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Shri Thanedar calls for deeper India-US ties

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Americans4Hindus launches Rajneeti Academy 2026

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How Alia brings weekend vibes to a weekday

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PARTNERS OF GLOBAL SOUTH

"We are co-passengers and partners of the Global South": PM Modi on India-Ethiopia ties



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being conferred with Ethiopia's prestigious honour 'The Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia' by Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed Ali, during an award Conferment Ceremony at the Addis International Convention Centre, in Addis Ababa. (@PMEthiopia X/ANI Photo)

ADDIS ABABA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi held delegation-level discussions with his Ethiopian counterpart, Abiy Ahmed Ali, focusing on strengthening India-Ethiopia ties around enduring civilizational links, shared democratic principles, and a common commitment as partners in the Global South.

During the talks, Prime Minister Modi referred to the communication and exchange for "thousands of years" between the two nations, underlining the longevity of their

interaction. "India and Ethiopia have had contact, communication and exchange for thousands of years," he said.

Drawing a connection between history and present-day cooperation, the Prime Minister highlighted the cultural ethos underpinning the relationship, pointing out that both countries reflect harmony in diversity. "Our two countries, which are rich in languages and traditions, are symbols of unity in diversity," he said.

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India summons Bangladesh High Commissioner

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Last week's result

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HIGHLIGHTS

Bollywood:

Alia Bhatt's weekend on weekdays



Actor Alia Bhatt posted series of her stylish photos and videos simply captioned, "weekend wali vibe weekday pe."

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Lifestyle:

New Year getaway options; India

A grand palace celebration, a beachside countdown or, a peaceful retreat amid nature, India set to usher in the New Year with optimism

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PARTNERS OF GLOBAL SOUTH



PM Narendra Modi held delegation-level discussions with his Ethiopian counterpart, Abiy Ahmed Ali, focusing on strengthening India-Ethiopia ties around enduring civilizational links

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1.28-crore job expansion

India's hiring outlook for 2026 signals steady growth, with an estimated 1.28 crore jobs, as per recent report

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Dr Barai calls for tariff reversal



Eminent Ind-Am physician Dr Bharat Barai warned India-US relations could remain strained for the future unless Washington reverses recent tariff measures

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Ranthambore

The Ranthambore National Park, along with the Ranthambore Fort and the surrounding hills and valleys, altogether make Ranthambore a traveller's delight

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PARTNERS OF GLOBAL SOUTH

"We are co-passengers and partners of the Global South": PM Modi on India-Ethiopia ties

ADDIS ABABA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi held delegation-level discussions with his Ethiopian counterpart, Abiy Ahmed Ali, focusing on strengthening India-Ethiopia ties around enduring civilizational links, shared democratic principles, and a common commitment as partners in the Global South.

During the talks, Prime Minister Modi referred to the communication and exchange for "thousands of years" between the two nations, underlining the longevity of their interaction. "India and Ethiopia have had contact, communication and exchange for thousands of years," he said.

Drawing a connection between history and present-day cooperation, the Prime Minister highlighted the cultural ethos underpinning the relationship, pointing out that both countries reflect harmony in diversity. "Our two countries, which are rich in languages and traditions, are symbols of unity in diversity," he said.

Prime Minister Modi described India and Ethiopia as democratic nations working towards peace and human welfare. "Both countries are democratic powers committed to peace and the welfare of humanity," he stated.

The Prime Minister characterized the two countries as collaborators in promoting the voice of the Global South. "We are co-passengers and partners of the Global South," he said.

He also noted the consistent mutual support extended by both sides in multilateral settings. "On international platforms, we have stood shoulder-to-shoulder."

Prime Minister Modi drew attention to



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with Ministers and MPs of Ethiopia after his address at the Ethiopian Parliament, in Addis Ababa. (Narendra Modi Photo Gallery /ANI Photo)

Ethiopia's diplomatic stature in Africa, citing Addis Ababa's central role in continental affairs. "African Union HQ in Ethiopia makes Ethiopia the meeting point of African diplomacy," he said.

Reflecting on India's G20 Presidency, he recalled New Delhi's efforts to amplify Africa's participation in global governance. "Inspired by the common vision of inclusive world, in 2023, India ensured that African Union become a G20 member," he said.

The delegation-level engagement formed part of Prime Minister Modi's two-day State visit to Ethiopia, aligned with

India's broader foreign policy focus on Africa and the Global South.

The visit underscores New Delhi's intent to deepen strategic partnerships on the continent, strengthen multilateral cooperation, and prepare diplomatic ground ahead of India assuming the BRICS chairmanship on January 1, 2026.

The visit, undertaken at the invitation of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, is PM Modi's first official visit to Ethiopia and his third trip to Africa this year.

It comes after his engagements in Jordan and ahead of his scheduled visit to

Oman, placing Ethiopia at the center of India's broader West Asia-Africa diplomatic outreach.

Officials have described this leg of the tour as strategically important in view of BRICS expansion and Africa's rising influence in global governance.

Ethiopia's entry into BRICS has further elevated the strategic dimension of bilateral relations.

The grouping, founded by Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2006, with South Africa joining subsequently, has expanded in recent years. ANI

Wonderful to be in land of lions, I feel very much at home in Ethiopia, says PM Modi

ADDIS ABABA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he feels "very much at home" during his visit to Ethiopia and called it a "moment of great privilege" to address the Parliament of the African nation.

PM Modi received a warm welcome as he arrived to address the Joint Session of the Ethiopian Parliament. This is also the 18th Parliament in the world where the Prime Minister delivered his address.

Addressing the session, PM Modi said, "It is a moment of great privilege to stand before you today. It is wonderful to be here in Ethiopia, the land of lions. I

feel very much at home because my home state, Gujarat in India, is also home to lions."

"I am honored to be here in this temple of democracy, in the heart of the nation, with ancient wisdom and modern aspirations. I come to you with deep respect for your Parliament, your people and your democratic journey. On behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India, I bring greetings of friendship, goodwill and brotherhood," he said.

The Prime Minister again expressed gratitude for conferring him with Ethiopia's highest civilian honor, the 'Great Honor Nishan of Ethiopia'. "I accept this award

with folded hands, humility on behalf of the people of India," he said.

He said that Ethiopia is one of the oldest civilizations in human history. "Here, history is alive in the mountains, valleys and in the hearts of the Ethiopian people," he added.

"Today, Ethiopia stands tall because its roots are deep. To stand in Ethiopia is to stand where the past is honored, the present is full of purpose, and the future is welcomed with an open heart. The blend of old and new -- the balance between ancient wisdom and modern civilization -- this is the true strength of Ethiopia," he fur-

ther said, amid the loud cheers in the Parliament.

"With the call of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas', which means together with everyone's growth, trust and effort, our emotions with our motherland, also reflect our shared perspective," he said.

Drawing parallels to India's national song 'Vande Mataram' and Ethiopia's national anthem, PM Modi said that both refer to "our land as the Mother". "They inspire us to take pride in the heritage, culture, beauty and protect the motherland," he added. IANS

After Bondi Beach, Indian agencies flag Hamas-fuelled radicalization at home

NEW DELHI: It has now been established that one of the Bondi Beach shooters was from Hyderabad. The older suspect, Sajid Akram (50), was shot dead by the police while his 24-year-old son, Naveed Akram, was wounded and remains in hospital.

Intelligence agencies tracking Sajid's roots learnt that he hailed from the Al Hasnath Colony in Toli Chowk, Hyderabad. While Hyderabad has had many stints with terror and radicalization, there is no indication that Sajid was radicalized in India. The radicalization took place in Sydney, and the father-son duo acted on their own.

However, it has been confirmed that they had been radicalized by the ideology of the Islamic State in Sydney. It was a completely ideology-driven attack that claimed 16 lives, officials say. The probe has led to one Wissam Haddad, a notorious cleric associated with the Islamic State. Haddad preaches the radical ideology of the Islamic State, and despite many warnings, the Australian agencies failed to act against him.

Indian Intelligence agencies say that Haddad is not a new name. He has been a controversial figure, and despite many warnings, no action was taken against

him. This is a textbook Islamic State kind of operation, whereby the focus is more on radicalization rather than training.

The Islamic State has once again managed to succeed in radicalizing people, who have eventually gone on to carry out deadly attacks on their own, without much involvement on the training and logistical front by the Islamic State. Officials say that one can also draw parallels to the

preachers who are present in every corner of the country. The Islamic State has specifically identified many such preachers who are tasked with this duty and also with recruitment.

In the Australia case, it has been found that it was the son, Naveed, who began taking the classes with Haddad. He later introduced his father to the classes by the preacher. The agencies that have been

Intelligence agencies tracking Sajid's roots learnt that he hailed from the Al Hasnath Colony in Toli Chowk, Hyderabad. While Hyderabad has had many stints with terror and radicalization, there is no indication that Sajid was radicalized in India

Faridabad module, which carried out the Delhi Red Fort blasts. This was a self-inspired module that espoused radical ideology. The members of this module were also radicalized by a cleric, Mufti Irfan Ahmed, before they went on to set up operations, officials point out.

Intelligence agencies have alerted the state police about possible attacks during the New Year celebrations. They have also warned about controversial

analyzing the content of Haddad's speeches say that he can convince the youth and the elderly with ease. His messages are powerful, and in the last couple of years, he has focused heavily on the Israel-Hamas conflict. He subtly yet powerfully urges the people to target anyone associated with Israel. This explains the Bondi Beach attack on the Jews on the first day of Hanukkah, officials point out. **IANS**

India to Pakistan: Will counter terrorism 'with all its might'

UNITED NATIONS: In a strong and stinging rebuttal to Pakistan at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate, India served a notice to Pakistan that it will not tolerate Islamabad's terrorism and will counter it "with all its might".

"Let me be clear: India will counter Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in all its forms and manifestations with all its might," India's Permanent Representative P. Harish recently said to Pakistan's Permanent Representative Asim Iftikhar Ahmad taking a huge detour from the topic of Security Council debate, 'Leadership for Peace', to talk about the Indus Water Treaty, Harish said it "will be held in abeyance until Pakistan, which is a global epicenter of terror, credibly and irrevocably ends its support for cross-border and all other forms of terrorism".

India put the treaty on hold because of Pakistan's terrorism and wars that killed tens of thousands of Indians, he said.

"India had entered into the Indus Waters Treaty, 65 years ago, in good faith, in

a spirit of goodwill and friendship," he said. "Throughout these six and a half decades, Pakistan has violated the spirit of the Treaty by inflicting three wars and thousands of terror attacks on India".

The Pahalgam terror attack in April, during which Pakistan-sponsored terrorists carried out "religion-based targeted killings

waters with Pakistan.

Harish ridiculed Pakistan for obsessively bringing up issues extraneous to topics under discussion at the UN.

Akram's "unwarranted reference to Jammu and Kashmir in today's open debate attests to its obsessive focus on harming India and its

The attack in which Hindus and a Christian were slaughtered was the last straw, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that he was suspending the 1960 treaty signed by then-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for sharing river waters with Pakistan

of 26 innocent civilians", was the most recent.

The attack in which Hindus and a Christian were slaughtered was the last straw, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that he was suspending the 1960 treaty signed by then-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for sharing river

people," he said.

"A serving non-permanent Security Council Member that chooses to further this obsession in all meetings and platforms of the UN in pursuit of its divisive agenda cannot be expected to fulfill its designated responsibilities and obligations," he added. **IANS**

Chinese embassy staff disrupt Taiwan award ceremony at Paris tea contest

TAIPEI: Staff from the Chinese embassy attempted to disrupt an awards ceremony at an international tea competition in France earlier this month after the organizer mentioned Taiwan and displayed the Republic of China flag, according to a report in the Taipei Times.

Hsieh Chung-lin, chief executive of the Juxin Tea Factory in Lishan, Taichung, attended the Teas of the World International Contest on December 2, held at the Peruvian Embassy in Paris.

He received a special award for his Huagang Snow Source Tea from the nonprofit Agency for the Valorization of Agricultural Products (AVPA).

During the award ceremony, two representatives from the Chinese embassy stood up and shouted, "Taiwan is just a province of China" and "Taiwan is part of China," as shown in video footage of the event.

The organizers ignored the interruption and continued with the ceremony, while the audience booed the embassy staffers and applauded Hsieh.

During a dinner held after the event, Hsieh said many attendees had learned about Taiwan through its effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic; according to the Taipei Times report.

He noted that people he spoke to at the event said China's actions would only foster resentment and encouraged him to disregard the protest.

Reflecting on the incident, Hsieh said that as long as Taiwanese people continue to perform exceptionally, similar to Taiwan's contributions during the pandemic, the global community would recognize Taiwan.

In Taipei, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Hsiao Kuang-wei urged China to adhere to international etiquette norms to avoid becoming a "laughingstock" in the eyes of the world. He emphasized that Beijing could improve cross-strait relations only by engaging in respectful and equal discussions with Taiwan and by rationally viewing the current situation, as cited by the Taipei Times.

Hsieh's tea factory, which traces its roots to Songboling in Nantou County, is a family legacy passed down to him as the fifth generation. **ANI**

India summons Bangladesh High Commissioner over security concerns of Indian High Commission in Dhaka

NEW DELHI: India's Ministry of External Affairs recently summoned the Bangladesh High Commissioner M Riaz Hamidullah over concerns regarding the security of the Indian High Commission in Dhaka after a threat was received.

The summons come on the heels of anti-India rhetoric by National Citizen Party (NCP) leader Hasnat Abdullah who had made a public speech threatening to isolate the Seven Sisters and providing refuge to Northeast separatists if Bangladesh is destabilized. Abdullah is known for his strong anti-India stand.

