



Anita Anand

Indian-origin MP bows out of Canada PM race

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EAM Jaishankar to be at Trump's oath ceremony

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MAHAKUMBH HOLY DIP

"Very purifying for soul": Foreign devotees joyous on attending Mahakumbh Mela

PRAYAGRAJ: With the second day of the Maha Kumbh Mela in full swing, devotees from across the world have flocked to Prayagraj to take the holy dip and delve into spiritual practices and sermons. Notably several women pilgrims from across the world have gathered to participate in the Maha Kumbh Mela.

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FOG Telugu Sankranti event at ICSF

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Last week's result

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Devotees gather to take a dip at Triveni Sangam on the occasion of first 'Amrit Snan' during the Maha Kumbh 2025, in Prayagraj. (ANI Photo)



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Sunny Leone: God's lesson



Actress Sunny Leone, who is currently in Malaysia, shared that she thinks God is teaching her a lesson on patience and humility

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SEC files lawsuit against Musk



Ahead of Trump's inauguration as 47th US President, the Securities and Exchange Commission has filed a lawsuit against his best ally Musk

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MAHAKUMBH HOLY DIP

"Very purifying for soul": Foreign devotees joyous on attending Mahakumbh Mela



Foreign devotees gather to take a dip at Triveni Sangam on the occasion of 'Makar Sankranti' during the Maha Kumbh 2025, in Prayagraj. (ANI Photo)

PRAYAGRAJ: With the second day of the Maha Kumbh Mela in full swing, devotees from across the world have flocked to Prayagraj to take the holy dip and delve into spiritual practices and sermons. Notably several women pilgrims from across the world have gathered to participate in

the Maha Kumbh Mela.

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edge. We want to remind people about the real life, about Dharma, about how they can be really happy in this world".

Speaking about the arrangements, she said, "It's so nicely arranged. Everywhere there are policemen and they're helping", she lauded them for helping the groups of

devotees.

Another devotee, Madhavi Dasi from Peru told ANI, "I feel very fortunate to participate in this Mahakumbha Mela. We came here with this knowledge about Bhakti Yoga and about Sanatana Dharma. We want to share this. This is the path that our Gurudev teach us to really help the world to be in peace and be happy".

She said she also looked forward to take a bath in the Ganga and share the spiritual practice with all of them. "It's very purifying, and it's very purifying for the soul. That's the main thing. We came here to grow the soul".

"It's very impressive how many people are coming here from everywhere. So this is a very nice opportunity to share to everybody this Maha Kumbh Mela.", Madhavi Dasi said.

Devotees from several countries like Spain, Italy, US, and Germany amongst others have come to attend the Maha Kumbh Mela.

Maha Kumbh is one of the largest and most significant religious congregations in the world, held every 12 years at one of four locations in India.

The Maha Kumbh-2025, which is a Poorna Kumbh, will take place till February 26, 2025. Key 'snan' dates include January 14 (Makar Sankranti - First Shahi Snan), January 29 (Mauni Amavasya - Second Shahi Snan), February 3 (Basant Panchami - Third Shahi Snan), February 12 (Maghi Purnima), and February 26 (Maha Shivaratri). ANI

Laurene Powell, Steve Jobs's wife, joins Maha Kumbh festivities

GAURAV ARORA

PRAYAGRAJ: As celebrations for the Maha Kumbh 2025 begin in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj, many personalities from across the globe have been flocking to the ghats in the city, taking a dip in the holy confluence (Sangam) of Ganga and Yamuna.

The latest among many to attract attention at the Maha Kumbh festival is Laurene Powell, wife of former Apple CEO Steve Jobs, who has been participating in the cultural festivities. Reacting to this, Spiritual leader Swami Kailashanand Giri has said that such was the tradition that those who have never seen it want to partake in.

"She will participate in the ritual of taking a dip (at the Sangam). She is resting in my 'shivir'. However, she has some allergies. She has never been to such a crowded place. She is quite simple. She



Laurene Powell Jobs, wife of the late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs reaches Niranjani Akhara at Maha Kumbh, in Prayagraj. (ANI Photo)

stayed with us during the pooja. Our tradition is such that those who have never

seen it - they all want to join," Giri told ANI.

He further said that Niranjani Akhara was preparing for Rajasi Shahi (Amrit) Snan, which is scheduled for today morning. Expressing gratitude towards UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the arrangements done by the government, Giri said that nearly 30 to 40 million people will take a holy dip.

"Our Niranjani Akhara is preparing for Rajasi Shahi (Amrit) Snan - something that is rare to even Gods... Today, almost three to four crore (30 to 40 million) people will take holy baths. Both the central and the state governments have done praiseworthy work. I thank CM Yogi Adityanath who is dear to me and also PM Modi - both of them are Dharmatma," the seer said. ANI

"Maha Kumbh is not an occasion for India, it is for the world": Foreign devotees express zeal in Prayagraj

PRAYAGRAJ: Prayagraj is seeing the fervor of devotees from across the world on the second day of the Maha Kumbh Mela. With over 10 million devotees having taken the holy dip so far as per the UP DGP, the place continues to see an ever-growing presence of pilgrims from India and the world.

Nitya Tarangini, a devotee from Russia who has been staying in Vrindavan now told ANI, "I'm very excited because it's such a huge opportunity to take part in this Kumbh Mela because it's very special and many people are coming. We're staying in Vrindavan, we have a temple there, so that's why we came we want to share these books, this knowledge, this Sanatana Dharma."

Another foreign devotee said, "The spirit of India is very powerful at this moment. Jupiter and Saturn are aligned. Maha Kumbh is not an occasion for India, Maha Kumbh is for all world", he expressed enthusiastically.

Makeshwari Dasi, from the United States of America, told ANI, "I feel like we came to a very pure place and I'm anticipating seeing all the people of India, being in the water with them and chanting with them. We're very fortunate that we got to come to not just India but these



Foreign devotees gather to take a dip at Triveni Sangam on the occasion of 'Makar Sankranti' during the Maha Kumbh 2025, in Prayagraj. (ANI Photo)

spiritual places like Prayag".

Today, Sadhus of the 13 Akhadas of Sanatan Dharm will take a holy dip at Triveni Sangam.

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in the world, held every 12 years at one of four locations in India.

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Indian-origin MP bows out of Canada PM race, won't seek re-election

OTTAWA: Anita Anand has bowed out of Canada's prime ministerial race and announced that she won't seek re-election to parliament either.

Transport Minister Anand said she was following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's example and will start her career's next chapter by returning to

Pierre Marcel Poilievre, two other prominent politicians, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc, have also quit the race to succeed Trudeau who announced last week his decision to resign.

In the announcement on X, Anand, who has previously held the powerful defense

research, and public policy analyses."

An expert in business and finance law, she was a tenured law professor at the University of Toronto. She did stints as a visiting lecturer at Yale University in the US before plunging into politics and becoming the MP from Oakville in Ontario in 2019.

Speaking of her origin, she said, "During my first campaign, many people told me that a woman of Indian descent would not get elected in Oakville, Ontario. Yet, Oakville rallied behind me not once but twice since 2019, an honor that I will hold in my heart forever."

Her father, S.V. Anand was the son of a freedom fighter from Tamil Nadu, V.A. Sundaram, and her mother Saroj Ram was from Punjab, and both were doctors who immigrated to Canada.

Joining the Trudeau cabinet in 2019 as the public services and procurement minister, she made her mark ensuring

Canada had enough medical equipment and vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, she received the high-profile



Anita Anand

defense portfolio and moved in a cabinet reshuffle to be the president of the Treasury Board, a ministerial-level post, overseeing government operations broadly.

In the announcement on X, Anand, who has previously held the powerful defense portfolio, said, "Now that the Prime Minister has made his decision to move to his next chapter, I have determined the time is right for me to do the same"

academia.

With the Liberal Party leadership and the prime ministership heading to a dead end in an election that favors the opposition Conservative Party and its leader

portfolio, said, "Now that the Prime Minister has made his decision to move to his next chapter, I have determined the time is right for me to do the same, and to return to my prior professional life of teaching,

Death of Indian national in Russia: India calls for early discharge of remaining Indians from conflict zone

NEW DELHI: Reacting strongly to reports of the death of an Indian national in Russia, India reiterated its demand for the early discharge of the remaining Indians currently serving the Russian Army in the conflict zones.

"We have learnt of the unfortunate death of an Indian national from Kerala who had apparently been recruited to serve in the Russian Army. Another Indian national from Kerala, who was similarly recruited, has been injured and is receiv-

"We are working with the Russian authorities for early transportation of the mortal remains to India. We have also sought the early discharge and repatriation to India of the injured person. The matter has been strongly taken up with the Russian authorities in Moscow as well as with the Russian Embassy in New Delhi today. We have also reiterated our demand for the early discharge of the remaining Indian nationals," he added.

The plight of Indians fighting for Russia

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ing treatment in a hospital in Moscow," said Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.

Offering condolences to the family of the deceased, the senior diplomat stated that the Indian Embassy in Moscow is in touch with the families, and all possible assistance is being rendered.

in the Ukraine war is a key concern for New Delhi.

India has maintained that the recruitment of Indian nationals into the Russian army in a conflict situation is not in consonance with the India-Russia diplomatic partnership, and has asked for the early release and return of all such Indian nationals. *IANS*

Biden administration to remove Cuba from US terrorism list

WASHINGTON DC: The Biden administration announced it will remove Cuba from the US state sponsor of terrorism list, reversing a designation made by Donald Trump's administration in 2021.

The White House in a press release 'Certification of Rescission of Cuba's Designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism' quoted US President Joe Biden as saying, "Pursuant to the Constitution and the laws of the United States, and consistent with sections 1754(c) and 1768(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (50 U.S.C. 4813(c) and 4826(c)), I hereby certify with respect to the rescission of the determination of January 12, 2021, regarding Cuba that the Government of Cuba has not provided any support for international terrorism during the preceding 6-month period; and the Government of Cuba has provided assurances that it will not support acts of international terrorism in the future."

On January 11, 2021, the US State Department designated Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism in granting safe harbor to terrorists.

The US Embassy in Cuba in a press release had said, "The Trump administration has been focused from the start on denying the Castro regime the resources it uses to oppress its people at home and countering its malign interference in Venezuela and the rest of the Western Hemisphere. With this action, we will once again hold Cuba's government accountable and send a clear message: the Castro regime must end its support for international terrorism and subversion of US justice."

It added, "For decades, the Cuban government fed, housed, and provided medical care for murderers, bomb makers, and hijackers, while many Cubans go hungry, homeless, and without basic medicine. *ANI*

EAM Jaishankar to attend Trump's swearing-in ceremony on Jan 20

NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar will represent India at the swearing-in ceremony of US President-elect Donald Trump in Washington on January 20, according to a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The MEA noted, "On the invitation of the Trump-Vance Inaugural Committee, External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar will attend the swearing-in ceremony of President-elect Donald J. Trump as the 47th President of the United States of America."



S. Jaishankar

The ministry further stated that Jaishankar will also engage with representatives from the incoming administration and other dignitaries during his visit.

Donald Trump is set to take the presidential oath of office at noon on January 20, administered by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts on the steps of the US Capitol in Washington. Prior to this, Vice President-elect J.D. Vance will also be sworn in.

Last month, the Joint Congressional

Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies (JCCIC) announced "Our Enduring Democracy: A Constitutional Promise" as the theme for the 60th Inaugural Ceremonies.

The theme pays tribute to the Founding Fathers' commitment to preserving democracy for future generations.

As part of the inauguration, US flags will be flown at half-staff in honor of former President Jimmy Carter, who passed away at the age of 100. President Joe Biden ordered the flags to remain lowered for 30 days, ending at sunset

on January 28.

Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election was certified by the United States Congress on January 6, clearing the path for his return to the White House. The certification officially validated the Electoral College results from November's election.

The certification event in Congress, led by Vice President Kamala Harris, who was Trump's main opponent in the presidential race, proceeded briefly and without significant attention. *IANS*

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BAPS Hindu Mandir, Abu Dhabi welcomes Defense Attachés of over 20 nations

NEW DELHI: The BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi welcomed a host of Defense Attachés, families and dignitaries from more than 20 embassies worldwide, to celebrate the values of unity, diversity and harmony.

The event, which saw dignitaries from across the globe, assembling at Abu Dhabi's first Hindu mandir, was organised during the New Year.

The Mandir created by the generosity of the leadership of Abu Dhabi and the efforts of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, has already attracted over two million visitors from across the world in less than one year, demonstrating immense global admiration and support.

The gathering highlighted the Mandir's profound commitment to fostering intercultural understanding and collaboration, positioning it as a beacon of hope and inspiration for communities worldwide.

The event brought together a gathering of high-level military personnel and many others who represented diverse nationalities and cultures.

Defense Attachés from the countries included: Belgium, Canada, Comoros Island, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt,

France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Korea, Mozambique, Tanzania, Serbia, Switzerland, etc attended the gathering, which underscored the Mandir's dedication to fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The delegates were warmly welcomed by the BAPS Board members and volunteers with traditional garlands and roses, setting the tone for a heartfelt event. The

Defense Attachés from the countries included: Belgium, Canada, Comoros Island, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Korea, Mozambique, Tanzania, Serbia, Switzerland, etc

serene setting of the Mandir, coupled with the powerful message of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" - "The whole world is one family" - served as a poignant backdrop for this significant occasion.

The delegates ascended to the Prayer Dune, which symbolizes HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj's historic prayer from 1997, representing the origin of the mandir, from where the delegates offered selfless

prayers for world peace and for the well-being of others.

The delegates were mesmerized by 'The Fairy Tale' immersive show, which recreates the incredible journey of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi, marking a crucial milestone in celebration of the unique and historic Mandir. The Fairy Tale immersive show at the BAPS Hindu Mandir housed in a specially constructed audito-

rium, is projected on all four walls and the floor using 20 video projectors and provides a cutting-edge surround sound experience.

