "At first I thought it was too hard," he said. "But once I finished, I felt more confident. It showed me I can stick with something."

Six-year-old Anadi Tailor from Atlanta said memorizing the verses helped her apply values in everyday life. "I remember the words when I am at school," she said. "They help me make good choices."

Another participant, Vani Patel from Los Angeles, described the emotional impact of reciting with thousands of children. "It felt powerful to say the words together," she said.

Sanskrit, one of the world's oldest recorded languages, is known for its precise grammar and deep philosophical tradition. Scholars continue to study it for its linguistic structure, while families value its role in character-building and classical education. Organizers carefully selected participants based on their accuracy, commitment, and sincerity, ensuring the recital's quality and authenticity.

Educators and psychologists have long emphasized the benefits of structured, goal-oriented learning activities for children. According to organizers, the mass recitation was designed not only to set a record but also to promote focus,



memory, perseverance, and collaboration—skills essential for childhood development.

Beyond the record-setting event, the celebration featured spectacular cultural presentations with hundreds of performers, immersive video segments, and inspiring addresses, creating a powerful and

memorable program for attendees. During the event, Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated a Mobile School initiative for tribal regions under the theme "Har Ghar Shiksha Ki Jyot Jale," highlighting BAPS' ongoing commitment to education and social upliftment.

At the conclusion of the celebration, Mahant Swami Maharaj addressed the gathering with heartfelt words. Reflecting on the legacy of the BAPS gurus, he said, "The honor received from Guinness World Records today is the result of the children's sincere and tireless efforts, and it is dedicated to all the gurus. The sadhus, volunteers, and parents have worked with great dedication—this recognition belongs to them."

The event was attended by Honorable Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel, and Honorable Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Mohan Yadav, as special guests. A letter of

greetings from the Honorable Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation, Shri Amitbhai Shah, was also read out on the occasion.

For detailed story visit www.indiapost.com



'EU deal drove US to sign deal with India'

NEW DELHI: Billionaire investor Mark Mobius said that India's recent trade engagement with the European Union played a key role in pushing the United States to speed up its own deal with India.

While he believes friendly ties between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump helped, Mobius made it clear that negotiators from both sides mainly shaped the agreement.

In an interaction with IANS, Mobius said the India-US trade deal should not be described as the "father of all trade deals."

"The Free Trade Agreement with the European Union is likely to be more significant in comparison," the ace investor told IANS.

He suggested that India's decision to move ahead with the EU agreement showed independence and may have encouraged the US to act more quickly in finalizing its own understanding with India.

When asked whether Prime Minister Modi managed to secure a favorable deal from the US due to his cordial relationship with Donald Trump, Mobius said teams of negotiators on both sides worked out the agreement.

"However, that friendly relations between the two leaders certainly helped smooth the process," he told IANS.

Haven't heard anything from Delhi: Putin's top aide on India halting purchase of Russian oil

MOSCOW: Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has said that Moscow has not yet received any messages from New Delhi about refusing Russian oil supplies.

"We haven't heard any statements from Delhi on this matter yet," Russia's state-run news agency Tass quoted the Presidential Spokesman as saying during a regular media briefing in Moscow while responding to a question about whether India had refused Russian oil. *IANS*



US tariff reduction puts India at an advantageous position to China: Report

NEW DELHI: The reduction of US tariffs on India effectively takes India's rate below most ASEAN peers and puts it at an advantageous position compared to China, a recent report showed.

US President Donald Trump announced that the US and India had agreed on a trade deal, under which reciprocal tariffs on India will be lowered to 18 percent from 25 percent earlier.

There was no explicit mention of how the additional punitive tariff of 25 percent (due to Russian oil purchases) will be treated, although US Ambassador to India Sergia Gor said in press comments that the final tariff rate will stand at 18 percent (from 50 percent earlier), according to the report by DBS Bank.

"At the onset, this breakthrough is unequivocally positive for the real economy/exports, sentiments as well as financial markets, while further details are awaited," DBS Group Research Senior Econo-

mist Radhika Rao said.

"To our understanding, tariffs under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act will be exempt from this tariff relief, similar to the treatment for other nations.

This will apply to sectors like auto and auto parts (25 percent tariff), steel and aluminum (50 percent), lumber and copper, etc. This is likely to impact about a tenth of the export bas-

ket," she contended.

As for fuel imports from Russia, imports of petroleum, crude, and products from Russia moderated to \$33 billion in FY26 (year to date) compared to annual \$53.5 billion in FY25.

There were earlier reports that private sector refiners had sharply reduced purchases following US sanctions on specific Russian entities last year.

The US has moved from the sixth largest supplier of petroleum and crude in FY25 to fifth in FY26 YTD. Full-year nominal fuel imports from the US are on course to be higher in FY26 than in FY25, said the report.

"Textiles, gems and jewelry, engineering goods, leather, and chemicals are likely among the key gainers in the immediate term," said Rao.

An eventual unveiling of the bilateral trade agreement will provide more details on the beneficiary product lines and trade as well as investment commitments, she added. *IANS*



The US has moved from the sixth largest supplier of petroleum and crude in FY25 to fifth in FY26 YTD. Full-year nominal fuel imports from the US are on course to be higher in FY26 than in FY2

Wait for fine print on US trade deal, India well placed: Report

NEW DELHI: History shows trade announcements by US President Donald Trump often evolve through revisions and re-interpretations, a report has said, adding that the Indian government has neither confirmed stopping purchase of Russian oil, nor mentioned tariff reduction against the US to zero.

The report from JM Financial Institutional Securities also noted that the Indian government has not specified a timeline for buying \$500 billion of US energy, technology, agriculture, coal and other products.

"Over the past year, tariff policy has repeatedly been announced, revised, escalated and then softened, often in response to political/strategic goals," the



report said, citing example of the US-Korea FTA and Trump's recent threats of tariff hikes against

EU countries.

The report added that key sectors that should benefit from tariff reduction are diamonds and jewelry, textiles, machinery, chemi-

cals and automobiles.

India is relatively well placed versus Asian emerging market

peers with a new US tariff of 18 percent, lower than China at about 30 percent and below Bangladesh, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia and the Philippines at roughly 19-20 percent. This could help India gain market share in labor-intensive sectors such as textiles, the report said.

An US-India trade deal should enhance dollar flows; improve the balance of payments, lead to INR appreciation and boost Indian equity market sentiments, but the scale of foreign institutional inflows remains uncertain due to high valuations, the report said.

Electronics, India's largest export category to the US, were largely unaffected by previous tariffs due to exemptions.

The brokerage highlighted that the Indian agricultural goods could face increased competition if India cuts tariffs to zero on US imports.

The US is India's largest export destination, accounting for about 20 percent of total exports, and the lower tariff should improve bilateral trade flows and help revive India's trade surplus with the US. *IANS*

Foreign firms to meet 4 essential conditions to qualify for tax holiday benefits

NEW DELHI: As the Union Budget announced tax holiday for data and cloud center companies, Finance Ministry sources on Wednesday clarified four essential conditions for foreign firms to meet to become applicable for the exemption.

The exemption is available from tax year 2026-27 onwards till tax year 2046-47, to "a foreign company which provides cloud services globally including in India," sources said.



Union Finance minister
Nirmala Sitharaman

Four essential conditions must be satisfied by the foreign company, to qualify for the exemption.

The foreign company must be notified and the data center company in India from which data center services are taken must be an Indian company, they said.

Other conditions include, "The data center must be notified by MeITY and the services from the foreign company to Indian users must be provided through an Indian reseller entity, being an Indian company."

"The exemption provides certainty to foreign companies who are in the business of providing cloud services and procure services from a data center in India. There will not be any risk for such foreign companies of their

global income being taxed in India on this account," according to the sources.

The profits on the income from domestic economic activities such as data center services to the global entity by the resident data center; and resale of cloud services to Indian customers by the resident reseller entity, will remain taxable as any other domestic company, according to the sources.

However, a safe harbor margin of 15 percent is pro-

Four essential conditions must be satisfied by the foreign company, to qualify for the exemption.

The foreign company must be notified and the data center company in India from which data center services are taken must be an Indian company, they said

vided in case the Indian data center is a related entity of foreign company (cost plus center).

The treatment of foreign cloud services entity remains same regardless of the data center being Indian-owned or a subsidiary of the global entity, maintaining a level playing field, they added.

Indian data centers can now confidently offer their services to such global cloud entities, without the latter perceiving any tax risk on account of using Indian data centers.

The move is aimed at developing critical infrastructure and boosting investment in data centers. *IANS*

Brent crude to be range bound under \$70 per barrel due to supply-demand mismatch

NEW DELHI: Global crude oil prices may see only a marginal uptick in the near term and will be curtailed to \$68-70 per barrel in the long term despite geopolitical and supply side uncertainties, a report said.

Emkay Wealth Management Limited, the wealth management arm of Emkay Global Financial Services said in a report that any upward movement is likely to be gradual and capped, as market fundamentals point to slower global growth and cautious consumption across major economies.

Brent crude has traded in a subdued \$60-65 range for over a year despite OPEC+ production curbs, amid lack of price breakout due to persistent imbalance between demand growth and emerging supply, the report highlighted.

The report further noted that demand forecasts continue to lag incremental production additions and prolonged low prices have curtailed capital expenditure across the energy sector, with major oil and gas companies deferring investments to preserve liquidity and balance sheet stability.

Output from Venezuela and Iran has normalized recently, with a larger portion of it flowing to Asian markets, particularly China.

However, fresh political developments and evolving geopolitical dynamics have reintroduced uncertainty around the continuity of these supplies.

"While geopolitical developments could support oil prices in the very short term, the underlying fundamentals suggest that any rally will be limited," said Dr. Joseph Thomas, Head of Research, Emkay Wealth Management.

Energy companies and market participants will need to navigate this phase with capital discipline and a focus on operational efficiency rather than relying on price-led growth, he suggested.

The reports cited forecasts by the US Energy Information Administration that global oil inventories are expected to keep rising through 2026, exerting downward pressure on prices in the coming months. The agency has projected an average Brent crude price of around USD 55 per barrel in 2026, underscoring expectations of continued oversupply. *IANS*

China's cheap oil imports from sanctioned countries hit geopolitical hurdle

NEW DELHI: China's strategy of importing oil at heavily discounted prices from sanctioned countries, including Venezuela, Iran and Russia, has run into trouble due to the geopolitical tensions that have now hit these countries.