Earlier, Bangladesh's Victory Day was celebrated with a cultural program at the Embassy of Bangladesh in Delhi, India. High Commissioner M Riaz Hamidullah emphasized Bangladesh's commitment to fulfilling its people's aspirations, particularly those of the younger generation, and highlighted the country's young population.

Hamidullah stressed that Bangladesh and India share a mutually beneficial relationship, with a focus on prosperity, peace, and regional security. He noted the two countries' mutual interdependence, underscoring the importance of their partnership.

He said, "The whole of Bangladesh, and all of us, are

committed to fulfilling the aspirations of our people, especially the younger generation. We have a very young demography... We believe our relationship with India is in our shared interest. We have mutual interdependence...



A large number of people, under the banner of "July Oyikko" (July Unity), hold a protest march to the Indian High Commission, in Dhaka (ANI Video Grab)

We are fully focused on prosperity, peace, and security in the region."

The event showcased Bangladesh's rich culture and heritage, celebrating its liberation and independence. The High Commissioner's remarks reflected Bangladesh's dedication to advancing its people's interests and strengthening ties with India. ANI

EAM Jaishankar meets Israeli PM Netanyahu, discusses deeper bilateral cooperation

JERUSALEM: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar called on Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem and conveyed warm wishes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The two leaders discussed enhancing cooperation between India and Israel across several sectors, including technology, economy, skills and talent, connectivity and security.

Taking to social media X, EAM Jaishankar wrote, "Deeply appreciate the call on Prime Minister Israel Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem this evening. Extended warm wishes of PM Narendra Modi. Discussed deepening cooperation in technology, economy, skills and talent, connectivity and security. Valued his perspectives on regional and global developments. Confident that our Strategic Partnership will grow from strength to strength."

Following the meeting, PM Netanyahu also posted on X, "This evening, I met in my office in Jerusalem with India's Minister of External Affairs, Dr S Jaishankar."

EAM Jaishankar also met Israeli President Isaac Herzog, where the two sides reviewed the India-Israel strategic partnership and its continued advancement.

Taking to X, Jaishankar wrote, "Honored to call on President Isaac Herzog of Israel today. Conveyed warm greetings of President Croupade Murmur and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Discussed our Strategic Partnership and its continued deepening. Reaffirmed India's steadfast support for enduring peace in the region." IANS

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आपने इस स्टेट को बनाने में मदद की है— अपना देश छोड़कर, अपनों को छोड़कर, और अपनों के बेहतरीन ज़िंदगी के लिए।

60 देशों के लोग एक स्टेट में – यह फूलों का गुलदस्ता, जहाँ हर एक फूल अपने रंग और खुशबू से इस जगह को महका देता है - वहाँ उनकी हिफाजत भी ज़रूरी है।

आपको चाहिये थोड़ा सा प्यार, थोड़ा देखभाल – एक चैंपियन की, क्योंकि हर कैलिफोर्निया-वासी को कारगर स्वास्थ्य सेवा मिलनी चाहिये।

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हम स्वास्थ्य बीमा कंपनी नहीं हैं। हम इसमें आपके लिए हैं।



कलिफोर्निया
के लिए
दिल से

First snowfall cloaks BAPS Akshardham temple in New Jersey

WASHINGTON: The first snowfall of the season brought a quiet, wintry stillness to the majestic Akshardham temple in Robbinsville, New Jersey, as fresh snow covered the sprawling marble temple complex and its surrounding courtyards.

Pictures from the site showed the main temple and nearby buildings covered in white, with snow on the domes, towers, and carved stone. The golden statue in the center stood out, its raised arms standing out clearly against the snowy temples and paths behind it.



Aerial photos showed how large and balanced the Akshardham campus looked in winter. Paths, gardens, and water areas looked frozen and covered with snow, while rows of decorated pavilions and columns lined the grounds neatly. The main temple stood tall above the complex, its light stone standing out against the blue sky and white snow.

Closer views showed snow collected on stairs, ledges, and railings, making the detailed work on the building stand out. The snowfall marked a change in season for the temple, which is an important religious and cultural place for Indian Americans in the area.

BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham in Robbinsville opened in 2023 and is one of the largest Hindu temples outside India. Built using old stone-carving techniques, the complex has a main temple, gardens, and cultural spaces spread over a large area. *IANS*

COMMUNITY ACROSS AMERICA

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December 19, 2025



US Congressman calls for deeper India-US ties, civic engagement

Details on page 13

Indian American community leader calls for tariff reversal to bolster India-US relations

CHICAGO: Eminent Indian American physician and community leader Dr Bharat Barai warned that India-US relations could remain strained for the foreseeable future unless Washington reverses recent tariff measures, arguing that New Delhi has been unfairly singled out amid broader global trade and energy dynamics.

In an interview with IANS, Dr Barai said the momentum built in India-US ties over several administrations had been undermined following President Donald Trump's return to the White House, particularly by trade actions driven more by politics than economics.

Dr Barai said the United States does have a trade deficit with India, but noted that addressing it should have followed a calibrated economic approach. "Doing X amount of tariffs purely on economic grounds to remove the trade deficit will be one thing, and they impose 25 per cent that so-called reciprocal duty to wipe out the trade deficit," he said, adding that the rate should have been lower, "more like 15 per cent or so."

He was particularly critical of the additional 25 per cent duty imposed as a penalty linked to India's imports of Russian oil. While condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, Dr Barai said India had become "a sort of innocent bystander casualty" in a policy that lacked consistency.

"China is importing more oil than India, but China has a Trump card, and their Trump card is the rare earth metals," he said, pointing to US and European dependence on Chi-



Dr Bharat Barai

nese rare earths for electric vehicles, defense equipment and even advanced aircraft. He also noted that several European countries continued to import Russian energy without facing comparable penalties.

"So why single out India with 25 per cent additional import duty when China is only at 47 per cent? Most European countries are around 15 per

cent and trade adviser Peter Navarro as key drivers of the policy. He said many lawmakers privately disagreed but were reluctant to speak out.

"Many congressmen and senators are very unhappy about it in private when they have a conversation. They do admit that this is wrong, but they all are afraid that President Trump will try to take re-

ing very unpopular. They are totally arbitrary, made up by three people sitting in the Oval Office rather than the United States Congress," Dr Barai said, expressing hope that the Supreme Court would eventually rule that tariffs fall under Congress's authority.

On the outlook for bilateral ties, Dr Barai said the relationship could remain frozen unless a trade agreement removed the additional duty. He noted that some Indian companies, including Reliance, had reduced Russian oil imports following sanctions on specific Russian firms, but said India could not completely abandon a major energy source.

"For India, serving the population of 1.4 billion, wherever they can find a reliable source and cheaper source of energy, it is important," he said, adding that India sourced only about 35 per cent of its oil from Russia while diversifying the rest from the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Dr Barai said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was acting in India's national interest and had handled pressure from Washington "very diplomatically, very politely, very gentlemanly," without succumbing to it. "He is doing what is best for the people of India," he said.

He also argued that India's global standing had risen over the past year, citing closer ties with Europe, a free trade agreement with the UK, stronger engagement with Africa, and a recent defense pact with Australia. "India is respected more than before, except maybe in the United States," he said. *IANS*

Dr Barai said the momentum built in India-US ties over several administrations had been undermined following President Donald Trump's return to the White House, particularly by trade actions driven more by politics than economics

cent. There is no extra duty on Hungary or Slovenia for continuing to import Russian oil," he said.

Dr Barai attributed the tariff decisions to a small group within the administration, naming President Trump, immigration hardliner Stephen Miller

venge on them," he said, adding that fear of primary challenges had kept them silent.

He said recent electoral outcomes in states such as New Jersey and Virginia, as well as a mayoral election in Miami, reflected growing public discontent. "His policies are becom-

Americans4Hindus launches Rajneeti Academy 2026

A National Weekly Political Empowerment series with multi-level certifications

IT'S TIME TO LEAD - ENTER POLITICS, SHAPE THE FUTURE

India Post News Service

Americans4Hindus (A4H), a national, independent, non-partisan political organization committed to empowering Hindu and pro-Hindu Americans, proudly announces the launch of RAJNEETI ACADEMY 2026, a comprehensive Weekly Political Empowerment Series designed to educate, train, and certify the next generation of civic and political leaders.

The program officially begins on Sunday, January 11, 2026, and will be conducted online every Sunday from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM PST, enabling participants from across the United States and globally to engage meaningfully.

Program Highlights & Benefits

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Certification Pathway

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About Americans4Hindus

Americans4Hindus (A4H) is a national political organization operating as a Federal Super PAC,

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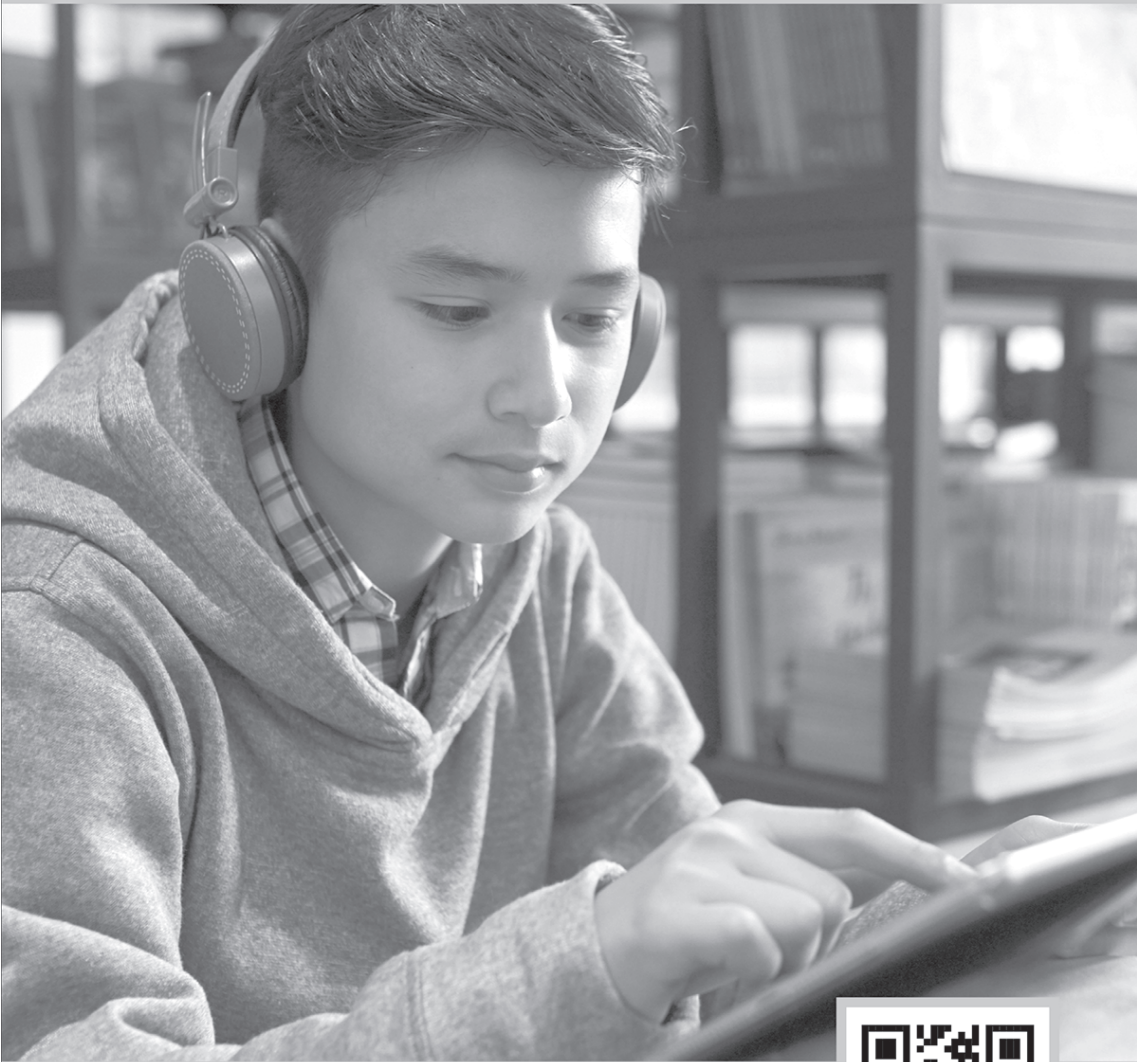
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'PM Modi's Oman visit will deepen ties, boost trade and open new opportunities'

MUSCAT: As Prime Minister Narendra Modi prepares to arrive in Oman, members of the Indian business and professional community on Wednesday expressed strong optimism about the visit, calling it a major opportunity to deepen India-Oman relations and expand cooperation across sectors such as energy, manufacturing, healthcare, tourism and logistics.

Speaking to IANS in Muscat, Indian industry leaders said the Prime Minister's visit comes at a time when both countries are looking to elevate their partner-

ship through structured dialogue and a possible Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Nirmal K Minda, Executive Chairman of Uno Minda Limited, said the visit could unlock collaboration in multiple sectors.

"Oman's low energy costs and India's strong manufacturing ecosystem create a natural complementarity," Minda stated.

From an Indian perspective, he said, it makes sense for Omani investors to look at India as a manufacturing destination under the Make in India initiative. IANS

Kerrville Honors Sewa International, partner organizations for flood relief and recovery efforts

KERRVILLE, TEXAS: The City of Kerrville, Texas, along with the Kerr Economic Development Corporation and the Kerr Together Long-Term Recovery Group, honored Sewa International and other Indian American organizations on December 9 for their outstanding service and leadership during the July 4 flash floods that affected the city this year.