After the 'Fairy Tale' show, delegates marveled at the 6,500-year-old sub-fossil oaks from the Czech Republic, generously donated by an artist.

The dignitaries were mesmerized by the tour of the Mandir's elaborate and intricate architecture and learned about its

undertaking of spiritual elevation, cultural preservation, and social service.

Inside the mandir, delegates offered prayers and closely admired the artistry of the intricately carved Ancient Civilizational Value tales on the mandir's façade.

Concluding the evening's event with a short, elegant session in the sustainable environment of 'The Orchard' at the BAPS Hindu Mandir, Brahmaviharidas Swami, Head of the BAPS Hindu Mandir said, 'The BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi reflects our deep love for God and humanity, our commitment to global harmony, and our belief that, at their core, even those engaged in conflict seek peace. The vast diversity of flowers, faces and races strengthen our belief that God and nature that created us all believe in harmony.'

He also emphasized the importance that nothing on this Earth is more sacred than life itself, as the true worth of a nation is determined by the quality of people it nurtures. Drawing inspiration from history, he offered three pieces of advice: First, win people, not wars; second, speak from the heart; and third, keep the promises we give. IANS



An aerial view of tents at Triveni Sangam during Maha Kumbh 2025, in Prayagraj. (ANI Photo)

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Maha Shivaratri

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MP receives investment proposals worth Rs 3.75 lakh crore

BHOPAL: The Madhya Pradesh government has received investment proposals worth more than Rs 3.75 lakh crore from six Regional Industry Conclaves (RIC), organised between March and December 2024.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that the total investment proposals received from six RICs were expected to generate nearly 85,000 jobs in the state, besides ensuring industrial growth.

The state government is now preparing for the 7th Regional Industry Conclave (RIC) in the Shahdol division.

The Chief Minister Yadav virtually interacted with a group of industrialists who were supposed to announce investment in the state during Shahdol's RIC.



Chief Minister Mohan Yadav

After virtual interaction with industrialists from Rewa airport, the Chief Minister said investment proposals worth Rs 20,000 crore have been received for Shahdol.

The total investment is estimated to increase further after the conclave is organised.

After reviewing preparations for RIC, Chief Minister Yadav directed the Shahdol district administration to prepare new entrepreneurs for startups within two days.

The Chief Minister also stated that Shahdol is known across the country for its abundant mineral resources.

Notably, the first edition of the RIC was organised in Chief Minister Yadav's home district Ujjain on March 1 and 2, 2024. Later, the second edition was held in Jabalpur on July 20 and the third in Gwalior on August 28. IANS

SpaceX launches 2 private lunar landers from US, Japan to space

NEW DELHI: Elon Musk-led SpaceX has successfully launched two private lunar landers from the US and Japan to space.

Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost and ispace's Resilience lifted off aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from NASA's Kennedy Space Center (KSC) on Florida's Space Coast at 1:11 a.m. EST.

"SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket has lifted off from pad 39A in Cape Canaveral and Blue Ghost is on its way to orbit! Go Ghost Riders in the sky! #BGM1 #GhostRiders," Firefly said, in a post on social media platform X. IANS



US SEC files lawsuit against Musk ahead of Trump inauguration

WASHINGTON: Just days ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration as the 47th US President, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has filed a lawsuit against his best ally Elon Musk over an alleged securities violation relating to his acquisition of Twitter (now called X) in 2022.

The SEC lawsuit alleged that the tech billionaire "failed to disclose his 5 percent ownership stake of Twitter in a timely manner", violating federal securities law.

The complaint, filed in federal court in Washington, DC, also claimed that the Tesla and SpaceX owner "waited to disclose the acquisition in order to build up a larger position in Twitter at a discounted price" said reports.

The lawsuit against Musk

came as Gary Gensler, Chairman of the SEC, is set to step down on January 20, the day

than 5 percent of Twitter - which Musk allegedly did on March 24, 2022 - he was required by the

complaint.

During this delayed disclosure period, Musk allegedly increased his position in Twitter from a 5 percent stake to a 9 percent stake, according to reports.

Musk's lawyers were quoted as saying in media reports that SEC cannot bring an "actual case" against the billionaire. "As the SEC retreats and leaves of-fice, the SEC's multi-year campaign of harassment against Mr. Musk culminated in the filing of a single-count ticky tak complaint against Mr. Musk," the lawyers said in a statement.

US President-elect has nominated Paul Atkins as the new SEC chief, who earlier served as SEC Commissioner and is expected to be a Trump ally.

Musk had bought Twitter for a whopping \$44 billion in October 2022. IANS



Elon Musk

Trump takes over as US President.

According to the SEC complaint, after purchasing more

SEC to file a beneficial ownership report.

He filed the report April 4, 2022, according to the SEC's

GenAI adoption projected to transform nearly 3.8 crore jobs in India by 2030

NEW DELHI: The Generative AI (GenAI) adoption is projected to transform at least 38 million (3.8 crore) jobs in India by 2030, driving a 2.61 percent productivity boost to the economy through gains in the organised sector and additional 2.82 per-



cent with the adoption of GenAI by the unorganized sector, a recent report said.

At least 24 percent of tasks across industries have the potential for full automation, while

another 42 percent can be enhanced through AI, freeing up between 8-10 hours per week for knowledge workers," according to the EY India report.

GenAI is poised to transform every job, unlocking immense potential for productivity and economic gains.

"This revolution will fundamentally reshape jobs, driving productivity and innovation. Building talent pipelines and prioritizing upskilling must be at the forefront of every organization," said Rajiv Memani, Chairman and CEO, EY India.

By fostering public-private collaborations and investing in talent development, India can also become a global hub for AI skilled

talent, he added.

The report stated that at an industry level, the largest productivity gains are expected in the services sector due to its higher labor share to gross output while manufacturing and construction will see smaller impact.

duction, with 34 percent having completed proof of concepts (POCs) and 11 percent working on production implementation of POCs. Enterprises in India are also at different stages of data readiness. Only 3 percent of surveyed enterprises report

"This revolution will fundamentally reshape jobs, driving productivity and innovation. Building talent pipelines and prioritizing upskilling must be at the forefront of every organization"

While the promise of AI is vast, the survey reveals that adoption is still in its early stages. Only 15 percent of surveyed enterprises have implemented GenAI in pro-

being fully ready, with 23 percent reporting that they're in no state of data readiness to take up AI deployments, the report mentioned. IANS

India likely to see smartphone exports reach \$20 billion this fiscal

NEW DELHI: The country's smartphone market, which is projected to cross \$50 billion in value this year, is likely to see \$20 billion worth exports in FY25, riding on 'made in India' Apple iPhones.

In FY24, the country saw smartphone exports surpassing \$15 billion (with Apple's share at over \$10 billion). This fiscal, according to industry estimates, this figure is likely to cross \$20 billion, further driven by iPhone exports.

Driven by the ongoing trend of premiumisation and thrust on local manufacturing, Apple and Samsung are leading the chart. The Indian smartphone market is evolving rapidly, with original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) increasingly focusing on premium launches to strengthen brand equity, showcase technological capabilities and improve profitability.

Owing to the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, Apple has already reached Rs 1 lakh crore in iPhone exports from India in the calendar year 2024.

Over the past four years, the Apple ecosystem has also generated 1,75,000 new direct jobs, with over 72 percent of these roles filled by women, as per the government data.

Back in 2014-15, domestic mobile phone production



stood at 5.8 crore units, which was increased to 33 crore units in 2023-24, with imports dropping significantly. Exports reached five crore units, and FDI increased by 254 percent, highlighting the PLI scheme's role in boosting manufacturing and investment.

The electronics sector in the country is projected to create 12 million jobs by 2027 - 3 million direct and 9 million indirect roles.

Direct employment opportunities are likely to include employment for nearly 1 million engineers, 2 million ITI-certified professionals, and 0.2 million specialists in fields like AI, ML and data science, while non-technical roles are expected to contribute 9 million indirect jobs, highlighting the sector's immense potential to fuel economic growth, according to

a latest report by TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship.

The electronics industry has an ambitious goal of achieving \$500 billion in manufacturing output by 2030. To meet this target, the sector must grow five-fold over the next five years, bridging a \$400 billion production gap.

Currently, domestic production stands at \$101 billion, with mobile phones contributing 43 percent, followed by consumer and industrial electronics at 12 percent each, and electronic components at 11 percent. *IANS*

India's automobile sales surge 11.6 pc to record 2.5 crore units in 2024

NEW DELHI: India's automobile sales surged by a robust 11.6 percent in 2024 to scale the highest-ever mark of 2.5 crore units compared to the corresponding figure of 2.3 crore units in the previous year, according to wholesale data released recently by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM).

With this, India remained the world's third largest car market last year.

"Positive consumer sentiments and the country's macroeconomic stability helped in propelling reasonable growth for the automobile sector across vehicle segments," said SIAM president Shailesh Chandra.

The growth has been primarily driven by the two-wheeler segment which grew by 14.5 percent in 2024 as compared to previous year, posting sales of 1.95 crore units. In addition, passenger vehicles and three-wheelers posted their highest ever sales in a calendar year, he pointed out.

Passenger vehicles (PV) grew by 4.2 percent in 2024 as compared to the previous year, with sales of around 43

lakh units. Three-wheelers posted a growth of 6.8 percent in 2024 as compared to the previous year, with sales of 7.3 lakh units.

The data for December showed passenger vehicle dispatches to dealers rose 10 percent to 3,14,934 units against 2,86,390 units in December 2023.

Two-wheeler dispatches, however, witnessed a 9 percent decline at 11,05,565 units over 12,12,238 units in December 2023. Three-wheeler dispatches rose to 52,733 units in December from 50,947 units in December 2023, SIAM said.

In the October-December quarter, passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles and three-wheelers posted their highest ever growth.

"The stable policy ecosystem of government in 2024, carrying on from the previous years, has helped the industry. As the new year commences with a positive sentiment being created through the Bharat Mobility Global Expo, this momentum would further propel growth in 2025," Chandra noted. *IANS*



3 Indian banks among top 25 global banks by market cap, ICICI standout performer

NEW DELHI: Three Indian banks -- HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, and the State Bank of India (SBI) -- ended the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2024 at the 13th, 19th, and 24th spots in the top 25 global banks by market capitalization, respectively, according to a new report.

While HDFC Bank ended Q4 2024 with \$158.5 billion in market cap, ICICI Bank had a market cap of \$105.7 billion, and the SBI, \$82.9 billion, according to a report by GlobalData, a leading data analytics and research company.

Indian banks demonstrated resilience, with ICICI Bank emerging as a standout performer, with its market cap growing by 25.8 percent to \$105.7 billion, highlighting the strength of India's expanding digital banking and credit ecosystem.

However, HDFC Bank's market cap recorded a 1.6 percent increase to \$158.5 billion, due to rising competition and cost pressures.

The aggregate market capitalization of the top 25 global banks increased by 27.1 percent year-on-year (YoY), reaching \$4.6 trillion in the fourth quarter (Q4)



ended December 31, compared to the same period ended December 31, 2023.

JPMorgan Chase continues to remain the world's largest bank by market cap, recording an increase of 37.2 percent to \$674.9 billion by the end of Q4 2024.

Goldman Sachs witnessed a stellar 42.9 percent growth, which propelled it to ninth place in the chart from 13th position in the previous quarter.

Most of the stocks rose in Q4, benefiting from the US Federal Reserve's interest rate cuts, while other regional markets came under pressure amid worries over trade tariffs, according to the report.

According to Murthy Grandhi, company profiles analyst at GlobalData, the Federal Reserve implemented consecutive interest rate cuts of 25 basis points in November 2024 and December 2024.

"However, in December 2024, the Fed sparked a stock market sell-off by reducing the projected number of interest rate cuts for 2025. This adjustment was driven by concerns over persistently stubborn inflation," said Grandhi.

The report predicted that tariffs expected to be imposed under Donald Trump's administration and planned tax cuts in 2025 may offset each other.

However, risks such as rising sovereign debt, a stronger dollar, foreign outflows from emerging markets, geopolitical tensions in West Asia, China's economic stimulus, and the yen carry trade are key factors likely to influence market performance and economic growth. *IANS*

HMPV cases in northern provinces declining: China

NEW DELHI: Cases of the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV), a respiratory illness, is declining in the northern provinces, said Chinese officials.

Assuring that HMPV is a decades-old virus, Wang Liping, a researcher at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, stated that the rise in case was due to better detection.

"At present, the rate of positive cases in human metapneumovirus detection is fluctuating, and the rate of positive cases in northern provinces is declining," said Liping, during a press briefing by China's National Health Commission.

"The rate of positive cases among patients aged 14 and below has started to decline," she added.

Liping noted the increase in recent years in the number of cases of the virus, first detected in the Netherlands in 2001, is due to better detection methods.

"The human metapneumovirus is not a new virus, and has been with humans for at least several decades," said Liping added. Earlier, several photos and videos emerged on social media showing hospitals in China swamped with people amid rising cases of HMPV -- causing respiratory illness -- and raising serious concerns of another pandemic akin to Covid-19. The Chinese government has dismissed this as an annual winter occurrence.

"Respiratory infections tend to peak during the winter season in the Northern Hemisphere. Recently, the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration of China held a press conference to share information about the prevention and control of respiratory diseases in China during the wintertime," said China's foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning.

"The diseases appear to be less severe and spread on a smaller scale compared with the previous year," Ning said.

Meanwhile, India has recorded about 10 cases, majorly from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Assam. The majority of cases occurred in children between infants aged 3-month-old to 13 years. 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)

Study links reel addiction with high BP in young, middle-aged people

NEW DELHI: Even as watching short videos or reels on social media platforms has become an integral part of the daily lives of young and middle-aged people, a new study shows that addiction to this can lead to high blood pressure.

The team analyzed data from 4,318 young and middle-aged people who self-reported screen time spent watching short videos at bedtime and also underwent medical examinations between January 2023 and September 2023.