Nearly 40 percent of China's crude imports come from Russia, Iran, and Venezuela combined. This is a significant share, especially given that these are sources associated with sanctions, political instability, and broader geopolitical risk, according to an article in The Diplomat.

Iran is in the midst of one of the largest and most widespread periods of public unrest, triggered by a deep economic crisis marked by soaring inflation and rising cost of living for the people.

The Trump administration's removal of Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro and the large-scale confiscation of tankers have disrupted this source of cheap oil for China.



Venezuela has the world's largest proven crude oil reserves, as well as an abundance of gold, diamonds, and other natural resources. As Western sanctions on Venezuela have dramatically curtailed its oil exports to the United States and Europe, the country found a reliable buyer for its crude oil in China, which has purchased up to 80 percent of Venezuela's oil exports in recent years at discount rates.

"Purchasing pariah state oil at discount prices benefited China considerably, helping to fuel its industrial growth strategy. Yet, with the removal of Maduro, this model now looks fragile. What began as a clever circumvention of Western sanctions is poised to become a liability for China, exposing the reality that regime risk, not supply scarcity, is now its primary energy vulnerability," states the article by Nik Foster, a non-resident fellow at the Atlantic Council's China Hub and the former deputy China adviser for USAID.

Venezuela is not the only questionable source of China's crude. Over the years, Beijing quietly built an alternative supply system, anchored in the political isolation of pariah states, including Iran and Russia. After the invasion of Ukraine, Russian crude oil became China's largest single source of imports. Iranian oil, responsible for about 14 percent of China's crude oil imports, continues to slip through global sanctions enforcement, often relabeled and rebranded as Malaysian oil. And Venezuelan oil found its way to Chinese ports by shadow tankers, sometimes labeled as crude oil from Brazil, the article further said. *IANS*

Doctors welcome Supreme Court ban on stem cell therapy for autism

NEW DELHI: Doctors welcomed the Supreme Court's order against the use of stem cell therapy to treat autism -- a neurodevelopmental condition affecting communication, social interaction, and behavior.

A bench comprising Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice R Mahadevan noted that stem cell therapy lacks "scientific support and has not been recognized as a sound medical practice backed by empirical evidence".

The Bench ruled that "every use of stem cells in patients outside an approved clinical trial is unethical and shall be considered as malpractice."

Doctors welcomed the move by SC as many private labs are minting money from patients over the promise of treatment for autism, amid a lack of scientific evidence.

"This is absolutely the best thing that can happen because there is no proof or evidence of the utility of stem cell therapy in autism or in any neurological disorder as of now," Dr Manjari Tripathi, Head of Department, Neurology, AIIMS Delhi, told IANS.

"Many people in India, and private labs, are advertising stem cells for autism and other disorders like cerebral palsy and charging patients anywhere between Rs 6 and 20 lakh. Many families have lost money with no improvement. So, it's a correct move by the Supreme Court, and should have come earlier," she added. IANS

One can be said to be perfectly healthy in body and mind only if no part of the body or mind makes itself felt. A part makes itself felt only when there is something wrong with it. You know that you have a head only when it aches.
Sri Atmananda (1883 - 1959)

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February 6, 2026

Global aid cuts could lead to 22.6 million additional deaths by 2030 in 93 countries: The Lancet

NEW DELHI: Slashing global aid, particularly by the US and European countries, will reverse decades of progress in fighting diseases, and lead to 22.6 million additional deaths in people of all age groups, including children under five years of age, by 2030, warned a new study published recently in The Lancet Global Health.

The peer-reviewed study led by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), in Spain, showed that the additional deaths will be across 93 low- and middle-income countries, including India. The figures also include 5.4 million children under the age of five.

Severe cuts to official development assistance (ODA) will affect Sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 38 of the 93 countries analyzed, the most.

In Asia, 21 countries, including India, are at risk, followed by 12 countries each in Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa. Ten countries in Europe, including Ukraine, will also be affected.

"Withdrawing this support now would not only reverse hard-won progress but would translate

directly into millions of preventable adult and child deaths in the coming years. Budget decisions made today in donor countries will have irreversible consequences for millions of people for years to come," said Davide Rasella, Coordinator of the study,



In Asia, 21 countries, including India, are at risk, followed by 12 countries each in Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa. Ten countries in Europe, including Ukraine, will also be affected

ICREA Research Professor at ISGlobal, and at the Brazilian Institute of Collective Health.

The research also reveals that between 2002 and 2021, the

ODA helped reduce global child mortality by 39 percent; prevented HIV/AIDS deaths by 70 percent, with a 56 percent reduction in deaths from both malaria and nutritional deficiencies. It also increased additional global health outcomes in these 93

significantly reduced their ODA contributions for the first time in nearly 30 years.

To understand the impact of the fund cuts, the study modeled two scenarios from 2025 through 2030.

In case of a mild defunding scenario with a 10.6 percent yearly reduction (corresponding to the average reduction of the last two years, 2024-2025), the cuts could result in 9.4 million preventable deaths, including 2.5 million children younger than five years.

However, a severe defunding scenario, based on \$32 billion (15.1 percent) in ODA cuts from 2024 to 2025, could cause 5.4 million children younger than age five years to die as part of more than 22.6 million additional deaths of all ages.

"These findings are a warning of the profound moral cost of the zero-sum approach many political leaders are taking -- and they are an urgent call to action to all of us to prevent this human suffering," said Dr. Rajiv J. Shah, President of The Rockefeller Foundation, who supported the study. IANS

countries, which are home to 75 percent of the world's population.

The international aid fell for the first time in six years in 2024. The US, UK, France, and Germany

Healthcare gets booster shot with Rs 10,000 crore for Bio Pharma Shakti in Budget 2026-27

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently announced a Rs 10,000 crore outlay for the Bio Pharma Shakti scheme for biologics and biosimilar drugs to make India a global bio-pharma hub.

Presenting the Budget 2026-27, she said these bio medicines would help the country tackle the growing burden of non-communicable diseases like diabetes.

The Finance Minister also said that the government would

create 1 lakh Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) in 10 disciplines like optometry, radiology, and anesthesia over the next five years as part of the Budget proposals.

Sitharaman also announced that as many as 1.5 lakh caregivers would be created for geriatric and NSQF-aligned programs in the country.

Besides, more emergency and trauma centers would be set up in the country, and mental health institutions would be built

on the lines of the NIMHANS.

In her Budget 2026-27 presentation, the Finance Minister also said that since the Narendra Modi government assumed of-

fice, the Indian economic trajectory has been marked by fiscal discipline and sustained growth

The FM has proposed interventions in 6 sectors, including

manufacturing, strategic and frontier sectors, healthcare and advanced technology in the Budget for 2026-27.

Among other announcements, she proposed scaling up manufacturing in strategic and frontier sectors and developing city economic regions.

The Finance Minister further stated that the government has undertaken comprehensive reforms towards creating employment, boosting productivity and accelerating growth. IANS



India-US trade deal game-changer for MedTech, pharma sectors: Industry

NEW DELHI: The trade deal between India and the US is a game-changer for the Indian MedTech and pharma sectors, said industry experts.

In a historic move, the US has announced a reduction in tariffs on Indian exports to 18 percent from 50 percent, which is a constructive development for the India-US trade relations.

The US is India's largest export destination, accounting for about 20 percent of total exports.

The Association of Indian Medical Devices (AiMeD) hailed the deal and noted that it can prove to be a "vital boost for our manufacturers, enhancing global competitiveness, spurring investments, and creating jobs".

"The US tariff slash from 50 percent to 18 percent is a game-changer for Indian medical devices, slashing export costs and unlocking billions in US market potential amid China+1 shifts. We urge sustained India-US regulatory harmonization to capitalize fully on this opportunity for 'Make in India' MedTech success," said

Rajiv Nath, Forum Coordinator, AiMeD.

Further, Nath noted that the US tariff cut to 18 percent on Indian goods also provides Indian medical devices a competitive edge over Chinese counterparts,

"Previously, India endured up to 50 percent duties while China had around 30 percent, but the new deal aligns India's rate below China's base, favoring India amid China+1 diversification," he added.

sector.

"The India-US trade agreement represents a pivotal moment for the pharmaceutical sector, with key highlights including the reduction of tariffs on Indian goods exports," said Namit Joshi, Chairman - Pharmexcil.

"The reduction in reciprocal taxes is incrementally positive for Indian pharmaceutical companies, particularly those with significant exposure to the US market, which accounts for 30-40 percent of the sector's total revenue," he added.

Joshi noted that the deal also fosters greater market access for Indian generics and biosimilars, strengthening India's position as the global leader in affordable medicines.

"By enhancing trade ties, streamlining regulatory processes, and ensuring supply chain resilience, this agreement will drive growth in India's pharmaceutical exports, unlock new opportunities for innovation, and reinforce the country's critical role in global healthcare," the expert said. IANS



which face higher Section 301 tariffs typically at 25 percent plus additional hikes (up to 50-60 percent on some items like respirators).

The Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) also highlighted the positive implications of the India-US trade deal for the Indian pharma



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Middle class to gain through affordable healthcare, Budget aims long-term relief: Dr Singh

NEW DELHI: Affordable drugs, vaccines and diagnostics, supported by domestic biomanufacturing, would be a major social and economic support, especially for the middle class and vulnerable sections, said Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Tech-



Dr Jitendra Singh

nology, Dr Jitendra Singh, said recently.

Addressing the media in a post-Budget interaction, the minister said it may take

time to be fully appreciated, but the Budget reflects a clear, sequential vision where structural reforms are powered by cutting-edge technologies, and cutting-edge technologies are increasingly driven by AI.

Dr Singh addressed concerns regarding benefits for the middle class, stating that the Budget's true impact lies in long-term relief from rising healthcare and living costs, rather than short-term income calculations.

Large-scale investment in biopharma, diagnostics, vaccines, and gene-based therapies would significantly reduce the financial burden on families dealing with chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and metabolic disorders, he mentioned.

The Minister noted that the country has over 11-12 crore diabetics, nearly 14 crore pre-diabetics, and a rapidly increasing incidence of cancer, with projections touching two million cases annually by 2030.

On the Rs 10,000 crore Biopharma Shakti initiative, Dr Singh said India has

already emerged as a global bio-manufacturing hub, ranking among the top bio-economies globally and within the Indo-Pacific region.