Reflecting on the experience, Mayor Joe Herrington remarked, "This wasn't just emergency response-it was a ministry. Helping others is how we serve God, and Sewa International embodied that spirit every single day. Their volunteers brought hope, structure, and humanity when our community needed it most."

In addition, the Indo-American Charity Foundation (IACF), Sewa's partner organization, made a significant contribution of \$50,000 toward flood recovery efforts. Representatives from the Indo-American Charity Foundation Houston (IACF) shared their guiding principle: "We live here, we give here."

"It was impossible to miss the sea of



Kerrville City officials, partner organizations, and Sewa volunteers gathered to showcase their shared commitment to uniting communities and leading long-term recovery efforts after the devastating July 4 floods this year

whelmed and unsure how to manage the sheer scale of operations, Sewa stepped in and brought order, compassion, and unwavering commitment. That made all the difference," the representative said.

Key city officials, including Economic Development Manager Kelly Hagemeyer, Kerr EDC Deputy Director Theresa Metcalf, Todd Bock, Executive Director,

support Kerrville's recovery.

Drawing from years of experience handling hurricanes in Houston, Sewa volunteers immediately organized and prepared to help emergency teams deal with the Kerrville situation and joined the relief efforts.

Under the guidance of Mr. Prashant Sona of the Houston Indian Consulate, and the leadership of Ramesh Cherivirala and Pankaj Rana of IACF, multiple organizations rallied together, including Arya Samaj, Indian Muslims Association of Greater Houston, Indian Doctors' Association, Indo American Conservatives of Texas, and Indian Doctors' Charitable Clinic.

Emphasizing the collaborative effort, IACF President Pankaj Rana said, "The strength of our response came from unity. Partnering with Sewa International allowed us to break silos, combine resources, and make a meaningful impact quickly."

City leaders also expressed deep appreciation for Sewa volunteers, many of

whom traveled from Houston and San Antonio and arrived within hours of the disaster to support the affected community.

Several individuals-Nikhil Jain, Vinayak Astekar, Sunil Kolluru, Trinabh Shukla, Jitendra Chaudhary, Swapnil Padate, and others-were also recognized for their direct contributions, both financially and on the ground.

Overall, city leaders credited Sewa International USA for being among the first organizations to arrive and among the last to leave. As one official said, "Sewa's dedication didn't end with the initial emergency. They have continued to support long-term recovery and have remained a pillar of strength for families rebuilding their lives."

About Sewa International

Sewa International (www.sewausa.org) is a 501 (c) (3) Hindu faith-based charitable nonprofit that works in the areas of disaster recovery, education, and development. Sewa has 43 Chapters across the USA and serves regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin.



(From left) Prashant Sona, Head of Chancery, Indian Consulate in Houston; Pankaj Rana, President, Indo American Charity Foundation; Theresa Metcalf, Deputy Director, Kerr Economic Development Corporation; Todd Bock, Executive Director, Kerr Economic Development Corporation; Vinayak Ashtekar, Sewa volunteer; and Nikhil Jain, Director of Marketing, Sewa International, present at the event

yellow T-shirts," a city representative recalled, Sewa International volunteers who managed traffic, coordinated logistics, and organized hundreds of community volunteers at the Tivy Antler Stadium emergency site. "At a moment when we were over-

Kerr Economic Development Corporation, and City Manager Dalton Rice, expressed gratitude for the early and sustained support provided by Sewa International, which played a central role in uniting Indian American organizations across Texas to

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★ PRINT ★ TV ★ RADIO ★ DIGITAL ★ SOCIAL MEDIA ★ EVENTS

Country artist Drew Baldridge's new song, "Tough People," pays tribute to resilient kids like St. Jude patient Lizzie

With her eyes sparkling and a bright, happy grin, Lizzie, a patient at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®, could barely contain her excitement. She was about to meet country music artist Drew Baldridge.

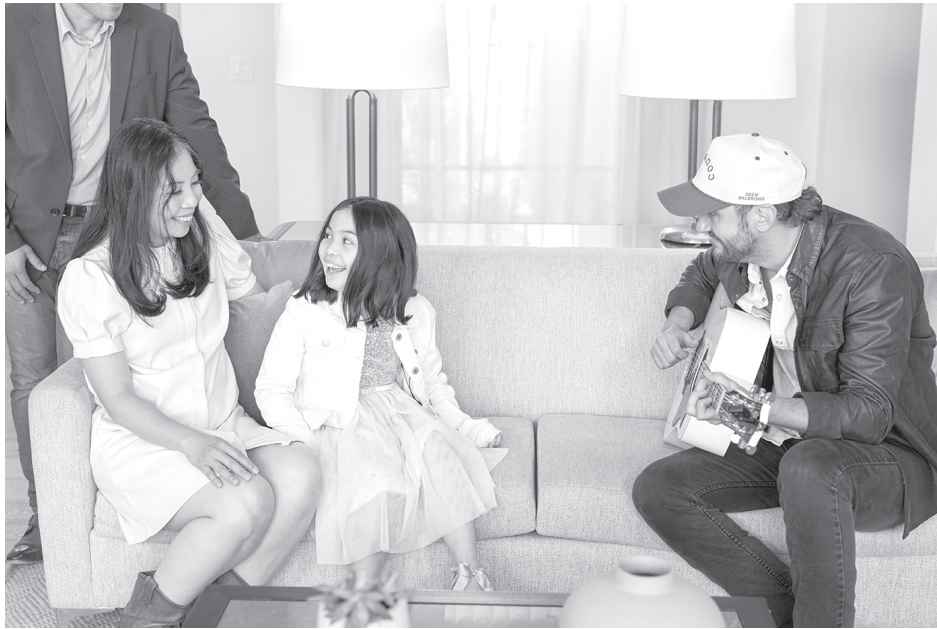
Drew was excited, too. He was there to share something close to his heart, his Top 10 single "Tough People" a tribute to people who get through life's hardships and come out on the other side.

"We wrote it for people like you," Drew said to the enraptured 9-year-old.

"Thank you," Lizzie said with a smile.

At 20 months old, Lizzie was diagnosed with hypothalamic/optic pathway pilocytic astrocytoma, a slow-growing brain tumor. She received nearly three years of treatment at a Texas hospital. When her tumor grew back in 2021, she was referred to St. Jude, where doctors tried multiple treatments until one involving a new drug protocol worked.

"We were just happy to have a place to go that we had an option, because at that point we felt like there was no other op-



tion," said Lizzie's mom Mary.

At St. Jude, Lizzie was treated with Mirdametinin, a medicine designed to slow tumor growth.

"This is really exciting for a group of children because, while they grow slowly, these tumors affect all kinds of things, like

vision, proper movement, cognition, and development. If you can put them on a medicine and shrink this down you can alleviate a lot of their symptoms and have them lead near normal lives while taking this medicine," said Giles Robinson, a doctor at St. Jude and principal investigator of the clinical trial.

Lizzie completed her treatment in October of 2023.

Back when Drew and the co-writers began work on "Tough People," he was going through tough times himself. He'd lost his record deal, his manager and booking agent.

It would become his fight song, with the hook: "Hard work pays off, good beats evil and tough times make tough people."

Then, Drew visited St. Jude in Memphis, Tennessee. A dad himself to a young boy, the visit to St. Jude was poignant.

"And I saw these kids fighting for their life. And their parents right next to them along on that journey," he said. "And I knew we had to put them in the song. And this had to be a big part of our song."

It's the second verse, which refers to a patient with stage two cancer. The disease might be different from Lizzie's, but the journey is similar.

Mary and Juan, Lizzie's parents, are

grateful that the journey they share with so many other families is part of this moving anthem.

"It really strikes a chord, and it really reflects the struggles," Mary said.

Lizzie, who is taking weekly piano lessons, was "over the moon" about meeting Drew and strumming his guitar. She can't stop talking about him, Mary said.

"If the world had more Drews in it, we would be so much happier," she said.

Lizzie's tumor left her visually impaired in her left eye. She plays in a soccer league with other visually impaired children.

"She also does swim team and enjoys volleyball," Mary said. "I happen to think she's the best artist. She took some art lessons this summer and her drawings are stunning. I feel like I'm bragging. But all of this is possible because of the lifesaving work St. Jude does."

From the doctors and the staff to the kids and their families, "Tough People" is everything St. Jude stands for, Drew said.

"Everybody in that hospital is tough. Everyone is going through something," he said. "I'm glad this song shines a light on them. They deserve it."



Affordability, immigration drive Neil Khot's Illinois Congress bid

CHICAGO: Rising living costs, immigration anxiety, job losses and concerns over cuts to Social Security and Medicare are shaping Indian American entrepreneur Neil Khot's campaign for the US House of Representatives from Illinois' 8th Congressional District, as he mounts a grassroots Democratic bid to retain a seat being vacated by Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi.

Khot said conversations with voters across the district have consistently pointed to economic pressure and uncertainty. "People are worried that they are insurance premiums are going up," he said. "Interest rates are very high. So there is unaffordability in the society. People cannot afford housing. People cannot afford day-to-day groceries." He added that business owners are unsettled by trade policy uncertainty, saying there is "no proper tariff position, so they don't know what steps to take," he told IANS in an interview.

Immigration enforcement has emerged as another defining issue, according to Khot. "People are worried. Business people are worried that they've been dragged, kidnapped and taken," he said,

referring to fears around immigration raids. As a first-generation immigrant, Khot said the issue is deeply personal. "We never, ever have to go through this feeling that the current government has made us go through that America is not welcoming," he said. "America should be welcoming. That's what they did to me."

Khot said protecting seniors is central to his agenda, warning against reductions to entitlement programs. "For my seniors, I want to fight to make sure Medicare and Social Security are not cut down," he said, adding that benefits such as SNAP and healthcare should also be safeguarded. "In the richest country, we should not have healthcare bankrupt people and families."

Presenting himself as an outsider to Washington politics, Khot stressed that he is "not a career politician" but a "small business entrepreneur" with decades of community involvement. He said his campaign is focused on "fighting for immigrants, fighting for the hardworking families," while ensuring "business people have the right opportunity to make sure that they can run proper businesses." IANS



Neil Khot

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America's incredible shrinking population

VIDYA SETHURAMAN
India Post News Service

The United States is edging toward population decline as birth rates fall, the population ages, and immigration slows, removing the country's longtime demographic safety valve. Under lower-immigration scenarios, the U.S. population could shrink as low as 226 million by the year 2100, according to data from the US Census Bureau. This trend mirrors a global shift already reshaping Europe and East Asia. Two-thirds of humanity lives in countries with fertility below the replacement rate of 2.1 children per family. By 2100, populations in some major economies will fall by 20 to 50 percent, based on UN projections. Speakers at the ACom briefing discussed the factors leading to negative population growth; the impact to the economy, including a shrinking labor force; and possible implications for the environment.

Dr. Ana Langer, Director of the Women and Health Initiative at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Professor Emerita in the Department of Global Health and Population pointed out that the decline in population is caused by a complex interplay of structural problems. US surveys show that increased female participation in the workplace, high childcare costs, reproductive health issues, the difficulty of balancing work and family, climate change, and anxiety about future uncer-

tainty are all significant factors contributing to the continued decline in birth rates. Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that families on average spend about 16% of their income on childcare for one young child, causing many couples to postpone or even forgo having children due to the heavy burden.

The briefing also used China as a case study. From 1979 to 2015, China implemented a one-child policy, and the birth rate dropped from over 5 to 2.7; even after the full relaxation of the two- and three-child policy in 2015, the birth rate still fell to about 1.1 in 2022, a record low. Later marriage and childbirth, high childcare costs, the pressure on women to juggle family roles in the workplace, and socio-cultural

factors such as a less child-friendly workplace limit the effectiveness of policy incentives. Many countries' subsidy policies face the same dilemma, with only a few countries, such as Sweden, able to maintain a fertility rate that is relatively close to the replacement level.

Anu Madgavkar, McKinsey Global Institute Partner pointed out that population decline will have a profound impact on labor force structure and the economy. Many countries' working-age populations are approaching or have already reached their peak, and will enter a period of rapid decline in the future; conversely, the proportion of the elderly population continues to rise, leading to a significant increase in the dependency ratio, which will squeeze

economic growth momentum. She predicts that population aging will reduce global per capita GDP growth by about 0.5 percentage points, and this slowdown, accumulated over the long term, will be enough to change the global economic landscape.

At the end of the conference, panelists unanimously emphasized that global population change is a complex issue spanning economics, environment, culture, and policy. The challenges and choices faced by different countries vary greatly, and the future immigration policy, fertility support measures, and socio-cultural changes in the United States will profoundly determine the direction of its population structure.

US federal court upholds removal order against Indian national

WASHINGTON: A US federal appeals court has denied a petition by an Indian national challenging a final administrative removal order issued by the Department of Homeland Security, ruling that alleged procedural errors did not cause him any prejudice.

In a no precedential order issued on December 15, a three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit said petitioner Karanpreet Singh "has not demonstrated any prejudice arising from the alleged errors," and therefore denied his request to vacate the removal order.

Singh, a citizen of India and a permanent resident of Canada, entered the United States from Canada in November 2021 on a visitor visa. In April 2024, he pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine, and a federal district court sentenced him to 60 months in prison.

In December 2024, the Department of Homeland Security served Singh with a notice of intent to issue a final administrative removal order, charging him as removable based on his conviction for an aggravated felony.