They found that longer screen time spent watching short videos at bedtime was associated with higher hypertension prevalence.

"The screen time spent

watching short videos at bedtime was significantly associated with essential hypertension in young and middle-aged



people," said the team, in the paper published in the journal BMC Public Health.

The researchers called for "strict control of screen time

spent watching short videos at bedtime".

In addition, they also urged "control of body weight, blood

lipids, blood glucose, and uric acid levels, and improvement of poor lifestyle, such as a high-sodium diet," which can help reduce the risk of hypertension.

Previous studies have shown that prolonged mobile phone use, that is 30 minutes or more a week can increase the risk of high blood pressure or hypertension.

The study, published in European Heart Journal - Digital Health, a journal of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), indicates that low levels of radiofrequency energy emitted from mobile phones have been linked with an increase in blood pressure.

According to the World Health Organization, nearly 1.3 billion adults aged 30 to 79 years worldwide have high blood pressure. It is a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke, as well as a leading cause of premature death. IANS

Obesity may affect survival rates in children with cancer: Study

NEW DELHI: Obesity at the time of cancer diagnosis in children may affect the survival rates, according to a recent study.

Over 390 million children and adolescents aged 5-19 years were overweight in 2022, including 160 million who were living with obesity, as per data from the World Health Organization (WHO). Obesity is a known precursor to many non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cancer.

"Our study highlights the negative impact of obesity among all types of childhood cancers. It provides the rationale to evaluate different strategies to mitigate the adverse risk of obesity on cancer outcomes in future trials," said Thai Hoa Tran from the Centre

Hospitalier Universitaire Sainte-Justine in Montreal, Canada. The team conducted a retrospective study on 11,291 children newly



diagnosed with cancer from 2001 to 2020, across Canada.

Of these children, aged 2 to 18 years, 10.5 percent were

obese at the time of diagnosis.

Compared with patients without obesity at the time of initial cancer diagnosis, those with

obesity had lower rates of 5-year event-free survival (77.5 percent versus 79.6 percent) and overall survival (83.0 percent versus

85.9 percent).

After adjusting for factors including age, sex, ethnicity, neighborhood income quintile, treatment era, and cancer categories, the team found that obesity at diagnosis was linked with a 16 percent increase in the risk of relapse. There was also a 29 percent increase in the risk of death, revealed the study, published in the journal Cancer.

The negative impact of obesity on prognosis was especially pronounced in patients with acute lymphoblastic leukemia and brain tumors, said the team.

The study "also reinforces the urgent need to reduce the epidemic of childhood obesity as it can result in significant health consequences," Tran said. IANS

Fiber in diet may boost the body against infections: Study

WASHINGTON: A new study has found that the composition of the gut microbiome helps in predicting how likely a person will succumb to potentially life-threatening infection with *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *E. coli* and other bugs -- and it may be altered by changing your diet.

The group of bacteria called Enterobacteriaceae, including *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Shigella*, *E. coli* and others, is present at low levels as part of a healthy human gut microbiome. However, certain catalytic factors such as increased inflammation in the body, or by eating contaminated food these bugs can cause illness and disease. In extreme cases, too much Enterobacteriaceae in the gut can be life-threatening.

Researchers have used computational approaches including AI to analyze the gut microbiome composition of over 12,000 people across 45 countries from their stool samples. They found that a person's microbiome 'signature' can predict whether a person's gut is likely to be colonized by Enterobacteriaceae. The results are consistent across different states of

health and geographic locations.

The researchers identified 135 gut microbe species that are commonly

found in the absence of Enterobacteriaceae. It likely protects against infection. The results are published in the

journal *Nature Microbiology*. Notable among the protective gut species is a group of bacteria called



found in the absence of Enterobacteriaceae. It likely protects against infection. The results are published in the

journal *Nature Microbiology*. Notable among the protective gut species is a group of bacteria called *Faecalibacterium*, which produces beneficial compounds called short-chain fatty acids by breaking down fi-

ber in the foods we eat.

This seems to protect against infection by a range of disease-causing Enterobacteriaceae bugs.

The researchers suggest that eating more fiber in our diet will support the growth of good bacteria -- and crowd out the bad ones to significantly reduce the risk of illness.

In contrast, taking probiotics -- which don't directly change the environment in the gut -- is less likely to affect the likelihood of Enterobacteriaceae infection.

"Our results suggest that what we eat is potentially very important in controlling the likelihood of infection with a range of bacteria, including *E. coli* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* because this changes our gut environment to make it more hostile to invaders," said Dr Alexandre Almeida, a researcher at the University of Cambridge's Department of Veterinary Medicine and senior author of the paper.

He added: "By eating fiber in foods like vegetables, beans and whole grains, we can provide the raw material for our gut bacteria to produce short-chain fatty acids -- compounds that can protect us from these pathogenic bugs."

Klebsiella pneumoniae can cause pneumonia, meningitis and other infections. ANI



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Cambodia records 46 percent drop in dengue cases in 2024

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia reported 18,987 dengue cases in 2024, a sharp decline of 46 percent from 35,390 cases in the year before, said a Ministry of Health's recent report.

"The disease killed 46 people last year, down 53.5 percent from 99 deaths a year earlier," the report said.

Leang Rithea, National Dengue Control Program manager and deputy director of the National Center for Parasitology, Entomology, and Malaria Control, attributed the success to efforts to distribute larvicides, mosquito repellents and other materials to households to prevent a large-scale outbreak, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Parents should take their sick children to health centers or state hospitals within 48 hours if they suspect that their kids are infected with a dengue virus," he told Xinhua.

Rithea also urged households to fill in puddles around their houses, saying that the puddles are the sources of mosquitoes.

Dengue fever is a viral disease transmitted through the bite of an Aedes mosquito.



The disease causes an acute illness that usually follows symptoms such as headache, high fever, exhaustion, severe muscle and joint pain, swollen glands, vomiting and rash.

In the Southeast Asian country, the peak of the dengue epidemic period is in the rainy season from May to October.

Earlier, Huy Rekol, Director of the National Centre for Parasitology, Entomology and Malaria Control, said malaria cases in the Southeast Asian country plummeted by 74 percent from 1,384 cases in 2023 to only 355 cases in 2024.

Malaria is mainly found in the tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas, Asia, and Africa. The term malaria comes from the Medieval Italian phrase mala aria,

which means "bad air".

Malaria is common in tropical areas where it's hot and humid. In 2020, there were 241 million reported cases of malaria throughout the world, with 6,27,000 deaths due to vector-borne disease. The majority of these cases occur in Africa and South Asia. *IANS*

DNA repair may determine how cancer cells die following radiotherapy

SYDNEY: Australian researchers have found that DNA repair may determine how cancer cells die following radiotherapy in a new study that may help improve cancer treatment and cure rates.

To understand how cancerous tumor cells die after being subjected to radiotherapy, scientists from Sydney's Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI) followed irradiated cells for one week after radiation therapy by using live cell microscope technology, said an announcement by CMRI, Xinhua News agency reported.

"The surprising result of our research is that DNA repair, which normally protects healthy cells, determines how cancer cells die following radiotherapy," said Tony Cesare, head of the CMRI Genome Integrity Unit.

He said that the study found that DNA repair processes can recognize when overwhelming damage has occurred, such as from radiotherapy, and instruct a cancer cell how to die.

When DNA damaged by radiation was repaired by a method called homologous recombination, they found that

cancer cells died during reproduction, a process called cell division or mitosis.

Cesare said that death during cell division goes unnoticed by the immune system so does not activate the desired immune response.

However, he said that cells that dealt with radiation-damaged DNA through other repair methods survived cell division but released DNA repair byproducts into the cell.

"To the cell, these repair byproducts look like a viral or bacterial infection. This causes the cancer cell to die in a manner that alerts the immune system, which is what we do want," Cesare said.

The team showed that blocking homologous recombination changed the way cancer cells died to evoke a strong immune response.

The researchers said that the discovery will make it possible to use drugs

that block homologous recombination to force cancer cells treated with radiotherapy to die in a manner that alerts the immune system to the existence of a cancer that needs to be destroyed. *IANS*

"The surprising result of our research is that DNA repair, which normally protects healthy cells, determines how cancer cells die following radiotherapy," said Tony Cesare

Costly therapies to foster Alzheimer's market growth globally: Report

NEW DELHI: New expensive but disease-modifying treatments are expected to foster Alzheimer's disease market growth globally, according to a report.

The report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company showed that the growth will particularly be visible in eight major markets -- US, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK, Japan, and China.

The report forecasted that the Alzheimer's disease market in these countries to grow from \$2.4 billion in 2023 to \$19.3 billion by 2033 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 23.4 percent.

This will be primarily driven by the entry of expensive disease-modifying therapies (DMTs) into the market, which will likely result in increased treatment rates as more options become available. An ageing global population leading to an increase in prevalent cases, and the launch of novel symptomatic therapies for the treatment of agitation and psychosis associated with Alzheimer's disease will also contribute to the growth.

By 2033, DMTs are expected to dominate the global Alzheimer's disease market, contributing 73.5 percent of the market, with drugs targeting amyloid beta making up the majority of this, the report said.

Philippa Salter, Managing Neurology Analyst at GlobalData, said that Eisai/Biogen's Leqembi (lecanemab) and Eli Lilly's Kisunla (donanemab) will become the top-selling drugs for Alzheimer's, and "will generate global sales of approximately \$3.6 billion and \$3.8 billion, respectively, by 2033".

The report also noted barriers for these DMTs, which will limit their integration into clinical practice. Frequent IV administration and access to positron emission tomography (PET) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans are key economic and operational limiting factors for access to these drugs.

"In addition to logistical factors, these new DMTs are significantly more expensive than the current highly genericised symptomatic treatments used in the management of AD, providing a further access challenge in the form of reimbursement/payer restrictions," Salter said

To counter these, drugmakers are probing alternative routes of administration. Several oral late-stage products in the pipeline can enable easier integration into clinical practice.

These include Anavex Life Sciences' ANAVEX2-73 (blarcamesine), TauRx Therapeutics' LMTX (hydromethylthionine mesylate), and Novo Nordisk's NN-6535 (semaglutide).

The new DMTs are only considered moderately effective, so significant opportunity remains for more effective DMTs that do not just slow progression but also stop the disease, with prevention being the end goal.

Beyond DMTs, drugs that can effectively improve cognition in the late stages of the disease, as well as more effective options for secondary symptoms such as agitation and psychosis also provide opportunities for developers. *IANS*



I had been searching for a meaningful way to talk about violence against women: filmmaker SANDHYA SURI

MUMBAI: Violence, gender dynamics, and personal empowerment, 'Santosh', the United Kingdom's official entry for the 2025 Academy Awards for the Best International Feature Film category had been brewing in writer and director Sandhya Suri's mind for long.

Reflecting on the origins of the movie, Suri tells IANS that she had been searching for a meaningful way to talk about violence against women for a long time.

"She said, "When I was in India researching and working with various NGOs, I came across an image. There were nationwide protests following the Nirbhaya gang rape case and this was an image from Delhi of a huge crowd of angry female protesters, faces contorted with rage, and a line of female police officers, forcing them back. One of them had such an enigmatic expression, I was fascinated by her".

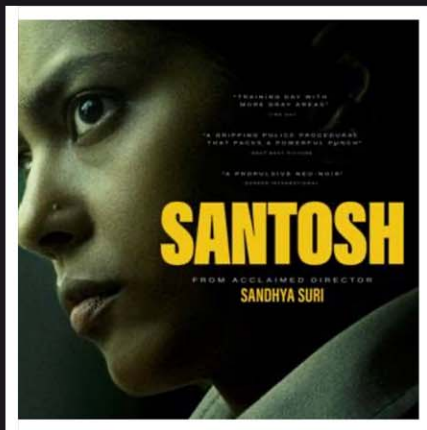
She continued, "What a gulf between her and those protesting, what power her uniform wielded and what powerlessness not to feel safe as an ordinary woman. When I started researching female police constables, I learnt of the government scheme of 'appointment on compassionate grounds' in which eligible dependents of

deceased police officers can inherit their jobs".

Spending time with many such widows, she realized some had previously led very sheltered lives, never even leaving the house without their husbands or relatives until they started their police training.

"I was struck by the journey: from housewife to widow, to policewoman. That was a journey I wanted to write about, and one I wanted to watch," she said.

The film revolves around a



young widow who inherits her late husband's job as a police constable in rural India and investigates a murder. This is the first time the UK has selected a Hindi-language film for this category. Having studied mathematics as an undergraduate, Suri says she did not want to dissect films the way she did with English literature.

Talking about the time when she was a teacher of English in Germany, she recalled, "Making films was what excited me, not analyzing them. So I decided to go to film school as a post-graduate, leaving the door open for something entirely different".

Her background in mathematics, she explains, helped her develop a unique way of thinking, which she carried over into her filmmaking approach. Having trained in documentary filmmaking at the National Film and Television School (NFTS) in the UK, the director, who has made documentaries including 'I for India', 'Around India with a Movie Camera', and the narrative short film 'The Field', tells that work on 'Santosh' began in 2016.

"The script was in good shape after the Sundance Scriptwriters' Lab, but the real work was researching, refining details, and fleshing out the characters. The film's protagonist, Santosh, a female constable, didn't fit the typical mold seen in many films set in India. She was not a diaspora character discovering her roots or an upper-middle-class protagonist fluent in English. Santosh does not speak English. She is a constable. I wanted to keep that authentic," says the director. IANS

Ajith to his fans: I am grateful for your love but please look after your lives!

CHENNAI: Actor Ajith Kumar, whose car racing team Ajith Kumar Racing recently did the country proud by emerging third in the 991 category of the 24H Dubai 2025, has said, while he is grateful for the love of his fans, he would want them to look after their lives.

Ajith, during the course of an interview that he gave after the win, had some suggestions for his fans.