He said the new outlay will further strengthen this position by expanding capabilities in biologics, biosimilars, vaccines, medical devices, and gene-based technologies.

The Minister described biotechnology as the next major industrial driver, compa-

vations.

Dr Singh said the Budget also addresses non-communicable diseases and mental health, areas that were neglected in earlier decades. He announced that new super-specialty academic and clinical institutes for mental health will be established in North India, ensuring wider and more equitable access to care.

The Minister also highlighted the decision to establish new institutes of Ayurveda

"Large-scale investment in biopharma, diagnostics, vaccines, and gene-based therapies would significantly reduce the financial burden on families dealing with chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and metabolic disorders"

able to the role played by IT in previous decades, and said the upcoming industrial revolution will be a bio-revolution, encompassing recycling, regeneration, circular economy, and advanced life-science inno-

and pharmaceutical education, saying these initiatives will strengthen traditional medicine systems while integrating them with modern research and healthcare delivery. *IANS*

Myanmar's Yangon airport tightens screening to prevent Nipah virus entry

YANGON: Myanmar has intensified health screening and surveillance at Yangon International Airport to prevent the possible entry of the Nipah virus, the state-owned daily The Global New Light of Myanmar reported.

In view of the ongoing outbreak of the Nipah virus in India's West Bengal state, special attention is being given to travelers arriving from India, with health checks focusing on fever and other Nipah-related symptoms, the report said, citing the Ministry of Health.

The ministry said health screening of passengers arriving from abroad is being conducted in line with established guidelines for infectious diseases that could give rise to public health emergencies, Xinhua news agency reported.

As part of the health awareness efforts, informational leaflets are being distributed to travelers and posters displayed at the airport. Disease prevention and control measures are also being carried out in coordination with relevant departments operating at the airport, it said.

Similar enhanced surveillance and screening measures are also being imple-

mented at Mandalay International Airport, the ministry said.

So far, no suspected Nipah cases have been reported in Myanmar, the ministry said.

Nipah virus is a zoonotic disease transmitted between animals and humans and, in some instances, through human-to-hu-



man contact. It is classified as a priority pathogen by the World Health Organization due to its epidemic potential and the severity of illness it can cause.

Nipah virus was first identified in 1998 during an outbreak among pig farmers in Malaysia. In 1999, an outbreak was reported in Singapore following the importation of sick pigs from Malaysia. *IANS*

Geriatric care a national imperative for India's ageing population, say experts

NEW DELHI: Amid a rapidly ageing population in India, experts have stressed the need for a home-based, community-led, and integrated elder care model to boost geriatric care in the country.

Speaking at an event held in the national capital, the health experts also discussed the growing challenges confronting the

structure coupled with a sharp urban-rural divide in access to medical services, and mounting economic pressures driven by inadequate social security and rising healthcare costs.

"Ageing is not just about adding years to life, but adding life to those years. Geriatric care must be coordinated, continuous, community-based, and compassionate. Mental and emotional well-being is as critical as physical health, especially in an era of nuclear families and increasing social isolation. Geriatric care is not a luxury -- it is a necessity," said Dr. Rajinder K. Dhamija, Director, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS).

According to government data, India's senior citizen population is projected to surge to around 230 million by 2036, making up about 15 percent of the total population.

"Geriatric care cannot remain confined to a few tertiary hospitals or centers of excellence. In a country as large and demographically diverse as India, care must begin at home and be strengthened through district-level systems". *IANS*



country's elderly population and the urgent need for more responsive and inclusive approaches to geriatric care.

The experts highlighted that the challenges for geriatric care are multi-dimensional in nature. These include rising disabilities and age-related health conditions such as dementia and Alzheimer's, significant gaps in geriatric healthcare infra-

"No one illegal on stolen land": Billie Eilish

LOS ANGELES: Billie Eilish, who clinched Song of the Year for "Wildflower" at the 2026 Grammys, took a moment to advocate for 'immigrants' during her winning speech.

The 24-year-old singer used her time on stage to speak about the current political climate and the impact of strict immigration rules in the US

During her speech, Eilish spoke about how hard it is to stay silent when people are hurting. She then delivered a line that quickly spread across social media: "As grateful as I feel, I honestly don't feel like I need to say anything except that no one is illegal on stolen land," Eilish, 24, said, according to PEOPLE.

Standing next to her brother and co-writer Finneas O'Connell, Eilish went on to explain that she has been feeling unsure about what to say or do, but still believes in the power of people coming together. While talking about staying "hopeful" and continuing to "fight" and "speak up," she said: "It's just really hard to know what to say and what to do right now, and I just feel really hopeful in this room. I feel like we just need to keep fighting, speaking up, and protesting. Our voices really do matter, and people matter." ANI

Immigration

POST

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"This Department of Justice will continue to strip citizenship from those who commit heinous crimes and conceal them during the naturalization process"

US seeks to strip citizenship of convicted rapist

WASHINGTON: The United States has filed a civil action seeking to revoke the citizenship of an Indian-born man convicted of rape and kidnapping, saying he concealed violent crimes during his naturalization process, the Justice Department announced.

In a complaint filed in the Eastern District of New York, the Justice Department said Gurmeet Singh hid and misrepresented material facts on his naturalization application, including that he had previously kidnapped and sexually assaulted a female passenger while working as a taxi-cab driver.

According to the complaint, after the passenger fell asleep in the back seat, Singh drove to a side street where she awoke to find him on top of her with a knife at her throat. He allegedly told her to stop resisting if she wanted to

live. Singh then bound and gagged the woman, blindfolded her, removed her clothes and raped her, the Justice Department said.

Despite these alleged acts,

York state court of Rape in the First Degree and Kidnapping in the Second Degree as a sexually motivated felony. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

"This Department of Justice



Singh proceeded through the naturalization process and became a US citizen on October 19, 2011, according to the filing.

After obtaining citizenship, Singh was later convicted in New

York state court of Rape in the First Degree and Kidnapping in the Second Degree as a sexually motivated felony. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison. "This Department of Justice will continue to strip citizenship from those who commit heinous crimes and conceal them during the naturalization process," said Attorney General Pamela Bondi. "American citizenship is a great

and sacred privilege that must be earned honestly."

Assistant Attorney General Brett A. Shumate of the Justice Department's Civil Division said Singh should never have been granted citizenship.

"This individual's vile acts prove that he should not have been granted US citizenship," Shumate said. "Singh entered our country through family-based immigration laws, then committed horrible crimes before lying about them to become a US citizen. We will now correct this injustice."

Under the Immigration and Nationality Act, US officials may revoke naturalized citizenship and cancel a certificate of naturalization if it was illegally obtained or procured through the concealment of material facts or willful misrepresentation. IANS

Nationwide 'ICE Out' protests sweep US against Trump administration's immigration policies

WASHINGTON DC: Protests swept across the United States over the weekend as demonstrators rallied under the slogan "ICE Out", demanding an end to the Trump administration's immigration enforcement measures, CNN reported.

The protests marked a second consecutive day of demonstrations after a nationwide strike last week disrupted schools, workplaces, and businesses across several states, with large rallies and marches reported in major cities including Minneapolis, New York, Los

Angeles, Portland, and Austin.

According to CNN, protests gained momentum following recent incidents in Minneapolis, where the deaths of Alex Pretti and Renee Good during immigration enforcement actions have intensified public scrutiny of federal tactics, making the incidents focal points in the broader national debate over immigration policy.

The protest also led to major legal development in the country, with a federal judge ordering the release of five-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos and his father from a detention facility in Texas,

issuing a strongly worded opinion critical of the government's actions.

The child and his father returned safely to Minneapolis, according to Texas Representative

opposition to what critics describe as heavy-handed enforcement practices by federal authorities.

However, the Trump administration also had its small share of

Operation Metro Surge, a large-scale federal immigration operation currently underway in the Twin Cities, CNN reported.

The operation involves thousands of federal agents and will continue as legal proceedings move forward amid the raging protests.

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) welcomed the ruling, while state and city officials expressed disappointment, noting that they would continue pursuing the case, which alleges unlawful arrests and excessive use of force, CNN reported. ANI

The protests marked a second consecutive day of demonstrations after a nationwide strike last week disrupted schools, workplaces, and businesses across several states

Joaquin Castro, CNN reported.

The detention of the child had further fuelled the widespread outrage and become a symbol of

wins when a separate court ruling denied a request by the State of Minnesota and the cities of Minneapolis and St Paul to halt

Borders on high-alert as Bangladesh braces for election-day violence

NEW DELHI: The Indian Intelligence agencies have warned of severe violence in Bangladesh on February 12 when the parliamentary elections and national referendum would be held simultaneously.

The ISI-backed Jamaat-e-Islami will watch how the elections are shaping up. If they feel that they are not in the reckoning, then scores of radical elements would be unleashed on the streets of the country. The violence is expected to be severe in nature, Intelligence agencies say.

The fight would be a direct one between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Jamaat. The ISI wants the Jamaat to win at any cost, so that it can continue to exercise control over the country. Under Muhammad Yunus, Pakistan has been given several exceptions that include easy travel, trade and arms deals, among others.

Bangladesh watchers say that if the BNP is in power, Pakistan would definitely have a role to play. However, what Pakistan would not want is for Bangladesh to indulge with India. A BNP government would entertain Pakistan, but would also deal with India, as the leadership is clear that it wants good ties with all its neighbors.

However, if a Jamaat is in power, it would be nothing but a puppet of the ISI. It would implement everything that Pakistan would tell it to. This is the reason why Pakistan wants a Jamaat government at any cost.



Moreover, if the Jamaat is in power, then there is every chance that Yunus would be made President of the country. There have been many meetings between Yunus, the ISI and the Jamaat leadership where his presidency has been discussed. In a bid to become President, Yunus has made

several exceptions for both Pakistan and the Jamaat.

After Yunus came to power, the first thing he did was to lift the ban on the Jamaat. He also, at the insistence of the outfit, has released several hardcore radi-

tempt would be made to put off the elections so that the existing interim government could continue to rule, officials say.

While plans to incite violence are already in place, the Election Commission of Bangladesh wants the entire process to pass off smoothly. It has ordered government officials to refrain from campaigning for a 'Yes' vote in the referendum.