Singh responded three days later, saying he wanted to be removed to Canada, arguing that his case should proceed before an immigration judge rather than through expedited administrative removal, and urging the government to issue a detainer rather than a final order so he could apply for earned time credits under the First Step Act.

Ten weeks later, the Department issued a final removal order directing that Singh be removed to "India and or Canada or to any alternate country prescribed" under immigration law. *IANS*

Hindu Chaplaincy - Firmly on the Map

APPEAL TO SUPPORTERS

Namaste,
Picture a student, away from home, wrestling with identity issues and loneliness on a quiet campus night. Or a family gathered around a hospital bed, watching their grandmother take her final breaths.
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The Hindu tradition is rich in "spiritual tools" to help with such times, honed over thousands of years of lived-practice. And yet, across the Diaspora, our community has continued to face crisis, grief, stress, and transformation without the spiritual tools and guidance of our

own tradition. The HSCI global team is actively addressing this void - and needs your partnership to make it real.
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Thank you for helping us bring the gift of compassionate presence to millions who have long lived without it.
About the Hindu Spiritual Care Institute (HSCI) - Founded in 2018, the Hindu Spiritual Care Institute is the first institution dedicated to preparing Hindu chaplains and spiritual caregivers - and to delivering compassionate support to the global Hindu diaspora. It is a US 501(c)(3) institution managed by volunteer faculty and administration.

US Congressman calls for deeper India-US ties, civic engagement

DETROIT: Indian American Congressman Shri Thanedar made a strong case for closer India-United States ties, expanded immigration pathways, and greater civic participation by Indian Americans.

"A strong India-America relationship is beneficial to both countries," Thanedar told a gathering of eminent community leaders in his keynote address at the inaugural India Abroad Dialogue in Detroit, the automobile capital of the world, as he underscored the strategic, economic, and people-to-people foundations of the bilateral partnership.

Thanedar, who represents the 13th Congressional District of Michigan, praised Indian immigrants for bringing "valuable STEM and entrepreneurial skills, which are critical to strengthening our economy," and linked that contribution directly to America's technological and economic competitiveness.

He thanked India Abroad for launching a 10-city national dialogue series, adding, "Give yourselves a round of applause."

A 10-city tour, the India Abroad Dialogue,

starting in Detroit, is being held in partnership with the Foundation of India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) and several other community organizations. The next one scheduled in Chicago would be attended by Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi and top Indian American Dr. Bharat Barai.

Thanedar said events like the dialogue were "critical to building bridges between American policy makers and the Indian-American diaspora, which has often been neglected and is underrepresented in our national political scene."

He drew parallels between Detroit's resurgence and the Indian American experience, noting that the city had rebounded after declaring bankruptcy 12 years ago. "Detroit has entered a resurgence as a global center for manufacturing and technology, as our city continues to build the cars the world drives," he said.

Highlighting Michigan's evolving economy, Thanedar pointed to growth in financial services and digital assets, noting that Detroit has become "the largest city in the United States to accept cryptocurrency

to pay for city fees and taxes." He credited immigrants, particularly Indian Americans, for driving this revival. "Every day, you are bringing economic development, jobs, and hope for a better day to every block of this great city," he said.



Shri Thanedar

Thanedar spoke at length about his own background, saying, "Before I went to Congress, I was a serial entrepreneur for my whole life. I built companies that brought life-saving drugs to market." That experience, he said, shaped his commitment to immigrant entrepreneurs. "I understand the challenges our immigrant entrepreneurs face because I experienced them

myself," he told the audience.

On foreign policy, Thanedar said India and the United States were "natural partners that share democratic values, and key economic and strategic interests," citing cooperation in "defense, technology, education, supply-chain resilience, and counterterrorism." He stressed Michigan's role in the relationship, from the auto sector and EV ecosystem to advanced manufacturing and engineering talent.

The Congressman also addressed emerging technologies, saying innovation in "artificial intelligence and advanced computing to mobility innovation and semiconductors" was moving at an "unbelievably rapid pace." But he cautioned that the workforce must be prepared so that technology serves "as a job creator rather than a worker replacement."

Immigration remained a central theme of his remarks. "History has made one thing clear: immigration has greatly benefited America," Thanedar said, calling India "a fantastic source for remarkable talent in STEM, especially the tech sector." IANS

Indian diaspora must speak up, engage politically: US Congressman

CHICAGO: Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi on Sunday urged Indian Americans to confront rising bigotry by speaking out, building coalitions, and deepening political engagement, warning that silence could leave the community vulnerable.

"We are kind of in this moment where anti-Indian sentiment is on the rise," Krishnamoorthi said at the India Abroad® Dialogue in Chicago. "It's going to become dangerous when combined with the rise of political violence as well."

He cited recent incidents of hate speech directed at him personally. "An elected official from Florida called for me to be deported. He called me a foreign occupier," he said, adding, "I said, just call me Raja - I'll just call you racist."

Krishnamoorthi outlined what he described as three essential responses for the Indian American community. "One, we have to speak up," he said, rejecting earlier advice that silence might reduce back-

lash.

"The second thing is you need to speak up even when there's bigotry, prejudice and hatred directed at anyone else," he said, urging solidarity across communities. "At the end of the day, we have to multiply our numbers by standing shoulder to shoulder with others."

The third, he said, was political participation. "If you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu," he said. "None of us can afford to be on the menu."

Krishnamoorthi also addressed concerns over public safety and gun violence, pointing to what he called a national "scourge." "There's a mass shooting every day on average," he said, arguing for "common sense gun regulations" and improved mental health support.

He said the tone of political rhetoric mattered. "We have to lower the temperature of the rhetoric that we use about each other," he said. "People listen to you, and if they listen to you, they may act." IANS



Raja Krishnamoorthi

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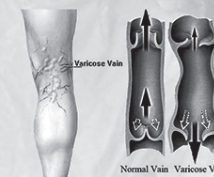


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'Indian rupee likely to bounce back strongly in 2nd half of next fiscal'

NEW DELHI: Geopolitical uncertainties driven by the delay in the India-US trade deal have been the single-most important reasons for the rupee sliding against the US dollar, an SBI Research report said, adding, the rupee is likely to bounce back strongly in the second half of the next fiscal.

India's trade data shows the remarkable resilience in navigating through prolonged uncertainty; more protectionism and labor supply shocks.

"While the geopolitical risk index has moderated since April



2025, the current average value of the index for April-October 2025 is much greater than its decadal average, which indicates how much pressure global uncertainties are exerting on INR," State Bank of India's (SBI) Group Chief Economic Advisor, Dr Soumya Kanti Ghosh, said.

Dr Ghosh further stated that consistent with their empirical analysis, "the rupee is currently in a depreciating regime and is likely to exit it". IANS

Steel demand in India projected to grow at 8 pc in FY26



NEW DELHI: Steel demand growth in India is projected to remain steady at around 8 percent for FY26, generating an incremental demand of 11-12 million tons per annum (mtpa), a report said on Wednesday.

However, softer steel prices and incremental supply are expected to pose challenges for domestic steel producers, the report from ratings agency ICRA said. IANS

India aims for a 1.28-crore job expansion in 2026: Report

NEW DELHI: While the Indian job market closed 2025 on a strong note, the country's hiring outlook for 2026 signals steady growth, with an estimated 1.28 crore jobs, as per recent report.

The report by foundit, a jobs and talent platform, showed that the surge in hiring in 2025 was led by robust employer confidence, steady recruitment across major industries, and the rising prominence of Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities as strategic talent hubs.

However, growth in the second half of the year moderated to +4 percent over six months, indicating a shift toward more calibrated, productivity-led hiring.

But 2026 is shaping up to be a skills-led year of hiring, as growth expands beyond metros and strengthens India's position as a resilient and future-ready talent market, the report said.

"2025 shaped up as a year of strong expansion but disciplined hiring. We witnessed the decen-



The report by foundit, a jobs and talent platform, showed that the surge in hiring in 2025 was led by robust employer confidence, steady recruitment across major industries

tralization of talent, with Tier-2 hubs becoming operational anchors for tech, BFSI, logistics, and retail," said Anupama Bhimrajka, VP, Marketing, foundit.

"As we head into 2026, de-

mand for AI-ready skills, strategic leadership, and mid-career digital talent will keep momentum high despite measured intake in some sectors," Bhimrajka added.

The report noted that in 2026,

the demand will be strongest for mid-to-senior talent in digital, AI, cloud, data, and cybersecurity, driven by continued enterprise transformation.

Tech, BFSI, manufacturing, infrastructure, and renewable energy are set to lead hiring, with emerging sectors like fintech, health tech, and electric mobility creating niche opportunities.

Hiring is also expected to expand beyond metros as companies develop talent hubs in Tier 2 cities to optimize costs and access wider talent pools.

Further, in 2026, Bengaluru and Hyderabad are set to lead hiring, driven by tech, GCCs, AI, cloud, and semiconductor operations.

Mumbai, Chennai, Pune, Kochi, and Tier-2 cities such as Coimbatore, Jaipur, and Baroda are expected to record steady growth. Overall, the trend reflects India's shift toward a distributed, multi-city talent model. IANS

India now largest market in world in AI model adoption: BofA

NEW DELHI: India has emerged as the world's largest and most active market for large language model (LLM) adoption, according to an analysis by Bank of America (BofA).

The country now leads globally in the number of users for popular AI apps such as ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity, both in terms of monthly active users (MAUs) and daily active users (DAUs).

BofA said India's rapid rise as a key AI market is driven by a combination of scale, affordability and demographics.

India has the second-largest

online population in the world, with more than 700-750 million mobile internet users.

Affordable data plans have made AI access easier, with users able to consume 20-30 GB of data a month at around \$2.

In addition, more than 60 percent of Indian internet users are under the age of 35, and a large part of this population is English-speaking and quick to adopt new technologies.

AI adoption in India is also getting a push from telecom companies. BofA noted that telcos such as Jio and Bharti Airtel are offering complimentary subscriptions to paid versions of AI apps like

Gemini and Perplexity.

This, according to the report, is creating a win-win situation for users, AI companies and telecom operators.

For consumers, access to ad-

vanced AI tools at a low cost is helping create a level playing field.

Indian users are using these tools to improve learning outcomes and boost productivity.

The availability of AI models in

multiple Indian languages is also helping bridge the digital divide and reduce language barriers, leading to what BofA described as the democratization of AI.

The report also highlighted that India could emerge as a testing ground for the next phase of AI, known as agentic AI.

These are AI applications that can reason, plan and execute tasks independently. Given India's massive and diverse user base, BofA believes the country is well suited to stress-test such applications in real-world conditions before they are rolled out globally. IANS



India's top 200 self-made entrepreneurs reach Rs 42 lakh crore valuation in 2025

NEW DELHI: The cumulative value of all companies belonging to India's top 200 self-made entrepreneurs stands at Rs 42 lakh crore (\$469 billion) in 2025, up from Rs 36 lakh crore (\$431 billion) last year -- reflecting a 15 percent growth and underscoring the rapid wealth creation among India's self-made entrepreneurs, a report showed on Wednesday.

The number of billion-dollar companies founded by the 'Self-made Entrepreneurs of the Millennia 2025' stands at 128, up from 121 last year, adding 22 new companies to the elite club, according to the IDFC FIRST Private and Hurun India's list.

The 2025 edition welcomed 102 new founders and 53 new companies. Five companies on list are worth Rs 1 lakh crore or more, up from three last year, indicating a strong growth in ultra-high-value businesses.

Bengaluru retained its position as India's top startup hub, with 52 companies, although down by 14 from last year. Mumbai followed with 41 companies (+5), and Gurugram with 36 companies (+5), reflecting a dynamic shift in entrepreneurial activity across major

cities, said the report.

Bengaluru also continued to lead as the top city for founder residences with 88 entrepreneurs, followed by Mumbai with 83 and New Delhi with 52, together account-

The number of billion-dollar companies founded by the 'Self-made Entrepreneurs of the Millennia 2025' stands at 128, up from 121 last year, adding 22 new companies to the elite club, according to the IDFC FIRST Private and Hurun India's list

ing for a significant share of India's top self-made entrepreneurs in 2025.

"India stands tall as one of the world's leading nations for the quality of its entrepreneurship ecosystem. This report honors the extraordinary stories of visionary leaders who are reshaping the country's

economic landscape," said Vikas Sharma, Head-Wealth Management and Private Banking, IDFC FIRST Bank.

Financial services led the sectors with 47 companies, followed by Software and Services (28), Healthcare (27), and Retail (20). Notably, 189 companies - nearly 95 percent of the list - have external investors, with the rest bootstrapped.

"Five companies founded post-2020 are now collectively valued at Rs 78,000 crore. These entrepreneurs are driving growth and contributing to nation-building, with employee benefits increasing from Rs 54,000 crore to Rs 57,200 crore this year, reflecting their investment in people," said Anas Rahman Junaid, Founder and Chief Researcher, Hurun India.

Deepinder Goyal took the top spot, as his company Eternal led with a valuation of Rs 3.2 lakh crore, up 27 percent from last year.

Women entrepreneurs are making significant strides in building some of the most valuable businesses of this millennia. Twenty women feature in the list. *IANS*

Modified electronics manufacturing clusters generated nearly 1.80 lakh jobs: Minister

NEW DELHI: The Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0), located in 10 states with projected investments of Rs 1,46,846 crore, have estimated to generate about 1.80 lakh jobs, the Parliament was informed recently.

Union Minister of State for Electronics and IT Jitin Prasada said in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha that so far, 11 EMC and 2 CFC (common facility center) projects have been approved.