He said, "Don't bother about what the other person is doing. Focus on your lives." He then went on to recall what he told his fans. "Watch films. Everything is fine. But you know... 'Ajith Vaazhga, Vijay Vaazhga' (Long Live Ajith, Long Live Vijay)... When are you going to live?" he asked.

The actor said, "I am very grateful for the love that you have for me but please look after your life. I will be a very happy man when I get to know that my fans are also doing very well in life. And when they are nice, they are kind to my peers, my co-stars and they have nice things to say.

"Again, life is very short. Our great grandchildren are not going to remember us. So, just keep this in mind. Live for the day. Don't look at the past and worry at what could happen. Live for this moment. Live now. Because one day, we will all die and that's the truth. Let's all work hard, play hard and be happy. Stay healthy - not just physically, mentally too. Love you all."

Interestingly, Ajith has said that he will not be signing any films until the racing season is on and that he would be doing a film between October and March, before the racing season commences.

It may be recalled that Ajith participated in the race unfazed by a car crash that had left his car badly damaged during a practice session on Tuesday.

For the uninitiated, Ajith was not only racing but is also the owner of the team Ajith Kumar Racing. His team participated in the intensely contested 991 class. Ajith's other teammates were Mathieu Detry, Fabian Duffieux and Cameron McLeod.

The 24H Dubai 2025 win will mean a lot to Ajith Kumar as it will mark his firm's competitive debut in the world of racing. It will also mark the start of intense endurance campaign for the team and his firm, which has roped in Bas Koeten Racing as its technical and logistical partner. IANS



Ajith Kumar

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AAPI's Share-the-Warmth program

India Post News Service

CHICAGO: Continuing the tradition of providing comfort and warmth to the needy and the homeless during this winter , with the overwhelming support from dozens of Chapters, the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) launched Share-the-Warmth program that will benefit thousands of people across the nation , " said Dr. Satheesh Kathula, President of AAPI.

For several years, AAPI at the national level and various local Chapters at the state levels have Launched this noble initiative of giving blankets to the poor and the needy in several homeless shelters across the nation.

Details on page 18

The Public Health Threats the World Faces This Year

VIDYA SETHURAMAN
India Post News Service

Avian flu, Norovirus, Human metapneumovirus, Oropouche and the continued threat of Covid-19 are some of the many public health crises the world faces this year. And with lower vaccination rates in the US, we are witnessing a corresponding spike in illnesses such as whooping cough. In recent years, we have seen a wave of proposed public health policies that threaten to undermine. tion program....

Details on page 20

COMMUNITY ACROSS AMERICA

16 India Post

www.indiapost.com

January 17, 2025



FOG Telugu Sankranthi event at Indian Consulate SF



India Post News Service

FOG Telugu Sankranthi Celebration in collaboration with the Indian Consulate in San Francisco, was a grand success, drawing a large crowd and featuring vibrant cultural programs. The event was organized and executed by FOG Telugu Chairperson Jo Sharma (Jyotsna) under the leadership of Dr. Japra

(FOG Founder) and team Dr. Abhilash Maraju (FOG Telugu President) and Devi Seetharam (FOG Telugu Director of Operations & Arts).

The chief guest of the event, Dr. Srikar Reddy, Consul General of San Francisco, addressed the audience alongside his wife, Prathima Reddy, both of whom enjoyed the entire show. Other dignitaries included Rakesh

Adhlaka, SF Deputy Consul, and Jaswant Singh Head of Chancery CGI, SF. A special thanks to Ruchika Sharma, Social Secretary of the Consulate General, for her coordination, as well as to FOG representatives Rajesh Verma, Vidya Sethuraman, Ritu Maheswari, Sandeep Deswal, and Raghu for their support.

Cont'd on page 19



Ramesh and Uma Ganatra Family Foundation supports Sankara Eye Foundation, USA with a \$1 Million-plus donation

MILPITAS: Sankara Eye Foundation, USA (SEF, USA) is deeply grateful to the Ramesh and Uma Ganatra Family Foundation for the incredibly generous support of \$1 million towards the construction of its upcoming Kalyanam Karoti Eye Hospital in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. The donation was made, along with an additional pledge of \$1 million to be donated during the years 2025-2026, towards the same project, and for regaining vision for the underprivileged who cannot afford to pay for the treatments.

Mr. Ramesh Ganatra, Chairman of the Ramesh and Uma Ganatra Family Foundation said, "Sankara Eye Foundation, USA's vision to improve and regain sight of millions of underprivileged people is truly a God-assigned task for Sankara. The entire Ganatra family in the USA and UK are truly humbled and blessed to have been assigned to be contributing partners to this noble cause."

Murali Krishnamurthy, CEO, of Sankara Eye Foundation, USA said "We are very fortunate to have the Ganatra family supporting our cause in a major way and we are very grateful to them. We need more such donors for our awesome journey of March to a Million."

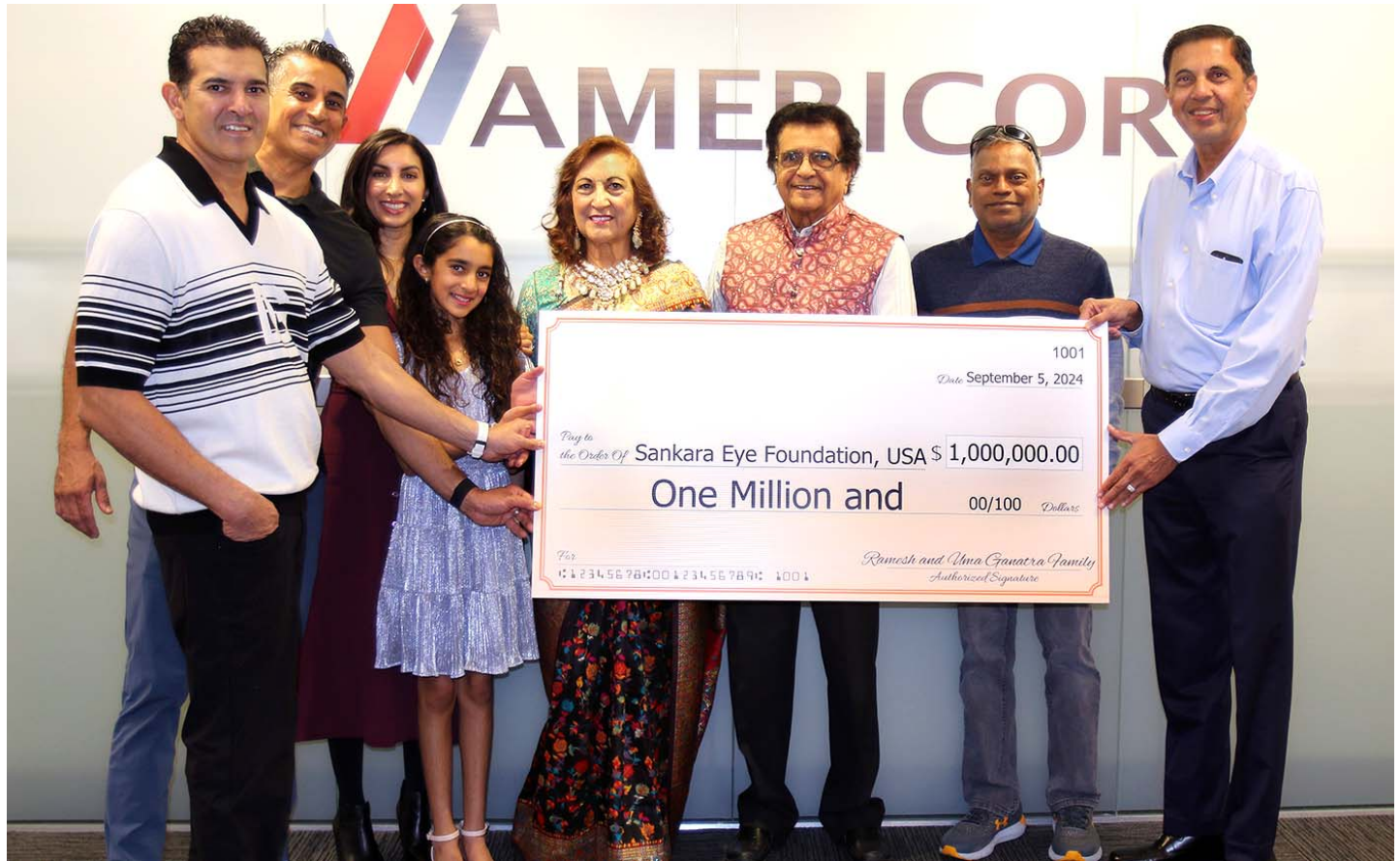
About Kalyanam Karoti Eye Hospital, Mathura

The Kalyanam Karoti Eye Hospital in Mathura is a state-of-the-art hospital with

"Sankara Eye Foundation, USA's vision to improve and regain sight of millions of underprivileged people is truly a God-assigned task for Sankara. The entire Ganatra family in the USA and UK are truly humbled and blessed"

the capacity to perform 50,000 free eye surgeries annually. It is located in one of the most underserved states in India and will serve a combined population of over 20 million.

SEF, USA's Vision 2030: March to a



Ramesh and Uma Ganatra (center) of the Ramesh and Uma Ganatra Family Foundation donate \$ 1 million to SEF, USA. Also seen are SEF, USA volunteers Girish Mehta, Venkatesh Subramanian (right), and members of the Ganatra family (left). Photo courtesy: SEF, USA

Million

SEF, USA is the world's largest FREE community eye care provider network with 27 hospitals across 14 states all over India performing over 400,000 free eye surgeries annually. Looking ahead, we are committed to more than doubling our impact in the next five years with Vision 2030: March to a Million - a goal to perform one million free eye surgeries annually by 2030. SEF, USA has a 4-star Charity Navigator rating for 10 years in a row, making it one of the top 3% of all charities in the USA.

For more information on SEF, USA and to donate, please visit our website at www.giftofvision.org; Call 1-866-726-5272, or write to: info@giftofvision.org.

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Ashfaq Syed Honored with Muslim Heritage Month Proclamation

India Post News Service

CHICAGO: Ashfaq Syed was honored to receive the Muslim Heritage Month Proclamation from DuPage County Board Chair Deborah A. Conroy at the DuPage County Board meeting.

This recognition celebrates the contributions of Muslim Americans to DuPage County and beyond, highlighting their impact across various fields.

The proclamation was presented by DuPage County Board Commissioner



our community over the years in various capacities, and I am truly humbled to stand alongside so many remarkable individuals who share a commitment to service. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Commissioner Sadia Covert for her unwavering leadership and support."

Ashfaq Syed joined fellow honorees and Commissioners Sadia Covert and Saba Haider in accepting this prestigious recognition. The event highlighted the importance of diversity and the value of cultural contributions in building stronger communities.

This proclamation is a reminder of the shared goal of fostering understanding, embracing diversity, and celebrating the unique contributions of all members of the community.

Sadia Covert to recognize organizations and community leaders who have dedicated themselves to serving the residents of DuPage County. Ashfaq Syed expressed gratitude for the recognition, saying:

"It has been a privilege to contribute to

Neiman Marcus removes \$940 Lord Ganesha cufflinks after protest

India Post News Service

CHICAGO: The Dallas (Texas) headquartered luxury fashion retailer "Neiman Marcus", which withdrew Hindu deity Ganesha shaped cufflinks in April 2021 after Hindus protested, and later brought these back, has again removed these after second protest describing it "highly inappropriate".

These \$940 Made in USA "Ganesha Cufflinks" were absent from "Neiman Marcus" website

Rajan Zed, who spearheaded both the protests, thanked Neiman Marcus Group for understanding the concerns of Hindu community.

Rajan Zed said that Lord Ganesha

is greatly revered in Hinduism meant to be worshipped in temples or home shrines.

Neiman Marcus, which claims to be "in pursuit of the extraordinary since 1907" should not be in the business of religious appropriation, sacrilege and belittling sa-

cred Hindu deity. It was deeply trivializing of immensely venerated Lord Ganesha to be flaunted like this; Zed had indicated that Hinduism is the oldest and third largest religions of the world with about 1.2 billion adherents and a rich philosophical thought and it should not be taken frivolously. Symbols of any faith, larger or smaller, should not be mishandled; Zed had noted.

In Hinduism, Lord Ganesha is worshipped as god of wisdom and remover of obstacles and is invoked before the beginning of any major undertaking.

Before removal, Ganesha Cufflinks, "sterling silver plated with rhodium", were claimed to be "hand painted in a process that takes 7 hours".

Neiman Marcus Group, with history going back to 1907; is now part of Saks Global, a leading luxury retail and real estate company; which includes Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman, Saks Fifth Avenue, Saks OFF 5TH, Last Call and Horchow.



AAPI's Share-the-Warmth program

India Post News Service

CHICAGO: Continuing the tradition of providing comfort and warmth to the needy and the homeless during this winter, with the overwhelming support from dozens of Chapters, the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) launched Share-the-Warmth program that will benefit thousands of people across the nation, " said Dr. Satheesh Kathula, President of AAPI.

For several years, AAPI at the national level and various local Chapters at the state levels have Launched this noble initiative of giving blankets to the poor and the needy in several homeless shelters across the nation.

"We are immensely happy to state that our AAPI's 'SHARE THE WARMTH' program has

been highly successful this year," said Dr. Raghu Lolabhattu, Chair, Share-The-Warmth program. "

Dr. Malti Mehta, Co-Chair of the Share-the-Warmth program said, "AAPI launched the Share-A-Blanket project in 2019 and since then it has been held annually by AAPI and local Chapters of AAPI."

"We at AAPI are extremely grateful for the opportunities we have been blessed with to serve the communities we live in and work in," said Dr. Sunil Kaza, Chair of AAPI BOT.

"This has been a one-of-a-kind experi-

ence for the teams of physicians and young volunteers alike who have generously volunteered their time and resources to bring joy to the less fortunate. " said Dr. Amit Chakrabarty, President-Elect of AAPI.