It said that such a campaign would influence the outcome of the referendum. If the voters endorse the July Charter by voting 'Yes' during the referendum, the new Parliament will be legally bound to implement the 84 reform proposals. These include major Constitutional changes, and this would affect the executive power, judiciary, election process and structure of the state. Further, it would also change the identity of the state by replacing the term 'Bengali' with 'Bangladeshi.'

Anticipating large-scale violence during which the minorities would be targeted heavily, the Indian borders are on a state of 'very high alert.' Attempts would be made to infiltrate the northeastern states and West Bengal during this time. The patrolling along the border areas has increased to prevent an influx of illegal immigration, officials say.

Even the US Embassy has issued an alert on election day. "Bangladesh will hold parliamentary elections and a national referendum simultaneously on February 12. During the election period, political violence or extremist attacks may occur, potentially targeting rallies, polling stations, and religious sites. US citizens should remain vigilant, avoid demonstrations, and exercise caution near any large gatherings," the US Embassy said on X.

US nationals have been monitoring local news, carry charged mobile phones for emergencies, plan alternative travel routes and keep a low profile. This comes in the backdrop of the US Ambassador to Bangladesh, Brent T. Christensen, meeting with Jamaat chief Shafiqul Rahman.

Following the meeting, he said, "I heard Jamaat Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman's perspectives on the upcoming elections. The United States looks forward to working with all Bangladeshi political parties to advance shared peace and prosperity."

The Bangladesh elections would be held on February 12. There are nearly 2,000 candidates in the fray from over 50 political parties and independent contenders. The battle is for the 300 seats. IANS

Media watchdog reports arrest of five Afghan journalists in Pakistan

KABUL: As many as five Afghan journalists were detained by the Pakistani police over the past two weeks as per the details released by the Afghanistan Media Support Organisation (AMSO), local media reported recently.

According to AMSO, journalist Samim Forough Faizi and cameraman Ataullah Shirzad were among those detained while others have requested anonymity due to security risks, Afghanistan's leading news agency Khaama Press reported. The organization stated that the journalists have been released now but warned that arbitrary detentions and insecurity remain serious concerns for Afghan reporters residing in Pakistan.

The organization noted that many Afghan journalists fled to Pakistan after Taliban seized power in Afghanistan due to threats, censorship and political pressure in the country. AMSO stressed that Afghan journalists and families have been

facing uncertain conditions in Pakistan as Islamabad has not been extending visas for many Afghan refugees.

Rights groups have warned that increasing deportations and stringent immigration policies have deteriorated conditions for Afghan journalists seeking safety and resettlement abroad. AMSO re-

quested international media and human rights groups to increase support for Afghan journalists who are facing insecurity and legal issues in Pakistan.

In an update on January 29, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization

for Migration (IOM) estimated that 17,870 Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan through Torkham, Ghulam Khan, Chaman, Badini and Bahramcha border crossing points from January 18-24. According to the report, from January 18-24, the number of returns decreased by one percent while deportations in-

Rights groups have warned that increasing deportations and stringent immigration policies have deteriorated conditions for Afghan journalists seeking safety and resettlement abroad

US Embassy in India limits social media operation amid partial govt shutdown, says "will not be updated regularly"

NEW DELHI: The US Embassy in India recently announced a temporary reduction in its social media activity due to the ongoing partial government shutdown in the United States, stating that its official X account "will not be updated regularly" until full operations resume.

In a post on X, the Embassy said essential communications, including updates on safety and security, will continue to be shared.

"Because of the lapse in appropriations, this X account will not be updated regularly until full operations resume, with the exception of urgent safety and security information," the post read.

The US Embassy in Dhaka also issued a similar statement amid the partial government shutdown.

The US Federal Government went into a partial shutdown early on Saturday (last week), hours after the US Senate met a last-minute deadline to approve a revised package of government-funding bills, ABC News reported.

The Senate voted last week to separate extended funding for the US Department of Homeland Security.

It was after reaching a deal with the White House to put that off for two weeks to negotiate Democrats' demands for restrictions on Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), including requiring agents to wear body cameras and no masks, according to ABC News.

The vote was 71-29, with only five Republicans voting against.

The bill will now head to the House, where Speaker Mike Johnson is expected to bring the package to the floor. The rules require a two-thirds majority for passage.

The passage of the bill requires strong support from Republicans and Democrats for it to reach US President



Donald Trump's desk.

The path to the Senate vote was cleared earlier when Republican Senator Lindsey Graham lifted his hold after securing a commitment from Senate Majority Leader John Thune to hold a vote on banning sanctuary cities in the coming weeks, according to ABC News. ANI

Troubling nexus between immigration fraud and official corruption exposed in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: An incident involving two individuals trying to travel to France on forged credentials, uncovered by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) at Islamabad International Airport, exposes a nexus between immigration fraud, abuse of official authority in Pakistan, and the continuous challenge of illegal migration, a report has stated.

"While it initially involved two individuals attempting to travel to France on forged credentials, the implications extend well beyond a routine interception at an airport. The case points to deeper institutional vulnerabilities and raises serious questions about governance, accountability, and the misuse of public office within a key regulatory authority," an editorial in Pakistan-based Business Recorder detailed.

The case involves alleged involvement of a senior tax official at the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), who is accused of facilitating fraudulent French visit visas by exploiting the authority of his position, and credibility of a crucial government department. By portraying themselves as FBR employees and claiming to be part of an official delegation, the suspects tried to hide their plans in bureaucratic legitimacy.

The fabricated email exchange they showed at the airport apparently between a Gmail account and an official-

looking FBR email address, with the subject referring to meetings and a visit to the European Parliament-demonstrating an attempt to avoid probe by Pakistani authorities and foreign embassies, the editorial in the Business Recorder mentioned.

When the individuals were asked for verification, they did not provide any formal travel authorization, evidence of employment, or official correspondence from the FBR. Further analysis of their travel itinerary, including a same-day Paris to Barcelona trip, contradicted their stated purpose of the visit and indicated their intention to stay in Europe and seek asylum.

"Such cases reinforce the perception that visit visas are frequently misused as gateways to irregular migration, harming Pakistan's international standing and complicating travel for genuine citizens who follow legal procedures. Analysis of the suspects' mobile phones and financial records adds another serious dimension to the case," the Business Recorder stated. "Evidence of sustained WhatsApp contact with the alleged facilitator and bank transfers involving millions of rupees suggests that this was not an isolated attempt, but part of an organized and lucrative visa-fraud operation. IANS

The case involves alleged involvement of a senior tax official at the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), who is accused of facilitating fraudulent French visit visas by exploiting the authority of his position, and credibility of a crucial government department

Pakistan repatriates seven Indian prisoners via Attari-Wagah Border

ATTARI, AMRITSAR: Pakistan sent back seven Indian prisoners recently. The prisoners had been swept across the border while attempting to save their animals during the 2023 floods in Punjab.

Protocol officer at Attari Border, Arun Mahal said, "The order for the release of 7 prisoners from the Pakistani side had reached both India and Pakistan today. Pakistani Rangers handed over the 7 prisoners to the BSF. From there, they were brought to the Customs and Immigration office to complete the formalities. Of the 7 citizens, 4 are from Ferozepur district, one from Jalandhar, one from Ludhiana, and one from Uttar Pradesh. All of them had been swept into Pakistan while trying to save their animals during the 2023 floods."

Earlier in January, India has repatriated a Pakistani national, allegedly imprisoned in India, via the Attari-Wagah border, Pakistan High Commission in India said.

"Hafiz Muhammad Abbu Bakar, a Pakistani citizen imprisoned in India, was repatriated to Pakistan via the Wagah-Attari border today," the Pakistan High Commission said.

Before this, in September of last year, India repatriated 48 Pakistani fishermen and 19 Pakistani civilian prisoners, who had completed their sentences, via the Attari-Wagah border, the Ministry of External Affairs said in an official statement.

India also urged the Pakistani government to expedite the release and repatriation of all Indian prisoners, including fishermen in Islamabad's custody.

"The Government of India attaches high priority to the issue of Indian fishermen and civilian prisoners in Pakistan's custody and has urged the Government of Pakistan to expedite the release and repatriation of all Indian prisoners, including fishermen who remain in Pakistan's custody," MEA said in a statement.

In July last year, India and Pakistan exchanged, through diplomatic channels simultaneously in New Delhi and Islamabad, the lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen in each other's custody. Under the provisions of the bilateral Agreement on Consular Access 2008, such lists are exchanged every year on 1st of January and July.

Pakistan has been requested to ensure the "safety, security and welfare" of all civilian prisoners and fishermen, pending their release and repatriation to India, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement. ANI

"The order for the release of 7 prisoners from the Pakistani side had reached both India and Pakistan today. Pakistani Rangers handed over the 7 prisoners to the BSF. From there, they were brought to the Customs and Immigration office to complete the formalities"

India's Tech-Powered Answer to Modern Student Housing

NEW DELHI: HooLiv is a technology-driven student housing platform operating in India's managed accommodation space, catering to universities, coaching institutes, and education-focused hubs across the country. The company was founded in September 2020 by a team of serial entrepreneurs led by CEO Chinmoy Mishra, COO Dr. Rasmi Mishra, CSO Abhishek Verma, and CIO Gaurav Vij, who had earlier scaled AllizHealth to a successful exit with 3x returns.

At the core of HooLiv's business model is a B2B-centric approach, working closely with academic institutions to manage both on-campus and off-campus accommodation. This model aims to reduce operational challenges for institutions while focusing on comfort, convenience, and community for students. Services include 24/7 facility-management, maintenance, security, hygienic in-house meals, cultural integration activities, skill-building sessions such as English communication and interview preparation, wellness initiatives, and recreational amenities including fitness and gaming zones.

(ADVERTORIAL DISCLAIMER: The above press release has been provided by PNN. ANI and India Post will not be responsible in any way for the content of the same.)

Real Estate POST

22 India Post

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February 6, 2026

M-SANVI Real Estate sees affordable housing driving residential demand in West Delhi's

Uttam Nagar

NEW DELHI: M-SANVI Real Estate Pvt. Ltd., a leading real estate firm based out of Delhi-NCR, has observed that affordable housing continues to remain the primary driver of residential demand in West Delhi, particularly in emerging micro-markets such as Uttam Nagar and Dwarka mor. The company notes that rising property prices in central and premium locations have pushed homebuyers to seek practical, well-connected, and value-driven housing options. *PNN*

India's housing prices rise 9.6 pc outperforming peers: Report



NEW DELHI: India ranked among the top ten global markets with residential prices up 9.6 percent year-on-year, significantly outperforming the global average supported by firm domestic demand, improving affordability and a stable macroeconomic environment, a recent report said.