These cover an area of 4,399.68 acres with project cost of Rs 5,226.49 crore, in-

cluding Central financial assistance of Rs 2,492.74 crore, the minister informed.

Further, under the EMC 2.0 scheme, at least 10 percent of the saleable/leasable area within the cluster has been provisioned for the Ready Built Factory (RBF) sheds.

The Ready Built Factory (RBF) sheds under the approved EMC 2.0 parks are in various stages of construction.



Jitin Prasada

Further, under the EMC 2.0 scheme, at least 10 percent of the saleable/leasable area within the cluster has been provisioned for the Ready Built Factory (RBF) sheds

sponsiveness, availability of RBF/Plug-and-Play facilities, cost-efficient logistics, and significant direct and indirect employment generation, along with enhanced skill development within the cluster ecosystem, said Prasada.

The government notified the Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) Scheme in April 2020. The scheme supports the creation of world-class electronics manufacturing infrastructure by funding dedicated clusters with common facilities. *IANS*

an investment commitment of Rs 1,13,000 crore has already been received from 123 land allotted manufacturers in

India's staffing industry surges 5 pc in Q2 FY26 sequentially

NEW DELHI: The overall staffing industry in India witnessed robust quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) growth at 5 percent in the second quarter of the current financial year (Q2 FY26), while maintaining an annual growth rate of 5.8 percent year-on-year (YoY), as per report said.

The surge in employment reflects a positive demand for a formal staffing workforce across various key sectors. The general and IT staffing industries both contributed positively to the overall growth trajectory in Q2 FY26.

"The General Staffing Industry witnessed a growth of 5 percent QoQ in the quarter under review and at 5.5 percent YoY, driven by demands from FMCG, e-commerce, retail and others. Banking, financial services, and insurance, fueled by digital transformation and compliance hiring, added new employment," the Indian Staffing Federation said in its report.

The IT staffing industry demonstrated a more robust performance, witnessing a 16 percent YoY growth and a high 4.9 percent QoQ growth, benefitting from ongoing global demand for AI, cloud computing, digital services, as well as new demands from

Global Capability Centers (GCCs).

"The members of the federation maintained a growth, adding 92K new formal temporary jobs in the last four quarters." Indian Staffing Federation President Lohit Bhatia said.

This represents a demand momentum, driven primarily by sectors such as FMCG, e-commerce, logistics, and energy, he



added. The sequential recovery in Q2 FY26 was notably driven by the rebound in the IT consulting sector, largely spearheaded by tier-2 tech firms.

"India's IT sector, coming out of the red after a long time, has started showing signs of strong resilience, strategically addressing market dynamics with scale of operations. The growth was at a significant 16 percent year-on-year in Q2 FY26, the highest in three years," ISF Vice President Manmeet Singh said. *IANS*

India to host 2nd WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine

NEW DELHI: The second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine from December 17-19 here will bring together policymakers, scientists, practitioners, indigenous knowledge holders and civil society leaders from across the world to advance a shared vision of balanced, inclusive and sustainable health systems, Ministry of Ayush said.

Co-hosted by the WHO and Ministry of Ayush, the summit will be held under the theme "Restoring balance: The science and practice of health and well-being."

At a time when health systems globally are grappling with inequities, environmental stress and rising chronic disease, the summit seeks to reaffirm the relevance of Traditional Medicine while firmly grounding its role in science, evidence and responsible practice.

Building on the momentum generated by the inaugural Summit held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat in 2023, the New Delhi edition marks a significant step forward in positioning Traditional Medicine within the global health agenda.

Guided by the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025-2034, the summit will focus on how Traditional Medicine systems can contribute meaningfully to people-centered healthcare and planetary well-being. *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)

16 India Post

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December 19, 2025

Google offers \$8 mn for India's AI Centers for health agriculture, education, and sustainable cities

NEW DELHI: In a bid to support India's research ecosystem, Google.org, the philanthropic arm of Google, recently announced a funding of \$8 million for four AI Centers of Excellence for health, agriculture, education, and sustainable cities.

The centers were established by the Government, aligning with the vision to "Make AI in India and Make AI work for India".

The centers include TANUH at IISc Bangalore, which will focus on developing scalable AI solutions for effective treatment of non-communicable diseases; Airawat Research Foundation at



focus on developing solutions to enhance learning and teaching outcomes, while ANNAM.AI at IIT Ropar will focus on developing data-driven solutions for agriculture and farmer welfare.

In addition, Google announced a \$2 million founding contribution to establish the new Indic Language Technologies Research Hub at IIT Bombay.

The hub, set up in memory of Professor Pushpak Bhattacharyya, a pioneer in Indic language technologies and a Visiting Researcher at Google DeepMind, will aim to ensure that global AI advancements serve India's linguistic diversity.

"India is approaching artificial intelligence as a strategic national capability, not as a short-

term technology trend. The four AI Centers of Excellence have been conceived as a coordinated national research mission, advancing foundational research, responsible AI, and applied solutions that serve public purpose, and contributing to our larger as-

The four AI Centers of Excellence have been conceived as a coordinated national research mission, advancing foundational research, responsible AI, and applied solutions that serve public purpose, and contributing to our larger aspiration of Viksit Bharat 2047," said Dharmendra Pradhan

piration of Viksit Bharat 2047," said Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Education.

"Building a globally competi-

tive AI ecosystem requires not only public investment, but also strong institutional leadership and long-term partnerships with industry. This effort is supported by Google and Google.org through their \$8 million contribution to the AI Centers of Excellence and a \$2 million founding contribution to the Indic Language Technologies Research Hub at IIT Bombay," he added.

At Google's "Lab to Impact" dialogue, supported by the India AI Impact Summit 2026, the company also committed \$400,000 to support the development of India's Health Foundation model using Google's MedGemma -- the specialized AI model designed for healthcare.



IIT Kanpur, which will focus on pioneering research on AI to transform urban governance.

The AI Centre of Excellence for Education at IIT Madras will

Global leaders adopt political declaration to combat diabetes, high BP and mental health by 2030

NEW DELHI: In a first, leaders from across the world adopted a political declaration to combat noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, high BP, and mental health challenges by 2030, the World Health Organization (WHO) said.

NCDs, including obesity and cancers, are the leading causes of death. These chronic conditions claim 18 million lives pre-



maturely each year, while mental health conditions affect over a billion people globally.

As both NCDs and mental health conditions are increasing in every country, these require

urgent action not only for better public health, but also for productivity and sustainable economic growth, said the WHO.

The new political declaration, adopted at the 80th United Na-

tions General Assembly (UNGA), aims to accelerate global progress with a set of specific global targets for 2030.

It established three first-ever global "fast-track" outcome targets to be achieved by 2030: 150 million fewer tobacco users; 150 million more people with hypertension under control; and 150 million more people with access to mental health care. *IANS*

As a first step, Ajna Lens will work with experts from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to build models that will support India-specific use cases in Dermatology and OPD Triage.

The resulting models will contribute to India's Digital Public Infrastructure, and their outcomes will be made accessible to the ecosystem.

Google is also working with India's National Health Authority (NHA) to deploy its advanced AI to convert millions of fragmented, unstructured medical records, such as doctors' clinical and progress notes, into the international, machine-readable FHIR standard. *IANS*

India at forefront as traditional medicine reclaims its place in global health discourse

NEW DELHI: As traditional medicine reclaims its place in global health discourse, the country stands at the forefront of this transformation as rich wealth of traditional knowledge, powered with modern regulation, digital systems, and scientific rigor marks India out as a world leader in this area, the government said recently.

The country is set to host the second 'WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine' here from December 17-19. The theme of the summit is "Restoring Balance for People and Planet: The Science and Practice of Well-Being."

The Summit will also see the launch of the WHO Traditional Medicine Global Library (TMGL). This is the world's most comprehensive digital repository on traditional, complementary and integrative medicine with over 1.5 million records.

There are 3,844 Ayush hospitals, 36,848 dispensaries, 886 undergraduate and 251 postgraduate colleges, and more than 7.5 lakh registered practitioners in India, according to an official document.

The upcoming summit further under-

scores India's strength in shaping international discourse aimed at strengthening standards, and establishing frameworks for evidence-based traditional healthcare.



This is also in alignment with the vision of Viksit Bharat at 2047, said the government.

In India, traditional medicine systems like Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani, hold profound cultural, health, and economic importance and have been deeply embedded in daily life for years.

They offer holistic, preventive and person-centered approaches to well-being.

Under the Ministry of AYUSH, systems such as Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy are formally recognized within India's public-health framework and continue to be widely practiced through national institutions, service networks and community traditions.

The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges traditional, complementary and integrative medicine as a significant source of primary health care, valued for its cultural relevance, accessibility and personalized nature.

With rising interest in scientifically validated traditional practices, the WHO and regional health bodies increasingly view these systems as contributors to health equity, particularly in contexts, where affordability and cultural familiarity shape healthcare choices.

The WHO organizes Traditional Medicine Global Summits to promote the evidence-based integration of traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine (TCIM) into global health systems. IANS



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Medicinal plant cultivation can empower farmers boost quality medicines: Prataprao Jadhav

NEW DELHI: Cultivation of medicinal plants can not only empower farmers but also strengthen the production of quality medicines, said Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Ayush.

Speaking at the second meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Ayush, Jadhav emphasized the critical role of medicinal plant cultivation in empowering farmers, strengthening the AYUSH sector, and conserving biodiversity.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government is making sustained efforts to integrate AYUSH systems into the national healthcare framework, with a focus on promoting healthy lifestyles and building a sustainable health system," he added.

The Minister underlined that the foundation of strong traditional medicine systems lies in the availability of high-quality medicines, which in turn depends on the sustainable supply of quality raw material from medicinal plants.

He noted that ensuring quality at the source leads to better and faster health outcomes. Jadhav also highlighted the initiatives of the National Medicinal Plants Board and informed that for the last 25 years, NMPB has been implementing the Central Sector Scheme on "Conservation,

Development and Sustainable Management of Medicinal Plants" across the country.

Special emphasis has been placed on Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities to create awareness and build capacity among farmers.

"From 2020-21 to 2024-25, about Rs

1161.96 lakh was approved through 139 projects for farmers' training and awareness, with seven regional-cum-facilitation centers providing technical support across the country," the Minister said.



He also mentioned the "e-Charak" digital platform, which has strengthened market linkages by directly connecting farm-

ers with buyers. Jadhav highlighted the global rise of millets (Shri Anna), boosted by the UN declaration of 2023 as the International Year of Millets, which enhanced cultivation and farmers' income.

The Minister also noted the pivotal role

of Krishi Vidyapeeths and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in empowering farmers. He further suggested that these institutions could be engaged to raise awareness and promote the cultivation and use of medicinal plants among farmers, thereby enhancing livelihood opportunities and augmenting rural incomes. *IANS*

IIT Delhi, AIIMS's new ingestible device can collect microbial samples from small intestine

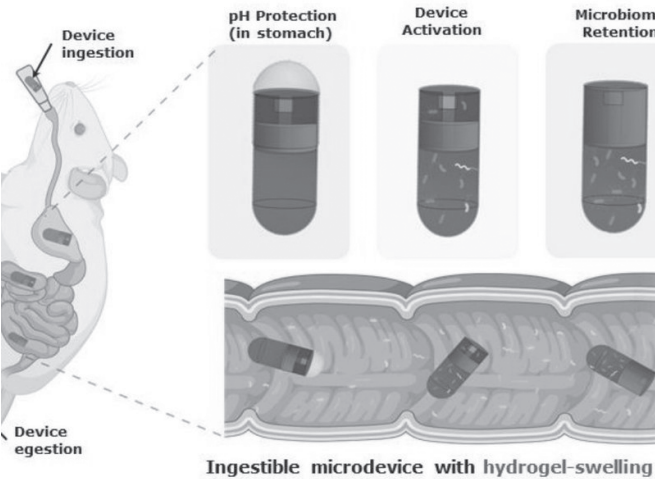
NEW DELHI: Researchers at IIT Delhi announced the development of an ingestible device that can sample bacteria directly from the small intestine, opening a new window into the human gut microbiome.

While not all bacteria are harmful, nearly half of all cells in the human body are microbial. These organisms line our gut and help us digest food, regulate mood, and build immunity.

Yet studying them has remained difficult. Existing tools are invasive, such as endoscopy or ileostomy, or indirect, relying on stool samples that do not truly reflect conditions higher up in the digestive tract.

The device, a tiny pill, once swallowed, stays shut in the stomach. It opens only in the intestine to collect bacteria, then seals itself again to keep the sample safe while moving

through the gut, revealed the study, conducted in collaboration with the AIIMS, Delhi and funded by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).



"To say there is a hidden universe of living microbes in our body is no exaggeration but a scientific reality -- we call it

the human microbiome. Just as we send rovers to explore outer space, we need miniaturized devices to explore the inner space of the human body," explained Prof.

Sarvesh Kumar Srivastava, Principal Investigator at the Medical Microdevices and Medicine Laboratory (3MLab), CBME, IIT Delhi.

"The prototype microdevice, once swallowed, can autonomously collect microbes from specific regions of the upper GI tract, allowing species-level identification of the residing microbes, among other biomarkers," Srivastava added.

The device comprises an enteric-coated gelatin cap that protects it in gastric pH (1-1.5) and disintegrates at intestinal pH (3-5), allowing luminal fluid via an inlet connected to activation and sampling chambers. *IANS*

India, South America see strong collaboration in pharma, healthcare sectors: PHDCCI

NEW DELHI: India and South America are witnessing growing opportunities for collaboration across key sectors such as pharmaceuticals, hospital management and medical devices, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) CEO and Secretary General Ranjit Mehta said.