Dr. Raj Bhayani, Secretary of AAPI urged "all AAPI members to make this program a grand success and make AAPI and our local organizations proud. We request that every one of you make a generous donation for this fund and your contribution would surely give

a great comfort to a needed person.

"After experiencing the generosity of AAPI members, we strongly feel that we can accomplish much more with support and participation from all our AAPI physicians led by the local Chapters," said Dr. Shirish Patel, Treasurer of AAPI

American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), founded in 1982 is the largest ethnic medical organization in the United States, representing the interests of over 120,000 physicians of Indian origin. In addition to several programs in India, AAPI has been in the forefront, advocating for the interests of the medical fraternity and organizing regular CME programs, health & wellness events, and financial workshops for its members and outreach, public health education, and advocacy activities for the community both locally and internationally.

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FOG Telugu Sankranthi event at Indian Consulate SF

Cont'd from page 16

Raghu represented Jo Sharma, the main sponsor of the event, which showcased beautiful artwork by Devi Seetharam, including her unique Bommala Kolu (traditional dolls) and colorful Rangoli (muggulu) arrangements, along with handmade kites used as decorative photo booths.

Highlights of the celebration included cultural performances such as the Sankranthi Kuchipudi Dances by Shivanoopuram (School of Kuchipudi) led by Sindhu Surendra, the Kollata dancedilse group Dance along with the BogiPallu led by SriSailaja Sayani, traditional group singing led by Srikali Varanasi, and the Sankranthi Fashion Walk (Andamaina Bhamalu) led by Anu Gangadi. Additional artwork was displayed by FOG Telugu Directors Srikali/Gautham and Megha, which included more kite decorations.

Medals were distributed by Dr. Srikar Reddy to all the leads of FOG Telugu. Food was provided by Anu Nair from the Vande Bharat Restaurant.

Jo Sharma (also known as Jyotsna), the Chairperson of FOG Telugu and the FOG Cultural Chair, organized pre-Sankranthi event competitions at the Fremont Hindu



Temple. She hosted various activities, including kite-making, cooking, art, and rangoli competitions. She also sponsored the whole event.

A big thank you to all the volunteers who helped: Raghu, Saahil, Srikali, Gautham, Megha, Sindhu, Surendra, Anita, Ganesh, Ravindar, Maruthi, Sireesh, Madhu, Pragathi, Soumya, and our food sponsor Anu Nair from Vande Bharat.

Bhogi Pallu by Sirisha Gurana, Sirisha Kasya, and Lakshmi Pasala

Dance by Sankranthi Bullolu: Praveena Reddy Dyasani

Dance for Chinna Bhogipallu: Priyadarshini Nare

The entire event was covered and published by IndiaPost, Sakshi TV, TV5 and ManaTV channels.



FOG Telugu Sankranthi Competitions (Rangoli/Cooking/Art/Kites)



The Public Health Threats the World Faces This Year

VIDYA SETHURAMAN
India Post News Service

Avian flu, Norovirus, Human metapneumovirus, Oropouche and the continued threat of Covid-19 are some of the many public health crises the world faces this year. And with lower vaccination rates in the US, we are witnessing a corresponding spike in illnesses such as whooping cough. In recent years, we have seen a wave of proposed public health policies that threaten to undermine decades of progress in protecting the health of individuals, families, and communities across the United States. Experts at this week's briefing provided an in-depth analysis of these diseases and whether the US is sufficiently equipped to manage outbreaks. The meeting focused on the global challenges of emerging infectious diseases and the impact of climate change on disease transmission, providing guidance for the prevention and control of future health crises.

Experts analyze that extreme weather and rising global temperatures accelerate the cross-border spread of the virus and pose a threat to the existing vaccine supply chain and vaccination program. Among them, climate change is weakening the disease prevention and control safety net established by mankind since the 18th century. Vaccination rates may decline, and the originally stable public health sys-

Experts analyze that extreme weather and rising global temperatures accelerate the cross-border spread of the virus and pose a threat to the existing vaccine supply chain and vaccination program

tem is facing challenges.

Dr. Benjamin Neuman, Professor of Biology, Texas A&M University said that climate change not only changes the geographical scope of virus transmission, but

also increases the risk of the spread of respiratory infections. Dense crowd gatherings, holiday travel and the reopening of schools make the spread of viruses including influenza and new coronavirus more complex. He mentioned that the peak season of respiratory virus infections has left many hospitals overcrowded, and the shortage of medical supplies has further exacerbated the crisis.

pitals and establish a more efficient monitoring and early warning system globally.

At the end of the meeting, experts made suggestions for future prevention and control work. They believe that technological innovation is key, but it must be combined with practical applications to truly solve public health challenges. In addition, strengthening public education and international cooperation are also indispensable elements in responding to the health crisis. Dr. Peter Chin Hong said that although humans have advanced technology, only by implementing it into policies and actions can we truly protect people's health.

Healthcare providers emphasized the importance of staying current with vaccinations. Anyone uncertain about their vaccination status should consult their healthcare provider to ensure proper protection. Through vigilance and proper preventive measures, communities can work together to control these threats.

Dr. Ashima Taneja sets world record for fastest C-Section delivery

ASHOK KAURA

PHAGWARA: Dr. Ashima Taneja Daughter in law of Phagwara and Wife of Dr Sameer Kaura posted as Head of Department Gynecology in DMC Ludhiana has earned a place in the International Book of Records for achieving the "Fastest Delivery of a Baby During a Caesarean Section Surgery." The remarkable feat

advancements in medical expertise and efficiency in critical care procedures.

The International Book of Records awarded Dr. Taneja the certificate of recognition, commending her for this historic milestone. The record highlights her dedication to medical excel-



Dr Ashima Taneja with DMC Secretary Bipin Gupta, Treasurer Mukesh Sharma and Principal Dr GS Wander

was accomplished on September 26, 2024, at a medical facility in Ludhiana, Punjab, India.

Dr. Taneja successfully delivered a baby through a skin incision in just 1 minute and 5 seconds, showcasing exceptional skill and precision in surgical care. This achievement underscores

and serves as an inspiration to healthcare professionals worldwide.

The accomplishment has sparked widespread admiration in the medical community, reflecting not only on Dr. Taneja's expertise but also on the importance of pushing boundaries in healthcare to save lives. (EOM)

Ginger Carrot Soup

MADHUMATI TYAGI

This is flavorful Ginger-Carrot soup. With a touch of spice and a hint of warming ginger, it is the perfect balance of savory and sweet. This diabetes-friendly recipe would pair well with Almond flour roti or low GI rice and Dal.

Ingredients:

- 1 lbs. -Carrots (peeled and chopped)
- 1 - Onion (chopped)
- 2 clove - garlic (minced)
- 2 tbsp - olive oil
- 2 tbsp - fresh ginger (grated)
- 1 tsp - ground coriander
- 1/4 tsp - ground turmeric
- 1/4 tsp - salt
- 1/4 tsp Black pepper powder/chili powder
- 4 cup - low sodium vegetable broth
- 1 cup - unsweetened coconut milk
- Fresh cilantro (for garnish)

Instructions:

In a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté until translucent, 4-5 minutes. Add the minced garlic and freshly

grated ginger. Sauté for about 1-2 minutes or until fragrant. Stir in the coriander and turmeric. Cook for another minute to toast the spices.

Add the chopped carrots to the pot and sauté for a few minutes, coating them with the aromatic spices.

Pour in the vegetable broth and bring the mixture to a gentle simmer. Cover the pot and let the carrots cook until they are tender.

Once the carrots are cooked, use an immersion blender to puree the soup until smooth or carefully transfer the soup to a blender and blend until smooth, then pour it to the pot.

Stir in the coconut milk and season the soup with salt and pepper/chili powder to taste.

Let the soup simmer for a few more minutes.

Serve the spiced ginger carrot soup hot, garnished with chopped fresh cilantro.



Mint Cilantro Chutney/ Green Chutney

GEETHA PATIL

Ingredients

- 2 cups Cilantro leaves (Dhaniya)
- 1 cup Mint leaves (Pudina)
- 2 Green Chili or as per your taste
- 1" inch Ginger or 1 tablespoon grated
- 3 cloves Garlic
- 2 teaspoon roasted Cumin powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, you can also use black salt as well and adjust to taste
- 1 teaspoon sugar (optional, adjust to taste)
- 1 tablespoon lime juice or tamarind juice
- 1/2 or less cup water

Instructions

- Add all the ingredients to the blender.
- Blend at low speed until the ingredients start to mix, then increase the speed and blend to a smooth paste. You might have to stop and stir the ingredients couple of times.
- Chutney is ready. Enjoy right away or freeze for later.

Variations:

- Yogurt - Adding yogurt to this chutney reduces the spiciness and adds a refreshing touch to the chutney. I would suggest adding 1/3 cup yogurt to this recipe.

• Grated Coconut or Roasted Peanuts- This adds a thick texture to the chutney. If you want to use the chutney to make sandwiches, coconut is a great addition. Add 1/3 cup of either to this recipe.

• Onion - In North India, it is common to add a little onion to the chutney. I would

add 1/4 cup of chopped onion.

Storing: Store in refrigerator up to 4 days in an airtight container. You can also store in small containers or ice cube trays in the freezer. Defrost one at a time in the refrigerator and enjoy.



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To stay hale and healthy
Use them everywhere
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As sprinkles on your desserts
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Brunch on hazelnuts
Aha, lunch on pecan nuts
Or crunch on chestnuts
Nuts are an anytime and
Anywhere satisfying snack
Do travel with them in big amount
In your backpack or tight containers

Relish the taste of salted peanuts
Or roasted Jambu groundnuts
Even munch on Masala Cashews
Kashmir walnuts are tasty too
Snack on slivered Indian almonds
Or even Rajasthani pistachios
Nuts are petite, tasty and luscious too
Nuts hold vitamin B complex and
Vitamin E, potassium and magnesium
And many other anti-oxidants
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258 Pakistanis, deported from seven countries

KARACHI: In yet another major embarrassment for Pakistan, as many as 258 of its citizens were deported from seven countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and also 'all-weather friend' China in the last 24 hours, local media reported recently.

According to Pakistani immigration officials, out of the 258 individuals who arrived at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport, 244 were deported on emergency travel documents and only 14 had valid Pakistani passports. While only 16 deportees were arrested for having a 'suspicious identity', the rest were released after mere questioning.

Pakistan's leading news channel Geo News reported that Saudi Arabia deported 232 people, that included seven beggars, individuals caught performing Hajj without permits and sent back after they had completed their sentences besides several Pakistanis who had overstayed in the country or found to be working without sponsorship or beyond the validity of their visas. The report stated that 112 people were deported by the Saudi agencies due to complaints from their sponsors and 63 faced other charges.

Among the 21 people deported from the UAE, four were found to be involved in drug trafficking. *IANS*

Immigration

POST

The instructions to Form ETA-9089 state that only a signed Final Determination must be submitted with the Form I-140 petition as evidence of a permanent labor certification approval

USCIS updates filing procedures for form I-140

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services today announced a Federal Register notice (FRN) providing updated procedures for submitting a Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Workers, accompanied by a permanent labor certification, application for Schedule A designation, or national interest waiver (NIW) request.

On June 1, 2023, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) implemented a new system for permanent labor certifications, called the Foreign Labor Application Gateway (FLAG), and revised the Application for Permanent Employment Certification (Form ETA-9089) for use within the FLAG system. The revised Form ETA-9089 collects more detailed information about the job opportunity, including specific worksite locations, telecommuting options, and the foreign worker's qualifications. Employers who file Form ETA-9089 through the FLAG system and who receive a labor certification approval generally receive a 2-page Final Determination from DOL electronically.

The instructions to Form ETA-9089 state that only a signed Fi-

nal Determination must be submitted with the Form I-140 petition as evidence of a permanent labor certification approval. This

I-140 petition with an NIW request must contain a copy of the Form ETA-9089, Appendix A, and a signed Final Determination.



limited requirement is because, as a part of this process change, USCIS receives most of the information about the permanent labor certification directly from DOL under a data sharing agreement (PDF).

USCIS is announcing through this FRN that employers whose labor certifications were processed in the FLAG system must include a printed copy of the electronic Final Determination with their Form I-140, and that USCIS will consider this printed copy as an original, approved labor certification. The Final Determination must be completed and electronically signed by DOL, and must be signed by the foreign worker, employer, and the employer's attorney or agent, if applicable. In addition, the FRN states that Form I-140 petitions for Schedule A occupations must contain a completed, uncertified Form ETA-9089, including all applicable appendices, a signed Final Determination, and a valid prevailing wage determination tracking number in Section E, Item 1 of the Form ETA-9089. Finally, the FRN states that a Form

I-140 petition with an NIW request must contain a copy of the Form ETA-9089, Appendix A, and a signed Final Determination. tions, Schedule A applications, and NIW requests using the edition of the Form ETA-9089 and applicable appendices, developed for the FLAG system, so this FRN does not change any operations or processes. Instead, this FRN is meant to make the public aware of the new documentary requirements for permanent labor certification approvals, Schedule A applications, and NIW requests submitted with Form I-140 petitions following the implementation of the FLAG system.

Find more information on the Petition Filing and Processing Procedures for Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Workers and Checklist of Required Initial Evidence for Form I-140 webpages. *USCIS*

Haryana to introduce a bill to control illegal immigration: CM Saini

CHANDIGARH: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said last week, the government would introduce a Bill aimed at strictly controlling illegal immigration.

The proposed Bill will be presented in the upcoming Budget session. In addition, the government will soon unveil a policy to reward police personnel for their exceptional service.

This policy will not only recognize and encourage good work but will also the provision of strict action against any lapses in crime prevention.

The Chief Minister told the media after chairing the state-level review meeting in Panchkula, which was held with senior police officers to assess crime and law and or-

der in the state. He said a detailed review of crime trends was conducted during the meeting.