The report from real estate services firm Knight Frank said that residential sales across the

top eight cities remained steady in 2025 at over 3.48 lakh units, with H2 2025 volumes the highest since 2013.

"Market health indicators remained balanced, with the quarters-to-sell ratio holding at 5.8 quarters, despite a rise in unsold inventory driven largely by higher-value project launches," the firm said.

The report highlighted that price growth was broad-based,

led by the National Capital Region at 19 percent, followed by Hyderabad at 13 percent, Bengaluru at 12 percent and Mumbai at 7 percent.

The price growth reflected traction in premium and mid-to-premium housing supported by cumulative interest rate cuts, benign inflation and rising household incomes, the report highlighted.

A structural shift continued with homes priced above Rs 1 crore accounting for around 50 percent of total residential sales, and developers moderating launches while prioritizing execution and using financing incentives rather than price cuts to maintain absorption momentum, the report said.

"India's housing market continues to stand apart in a global environment that remains uneven. The combination of strong economic growth, easing financial conditions and a decisive shift towards end-user-led demand created a more mature and resilient residential cycle," said Shishir Bajjal, International Partner, Chairman and Managing Director, Knight Frank India.

"As we move into 2026, we expect the market to be defined by stable absorption, selective price appreciation and disciplined supply, rather than speculative excess," he added.

Across global housing markets, price growth strengthened modestly in Q3 2025 as easing monetary conditions began to feed through to demand. *IANS*

Things sellers should leave behind during property handover

HARINI BALASUBRAMANIAN

The property handover process involves the legal transfer of property ownership and possession of the property by the new buyer. At this stage, the buyer conducts final checks of the property and the legal documentation. The seller, on their part, must fulfill certain responsibilities such as providing key property documents, settling any outstanding dues and finally handing over the keys. During property handover, the seller must also handover things that they promised to sell as part of the deal. We list some of the key items or installations that a seller should leave behind when handing over the property to the buyer.

Property keys

After a property deal is finalized and the sale transaction, along with the paperwork, is completed, the seller is responsible for handing over the keys to the buyer. The seller should ensure they hand

over the complete set of keys, including main door keys, parking and storage keys, along with any duplicate keys.

If any access is required, such as access cards, security codes, etc., they should be provided to the buyer immediately.

Property documents

After the sale transaction, sellers must hand over documents such as the sale deed, title deed, society NOCs, occupancy certificate and completion certificate, property tax receipts, and utility bills. A possession letter is another essential document issued by the builder to the original buyer during the sale. The existing owner who plans to sell the house should handover the possession letter to the new

buyer. Sellers must keep copies of important documents as legal proof. www.housing.com

For detailed story visit www.indiapost.com



Buddha statue for home: Vastu tips for placement

HARINI BALASUBRAMANIAN

Gautam Buddha is a symbol of enlightenment, balance and inner peace. According to Vastu Shastra, as well as Feng Shui, statues of Gautam Buddha are auspicious and harbingers of good fortune. The Buddha statue invites a positive life force when placed in the correct position at home. The ideal location for a Buddha statue is the north or east corner of the house, in the living room or house entrance. Buddha figurines add an aesthetic appeal and when placed appropriately, bring prosperity, good health and peace. When bringing a Buddha statue home, choose auspicious colors and the right materials that can influence the statue's energy. Read on to find out the different forms of Buddha statue you can consider for your home, their benefits and Vastu tips to keep in mind.

Where to keep a Buddha statue in the house?

House entrance: Buddha statues can be placed at the house entrance or foyer area in the north or east direction. This placement is said to attract positive energies and peaceful vibes. Facing the Buddha towards the front door helps ward off the negative energies.

Pooja or prayer room: The ideal place for keeping a meditating or praying Buddha is the pooja corner facing east. The idol represents enlightenment and eternal knowledge. You can choose the northeast corner or Ishan Kon for placing Buddha figurines.

Centre of the house: According to Vastu, the center of the house, also known as the Brahmasthan, is a sacred space. One can keep a Buddha statue in the Brahmasthan to create a harmonious environment.

Living room: Keeping the painting of Buddha on a living room wall brings serenity, peace and enlightenment. The ideal places to keep Buddha in the living room can be the coffee table, the console table or the wall shelf.

Dining table: Consider placing a beautiful painting of Buddha near your dining table. This will enhance the décor of the area while attracting positivity. Make sure that the painting is facing inside the house.

Children's bedroom: According to Vastu Shastra, one can place the Buddha statue above a bed in the children's bedroom. You can also consider placing the Buddha statue at the corner of the room to promote positive energies.

Study room: Keeping a Buddha figurine in the children's study room is said to attract positive vibes and create a harmonious environment.



Bookshelf: Keep a laughing Buddha statue in the east direction on the bookshelf. The laughing Buddha symbolizes peace and happiness, and will attract good vibes in the house.

Garden or balcony: Placing Buddha statue in the garden or balcony brings calmness. You can enhance the positive vibes by keeping the statue near a fountain or as part of a fountain sprinkler.

Places to avoid when keeping buddha statue at home

Bedroom: Keeping a Buddha statue is generally not recommended in Vastu as it may be considered disrespectful to the deity and disrupt the tranquil energies of the statue.

Kitchen: The kitchen, which is usually in the southeast direction, is associated with the fire element and high energies. Vastu does not recommend placing Buddha statues near kitchen areas.

Laundry rooms: Do not position Buddha statues in utility areas of the house.

Bathroom: According to Vastu Shastra, bathrooms are potential sources of negative energies and should be avoided when considering the placement of the Buddha Statue at home.

Near electrical outlets: Areas near electrical outlets may accumulate negative energies coming from the devices and must be avoided when placing Buddha statues.

Under a staircase: The place under a staircase may also have accumulated negative energies and is not recommended for placing Buddha figurines.

When placing Buddha statues on wall shelf or artwork on the wall, make sure the wall is not shared with negative spaces such as bathrooms.

Buddha statue and painting direction as per Vastu

East: East is the direction of the rising sun and is associated with new beginnings. It is considered auspicious for most to place Buddha statues as it is said to invite peace, prosperity and spiritual growth.

Northeast: As per Vastu, the northeast direction or Ishan Kon is a sacred zone associated with positive energy and spirituality. Keeping Buddha figurines or paintings in this direction is believed to increase knowledge, focus and good health.

North: The north direction, ruled by the god of wealth Kubera, is another auspicious direction for placing Buddha statues.

Alternative directions for keeping Buddha statues

Southeast: Southeast is an alternative direction to place Buddha statues if you are unable to find a suitable space in the directions mentioned above. Although the southeast direction is associated with the fire element, keeping Buddha figurines in this direction can be beneficial and attract wealth and prosperity.

Southwest: Keeping Buddha statues in the southwest direction is not prohibited in Vastu. This can be an alternative direction for placing Buddha statues at home. The southwest direction is associated with stability and security and the presence of Buddha idols can bring a sense of support and strength.

West: While east is the most preferred direction owing to its auspiciousness, west can also be considered for the placement of statues in specific cases. For example, a reclining Buddha statue can be placed in the right corner of the room, facing west. This helps bring peace and harmony to the house.

Northwest: The northwest direction, which is associated with the air element, can be considered as an alternative direction for Buddha statue placement. Some Buddha statues such as Medicine Buddha or a Laughing Buddha with gold ingot can be kept in the northwest.



Direction to avoid

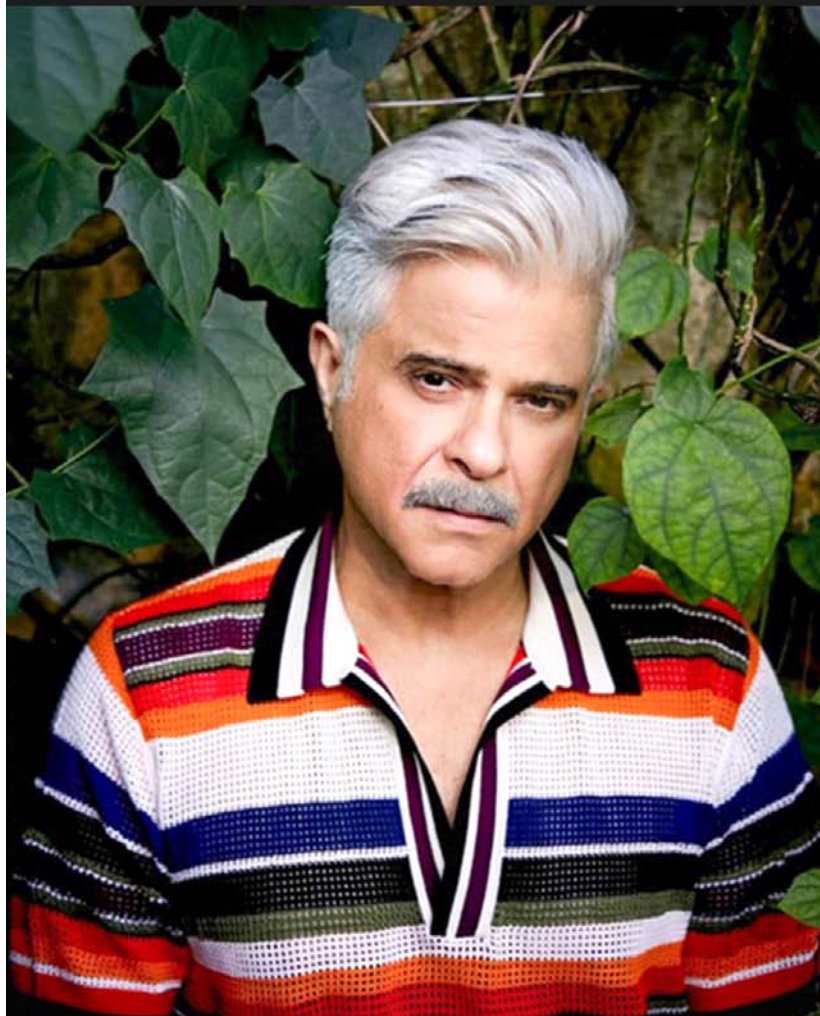
South: According to Vastu, the south direction is associated with the fire element and generally not recommended for placing statues of peaceful deities like Buddha. This direction brings strong energies and may disrupt the calm environment created by the Buddha idols. Moreover, placing a figurine in the south will make the idol face north, which is not considered good.