Speaking to IANS on the sidelines of the Indo-South America Trade and Investment Conclave, Mehta said the chamber had brought together stakeholders from India and several South American countries to deepen business engagement and unlock new investment avenues.

"The response from industry on both sides has been very encouraging. Through this platform, our objective is to facilitate both inbound and outbound investments and create smoother channels for cross-border business," he said.

Mehta highlighted that South American economies have strong capabilities in agriculture, food processing, and rare mineral resources, while India offers a vast consumer base and remains one of the fastest-growing major economies globally.

He noted that pharmaceuticals, in particular, present a significant area of cooperation, as South American nations are keen to further develop healthcare-related sectors. "There is clear potential for partnerships in pharmaceuticals, hospital management and medical devices, and we see this as a major growth opportunity for both regions," he added.

Echoing similar views, Guyana's High Commissioner to India, Dharamkumar Seeraj, said South American countries have made rapid progress in recent years, and such trade platforms play a vital role in strengthening commercial ties. He said the conclave would help businesses gain regional insights and identify concrete investment opportunities.

The Chilean Ambassador to India also underscored the importance of the forum, stating that it provides valuable exposure to South American markets and enables direct engagement with Indian companies exploring opportunities in the region. *IANS*



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New photo policy helps prevent immigration fraud

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is issuing new guidance (PDF, 305.52 KB) that limits the age of foreign nationals' photos that can be used to create immigration documents to no more than three years. This update enhances national security and prevents identity fraud.

Effective immediately, the new guidance in the USCIS Policy Manual limits the use of photos to those that were taken within three years of the date a person files a USCIS form. Additionally, self-submitted photos will no longer be accepted. Only photos taken by USCIS or other authorized entities will be used. This ensures every photo used in a secure document is recent, accurate, and reliable-key requirements to preventing fraud and identity theft.

Robust screening and vetting processes are critical to protecting the security and integrity of the U.S. immigration system. COVID-19-era flexibilities, which allowed the reuse of photos for up to 10 years even if a person's appearance changed significantly, were kept in place longer than necessary. This compromised USCIS' ability to verify, identify, and properly screen aliens.

This policy change aligns with Department of Homeland Security priorities to modernize screening and vetting processes and address the vulnerabilities in identity documents.

Certain forms will require a new photo, regardless of when an applicant's or petitioner's last photograph was taken. USCIS

Immigration POST

"Oregon's colleges, universities and research institutions rely on skilled international workers to keep labs running, courses on track and innovation moving forward," Rayfield said

19 US state attorneys general sue Trump admin over USD 100,000 H-1B visa fee

OREGON: A coalition of 19 US state attorneys general, led by Oregon Attorney General Dan Rayfield, has filed a lawsuit against the Trump Administration challenging its policy imposing a USD 100,000 fee on new H-1B visa petitions, calling the move unlawful and harmful to employers facing critical labor shortages.

In a press release issued by the Oregon Department of Justice recently, Attorney General Rayfield said the fee would create an insurmountable financial barrier for employers, particularly public-sector and government institutions, seeking to hire highly skilled foreign workers such as physicians, researchers, nurses, and educators.

"Oregon's colleges, universities and research institutions rely on skilled international workers to keep labs running, courses on track and innovation moving forward," Rayfield said.

"This enormous fee would make it nearly impossible for these institutions to hire the experts they need, and it goes far beyond what Congress ever intended," he added.

The lawsuit alleges that the policy, implemented by the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), violates federal law by imposing a massive fee not au-



thorized by Congress, bypassing required rulemaking procedures, and exceeding executive authority under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA).

The coalition also raised concerns that the policy grants the Secretary of Homeland Security broad discretion to determine which petitions are subject to the fee or exempt from it, potentially

for new H-1B visa applications.

According to the US State Department, the new fee requirement applies only to individuals or companies filing new H-1B petitions or entering the H-1B lottery after September 21.

Current visa holders and petitions submitted before that date remain unaffected. Under the proclamation, a USD 100,000 fee

The lawsuit issued challenged this very proclamation issued by the Trump administration.

Under the H-1B visa program, US employers can temporarily hire highly skilled foreign workers in specialty occupations requiring at least a bachelor's degree.

Congress caps most private-sector H-1B visas at 65,000 annually, with an additional 20,000 reserved for individuals holding a master's degree or higher.

The attorneys general argue that the fee far exceeds the typical H-1B filing costs, which usually range from USD 960 to USD 7,595, and is not tied to the actual cost of processing petitions, as required by law.

They also contend the administration failed to conduct the mandatory notice-and-comment process before implementing the policy. ANI

According to the US State Department, the new fee requirement applies only to individuals or companies filing new H-1B petitions or entering the H-1B lottery after September 21

enabling selective enforcement.

According to the proclamation issued by US President Donald Trump on September 19, there will now be a USD 100,000 fee

must accompany every new H-1B visa petition filed after the deadline, including those submitted for entry into the 2026 lottery.

USA 'dunky' route case: ED attaches Rs 5.41-cr properties of agents, their kin

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached movable and immovable properties worth Rs 5.41 crore belonging to agents and their family members in connection with a case in which people were sent to USA illegally through the 'dunky' route.

ED's Jalandhar zonal office attached these properties derived out or equivalent to the Proceeds of Crime generated by various agents namely Shubham Sharma, Jagjit Singh and Surmukh Singh, who were involved in sending persons to USA illegally through the 'dunky' route.

"The attached properties include agricultural land, residential premises, business premises and bank accounts in the names of such agents and their family members," said the ED in a statement.

ED initiated an investigation on the basis of various First In-

formation Reports registered by Punjab Police and Haryana Police under various sections of BNS 2023 (erstwhile IPC 1860) and Immigration Act, 1983 related to deportation of 330 Indian Nationals to India on military cargo planes in February 2025 by the USA government as

those 330 persons entered USA illegally.

ED investigation revealed that "these 'agents' and their associates used to cheat gullible people by luring them under the pretext of sending them to the USA legally and charged hefty amounts for this." ANI

WUC raises alarm over imminent deportation of Chinese whistleblower Guan Heng in US

MUNICH: The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) has expressed grave concern over the imminent deportation of Guan Heng, a Chinese national whose secret recordings of internment camps in East Turkistan were instrumental in revealing widespread abuses against Uyghurs and other Turkic communities.

In its press release, WUC stated, "In 2020, Guan Heng secretly documented large-scale detention compounds in East Turkistan, producing rare visual evidence that corroborated survivor testimonies and investigative reporting on the Chinese government's mass repression cam-

York and is facing deportation not because his asylum application was rejected but solely due to the way he entered the country. Human Rights in China reports that he is awaiting a court hearing in New York scheduled for December 15.

WUC stressed that returning Guan Heng to China would place him at serious risk of imprisonment, torture, or enforced disappearance. Because of his efforts to document state abuses and his cooperation with international media, he would likely face retaliation under China's broad national security laws. Chinese security authorities have already interrogated and harassed his family members.

The press release noted that the case has sparked deep concern among journalists, human rights groups, and China specialists, who caution that deporting Guan would send a

WUC highlighted that despite these circumstances, Guan is currently being held at Broome County Jail in New York and is facing deportation not because his asylum application was rejected but solely due to the way he entered the country

paign. His footage was later shared with journalists and researchers and contributed to the growing public record of mass detention, including reporting by BuzzFeed News' Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative team."

The press release added that after escaping China, Guan undertook a perilous journey through several countries before arriving in the United States in 2021 in search of protection. Since then, he has lived openly, secured a valid US work permit, and pursued asylum through the US immigration system.

WUC highlighted that despite these circumstances, Guan is currently being held at Broome County Jail in New

chilling signal to whistleblowers and witnesses to mass atrocities around the world.

The World Uyghur Congress urged US authorities to immediately halt all deportation actions against Guan Heng and to ensure that his asylum application is fully and fairly reviewed in accordance with US refugee law and international non-refoulement obligations.

The statement emphasized that Guan risked his life to expose crimes the Chinese government sought to hide and that, in light of the United States' recognition of the Uyghur genocide, he must not be returned to the persecution he helped reveal. ANI

Pakistan human trafficking exposed: FIA busts prostitution, smuggling racket at Karachi airport

KARACHI: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Immigration has uncovered a human trafficking network during operations at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, exposing schemes to smuggle women and other passengers abroad under false pretenses, ARY News reported.

The case first came to light when FIA officials stopped and questioned a young woman who was travelling on a visit visa to Dubai. She told officials that she had been promised a hotel job, but during questioning revealed details that pointed to a larger trafficking operation.

Her statement led investigators to uncover a network involved in sending girls abroad for prostitution under the guise of overseas employment.

Based on the woman's identification, FIA arrested a suspected human smuggler named Shahzaib. Investigators said Shahzaib had arranged her

visa and airline ticket using money provided by another trafficker, identified as Nadeem, as per ARY News.

According to the FIA spokesperson, a total of Pakistani currency (PKR) 420,000 was paid to facilitate the travel,

including PKR 40,000 given to an agent for airport clearance in Karachi.

The FIA said further evidence was recovered from Shahzaib's mobile phone, including WhatsApp conversations that showed his links with other individuals involved in prostitution-related activities. The victim has since been shifted to the Anti-Human Trafficking Circle for further legal proceedings, while Shahzaib remains in FIA custody as the investigation continues.

In a separate but related operation at the same airport, the FIA arrested eight more people who were allegedly planning to travel illegally to Albania by sea. Officials said the passengers had each paid around PKR 1 million to human smugglers to arrange the journey.

The FIA spokesperson said the agency took into custody several agents

and facilitators after the passengers identified them during questioning. Investigators confirmed that the arrested individuals were part of an organized human smuggling network, according to ARY News. ANI

The case first came to light when FIA officials stopped and questioned a young woman who was travelling on a visit visa to Dubai. She told officials that she had been promised a hotel job

Law catches up with Luthra brothers, arrested in Delhi by Goa Police on deportation from Thailand

NEW DELHI: The Goa Police has formally arrested the Luthra brothers-Gaurav and Saurabh from the Immigration control at New Delhi International airport on Tuesday (16 Dec.) after they were deported from Thailand. A team from the Goa Police had been present at the Airport to take custody of the brothers.

The brothers are the owners of the Goa Nightclub Birch by Romeo Lane where 25 people had been killed in a fire on December 6. After fleeing to Phuket on the morning after the fire the brothers were detained and then deported this morning to India.

The accused duo will be produced before the Patiala House court in the national capital, following which the Goa police will take them to Goa.

The siblings, owners of the 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub, were detained by Thai Police from a resort in Phuket after India moved to suspend their passports and requested the Thai authorities to deport them. An Indian law enforcement team coordinated formalities for the brother's return. On Tuesday morning the brothers were formally deported to India.

An extradition treaty between India and Thailand has been in

force since 2015. Thai officials stressed that due process was followed as part of the cooperation between the two countries, leading to the prompt, lawful handover of the brothers.

The Goa Police had filed a criminal case dated December 07 at the Police Station Arpora Anjuna, North Goa, under sections 105, 125, 125(a), 125(b), and 287, read with 3(5) of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023.

The FIR states that on December 6, Gaurav and Saurabh Luthra, the accused persons, had organized a fire show at the restaurant Birch by Romeo Lane, Arpora, without taking proper precautions and without providing fire safety equipment and other safety measures. The fire show resulted in a blaze, due to which 25 innocent people, including tourists and staff, succumbed to death and many others were seriously injured.

The Luthra brothers, despite knowing that the restaurant does not have emergency exit doors on the ground or deck floors for evacuation in an emergency, organized the fire show. ANI

The siblings, owners of the 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub, were detained by Thai Police from a resort in Phuket after India moved to suspend their passports and requested the Thai authorities to deport them

Can housing society take action against landlords for unauthorized rentals?

HARINI BALASUBRAMANIAN

If you own a house or an apartment in a gated housing society and plan to rent it out, there may be some rules you need to follow. Before getting a tenant to live in your property, you may need to complete a set of legal processes such as tenant registration, police verification and other requirements. Moreover, the types of rentals permitted in a housing society may also be defined by its byelaws. For example, some housing societies may not allow Paying Guest accommodation (PGs) or commercial rentals. If a landlord violates these laws, the housing society may take action against them. Let us discuss in detail the issues of unauthorized rental and determine whether housing societies can take legal action.

What are unauthorized rentals?

The rental market in India is governed by various state-specific rental laws and the Model Tenancy Act, which aim to protect the interests of tenants and landlords. At the same time, these laws also define the responsibilities of tenants and landlords. When renting a property within a housing society, property owners must adhere to the society's rules. Unauthorized rentals refer to situations in which a landlord rents out the property without complying with the society byelaws, zoning laws and local regulations.

Unauthorized rentals can have serious implications for tenants. The housing society can deny access to certain amenities and issue formal notices for violating the byelaws. It can result in legal consequences for illegal activities, unauthorized commercial activities, etc.

#1. Renting without notifying the housing society

Tenants must seek approval from the society's managing committee before moving into the rented property. www.housing.com

For detailed story visit www.indiapost.com

Real Estate POST

22 India Post

www.indiapost.com

December 19, 2025

India's industrial and warehousing demand grows 11 pc in 9 months of 2025

NEW DELHI: India's industrial and warehousing market remained resilient in 2025, with cumulative demand across the top eight markets reaching 26.5 million square feet in the first nine months of the year, reflecting an 11 percent year-on-year increase, as per report said.