Notably, Haryana has witnessed a significant reduction in crime rates.

In particular, incidents of crime against women have decreased in 2024 compared to the previous year, and the state has made commendable progress in addressing cybercrime.

The Chief Minister said police officers have been instructed to take stringent action against crime and criminals.

He assured that officers and personnel demonstrating excellence will be recognized, while those showing negligence will face strict disciplinary measures. *IANS*

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America sees its future with India, India sees its future with America: US envoy Eric Garcetti

NEW DELHI: US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti recently emphasized the strong bond between America and India, stating that America sees its future with India, and India sees its future with America, adding that the two nations are better when they are together.

He highlighted the importance of people-to-people ties, saying that the more connections Americans have with Indians, the more opportunities will arise for economic and educational exchanges.

Speaking on the theme 'The United States and India: Building Bridges for Our People', Garcetti said that the more ties Americans have with Indians, the more ways they can find to grow economic and educational exchanges.

Garcetti said, "We never know what the future holds, but I'll say this to my fellow Americans, the more ties that we have to more Indians, and the more ways we can find to grow our economic and educational exchanges, the stronger America and India will both be. In a world that too often cedes space to forces that seek to divide us, both internally and internationally, let us be a voice as we have been, to care for each other across the things that too often separate us, to care across geography and religion, language and income, identity and so much more."

"Let's prove any haters wrong the way we always have, by meeting, instead of tweeting, by investing, instead of protesting, by connecting instead of objecting and by bringing people together, acknowledging in this day and age, there will always be some divisive voices, but let's never mistake the loudest or most clickable comments for being the most representative. We know that there are Americans and Indians who are invested in this relationship and overwhelmingly our populations want this relationship to deepen," he added.

He noted that democracy, although challenging to manage is the best system and that diverse populations like those in India and the US make life more interesting. Garcetti praised the resilience of the India-US relationship, which has been fostered over 230 years since the establishment of the first US diplomatic mission in Kolkata.

He noted that democracy is tougher to manage than non-democracy and called the former the "best system." He said that Americans love Indians and Indians love Americans. He said that there have been 230 yrs of cooperation between India and the US since US established diplomatic mission in Kolkata.



US envoy Eric Garcetti

Garcetti said, "The truth is, as I said, Americans love Indians and Indians love Americans. So as we look to the future, on this day, just a week before our country's democracy will move forward with the new administration, we saw democracy turn the page here in this country with an election last year. Think about how lucky we are as people to live in two large diverse democracies. As I've often said, democracy is tougher to manage than non-democracy, but it is the best system out there. And diverse populations don't mean that everybody gets along, but think of how boring life would be if we all looked the same, all spoke the same, and all acted the same."

"You know 230 years of formal coopera-

Garcetti said, "We never know what the future holds, but I'll say this to my fellow Americans, the more ties that we have to more Indians, and the more ways we can find to grow our economic and educational exchanges, the stronger America and India will both be. In a world that too often cedes space to forces that seek to divide us, both internally and internationally"

tion between the United States of America and India since we established our first diplomatic mission in Kolkata. We can honestly say that this relationship has never been stronger and that we are always better when we are together. America sees its future with India and India sees its future with America, a future defined by friendship. Defined by trust and

together an unstoppable force for good in the world today. And so we have to ask ourselves at these moments when the years change, did we do what was important and lasting? Did we do it with a sense of urgency, purpose, and determination?" he added.

Stressing that visas are potholes for a diplomatic mission, he said, "When I was mayor, I used to say we can't work on the big things until we get back to the basics. Well, in a city, when you run a city, getting back to the basics means taking care of the streets, filling the potholes, and ensuring that people can move smoothly through town. But for a diplomatic mission, I learned very quickly that visas are our potholes, the core work that we do, and so

we've focused on trying to make our services better, and our numbers expand. And to serve Indians with the opportunity to connect directly and in person with the United States through travel, and I'm so proud of what we've accomplished over the last two years."

The ambassador also addressed the issue of visas, calling them "potholes" for

diplomatic missions. He reported that the US has increased visa issuance by over 60 percent and eliminated wait times for most visa types. Garcetti expressed pride in the work of the US mission in India, which has streamlined visa processing, implemented new technologies, and even used AI to improve services.

Highlighting the work of the US mission here in India, Garcetti said, "Our team from Kolkata to Mumbai, Hyderabad to Chennai, and of course here in New Delhi and in centers around the country where we do some of the preliminary work for visas. We've worked to streamline visa processing to keep up with this incredible demand. Since becoming ambassador, we've increased our visas by more than 60 percent, and eliminated wait times for all visa types except for first-time visitor visas, where the wait time is down 75 percent from our peak, still much further to go, I know, but a great accomplishment, and we added a record number of new hires as consular officers to this mission. We've implemented new technologies. We've even used AI to analyze some of the ways we can get better and the result for a second year in a row, we issued more than one non-immigrant visa, including a record number of visitor visas. More than five million Indians currently hold a United States visa."

"In 2024, the US mission to India met visa interview demand for all first-time student visa applicants, ensuring that every student could arrive on time and their parents could feel calm about their child going to the United States. The United States Citizen and Immigration Service has completed more than 1600 relative petitions. Our visa team issued tens of thousands of immigrant visas, and India is now the number one source of overseas adoptions for Americans as well. We've reunited more family members. We're building families across the Indo-Pacific together and all of this incredible exchange and accomplishment is reflected in what is perhaps our greatest secret weapon in the United States of this relationship, the 4 million strong Indian diaspora that calls America home," he added.

Lauding the contribution of the Indian diaspora in India-US bilateral ties, Garcetti said that the Indian community in the US enrich the tapestry of America and fuels the vibrant connection between the two nations. He noted that Indian students and Indian American immigrants help run companies and universities in the US. ANI

PE investment in India's real estate rose to \$2.82 billion in April-Dec of FY25

MUMBAI: The private equity (PE) investment in Indian real estate increased by 6 percent to \$2.82 billion during the first nine months (April-December) of Financial Year 2024-25, according to a report by real estate firm ANAROCK.

"The average deal size saw a notable increase of 32.5 percent, climbing from \$88.5 million in nine months of 2023-24 to \$117.3 million in the same period of 2024-25," said Shobhit Agarwal, MD & CEO - ANAROCK Capital. "This jump underscores the impact of large-scale transactions on the market, with the top 10 deals comprising 93 percent of total PE transactions."

Multi-city deals dominated the transaction table in the first nine of FY25. In terms of cities, Bengaluru and Hyderabad led the transaction tables with 11 percent and 10 percent deal shares, respectively.

In the first nine months of FY25, the industrial and logistics sector captured 62 percent of total investments, significantly surpassing both the office and residential sectors, which attracted 14 percent and 15 percent, respectively. "The fact that the share of private equity investment in the residential sector rose to 15 percent, up from 12 percent in the same period last year reflects the increased activity in the housing market," says Aashiesh Agarwal of ANAROCK Capital.

However, stronger pre-sales and higher participation from PSU banks in construction finance may reduce the demand for high-cost private equity financing. This may require PE funds to get into earlier stages of project lifecycles to maintain IRRs, or to engage in special situations investments.

While Indian commercial real estate markets saw strong leasing, this segment saw muted PE activity due to geopolitical concerns and high interest rates, which impacted valuations. That said, the sector's strong operational performance is likely to continue, and an expected decline in interest rates will revive PE investments in the space, the report states. *IANS*

Real Estate POST

New Zealand's new home consents up 4.8 percent

WELLINGTON: New Zealand saw 3,100 new homes consented in November 2024, up 4.8 percent compared with November 2023, the country's statistics department Stats NZ revealed recently.

Among the new homes consented, there were 1,402 stand-alone houses, down 4.1 percent compared with November 2023, and 1,698 multi-unit homes, up 14 percent over the same period, Stats NZ said, adding multi-unit homes, including townhouses, apartments, retirement village units, and flats. *IANS*



Real Estate expects tax reliefs, increased funding and long awaited Industry status in Budget 2025

NEW DELHI: As the Union Budget approaches, leaders from the real estate industry have voiced their expectations, focusing on measures to revive affordable housing, streamline regulations, and enhance market demand.

The key demands include tax reliefs, increased funding, and granting the long-awaited industry status to real estate.

Niranjan Hiranandani, Chairman of NAREDCO, highlighted the need to make homeownership more affordable by increasing the tax deduction limit on home loan interest payments from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. He also called for infrastructure status for the housing sector, which would reduce borrowing costs and provide easier access to financing.

Expanding rental-housing initiatives and rationalizing individual tax rates from 37 percent to 25 percent are other measures he suggested to boost market participation and disposable income. Affordable housing

remains a top priority for industry leaders.

He said "To improve rental affordability, it is imperative to expand rental housing beyond industrial workers. We recom-

He stated "For the real estate sector, key expectations include industry status recognition and a revival of the affordable housing segment. Once a promising sector, affordable housing--homes

technology-led growth trajectory. With these transformative measures, Budget 2025-26 can lay the foundation for a resilient real estate sector, driving economic development".

Ritesh Mehta, Senior Director at JLL India, stressed the importance of granting industry status to real estate. This move would enable developers to access cheaper loans and lower construction costs, ultimately benefiting homebuyers

He said "Recognizing real estate as an industry in the budget can significantly enhance the sector's performance. With this status, developers can access cheaper loans and reduced borrowing rates, ultimately lowering construction costs. These savings can be passed on to homebuyers, making housing more affordable".

With real estate contributing nearly 7 percent to India's GDP, industry leaders believe that these measures would not only strengthen the sector but also support overall economic growth.

The focus on affordable housing and infrastructure development, they say, could help the residential segment regain its momentum in 2025. *ANI*

Expanding rental-housing initiatives and rationalizing individual tax rates from 37 percent to 25 percent are other measures he suggested to boost market participation and disposable income. Affordable housing remains a top priority for industry leaders

mend deleting notional income from house property held as stock-in-trade to facilitate the creation of a sufficient rental housing stock, in alignment with the 'Housing for All' objective".

Anuj Puri, Chairman of ANAROCK Group, advocated for reviving the Credit-Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) to encourage first-time homebuyers.

He also urged the government to release centrally controlled land for affordable housing projects and revise upwards the Rs 45 lakh price cap for affordable homes in high-cost cities like Mumbai.

priced under INR 40 lakh--has struggled post-pandemic, with demand and supply shrinking significantly".

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO of CBRE India, emphasized the need to tackle rising construction and borrowing costs. He suggested revising the affordable housing price cap, introducing tax incentives for REIT investments, and increasing tax deductions for home loan interest. These measures, he noted, could attract new investors and provide much-needed relief to homebuyers.

He added "Additionally, rationalizing GST rates and incentivizing green building adoption will help build a sustainable,



How Los Angeles fires magnify deepening insurance crisis in California?

LOS ANGELES: The devastating wildfires in Los Angeles have wiped out tens of thousands of homes and businesses, which could inflict a 150 billion US dollars wound as reported by local media Accuweather. The rising risk of wildfires and related costs are adding to a crisis in California's insurance market.

Daunted by the many natural hazards California is prone to, major insurers like Heritage have withdrawn from California. This has left many homeowners without insurance or reliant on California's state-mandated FAIR Plan, originally designed as a last resort for fire insurance

figure from 2020.

For neighborhoods like Pacific Palisades, one of the hardest hit by insurer withdrawals, the situation is dire. This affluent area with thousands of multi-million-dollar homes has experienced many policy non-renewals, and a significant portion of its properties now rely on the FAIR Plan, exposing the state's already strained system to potentially devastating financial risks.

These fires, exacerbated by climate change, highlight how traditional finance tools like home insurance are becoming increasingly ineffective against the

to cover reinsurance costs.

In exchange, these insurers must maintain coverage in high-risk areas proportional to their statewide market share.

The commissioner has also issued a one-year moratorium preventing insurers from canceling policies in affected areas. This provides temporary relief for homeowners but does not address the systemic issues. Insurers retain the right to decline policy renewals after this period, leaving many residents in precarious positions, Xinhua news agency reported.

The FAIR Plan, already burdened by increasing demand, will face even greater financial pressure from the current fires. The plan's reserves are insufficient to cover claims for tens of billions of dollars in damages, forcing private insurers to contribute, which could lead them to reconsider their participation in California's market. This precarious situation exposes the fragility of the insurance system in the face of growing climate risks.

Premiums are expected to rise, and many homeowners may still find themselves underinsured due to rising rebuilding costs and widespread disasters. IANS

Daunted by the many natural hazards California is prone to, major insurers like Heritage have withdrawn from California. This has left many homeowners without insurance or reliant on California's state-mandated FAIR Plan, originally designed as a last resort for fire insurance and reformed and expanded by Governor Gavin Newsom

and reformed and expanded by Governor Gavin Newsom.

"Strengthening the state's FAIR Plan has been a key priority ... to get people the reliable and affordable insurance they need ... and these upgrades will help stabilize the entire market while providing more stability for those who already depend on it," said Newsom in a previous statement to the press.

But some insurers are running for the hills. "There are so many claims in California from wildfires, earthquakes and mudslides, you name it, that to continue to offer policies in that state would have driven our insurance company bankrupt," a claims adjuster for a large national insurance company told Xinhua off the record.

Over 450,000 Californians now have had to fall back on California's FAIR plan, which has seen its coverage exposure skyrocket to 458 billion dollars, nearly triple the

mounting risks.

Wildfires are not new to California, but their destructive potential has grown due to warmer temperatures and human development. Climate change leads to heavier rainfall in spring, fostering vegetation that later becomes fuel during dry seasons, upping the odds of an outbreak.

Add the powerful Santa Ana winds to that powder keg, and even a small spark can ignite a massive blaze. These fires spread rapidly, consuming homes built in the wildland-urban interface and areas where development meets natural landscapes, thus exacerbating the destruction.