Direction for Buddha statue mudras

According to Vastu, a Buddha statue should be placed facing east direction. It should be placed facing south, west and north directions. www.housing.com

For detailed story visit www.indiapost.com





Anil Kapoor FLAUNTS GREYS; Riteish Deshmukh says 'MIND BLOWING'

Veteran actor Anil Kapoor has raised the bar once again by showcasing his all-grey look, exuding effortless style and charm.

Anil took to Instagram, where he shared a picture of himself. In the image, Anil looks stylish as he flaunts silver-gray hair styled neatly and a matching mustache, giving him a sophisticated and mature appearance.

"The day doesn't know what's coming," he wrote as the caption.

Anil's new look caught the eyes of actor Riteish Deshmukh, who took to the comment section and heaped praise on his new look.

"Mind blowing!!!! How good are you looking," Riteish wrote as the caption.

Anil Kapoor did not disclose the reason behind his new look.

On the acting front, Anil was last seen in War 2, directed by Ayan Mukerji. It is the sixth installment in the YRF Spy Universe and a sequel to the 2019 film War. **IANS**

Huma Qureshi shares her 'best beauty hack'

Bollywood actress Huma Qureshi has shared what she calls her "best beauty hack," and it has nothing to do with makeup or skincare.

The actress believes that laughter is the simplest and most effective way to glow from within. Taking to Instagram, Huma shared a string of monochrome pictures of herself, accompanied by the caption, "Laughter is the best beauty hack."

The actress is all set to be seen in Yash-starrer "Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups". The makers had earlier unveiled the looks of Yash, Kiara Advani, Nayanthara, Rukmini Vasanth, and Tara Sutaria of the film.

Written by Yash and Geetu Mohandas and directed by Geetu Mohandas, Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups has been simultaneously shot in Kannada and English, with dubbed versions planned in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and several other languages.

"Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups" is reportedly a gripping tale of crime and deception set in 1980s Goa, where a powerful drug cartel manipulates lives behind the state's picturesque beaches and vibrant culture. **IANS**



TOP TEN HINDI FILM SONGS

- 1 Gehra Hua: **Dhurandhar**
- 2 Ishq Jalakar - Karvaan: **Dhurandhar**
- 3 Dhurandhar - Title Track: **Dhurandhar**
- 4 Aawaara Angaara: **Tere Ishk Mein**
- 5 Sitaare: **Ikkis**
- 6 Saiyaara: **Saiyaara**
- 7 Shararat: **Dhurandhar**
- 8 Lutt Le Gaya: **Dhurandhar**
- 9 Deewaniyat : **Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat**
- 10 Sahiba: **Sahiba-Aditya Rikhari**

Sai Dhanshika: I did all the stunts in 'Yogi Da' myself

Actress Sai Dhanshika, who plays the lead in director Goutham Krishna's upcoming action entertainer 'Yogi Da', has disclosed that she performed all the stunts in the film herself, without opting for a body double.

At a pre release event organized by the makers of the film, the actress said, "I first performed action in 'Peraanmai', and that experience continues to help me. All the stunt scenes in 'Yogi Da' were performed by me without a body double. If women decide, they can perform stunts just as well as men. Today, crimes against women are increasing. Society often believes that once a woman is physically hurt, she cannot rise again. 'Yogi Da' shows that she can overcome it. We have made this film for women, to the best of our ability."

The actress also took the opportunity to thank her entire team. She said, "My heartfelt thanks goes to my entire team - this would not have been possible without them. Instead of speaking too much, I believe a film should speak through our work." **IANS**



SHARVARI GREW UP WATCHING 'RANI MUKERJI IN SO MANY ROLES'

Actress Sharvari says she has grown up watching Rani Mukerji in a wide range of roles, adding that the actor's portrayal of Shivani Shivaji Roy not only empowers millions like her but also strengthens her belief in the fight for good. Sharvari took to her Instagram stories section, where she shared a picture of a big screen playing Rani's Mardaani 3.

She wrote: "Watched Mardaani 3 tonight. I've always grown up watching Rani ma'am in so many roles but Shivani Shivaji Roy doesn't just empower millions like me but also makes me believe in the fight for the good."

Calling the film "powerful", Sharvari congratulated the director Abhiraj Minawala.

She concluded: "More power to you & your entire team #ranimakherjee #adityachop??."

Talking about the latest release, "Mardaani 3", it delves into another dark and brutal reality of our society, further strengthening the franchise's legacy of impactful, issue-based storytelling.

Actress Janaki Bodiwala of Shaitaan fame also enters the Mardaani franchise to play a pivotal role. Mardaani 3 has been written by Aayush Gupta of The Railway Men fame.

The first installment of the Mardaani franchise was released in 2014. It featured Rani, Jisshu Sengupta, Tahir Raj Bhasin, and Anant Vidhaat Sharma in supporting roles. The second installment hit the screens in 2019. It was directed by Gopi Puthran. It also stars Vishal Jethwa.

Talking about Sharvari, the actress is currently busy shooting for filmmaker Imtiaz Ali's next with Diljit Dosanjh, Vedang Raina, Sharvari, and Naseeruddin Shah. It is slated to hit the screens on June 12. *IANS*



SHANAYA KAPOOR SATURDAY NIGHT LISTENING TO 'JEE LIYA'

Actress Shanaya Kapoor reveals she spent her Saturday night in a mellow, musical mood, soaking in the emotions of the song 'Jee Liya', which she had on loop as she unwound over the weekend.

Shanaya took to Instagram, where she shared a video of herself vibing to the "Tu Yaa Main" song "Jee Liya" sung by Adarsh Gourav and Lothika Jha.

"Saturday night lights... with jee liya on loop," Shanaya wrote as the caption.

Directed by Bejoy Nambiar, Tu Yaa Main is produced by Aanand L Rai and Himanshu Sharma under the banner of Colour Yellow, along with Vinod Bhanushali and Kamlesh Bhanushali of Bhanushali Studios Limited. Rooted in today's creator-driven culture, the film offers a fresh, youthful take on love and survival, and is set for release on 13 February 2026.

Talking about Shanaya, she made her debut with the romantic drama film "Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan". Adapted from Ruskin Bond's short story The Eyes Have It, the film stars Vikrant Massey as a visually impaired musician and marks the acting debut of Shanaya Kapoor as a theater artist. *IANS*



Sonam Kapoor apologizes to husband for 'always being right'

Bollywood fashionista Sonam Kapoor took to social media to apologize to her husband Anand Ahuja, playfully admitting that she isn't always trying to be right.

The actress took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a video reel in which an old man is heard saying: "There are three women who are always right. Women, first born daughters and first born granddaughters... If you find who is all three brace yourself."

Sonam, who is the eldest daughter of Bollywood star Anil Kapoor, wrote as the caption: "Sorry Anand Ahuja I'm not trying to be right all the time."

Sonam tied the knot with businessman Anand Ahuja in a grand wedding ceremony in May 2018, after dating for several years. The couple welcomed their first child, a baby boy, whom they named Vayu, in August 2022.

On the professional front, Kapoor was last seen in the film Blind in 2023. Sonam Kapoor, the daughter of Bollywood star Anil Kapoor, began her career as an assistant director on filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2005 film Black. *IANS*





Australian artist Grace Lillian Lee brings 'The Winds of Guardians' to INDIA ART FAIR 2026

NEW DELHI: Australian First Nations artist, designer and cultural advocate Grace Lillian Lee is set to present her work in India at the India Art Fair 2026, bringing Indigenous Australian perspectives on heritage, sustainability and identity to Indian audiences.

Lee will showcase 'The Winds of Guardians', a new body of work deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of the Torres Strait Islands.

A descendant of the Miriam Mer Semsep people of the Eastern Islands of the Torres Strait, Lee draws on ancestral knowledge passed down through gen-

erations.

Introduced to traditional weaving at a young age, her contemporary practice continues to be shaped by these techniques, blending cultural memory with modern material expression.

Her work explores themes of Country, Indigenous sovereignty and environmental consciousness through a distinctly present-day lens.

At the India Art Fair, Lee will present four large structural forms titled North Winds, South Winds, East Winds and West Winds, accompanied by a ceremonial Dreamweaver mask.

Together, the works examine wind as both a physical force and a metaphor for movement, memory and transmission.

Inspired by beliefs surrounding ancestors and wind spirits from the Torres Strait Islands, the installations are constructed using materials such as cotton webbing, cotton twine, cane, mirror acrylic and electrical rubber shrink tubing.

Australia's High Commissioner to India, Philip Green, described Lee's participation as a reflection of Australia's commit-

ment to showcasing First Nations culture internationally.

"Rooted in tradition yet unmistakably contemporary, Grace's work demonstrates how ancestral knowledge continues to inform and inspire new artistic expression," he said in a press release.

Speaking about her upcoming visit, Lee expressed admiration for India's craft heritage and cultural traditions.

She said she was honored to share her work through conversations centered on Indigenous knowledge and cultural ex-

LEE WILL SHOWCASE 'THE WINDS OF GUARDIANS', A NEW BODY OF WORK DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE CULTURAL TRADITIONS OF THE TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS

Korean Cultural Centre India to participate in India Art Fair 2026 in collaboration with Keumsan Gallery

NEW DELHI: The Korean Cultural Centre India will participate in the 17th edition of the India Art Fair 2026, which will be held from February 5 to 8 at the NSIC Exhibition Grounds in New Delhi.

The participation will take place in collaboration with Keumsan Gallery, marking an important step in strengthening cultural and artistic exchanges between India and the Republic of Korea.

As part of the Institutional Section of the India Art Fair, Korean Cultural Centre India will present a special K-Art Pavilion showcasing 13 artworks by four prominent contemporary Korean artists--Eunjin Kim, Yongrae Kwon, SINN (Jineon Kim) and Sungyong Hong.

The opening ceremony of the

K-Art Pavilion on February 5 will be attended by Lee Seong Ho, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to India, and Dr Sanjeev Kishor Goutam, Director General of the National Gallery of Modern

in 1992, is one of Korea's first-generation contemporary art galleries. Its director, Hwang Dal-seung, previously served as President of the Korea Galleries Association from 2021 to 2025.