The report from Colliers said that annual demand could reach 30–40 million sq ft, with new supply likely to remain elevated at 35–40 million sq ft in 2025. IANS

For detailed story visit www.indiapost.com

India's real estate sector resilient in 2025 outlook remains steady for 2026: Report



NEW DELHI: India's real estate sector continues to be on the upswing throughout 2025, supported by strong economic growth, steady consumption, government policies and firm investor confidence, according to a Colliers report. The study shows that even though global trade issues slowed supply chains, easing inflation, better credit flow and lower lending rates kept buyers active across real estate categories.

The report notes that the office, housing, and industrial segments recorded sustained demand throughout the year. Companies from the technology, banking, financial services, engineering and flex space sectors continued to take up office space across major cities. This steady activity helped maintain confidence in commercial markets.

Housing sales also remained firm, as rising incomes, improved affordability, and better connectivity encouraged homebuyers to upgrade. Demand in warehousing remained strong too, driven by logistics improvement and the needs of sectors such as e-commerce, engineering and automobiles. Institutional investors increased their interest in mixed-use assets and emerging categories such as data centers,

senior living, and co-living, driven by demographic and digital shifts. The report says these trends helped Tier II and III cities gain more attention and created a broader base for future growth.

infrastructure are set to guide the next phase.

Industrial, warehousing and alternative assets are likely to benefit further from expanding manufacturing and modernizing

led buildings will shape long-term strategies.

On the office front, the report highlights that India crossed 50 million sq ft of leasing in the first nine months of 2025, driven mainly by Global Capability Centers (GCCs). By the end of the year, Grade A demand is expected to reach nearly 70 million sq ft.

In 2026, demand is likely to settle around 70–75 million sq ft as occupiers increasingly seek high-quality, tech-enabled and sustainable spaces. GCCs are expected to expand further, while flex workspaces may account for about one-fifth of Grade A leasing. The report highlights a shift toward workplace designs that use AI, IoT, and automated systems to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Sustainability will also move to the center, with most new supply expected to be green certified.

In housing, sales in 2025 remain steady, supported by improved affordability and infrastructure improvements across major cities. Colliers expects this momentum to continue in 2026, as urbanization and rising lifestyle needs drive demand for premium homes, plotted developments, and gated communities. ANI

Looking ahead to 2026, Colliers expects the sector to maintain momentum, with both commercial and residential demand remaining healthy. Steady occupier interest, growing homeownership and improved infrastructure are set to guide the next phase

Looking ahead to 2026, Colliers expects the sector to maintain momentum, with both commercial and residential demand remaining healthy. Steady occupier interest, growing homeownership and improved

supply chains. Investor participation is expected to remain strong, driven by REITs, SM REITs, InvITs, and AIFs, which make real estate investing more accessible. The report adds that ESG-linked decisions and technology-



Gross office absorption in India to cross 80 million sq ft in 2025, GCCs lead

MUMBAI: Gross office absorption in India is expected to cross 80 million square feet in 2025, reaffirming the country's position as a global talent and enterprise hub, a recent report said, adding that global capability center (GCC) expansion, in

across all verticals -residential, commercial, retail, logistics, warehousing, and data centers- driven by policy stability, end-user demand, and India's sustained economic momentum.

"The progress made in 2025 has reaf-

Shishir Bajjal, International Partner, Chairman and Managing Director, Knight Frank India.

India's residential real estate market sustained its upward momentum, with premium and luxury housing emerging as the dominant demand segment.

Homes priced above Rs 1 crore accounted for more than half of all sales across major cities, underscoring the shift in affordability, aspiration, and buyer profile. Markets such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Delhi NCR recorded double-digit price appreciation, reflecting both scarcity of quality supply and deep buyer conviction.

Developers increasingly focused on premium offerings that prioritize brand assurance, sustainability, privacy, and advanced digital integration.

Meanwhile, the affordable housing segment remained constrained by rising input costs and limited financing, signaling the need for targeted policy interventions to restore balance across the income spectrum. *IANs*



particular, emerged as a powerful driver, consolidating India's role in the global value chain.

2025 marked a decisive shift from recovery to structural transformation. The sector demonstrated strong fundamentals

firmed our belief in the underlying strength of India's real estate sector. As India moves confidently toward becoming a \$1 trillion real estate economy by the end of the decade, the opportunities ahead are both exciting and transformative," said

Cost of living: Chennai vs Bangalore

HARINI BALASUBRAMANIAN

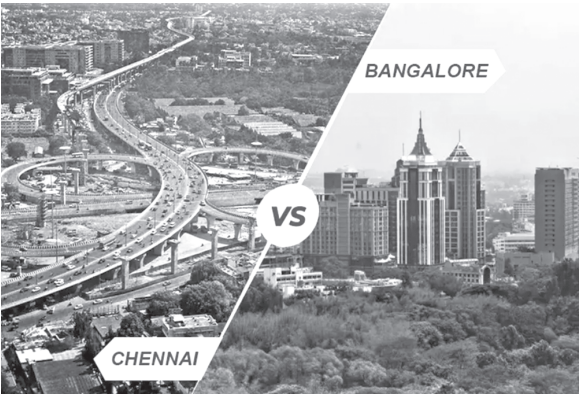
Chennai and Bangalore are two major metropolitan cities in South India that offer diverse job opportunities. Bangalore is a tech hub preferred by young professionals seeking a dynamic, vibrant lifestyle. Chennai, on the other hand, is a culture-rich city with a blend of modernity, having established itself as a diversified economy with a booming healthcare and manufacturing hub. Despite the pleasant weather and vibrant city life, Bangalore's high living expenses concern many home seekers who plan to relocate to this metro city, whereas Chennai has moderate living expenses and many residential pockets for affordable housing. When choosing between two top metropolises, such as Chennai and Bangalore, several factors should be considered beyond the cost of living. In this article, we compare Chennai and Bangalore for home seekers, focusing on living costs, property rates, and other factors contributing to the overall growth of these cities.

Chennai vs Bangalore: Real estate overview

Chennai and Bangalore are among the

top residential markets in India, which see a steady demand for homes. The two metropolises can be compared on key demand drivers and property prices.

Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, has thriving industries such as automotive, port-related, manufacturing, and



healthcare, which contribute to the economy and create employment opportunities. The housing market is mainly driven by end-users and is relatively affordable compared to other metro cities such as Mumbai and Bangalore. The growth of gated communities is seen in Chennai's emerging localities such as OMR (Old Mahabalipuram Road), Sholinganallur and Porur, driven by the

mushrooming IT parks. Owing to the bustling IT hubs, the rental market also witnesses a steady demand for properties.

Compared to Chennai, Bangalore has a growth-led real estate market, with its strong IT and startup culture fuelling demand. The influx of migrants creates a

high property demand for both buying and renting. Bangalore's residential market caters to diverse property demand - gated communities, villas, smart and sustainable homes and even senior living communities. The city attracts not only tech professionals and locals but also retirees and non-resident Indians (NRIs).

Property price and rental rates comparison

The steady demand for properties and limited supply in saturated markets within the city have led to rising prices, a trend seen across major metro cities, including Bangalore and Chennai. This has led to the expansion of these cities into peripheral areas and suburbs. Property prices in some emerging localities are relatively affordable compared to other areas. www.housing.com

For detailed story visit www.indiapost.com

India's Highest Infinity Pool at 700 Feet unveiled at Monte South, Byculla a JV between Marathon Group and Adani Realty

MUMBAI: Marathon Group, Mumbai's leading real estate company, has announced India's highest residential infinity pool at Monte South, the landmark luxury development in Byculla being built as a joint venture with Adani Realty. The sky-level pool set at an elevation of approximately 700 feet, on the 65th floor of Tower A, will set a new benchmark for high-rise living in the country, reinforcing Monte South's stature as one of Mumbai's most sought-after luxury projects.

Envisioned as a serene retreat above the city, the infinity pool has been designed to create a seamless visual connection between water and skyline, offering residents sweeping, uninterrupted views of the city below. The pool embodies Monte South's vision of elevated urban living - where scale, calm, and thoughtful design come together.

Work on the pool and its accompanying suite of sky amenities is currently underway, with completion targeted around March 2026. Upon opening, the infinity pool will stand as one of the development's signature lifestyle elements, marking a significant chapter in Monte South's ongoing growth.

Spread across a rare 12.5-acre land parcel in South Mumbai, Monte South offers an integrated lifestyle environment that extends beyond its iconic skyline features. The project includes a range of distinctive amenities such as a podium-level beach volleyball court on the 8th floor, immersive Amazon-themed landscaping, and a sky-level Zen garden at the tower's uppermost levels - together creating layered recreational and wellness spaces across varying elevations.

Monte South's landscape design has been conceived by LSG Inc., the internationally acclaimed landscape architecture firm from the United States, while the overall architectural vision has been conceptualized by renowned architect Hafeez Contractor. Monte South has received multiple design accolades, including recognition at the Asia-Pacific Property Awards for Best High-Rise Architecture.

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Philosophy

DEVDUUTT PATTANAIAK

The Vedic phase began 4,000 years ago, the Upanishadic phase 3,000 years ago, the Buddhist phase 2,500 years ago, the Puranic phase 2,000 years ago, the Bhakti phase 1,000 years ago and the Orientalist phase only 200 years ago. The modern phase is just emerging, with Indians questioning the understanding of Hinduism that has so far been based on Western frameworks

Dating of Hindu history is always approximate and speculative, and often a range, as orally transmitted scriptures precede the written works by several centuries, and parts of the written work were composed over several generations, in different geographies. Everything is complicated by the fact that writing became popular in India only 2,300 years ago, after Mauryan Emperor Ashoka popularized the Brahmi script through his edicts.

History seeks to be everyone's truth, but is limited by available facts. More often than not, what is passed off as his-

of future tendencies (karma-bija), without the need to play judge. Thus, we can see the writing of the Gitas as a response to, not an attack on, Buddhist monasticism, and the feminization of Buddhism as a response to, not an appropriation of, the idea of the Goddess found in Hindu Puranas.



Devdutt Pattanaik

No idea emerges from a vacuum. Different ideas amplify from time to time. Old ideas coexist with new ones. Contradictory ideas influence each other. Here the world has no beginning, no end, no value, no purpose. All meaning is created

by humans, individually and collectively: the boundaries we establish and fight over.

In most parts of the world, a new idea suppresses and wipes out the old idea, but in India, thanks to the abstract nature of Vedic ideas, new worldviews—be they native ones like Buddhism or Bhakti or foreign ones like Islam and Christianity—simply helped reaffirm the Vedic way in different ways. The same idea manifests as 4,000-year-old Vedic rituals, 2,000-year-old stories, 1,000-

New worldviews helped reaffirm the Vedic way

Questioning the understanding of Hinduism based on Western frameworks

tory is mythology, someone's understanding of truth shaped by memory, feelings and desire, available facts notwithstanding. However, it is never fantasy, or no one's truth.

We must also guard against a masculine view of history based on conflict and triumph alone: natives versus colonizers, polytheism versus monotheism, Hindus versus Buddhists, Christians versus Muslims, Shias versus Sunnis, Shaivites versus Vaishnavites, Protestants versus Catholics, Mughals versus Marathas, democracy versus monarchy, theists versus atheists, capitalists versus socialists, liberals versus conservatives.

This has been popularized by Western academics and their love for the Hegelian dialectic, where thesis creates antithesis until there is resolution and a new thesis.

An alternate, feminine view of history looks at every event as the fruit of the past (karma-phala) as well as the seed

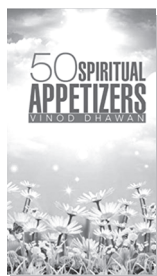
year-old temple art and architecture and 500-year-old devotional poetry.

Veda essentially refers to a set of hymns, melodies and rituals put together nearly 4,000 years ago that symbolically and metaphorically communicate knowledge—observations of seers (rishis), people who saw what others did not, would not, could not see.

Excerpted from 'My Gita'. The 55th birth anniversary of Devdutt Pattanaik was observed on December 11

50 SPIRITUAL APPETIZERS

Vinod Dhawan



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Jac O'Keeffe

Spirituality teacher based in USA.

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The inescapable grip of foreign influence on Sri Lanka

A. JATHINDRA

The involvement of foreign troops in disaster relief operations in Sri Lanka underscores how real-world exigencies continue to shape geopolitical realities. It also illustrates how such circumstances can compel ruling elites in smaller states to recalibrate positions that once appeared ideologically rigid. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, who has welcomed foreign forces to assist Sri Lanka during the recent crisis, had earlier taken a markedly different stance. As a Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Member of Parliament in 2009, he strongly opposed the presence of U.S. military personnel on Sri Lankan soil, alleging that Washington was planning to establish a missile base at the strategically important Trincomalee naval port.

These allegations surfaced during a visit by the U.S. Pacific Fleet Command, led by Major General Thomas L. Conant, ostensibly to oversee a school rehabilitation project in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province. The project was jointly funded by the U.S. Pacific Fleet Command and USAID.

21, 2024. The exercise brought together the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and the Sri Lanka Navy to enhance maritime security capabilities. It also included joint activities involving the U.S. Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team (FAST) and their Sri Lankan naval counterparts.

Bilateral ties were further strengthened with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on November 14, 2025, formalizing a defense partnership between the Montana National Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard District 13, and the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. The agreement reaffirmed a shared commitment to regional stability and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.