In response to the crisis, California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara recently implemented reforms aimed at stabilizing the market. Insurers are allowed to use catastrophe models for rate-setting, incorporate fire-prevention efforts by homeowners, and adjust premiums

Amaravati works will resume with Rs 50,000 crore investment: Naidu

AMARAVATI: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said on Friday that Amaravati state capital works will resume with an investment of Rs 50,000 crore.

He announced that a ring road has been designed around Amaravati with an extent of 183 km which is far bigger than the Hyderabad Outer Ring Road.

"Once this is complete, Guntur and Amaravati will get merged," Naidu said at the inauguration of the NAREDCO Property Show in Guntur.

He termed Amaravati a self-sustaining project and observed that assets are generated where real estate flourishes.

Stating that Amaravati would be developed as the best model city, he was confident that it would create a record of sorts in the country.



"At the same time, cities like Visakhapatnam, Guntur, Nellore, Kurnool, and Tirupati too will be developed in a similar manner," he said.

The Chief Minister said that he wants the construction sector to regain momentum and assured all support to those who come forward to develop this sector. He also promised to resolve any issue on a war footing.

He told builders that 'Brand Andhra Pradesh has just started picking up with the investments slowly flowing into the state. He claimed that within seven months of the coalition government, the state had received investment commitments of Rs 4 lakh crore.

He said this investment would create four lakh jobs and help the government reach the target of 20 lakh jobs in these five years. IANS

Hardeep Puri demands Kejriwal's clarification on 'Sheesh Mahal' budget

NEW DELHI: Political temperatures in Delhi are going up ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled to be held on February 5. Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri accused Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convenor and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of causing a loss of Rs 2,000 crore in the 'Sheesh Mahal' project.



Hardeep Singh Puri

The Union Minister said that Kejriwal must provide clarification on the budget and approval of the project, and that in the coming days, the AAP leader would have to answer these questions.

In a conversation with IANS, Hardeep Puri questioned why this project continued during the pandemic when construction activities were halted. He said that the Kejriwal government approved this project.

The Union Minister claimed that a loss of more than Rs 2,000 crore had been caused to the exchequer due to the liquor scam.

Hardeep Puri said that Kejriwal must provide clarifications on the budget and approval of the Sheesh Mahal project, and the former Delhi CM would be held accountable for these questions in the future.

Regarding the construction of the Prime Minister's residence, Puri said that the PM's house has not yet been built. IANS

Philosophy

PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA

The path followed by a man of self-realization is the path to be followed by any spiritual aspirant. A scripture, no matter what records of spiritual truths it contains in its bosom, is not as useful as a saint, who is veritably a walking, talking, living scripture.

There is a vast difference between the powerful sulphuric acid in a bottle and the mere statement of its formula as H₂SO₄. Neither the formula itself, nor the description of the power of sulphuric acid in a book can ever describe its burning, vital quality.

Truths of self-realization are like little insignificant seeds, but their power and wisdom-yielding qualities are truly felt when they are seen to grow into huge trees in the gardens of the self-realization of saints - trees laden with the fruits of Divine Love.

We meet little teachers in the beginning through our vague desires to know truth. But the Guru (or Preceptor) is the

his eyes are still and unwinking whenever he wants them to be so; by the practice of Yoga his breath is quiet without his forcibly holding it in his lungs; his mind is calm without effort.

If a man has eyelids that blink continually, and lungs acting like bellows all the time, and a mind always restless like a butterfly, and he keeps on telling you he is in cosmic consciousness, laugh at him.

Just as a man cannot pretend that he is sleeping while he continues to run, so one with restless eyes, breath, and mind cannot convince you, who know better, that he is in cosmic consciousness. Just as sleep manifests in the body by certain physiological changes, so the muscle, eyes, breath, all usually become still during cosmic consciousness.

No Guru can be developed alone by years of study in the intellectual factory of a theological seminary, which deems it has attained its ends when it confers B.D. or D.D. degrees. Such titles can be won by men of good memory, but character, self-control and intuition can be devel-

A scripture not as useful as a saint

Jesus and His disciples were products of unceasing meditation and intuitive devotion



Paramhansa Yogananda

living embodiment of scriptural truths and is the agent of salvation appointed by God in response to a devotee's demands for release from all the bondage of matter. It is very difficult to choose the right path from the many religious paths and varied religious opinions.

Most people who wander from church to church seeking intellectual inspiration, never find God, for intellectual inspiration is necessary only until one begins to "drink" God. Otherwise, intellectual inspiration, (when it forgets to taste God), is detrimental to self-realization.

It is easier to follow a living breathing, talking man (who lives truth) than a mute scripture. If a saint has reached his goal, whether by the shorter Yoga route, or by the longwinded spiritual-prayer way, he experiences actual self-realization. Anyone following him certainly would reach the goal by using either method.

Unlike ordinary prayers, real prayers, which alone can bring conscious response from God, must be offered in meditation intensely and for many hours continuously until Divine response comes.

The signs of a Guru are as follows:

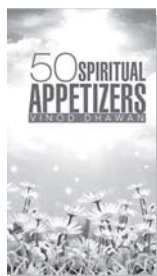
oped only by knowledge of advanced psycho-physical methods of self-realization and deep, daily meditation.

Jesus and His disciples were products of unceasing meditation and intuitive devotion, and not merely results of intellectual theological seminaries. Most Christian churches today have wandered away from the path of self-realization and are satisfied with sermons, ceremonies, organizations, and festivities.

Excerpted from 'The Second Coming of Christ'. The 132nd birth anniversary of Paramhansa Yogananda was observed on January 5

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Decolonizing the mind: South Asia yet to come out of its British colonial-era laws

SADI MOHAMOD SADI

South Asian countries which were once as a whole known as the Indian subcontinent share some common traditions, values, culture, and history. But one thing that they share the most is their colonial legacy which is still in effect to this day largely in the realm of Law. In South Asian countries, mostly India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh we see the use of colonial-era laws. Some of these laws are outdated and outright repressive, even in Britain these laws are not in use.

In today's postcolonial South Asia, we still see the use of The Penal Code of 1860, the police act of 1861, the Evidence Act of 1872, and the Official Secrecy Act of 1923. All of these laws were extremely oppressive and were used to repress the native population. The depressing thing is that these laws are still to this day being used to oppress the general population of the region. For example, section 5 of the Official Secrets Act of 1923 states, "Any com-

thoritarian, this is one of the reasons why South Asian countries have not been able to achieve their democratic aspirations. In Bangladesh, the Digital Security Act of 2018 uses some provisions that are inherited from colonial law. For example, section 32 of the DSA criminalizes the breaching of government secrecy, and section 28 of the DSA was incorporated from section 295A of the Indian Penal Code. Although the new Interim government is planning to remove the DSA with the Cyber Security Act, nonetheless the DSA can be remembered as a relic of authoritarianism in Bangladesh that stemmed from the colonial era law. In Pakistan, we see that it's legal foundation is based on colonial period common laws and the Indian Independence Act of 1947 made it applicable to Pakistan.

South Asian countries are leaning towards autocracy. In India we can see that the government is moving towards religious

autocracy. The current government has been working on removing some of the colonial-era laws. Still, it has created concerns because while the

In today's postcolonial South Asia, we still see the use of The Penal Code of 1860, the police act of 1861, the Evidence Act of 1872, and the Official Secrecy Act of 1923. All of these laws were extremely oppressive and were used to repress the native population

munication not in the interest of the state is illegal". This was at odds with the interest of the citizens living in the colonial state structure. This Official Secrets Act is still used in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

Another example of such law is section 377 of the Indian Penal Code 1860 which states that "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with [imprisonment] for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine". The section was abolished on September 6, 2018, by the Indian Supreme Court stating that this violates a person's privacy and their sexual rights. The section also criminalized homosexuality and is still in use in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Tendency towards autocracy

American-Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal argued that the British colonial government introduced laws that suppressed Indians, and also emphasized that these British policies and regulations are contradictory with democratic values and are au-

government has scrapped colonial laws it has replaced these laws with more rigorous ones. For example, in a new legislation the duration of police custody has increased from 15 days to 60, and in special cases can last up to 90 days. This has concerned human rights groups.

In Pakistan, the Lahore High Court changed its sedition law of the Indian Penal Code of 1860. In 2023, Lahore High Court deemed this law to be unconstitutional. This is a huge win for freedom of speech in Pakistan. However, some laws are still in use today and can be attributed to negative use. In 2017, in an article by Amnesty International's South Asia Director, the writer said that "crude colonial-era laws have been unleashed against government critics, new laws have been invoked against critics online, and brutal practices have endured in areas afflicted by conflict".

(The author is studying International Relations at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. Views expressed are personal) South Asia Monitor

For detailed story visit www.indiapost.com

Disclaimer: Views expressed are personal to the author

A unique International craft festival, the Surajkund Mela 2025 is a platform for artists across the globe to showcase their culture and talent. Hosted annually by the Haryana Tourism Department in Surajkund, the mela has many offbeat attractions for tourists of every age. Over 20 countries from South Asia, Africa, and Europe actively participate in making this fair a huge success. Surajkund, meaning 'Lake of the Sun', is an ancient reservoir that was built by King Suraj Pal of the Tomar dynasty in the 10th century. Faridabad in Haryana, saw no tourism until it began hosting the 'Surajkund International Craft Mela'.

Surajkund Mela 2025 Dates

In 2025, the festivities last a fortnight from 7th February, Friday to 23rd February, Sunday, engaging visitors in traditional folk dances, musical shows, and even puppet skits.

Surajkund Mela 2025 Timings

The Mela is on from 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM every day

Availability: Tickets for the Surajkund International Crafts Fair are easily available on all major online booking platforms and even at the venue.

About Surajkund Mela

Set idyllically amidst Lakkarpur and Baharpur village lays the picturesque Surajkund village near Faridabad. A dash of color, tempo of the music and flawless craftsmanship aptly capture the essence of this beguiling fair. Celebrated no less than any festival, the core motive behind it is to promote the talent and culture of local artisans in our country. In a world where machines are replacing humans faster than before, this little initiative by the Haryana government nurtures rural craftsmanship and boosts the export of local handlooms.

The bucolic aura of the mela creates a captivating spell for travellers who visit India from different parts of the globe. Each year the Surajkund Mela works around a specific theme based on a state of India, which also inspires the fair's architectural layout, spirit, and decor. The beauty of this concept is to very intricately accentuate the rich cultural heritage of India and boost the morale of local craftsmen to continue their waning flair of handmade merchandise.

The Theme of Surajkund Mela 2025

Each year the organizing committee picks a theme state. The motive behind this step is to accentuate India's diverse cultural history and make it more prominent among other nations. In 2019, the theme state for the mela was Maharashtra and the theme state for the year 2020 was Himachal Pradesh. In 2025, the theme state for the mela is Rajasthan.

Highlights of Surajkund Mela

India is a blend of vibrant cultures that are skillfully showcased at the

Surajkund Mela. Along with partner nations, the organizers invigorate the mood of its visitors with scrumptious ethnic dishes, affordable color-popping paintings, antique stone sculptures and fun rides to keep even the little ones busy. The profusion of so many elements elevates the fervor of the mela making it an unforgettable experience. Apart from trying delicious rural cuisines and shopping for local art, one can also indulge in some scintillating folk dance and music shows at the open-air theatre.

A cultural ethos, the Surajkund Mela, offers a stunning insight into the historical background and traditional beauty of hidden India. Each state exposes a part of their culture at the Mela, providing an aesthetic indulgence for both Indian and foreign tourists. If you are looking out for a rustic experience that celebrates both indigenous talent and the candid culture of locals, the Surajkund Mela should be on your bucket list.

How to Reach the Surajkund Mela?

A unique festival hosted in the famous Faridabad district of Haryana, Surajkund is well connected by all means of transport. The nearest metropolitan city near Surajkund is New Delhi. Just 8 km from South Delhi, one has multiple travel options based on their budget.

By Road: If you are driving down from another state, the National Highway is a well-made 4-lane road, with plenty of eateries offering dishes like Chola kulcha and paranthas. A comfortable drive, Surajkund is well connected to Delhi, Faridabad and Gurgaon. You can opt for a tourist taxi or even drive your personal vehicle as the mela area has adequate parking space.

By Rail: New Delhi (NDLS) is the nearest railway station to reach Surajkund. Once you reach the railway junction, the city is well connected to Faridabad and Gurgaon. You can take a local train or even the Delhi metro to reach Surajkund.

Metro: If you are already in Delhi and plan to travel to Surajkund from there, the Delhi Metro is an excellent mode of transport for you. Take the metro from Central Secretariat to Badarpur via Sarita Vihar and Mohan estate. Badarpur is the nearest metro station for the mela. There are plenty of prominent route maps at all metro stations in both English and Hindi for outstation travellers.

By Air: An easy and hassle-free mode of commute, Surajkund is just a 35-minute drive from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport and 25 km from Palam Airport.

All in all, the Surajkund Mela is a delightful experience that captures the essence of rustic India beautifully and magnifies the cultural amalgamation of diverse traditions in the world. www.holidify.com



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Udupi Palace is a South Indian vegetarian BYOB restaurant. My friend and I had dinner there shortly after I returned from south India. We were greeted warmly and the ambiance is pleasant. The menu is so enticing that we ordered too much food but it was almost as good the next day.

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The Third Eye: Terrorism on the US soil

DC PATHAK

The terror attack carried out by an ISIS convert -- Shamsuddin Jabbar -- at New Orleans's famed Bourbon Street on New Year's Day, has drawn attention to the reality that Islamic radical forces were down but not out and were present across the world as ' sleeper cells ' and ' lone wolves ' determined to execute their plans -- primarily against the US-led West and their allies.

Terrorism by definition is a resort to 'covert' violence for a perceived political 'cause', calling for a degree of 'commitment' that was determined by 'motivation'.

Since the faith-based motivation behind the call of Jihad could be very strong indeed, it is not surprising that a 'radicalized'

First, it is reported that in recent months a few terror suspects were already on the radar of the FBI from which it could be inferred that the US was not beyond the reach of Islamic radicals, particularly at a time when cyber channels and social media were being freely used for indoctrination of vulnerable citizens.