The collaboration is expected to support Korean contemporary art's entry into global art markets and further strengthen cultural exchange.

Under the theme "Resonances of Light," the pavilion will explore light as a narrative medium through diverse materials, ranging from traditional Korean elements such as mother-of-pearl

and lacquer to modern materials including stainless steel and aluminum. The pavilion has been designed as an immersive spatial experience rather than a conventional display. ANI

Art (NGMA), highlighting the importance of cultural and institutional collaboration between India and South Korea, according to a press release

Keumsan Gallery, established



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Philosophy

MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI

There is a saying in Sanskrit: 'The success of a great man does not depend on the accessories, but on the level of sattva'. If we are able to maintain our 'sattva' (our Being), then the success of what we want to do in this world will be ours.

It is not the accessories that make a man successful, but his own center of divine intelligence. This has been my experience all over the world, and this has been the experience of the saints since time immemorial. Nature becomes friendly with success.

It's the atmosphere that brings success if the 'sattva' is maintained. If we simply meditate properly in the morning and at night and have a right sense of life, which is common in a man who meditates, then right thought arises naturally and all nature is prepared to accept it.

This is divine help. Everything goes by itself; we only have to stay in the Being, but not at the level of memory. All we

Reflected upon by karma, the prana gains individuality and appears as individual mind. Thus the individual mind is found to be the reflection of cosmic mind or cosmic intelligence. Just as prana is the manifesting expression of the eternal ocean of unmanifested Being, mind is the reflection of cosmic intelligence on karma.



Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

This shows that before the creation of the mind, there existed in principle the agency of karma. This leads us to conclude that there was creation before creation. There existed a day before this day and a night before this night. The cycle of creation and dissolution is the eternal cycle.

All the activity of the ego, of the intellect, of the mind, of the senses, of the prana (breath), and all our physical activity, all experiences, understandings, feelings, the entire course of activity is basically motivated by the force of evolution. And therefore, whatever one does, knowingly and unknowingly, the first effect is, the first natural effect is [on] his

There was Creation
before Creation
Many things are done by nature
for one's own evolution

have to do is meditate in the morning and at night and you will get a right meaning of life. What we think is not right, we refrain from doing it, but we should not start considering that everything in the world is not right.

Don't carry too much in your mind the sense of what is right and what is wrong. Have a natural attitude and take things as they come.

With regular meditation, 'sattva' will sustain and grow, and there will be right behavior and values. Everything will work itself out; all success will be yours. The Spiritual Regeneration, that was a difficult task in the world, now it will be pretty easy.

Karma is inert. This inert karma supplemented by the life force, prana, gives rise to the mind. This mind is a composite of prana and karma, and through prana it is connected with unmanifested Being. Thus we find that mind is the second stage in the process of manifestation or creation and its relationship with Being, which is the ultimate. Prana is the first expression of cosmic intelligence.

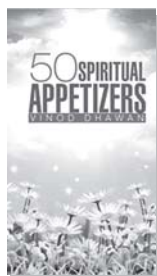
evolution. Many things one doesn't know, and they are done by nature for one's own evolution. When many things are accomplished by nature for our evolution, then certainly everything that we do must have a bearing on one's evolution.

Nothing but the force of evolution makes us go ahead on our undertakings, consciously and unconsciously.

Edited excerpts from public address in Rishikesh and Seelisberg, Switzerland. The 115th birth anniversary of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is being observed on January 12

50 SPIRITUAL APPETIZERS

Vinod Dhawan



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Jac O'Keeffe

Spirituality teacher based in USA.

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Mob rule as political strategy: Reshaping Bangladesh's secular memory and pluralistic Bengali culture

DR. ASM MOSTAFIZUR RAHMAN

The youth-led uprising in 2024 in Bangladesh succeeded as a moment of collective emotional mobilization through the ideals of 1971 and in Bengali cultural pluralism. Mobilization did not evolve through clear leadership or a roadmap. But through a shared political language, shared symbols through graffiti, memes, and images. The graffiti on the walls and the memes on social media painted a picture of pluralism. Most importantly, shared moral roots are driven by freedom, dignity, justice, and resistance to discrimination.

The uprising was held together more by a shared moral imagination. This imagination drew from the Bengali civilizational foundation, and that is the Liberation War and the Bengali tradition of religious coexistence.

It was this moral universe that allowed students to mobilize not only themselves but also workers, mothers, cultural activists, and ordinary citizens. So, the credit

thorities, and moral justification.

We have seen constant and consistent humiliation of freedom fighters, systematic attacks on Baul and Sufi shrines, the destruction of Liberation War monuments, shrinking public space for women, and arrests of journalists, academics, and cultural activists.

The Chittagong Press Club, for example, was captured through the mob attacks, and the management committee was pulled out, and a new committee was put in its place. Many journalists were sacked from their positions, and new individuals were replaced. The country's leading media and newspaper houses, such as the Prothom Alo and the Daily Star, were attacked by mobs and fire.

The government supports those mobs by staying silent and not trying to stop them. What was striking was even that the government was defending the mob by saying that the mob was a "pressure

group." When a journalist like Anis Alamgir criticized the government's silence and support of such mobs, he was arrested under Bangladesh's Anti-Terrorism Act. And so, through these acts, the goal was to create fear, silence, criticism, and political dissent.

The new political forces that have gained ground in

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for success goes not only to students but also to people from all walks of life. The protesters articulated a vision of a nation free from ethnicity, religion, gender, and class-based discrimination and oppression. At that moment, many believed it could restore not only democracy but also the promise of the Liberation War.

However, in the aftermath, the political forces that have consolidated power dismantled those foundations through anti-secular mobilization and the use of mob rule by establishing fear.

Mob Rule as Political Strategy

What we have been witnessing in Bangladesh should not be understood merely as spontaneous lawlessness or a breakdown of order. Mob rule has functioned as a political strategy designed to disseminate fear and reshape public memory. This strategy operates through selective targeting, the absence of accountability, silence or complicity from au-

the aftermath of the 2024 uprising mobilize youth through misinformation, fabricated histories of 1971, distorted interpretations of Islam, and narratives of ideological conflict. Youths have been told that 1971 was a religious war meant to separate the Pakistani and Bengali Muslim brothers. They were misinformed about the people's long struggle for dignity, for economic emancipation, and for cultural freedom.

They are not informed that Pakistani ruling machinery did not treat Bengali Muslims as pure Muslims, but rather discriminated heavily. Pakistani Field Marshal Ayub Khan, head of a military-led government, in his book Friends, Not Masters: A Political Autobiography, defined Bengali Muslims as influenced by Hinduism and Pakistani Muslims as the greatest race.

(The author holds a PhD in political science from Heidelberg University, Germany) South Asia Monitor

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Aid, ports, and the limits of incrementalism: What India's budget says about its foreign policy

JAYANTA ROY CHOWDHURY

When Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented India's 2026-27 Budget, the headline themes were familiar: fiscal consolidation, steady infrastructure spending, and the promise of "incremental reform" amid global uncertainty. But buried in the fine print of external assistance and overseas infrastructure allocations lies a quieter, more revealing story—one about India's narrowing foreign policy bandwidth and the growing constraints to strategic ambitions.

Two decisions stand out. New Delhi has halved its aid allocation to Bangladesh, cutting it to Rs 60 crore, after spending less than a third of the Rs 120 crore earmarked in the previous financial year. Simultaneously, for the first time in nearly a decade, India has allocated no fresh funds for Iran's Chabahar port—a project long framed as a linchpin of India's continental connectivity strategy

ity. India backed flagship projects such as the Akhaura-Agartala rail link, the Khulna-Mongla port rail line, and the jointly developed 1,320 MW Rampal thermal power station. Reflecting this momentum, New Delhi raised its aid allocation for Bangladesh to Rs 120 crore in the 2025-26 Budget—even after Hasina's fall in August 2024.

That decision now appears overly optimistic

The interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has adopted a markedly sharper public tone toward India. A series of anti-India statements by senior ministers, coupled with retaliatory trade measures on both sides, quickly chilled ties. The result was bureaucratic paralysis - of the Rs 120 crore allocated, India spent barely Rs 34.48 crore.

This year's pared-back Rs 60 crore allocation is less a punish-

Strategic Pause in Iran

If Bangladesh reflects political uncertainty, Chabahar reflects geopolitical constraint. India has invested more than \$370 million in developing the Shahid Beheshti Terminal at Iran's Chabahar port, which is operated by India Ports Global Limited under a 10-year contract. The port offers India a rare strategic prize: direct access to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and potentially Russia-bypassing Pakistan entirely.

Yet the 2026-27 Budget allocates zero fresh funding to the project.

The reason lies in Washington. In October 2025, the US Treasury granted India a six-month conditional sanctions waiver to continue operating Chabahar, despite renewed US threats of secondary sanctions and tariff hikes on countries "doing business" with Iran. That waiver expires on April 26, 2026. In the absence of clarity on an extension, New Delhi has opted for fiscal and political caution.

India continues to operate the port-for now-but the absence of new funding signals a strategic pause. It also marks a quiet retreat from India's long-articulated ambition to shape Eurasian connectivity on its own terms. Chabahar, once showcased as a symbol of India's strategic autonomy, now illustrates its limits in a sanctions-heavy global order.

Narrowing Circle Of Fiscal Options

These external cutbacks must be understood in the broader budgetary context. India's fiscal space is tightening. Capital expenditure remains high at Rs12.2 lakh crore, defense spending has jumped nearly 15 percent to ₹7.85 lakh crore after last year's brief but intense conflict with Pakistan, and the government remains committed to reducing the fiscal deficit toward 4 percent.

(The author is a veteran journalist and Bangladesh watcher) *South Asia Monitor*

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IS AMERICA LOSING GREATNESS?

United States of America, celebrated as a nation of immigrants, has historically drawn strength from the diverse talents, cultures, and aspirations of people from across the globe. From its earliest days, the United States positioned itself as a land of opportunity, a place where individuals seeking freedom, prosperity, and innovation, could build new lives. This openness to immigration helped transform the country into an economic powerhouse and a global leader in science, technology, culture, and entrepreneurship. However, in recent years, the nation has shown an increasingly anti-immigrant stance, raising concerns about its future and its commitment to the very principles that fueled its rise.