The challenge for American security agencies had suddenly enlarged as they have the responsibility of unearthing all such channels and neutralizing them -- this in fact is the case with the security setup of all democratic countries as well.

The second notable feature of this case is that the perpetrator of terror was an Army veteran who had served in Afghanistan

'war on terror' led by the US following 9/11, was essentially an American combat against Islamic radicals headed by Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and its competitor, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the second theatre of the said 'war'.

In Afghanistan despite the 'war on terror', the US was compelled to withdraw its troops from there after getting into an agreement with the Taliban backed by Al Qaeda and witnessing the reinstatement of the Kabul Emirate headed by Taliban, in 2021.

That Pakistan had cleverly played a mediatory role at Doha and helped the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan intending to acquire 'strategic depth' against India, is another story.

Shamsuddin Jabbar must have watched with possible admiration how Islamic radicals had stood their grounds against the might of the 'US-led world coalition'.

This draws attention to the third aspect of the New Orleans episode which is that the terrorist in this case became an admirer of ISIS rather than Al Qaeda because it is ISIS that had become the face of Islamic radical forces -- after Osama bin Laden and his successor in Al Qaeda, Ayaman Al Zawahiri, had been eliminated by the US in special military operations.

The attack at New Orleans fully conformed to the modus operandi of terrorists.

The attacker used a rented pickup truck to run over the crowds on pavements celebrating New Year's Day and opened indiscriminate fire killing a total of 14 innocent people and injuring 35 others.

(The writer is a former Director of the Intelligence Bureau) IANS

For detailed story visit www.indiapost.com

The challenge for American security agencies had suddenly enlarged as they have the responsibility of unearthing all such channels and neutralizing them -- this in fact is the case with the security setup of all democratic countries as well

mind could even take on a 'suicide mission' like what Shamsuddin did.

He is said to be a lone wolf according to the evidence surfacing so far.

Born in Texas -- Shamsuddin had rented an accommodation in New Orleans to plan the attack.

Given the seriousness of the incident, US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden visited New Orleans to meet the families of the victims.

In the background of this case of terrorism on US soil, three serious developments would add to the geopolitical concerns of President-elect Donald Trump.

for a spell, remained in active service till 2015 and reportedly put in his papers in 2020 as Staff Sergeant.

His case showed that 'radicalization' can influence even educated and reasonably well-employed persons and not only the poor and the frustrated youth -- Jabbar though was said to be in financial trouble after his first divorce.

In one of the videos made before the incident, he talked of the 'war between the believers and non-believers' and acknowledged his allegiance to ISIS.

A leaflet of ISIS was said to have been recovered from the back of his truck.

It may be mentioned that the



INDIA POST
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WILD FIRES IN LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles county officials said the death toll from wildfires had risen to 24. Many are believed to be missing, and over 12,000 structures damaged or, destroyed in six simultaneous wildfires that spread across the County starting last Tuesday. Dangerous dry winds returned last Sunday, to whip up furious gusts of infernos that scorched communities to rubble and left thousands homeless. The dry winds, which originate from inland deserts, fanned flames and blew embers up to 2 miles (3 km) ahead.

Santa Anna winds peaked 120 mph but believed to have slowed down to 30-40 mph by Sunday. Some aerial firefighters scooped water out of the Pacific Ocean and dropped water and retardant. At the same time, land crews with hand tools and hoses held the line of the Palisades Fire as it encroached on the upscale Brentwood section and other populated areas of Los Angeles.

California Governor Gavin Newsom said he was launching a "Marshall Plan" to rebuild the ravaged city. The National Weather Service has warned of worsening weather conditions ahead. Over 1,53,000 residents and 57,000 structures are under evacuation orders, and another 1,66,000 residents have been warned of potential evacuation. About 50,000 customers were without power for few days. The death toll is expected to mount when fire rescue fighters can enter and search ravaged structures.

The fires have consumed about 56 square miles (145 square km) an area larger than San Francisco. Tens of thousands of people remained under evacuation orders and new evacuations were ordered last week Friday evening, after a flare up on the eastern side of the Palisades Fire. Allegations of leadership failures and political blame have begun and so have investigations. Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered state officials to determine why a 117 million-gallon (440 million-liter) reservoir was out of service and some hydrants had run dry.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley said city leadership failed her department by not providing enough money for firefighting. She also criticized the lack of water. Eaton Fire north of Pasadena and Altadena, which has burned more than 7,000 structures. LA Mayor Karen Bass, who faces a critical test of her leadership as her city endures its greatest crisis in decades, said several smaller fires also were stopped.

The level of devastation is jarring, even in a State that regularly confronts massive wildfires. No cause has been determined for the largest fires and early estimates indicate the wildfires could be the nation's costliest ever. A preliminary estimate by AccuWeather put the damage and economic losses so far between \$135 billion and \$150 billion.

Overflowing with kindness, volunteers overflowed at donation centers and some had to be turned away at locations including the Santa Anita Park horse racing track, where people who lost their homes sifted through stacks of donated shirts, blankets and other household goods. Wildfires also ripped through Hollywood celebrity homes costing millions. The area where most of the homes have swimming pools but very few fire hydrants. Time for California Governor and City Mayor to reflect upon putting priorities in place as climate change takes a toll on most places.

Disclaimer: Views expressed are personal to the author

Sunny Leone: GOD TEACHING HER A LESSON

Actress Sunny Leone, who is currently in Malaysia, shared that she thinks God is teaching her a lesson on patience and humility.

Sunny took to Instagram, where she shared a video standing on a deck. In the backdrop, a cloudy sky, the sea and sand can be seen.

"Hmm, yes, where could we be? There are very mysterious things happening here," without divulging much the actress said in the video.

She then shared a cryptic message, which read: "I think God is teaching me a lesson on patience and humility...I just wish I had gotten a warning so I could mentally prepare!!"

An avid user of social media, Sunny shared 'what really happens behind making reels'. She posted a funny "behind-the-scenes" video of "what really happens behind making reels".

The actress, whose real name is Karenjit Kaur, posted a video on the photo-sharing website. In the clip, she is seen posing with her team for a reel.

She is heard telling her teammate: "Hide this. So we don't... Your hand, you dodo. Yeah. So we don't see it."

The actress and her team got ready to make the reel and one of her teammates starts to count funnily. *IANS*

Mouni Roy wraps up shoot of 'Salakaar'

Actress Mouni Roy, who was recently seen in 'Vedaa' in a special appearance, has wrapped up the shooting of her upcoming project 'Salakaar'. Her role in the film is touted to be both challenging and transformative. The actress wrapped up the film with a cake-cutting ceremony, capturing the camaraderie of the cast and crew.

The movie gives her an opportunity to explore new dimensions of storytelling. She has poured her heart and soul into her performance, aiming to connect with audiences on a deeper level.

The journey of bringing Salakaar to life has been an enriching experience for the actress, and her fans eagerly await her portrayal in this power-packed narrative. *IANS*



TOP TEN HINDI FILM SONGS

- 1 Aaj Ki Raat : **Stree 2**
- 2 Tauba Tauba: **Bad Newz**
- 3 Zaroorat Se Zyada: **Vedaa**
- 4 Tainu Khabar Nahi : **Munjya**
- 5 Sajni: **Laapataa Ladies**
- 6 Soulmate: **Ek Tha Raja**
- 7 Khoobsurat: **Stree 2**
- 8 Ishq: **Ishq**
- 9 Mere Mehboob Mere Sanam:
Bad Newz
- 10 Taras: **Munjya**



Simaran Kaur: MY FITNESS KEY TO ON-SCREEN PRESENCE

Actress Simaran Kaur, who stars in "Jamai No.1", embraces pilates and a good diet as her go-to regime to stay in her best shape. She says her fitness plays a key role in enhancing my on-screen presence.

Simaran said, "I believe staying fit isn't just about looking good; it's about feeling strong and confident in your own skin. Pilates, in particular, has been a game-changer for me. It not only helps me maintain my body but also keeps me centered and happy."

She said that her character Riddhi is a strong-headed, bossy girl who knows what she wants.

"And to maintain that on-screen I have been working on my body, my body language, my posture and what better than Pilates to do this. As an actress, I understand the importance of looking and feeling the character."

She added: "My fitness plays a key role in enhancing my on-screen presence, allowing me to embody the essence of a powerful boss girl." *IANS*

Triptii Dimri's workout with someone special

Triptii Dimri is one of the fittest actresses in Bollywood, and in order to maintain that picture-perfect physique, the diva hits the gym frequently. However, during her latest workout session on what looked like the terrace of her house, she was joined by someone special.

Triptii Dimri recently took to the stories section of her official IG handle and shared a video, giving a glimpse of her workout area. But what caught the attention of netizens was the background sound.

The clip was accompanied by the beautiful melody of a flute, most likely playing in one of the neighboring houses. Sharing the post on Instagram, Triptii Dimri wrote in the caption, "Someone playing the flute while I workout...what a Beautiful day". She further added a "SOUND ON" sticker.

Talking about Triptii Dimri's

2025 lineup, the actress will be a part of the much-anticipated sequel, "Dhadak 2". She will be co-starring with Siddhant Chaturvedi in her next. However, the makers have not yet announced the release date for the drama.

While the project was initially slated to release on 22nd November 2024, the film's release has now been postponed. Triptii Dimri and Siddhant Chaturvedi will be seen as Vidisha and Neelesh in "Dhadak 2". Directed by Shazia Iqbal, the movie will be presented by Zee Studios in association with Dharma Productions, and Cloud 9 Pictures. *IANS*

Khushi Kapoor's 8 minute monologue in 'Loveyapa'

Actress Khushi Kapoor, who will be next seen in the upcoming movie 'Loveyapa', has delivered an eight minute monologue in the film.

The film also stars Junaid Khan, and the actress' monologue in the film is touted to be one of its standout moments.

In 'Loveyapa', the monologue, according to insiders, is a pivotal scene that will showcase her acting prowess, and it is described as a raw, heart-wrenching reflection on love, heartbreak, and self-discovery.

Her co-star, Junaid Khan, son of Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan, plays the male lead in the film.

'Loveyapa', touches upon modern romance, and offers a heartwarming tale enriched with unforgettable performances, lively music, and breathtaking visuals. The film is set to hit the screens on February 7, 2025.

Earlier, the actress attended the haldi ceremony of Aaliyah Kashyap, the daughter of Indian auteur Anurag Kashyap.

She took to her Instagram, and shared an array of pictures and videos from the haldi ceremony. In one the videos Khushi was seen applying haldi on Aaliyah. Another video shows Aaliyah sharing a kiss with her fiance.

Khushi wrote in the caption, "Haldi morning".

The actress was seen donning a yellow colored ethnic outfit as per the theme of the wedding festivity.

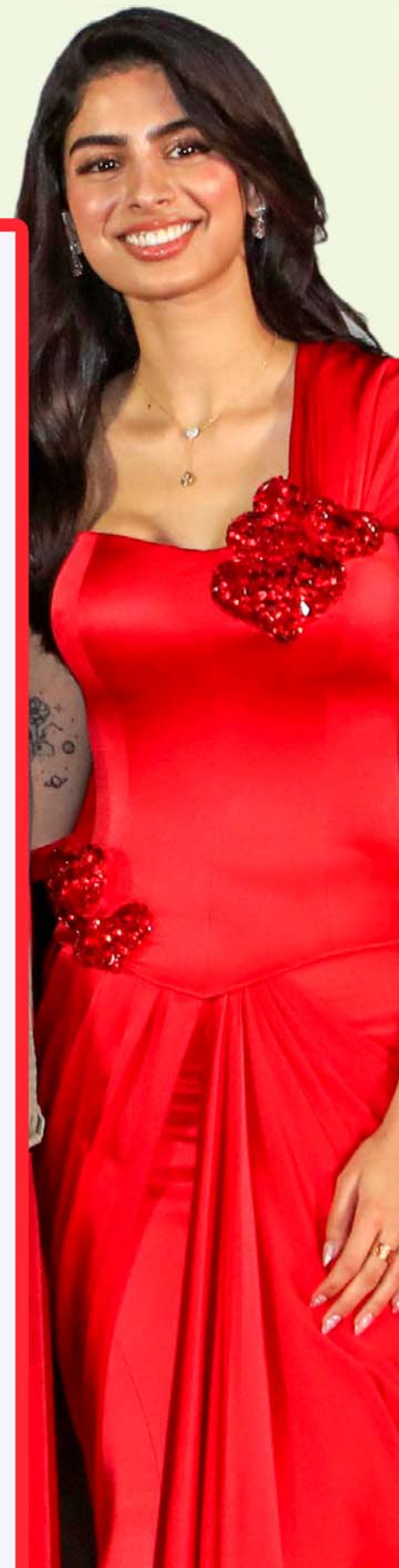
Khushi is the sister of Bollywood actress Janhvi Kapoor. She made her debut with 'The Archies' which was directed by Zoya Akhtar. In the film, she was seen essaying the role of Betty Cooper in 'The Archies' in which she starred alongside Agastya Nanda, Suhana Khan, Vedang Raina, Mihir Ahuja, Aditi 'Dot' Saigal and Yuvraj Menda. *IANS*

Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal fly kites on Makar Sankranti

Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar, who was last seen in 'Singham Again', is celebrating Makar Sankranti with actor Paresh Rawal while shooting for his upcoming movie 'Bhooth Bangla'.

The actor took to his Instagram, and shared a video in which he could be seen flying a kite, while Paresh Rawal holds the manjha.

He wrote in the caption, "Celebrating the vibrant spirit of Makar Sankranti on the set of #BhoothBangla with my dear friend @pareshrawalofficial. Here's to laughter, good vibes, and soaring high just like the kites! And sending my best wishes for a joyous Pongal, Uttarayan and Bihu". *IANS*





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