For generations, America's immigration policies actively attracted the world's best and brightest. Scientists escaping war, students seeking world-class education, and entrepreneurs with revolutionary ideas, all found a welcoming environment and opportunities in the United States. Their contributions are woven into the fabric of American success and its history. Immigrant innovators helped build Silicon Valley, led breakthroughs in medicine and technology, and founded or co-founded iconic companies like Google, Tesla, Intel, and Pfizer. Highly skilled professionals bolstered America's leadership in research and development, while millions of hardworking immigrants powered industries like agriculture, construction, and healthcare. The country not only benefited economically but also culturally, becoming a dynamic and globally influential society. However, the political climate in recent years has created a stark shift.

Rhetoric portraying immigrants as economic threats, cultural disruptors, or security risks has grown louder. This shift has influenced public attitude and shaped restrictive policies, from stricter visa regulations and travel bans, to reduced access to asylum and heightened enforcement actions. Even highly skilled immigrants, who once saw the U.S. as the premier destination for opportunity, now face uncertainty due to backlogged visa systems, unpredictable policy changes, and rising hostility in public discourse. These anti-immigrant trends risk undermining America's competitive edge.

As global competition intensifies, countries like Canada, Australia, Germany, New Zealand and Japan, are actively recruiting international talent, offering clearer pathways to residency and a more welcoming environment. Once, ambitious students and innovators around the world dreamed of coming to the United States. Today, many are looking elsewhere. A nation that once prided itself on opportunity is now at risk of losing the very people who help drive innovation and economic growth. Moreover, the shift contradicts the core American narrative, one built on inclusivity, resilience and the belief that diversity strengthens rather than weakens.

Immigrants have always been vital to America's progress, not only through economic and scientific contributions but also enriching cultural diversity, expanding perspectives and, strengthening democratic values.

If the United States continues along this anti-immigrant trajectory, it risks diminishing its global standing and weakening future potential. Revitalizing immigration policies, embracing diversity and, reaffirming the nation's openness to newcomers are essential steps to preserve America's legacy as a land of opportunities. This year alone, thousands of Indian students have decided to drop US and opted in to other countries for higher education. The same applies for students of China.

America became great because it welcomed the world. Its future greatness will depend on its continuing to do so.

Two decisions stand out. New Delhi has halved its aid allocation to Bangladesh, cutting it to Rs 60 crore, after spending less than a third of the Rs 120 crore earmarked in the previous financial year. Simultaneously, for the first time in nearly a decade, India has allocated no fresh funds for Iran's Chabahar port

and its answer to Pakistan's geographic veto.

Taken together, these moves underscore how geopolitical friction, domestic fiscal pressures, and external coercion—particularly from the United States—are reshaping India's neighborhood policy.

Bangladesh Engagement In Limbo

Until recently, India-Bangladesh relations were widely regarded as a rare success story in South Asia. Under Sheikh Hasina, the two countries deepened cooperation across energy, transport, and connectiv-

ment than a holding pattern. Indian officials privately signal that New Delhi is unwilling to commit significant resources until a new, elected Bangladeshi government emerges and policy direction stabilizes. If relations improve, funding can be restored through supplementary or ad hoc allocations. Until then, projects remain in limbo.

The episode highlights a recurring dilemma in India's neighborhood policy: long-term investments are deeply vulnerable to short-term political shifts in partner countries, especially where elite consensus on relations with India is fragile.

Disclaimer: Views expressed are personal to the author

Kasol is a quaint little village in Himachal situated along the banks of the river Parvati. Commonly known as the 'Amsterdam of India', Kasol is a tourist attraction that is rapidly gaining fame as a popular hub for trekkers, backpackers, and nature lovers. The valley is situated 23 kms from Bhuntar and next to the religious town of Manikaran and is one of the best places in the country just to sit back and chill in the panorama of snow-clad mountains, pine trees and serene river.

Famous for its trekking trails, Kasol is popular for several treks to Kheerganga, Yanker Pass, Sar Pass, and Pin Parbati Pass. To get a real feel of the culture in this region, go on a trip to the village of Malana. Located a few kilometers away from Kasol, Malana is a tiny hamlet inhabited by people living in self-imposed isolation. The village has plenty of scenic sights, though, and is often called 'Little Greece'.

Kasol is inhabited by a huge number of people from Israel, which is discernible from the plenteously available Israeli food, and the street signposts inscribed in Hebrew. The valley has quite a few street side cafes, which serve delicious food, and the experience of sitting and enjoying a meal amidst the dark green forests, and the awe-inspiring mountains make the meal even more enjoyable. Don't forget to visit the flea market which sells a variety of items, such as trinkets, souvenirs, pendants, and even semi-precious stones on your way back home!

PLACES TO VISIT IN KASOL

Manikaran Sahib: Located in the Parvati Valley of Himachal Pradesh, Manikaran Sahib is a significant religious site for both Sikhs and Hindus. Nestled amidst the scenic beauty of the Himalayas, this pilgrimage destination is renowned for its hot springs, gurdwara, and ancient temples. The key reason to visit Manikaran Sahib is its spiritual significance, offering visitors a chance to immerse themselves in the divine atmosphere and seek blessings.

Nature Park Kasol: Nestled in the breathtaking landscape of the Parvati Valley, the Nature Park stands as a testament to the pristine beauty of the Himalayan region. Located in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, this park is a sanctuary for nature enthusiasts seeking an escape into the serenity of untouched wilderness.

Kheerganga Trek: Kheer Ganga (3050 meters) lies at the extreme end of Parvati valley and the last inhabited village while trekking to pin valley via Pin-Parvati pass. Kheerganga's panoramic skies and vast greenery are a much-needed delight to the trekker's eyes and especially the tired legs. It is a holy place with a hot water spring, a small temple of Lord Shiva and a bathing tank.

Parvati River: Parvati River flows through the Parvati Valley in Himachal Pradesh and is an indispensable part of this gorgeous region. The thundering river originates from the Man Talai Glacier, flowing north through Parvati Valley and eventually flowing into the Beas River near Kulu. Though not really a place to visit, the Parvati River is definitely a top attraction in Kasol.

Camping in Kasol: Kasol is a cold haven in the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. Known as the Amsterdam of India, Kasol has excellent weather throughout the year. Camping in Kasol has been a tradition over the years. The hamlet is a perfect base for trekking as it has functional connectivity with valleys and hills nearby.

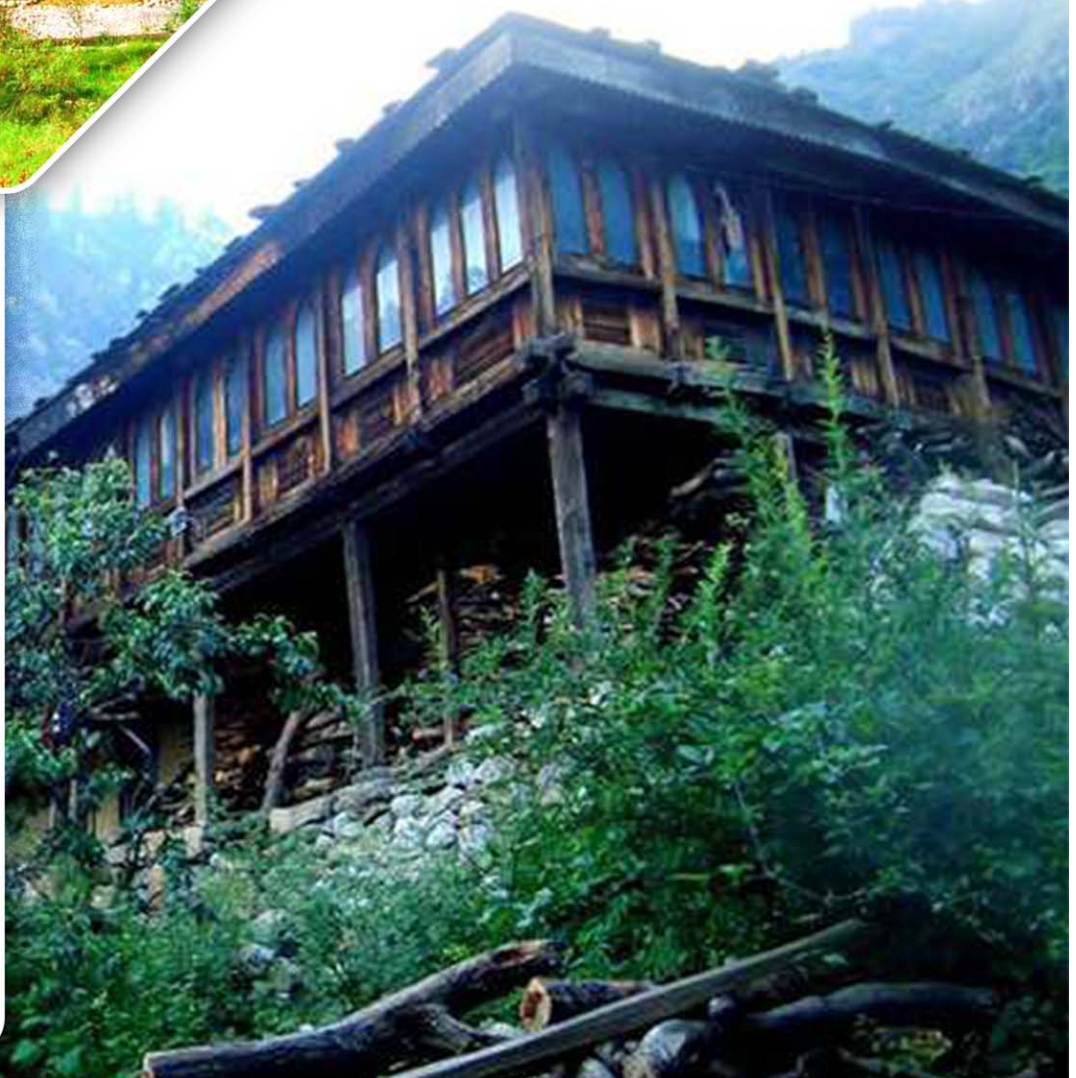
Moondance Café: Moondance Café in Kasol is a cozy, riverside café near the Kasol Bridge. It has been a local favorite since 1992. It features both indoor and outdoor seating, with views of the surrounding hills, and often hosts live music in the evenings. www.holidify.com

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Kasol

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