India's Enduring Strategic Sensitivities

Historically, New Delhi has been deeply wary of American military activity in Sri Lanka, viewing it as a potential threat to India's national security. During the Cold War, suspicions were rife that President J.R. Jayewardene was negotiating to grant the Trincomalee port—one of the most strategically located harbors in the Indian

Ocean—to the United States for military use. While the Cold War has long ended, the narrative of Washington's interest in Trincomalee continues to resurface periodically in Sri

As part of expanding Sri Lanka-U.S. defense cooperation, Trincomalee hosted the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Sri Lanka 2024 exercise on April 21, 2024. The exercise brought together the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and the Sri Lanka Navy to enhance maritime security capabilities

While the claims were never substantiated, they became part of a recurring narrative within Sri Lanka's domestic political discourse on foreign military involvement.

Ideological Resistance To Strategic Cooperation

Although U.S. military deployments overseas are common, their presence in Sri Lanka has historically been rare. For the first time, both Indian and American troops are now actively engaged in rescue and relief operations on Sri Lankan soil. This marks a significant departure from past sensitivities surrounding foreign military footprints in the island nation.

As part of expanding Sri Lanka-U.S. defense cooperation, Trincomalee hosted the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) Sri Lanka 2024 exercise on April

Lankan politics.

In 2019, concerns were revived when the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis operated near Sri Lanka and used the Bandaranaike International Airport for temporary cargo transfers. Similar allegations resurfaced in October 2025, when a former Sri Lankan minister claimed that agreements had been reached to establish a U.S. naval base in Trincomalee.

During the Cold War, Jayewardene's pro-American orientation caused deep unease in India, then led by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

(The author is Chief Editor, Eelanda Daily, and Executive Director, Centre for Strategic Studies-Trincomalee (CSST), Sri Lanka.) South Asia Monitor

For detailed story visit www.indiapost.com

Disclaimer: Views expressed are personal to the author



FROM ROYAL RAJASTHAN TO COASTAL GOA TOP NEW YEAR GETAWAY OPTIONS IN INDIA

NEW DELHI: New Year's Eve celebrations across India offer a wide spectrum of experiences, ranging from royal festivities in Rajasthan to vibrant beach parties along the coast of Goa. From heritage cities and desert camps to hill stations and bustling metros, the country presents diverse options for travellers looking to welcome the New Year in their own unique way.

With cultural shows, live music, fireworks and public gatherings planned in several destinations, people across the country are preparing for short holidays, family reunions and celebratory

getaways. Whether it is a grand palace celebration, a beachside countdown or a peaceful retreat amid nature, India is set to usher in the New Year with optimism and festive spirit.

KOCHI, KERALA

Kochi in Kerala is once again set to take center stage as the Cochin Carnival leads New Year 2026 celebrations in the state. Fort Kochi comes alive with colorful processions, music, dance performances and art events as part of the long-standing festival. One of the main attractions is the traditional burning of the 'Pappanji' effigy at midnight on New Year's Eve, symbolizing the

end of the old year and the beginning of a new one. Over several days, the carnival attracts large crowds, including tourists from across India and abroad. It reinforces Kerala's reputation as one of the most vibrant destinations for New Year celebrations.

JAISALMER, RAJASTHAN

Step away from the usual celebrations and embrace the grandeur of Rajasthan this New Year with a truly unforgettable experience in Jaisalmer. Desert camp parties with Rajasthani folk music, bonfires, starlit dinners, camel rides and cultural performances offer a magical New Year's Eve experience. You can

also enjoy the Desert Festival, also known as Maru Mahotsav, which will be held in Jaisalmer from January 30 to February 1, 2026, offering a three-day celebration of Rajasthan's rich cultural heritage. Organized annually in the Golden City, the festival showcases vibrant folk music and dance performances, traditional art forms and lively competitions such as camel polo, turban tying and moustache contests.

PUDUCHERRY

Planning to ring in the New Year with a vibrant celebration? Pondicherry comes alive in December with music, lights, and a festive crowd eager to welcome 2026. Among the most popular events is the Port Beach Party, ideal for those seeking a lively

beachfront experience. At the same time, Paradise Beach offers a nature-inspired celebration with bonfires, music, and a young, energetic crowd. Together, these events make Pondicherry one of the most exciting destinations in India to usher in the New Year.

DELHI

India's capital, Delhi, delivers a dynamic New Year experience. The city's nightlife, elite hotel festivities, open-air concerts and fireside countdowns bring diversity to celebrations. Connaught Place, Aerocity, and iconic city spots host gala dinners, themed parties, and fireworks displays. ANI

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HOW ALIA BHATT BRINGS WEEKEND VIBES TO A WEEKDAY

Actress Alia Bhatt showed how to keep things effortlessly stylish by bringing weekend vibes to an otherwise ordinary weekday. Taking to her Instagram handle, the 'Raazi' actress, posted a series of her stylish photos and videos from a recent award function. She simply captioned the post, "weekend wali vibe weekday pe." In the images, Alia, dressed in a black dress, can be seen striking different poses for the camera. The first close-up shot gives a glimpse of the actress's subtle makeup, while in the others she is seen posing sensuously for the lens.

On December 15, Alia Bhatt made a glamorous appearance at the star-studded Filmfare OTT Awards 2025, held in Mumbai. The 'Student of the Year' actress turned heads in a striking all-black Hervé Léger dress from 1993. Alia's black gown stands out with a plunging sweetheart neckline and wide halter-style straps.

Alia's stunning appearance at the Filmfare OTT Awards 2025 followed another major milestone in her career. The actress was recently honored with the Golden Globes Horizon Award at the fifth edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Speaking about receiving the honor, she said, "The Golden Globes are an iconic part of the global awards universe and I am delighted to be part of it and look forward to continuing my career in telling more stories of powerful and deserving women." *IANS*

KIRTI KULHARI: MAY I GO BEYOND LABELS

Actress Kirti Kulhari shared a reflective note on self-discovery and voicing her desire to move beyond the labels often attached to her.

The actress took to Instagram, where she spoke about finding an inner strength, a "superpower", that allows her to rise above pre-conceived notions and define herself on her own terms.

Sharing a string of images of herself, Kirti wrote as the caption: "May I find the #superpower to go beyond the #labels they give me .. May be I have."

The actress is gearing up for the ultimate season of "Four More Shots Please! Season 4". The cast returns with Sayani Gupta, Kirti Kulhari, Bani J, and Maanvi Gagroo. *IANS*

TOP TEN HINDI FILM SONGS

- 1 Saiyaara: **Saiyaara**
- 2 Barbaad: **Saiyaara**
- 3 Pardesiya: **Param Sundari**
- 4 Qayde Se: **Metro ... In Dino**
- 5 Dhun: **Saiyaara**
- 6 Janaab-e-Aali: **WAR 2**
- 7 Deewaniyat: **Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat**
- 8 Tum Ho Toh: **Saiyaara**
- 9 Raanjhan: **Do Patti**
- 10 Zamaana Lage: **Metro ... In Dino**



Abhishek praises Agastya Nanda's dedication in 'Ikkis'

Actor Abhishek Bachchan has lauded his nephew Agastya Nanda for his portrayal of war hero Arun Khetarpal in the film 'Ikkis'. He praised his dedication in bringing the iconic role to life.

Junior Bachchan called his dedication to portraying Arun Khetarpal "commendable." In his recent post, Abhishek highlighted the honor and responsibility of portraying a national hero like Arun Khetarpal and acknowledged Agastya's effort in giving the character the respect, valor, and dignity it deserves.

Praising him as an immensely sincere actor, the 'Dasvi' actor called Agastya's dedication to the role "commendable." Taking to his X handle, Abhishek Bachchan reposted a video shared by the makers in honor of Arun Khetarpal on his death anniversary. *IANS*



SHRUTI HAASAN HITS PAUSE AS SHE'S ON 'VACAY' MODE

Actress Shruti Haasan has finally carved out some time for herself after months of work, as she heads off on a long-overdue vacation.

Shruti took to Instagram stories, where she shared a selfie onboard a flight. The actress looks every inch happy in the picture, which she captioned: "Vacay time after ages and ages."

The actress did not reveal where she was off to or when she would be back.

Talking about Shruti, she was last seen in "Coolie," where she essayed the role of Preethi Rajasekar in the film, which also starred the titans of Indian cinema like Rajinikanth, Nagarjuna Akkineni, Malayalam actor Soubin Shahir, and Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan in a cameo appearance.

'Coolie' follows the story of a former coolie union leader, who investigates the death of his friend which leads him to a crime syndicate. The film was officially announced in September 2023 under the tentative title 'Thalaivar 171' as it is Rajinikanth's 171st film as the lead actor.

The official title was announced in April 2024. Principal photography took place between July 2024 and March 2025, in locations including Chennai, Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Jaipur and Bangkok.

The actress will next be seen in "Salaar Part 2: Shouryanga Parvam". The first installment of "Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire" released in 2023. The epic neo-noir action thriller film directed by Prashanth Neel.

The film stars Prabhas in the titular role, alongside an ensemble cast of Prithviraj Sukumaran, Shruti Haasan, Jagapathi Babu, Bobby Simha, Sriya Reddy, Ramachandra Raju, John Vijay, Easwari Rao, Tinnu Anand, Devaraj, Brahmaji and Mime Gopi. *IANS*



SMRITI IRANI LAUDS AKSHAYE KHANNA FOR DHURANDHAR

Actress-cum-politician Smriti Irani has taken to her social media in lauding Akshaye Khanna's performance in Dhurandhar.

The politician shared a funny scene from the Akshay Kumar and Akshaye Khanna starrer movie Tees Maar Khan and wrote, "When Akshaye Khanna has surpassed all expectations & you too want to yell... de do Oscar #dhurandhar."

The funny video clip shared by Smriti from Tees Maar Khan shows Akshay Kumar's character bursting with excitement and demanding an Oscar for Atish Kapoor, played by Akshaye Khanna. Smriti has been mighty impressed with Dhurandhar. The actress earlier had taken to her social media account in lauding the movie and its entire team. Sharing a collage of the lead star cast featuring Sanjay Dutt, Ranveer Singh, R Madhavan, Ashaye Khanna, director Aditya Dhar and actor Arjun Rampal, Irani penned a heartwarming note, further highlighting the essence of the movie.

She wrote, "If you have looked into the eyes of the wife of a fallen soldier & walked her to the cremation ground, if you have visited the Jagti camp in Jammu, if you have seen the deserted temple premises of Sharika Devi in Srinagar, if you have met those who were on duty during the Parliament attack or have family that survived the 26/11 Mumbai attack" *IANS*

Shraddha Kapoor: It's 'truly terrible' of 'Dhurandhar' maker Aditya Dhar

Bollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor has penned a note for the blockbuster film "Dhurandhar" and said it's "truly terrible" of filmmaker Aditya Dhar to make people wait for "part 2".

Shraddha took to Instagram stories and requested Aditya to pre-pone the release of the sequel of "Dhurandhar".

She first wrote: "Truly terrible of Aditya Dhar to make a film like Dhurandhar."

Shraddha then added: "and then make us wait three months for Part 2. Don't play with our emotions, pre-pone the release please. What a phenomenal experience. Subah shoot nahi hoti toh kasam se abhi hi dobara dekhne jaati"

"(Had I not had a shoot in the morning, I would have gone again to watch the film). Chhaava, Saiyaara, Dhurandhar - all in 2025 Hindi cinema."

Shraddha then penned a note talking about the "rampant negative PR" against the film. *IANS*



Turning strategic autonomy into genuine influence: Route to a resurgent India runs through Europe and the Global South

E.D. MATHEW

In 2025, India's vaunted strategic autonomy was tested in ways few foreign policy mavens in the country had imagined. Prime Minister Narendra Modi entered the year with a foreign policy playbook built on multi-alignment, personalized outreach and a claim to be a bridge between great powers. By the year's close, that posture had produced a string of diplomatic bruises: punitive tariffs from Washington, an ambiguous military episode on the western frontier dubbed Operation Sindoor, and a diplomatic sprint from arch foe Pakistan that culminated in a headline-grabbing defense pact with Saudi Arabia.

If India must attain a sem-

came under serious scrutiny.

Compounding the diplomatic sting was the spectacle of high-level U.S. outreach to Pakistan, epitomized by a two-hour White House lunch for Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir -- a gesture that hurt New Delhi's sense of cultivated trust in Washington.

Operation Sindoor, the brief but intense May exchange that produced the worst India-Pakistan kinetic confrontation in decades, tested India's military resolve and revealed limits in its diplomatic heft. New Delhi framed the operation as a precision move to restore deterrence. However, outside assessments and regional reportage painted a messier picture of aerial clashes,

stitch together patrons and partners - despite severe domestic vulnerabilities -- demonstrates the short-term payoff of bold, risk-taking diplomacy. New Delhi should examine why Islamabad's activism has yielded headline gains while India's cautious multi-alignment is read by many as distant.

The lesson for India is not to mimic Islamabad's theatrics but to recalibrate and build indispensability. Two interlocking routes stand out. The first runs through Europe; the second, through a credible, action-focused leadership of the Global South. Both tracks can be pursued in parallel and will reinforce one another.

Why Europe Matters

Europe matters for reasons of principle and pragmatism. The transatlantic order is fraying amid an American presidency that prizes short-term leverage. European capitals from Paris and Berlin to Warsaw and the Nordic states are asserting strategic autonomy, investing in defense modernization, and seeking partners to diversify critical supply chains. India offers market scale, engineering capacity and a politically palatable partner for technology and industrial cooperation.

India is hoping to conclude a trade and investment package with the EU in the next few weeks to be formalized during the India-EU annual summit scheduled to begin on 27 January in New Delhi. The two sides will also firm up a defense framework agreement and a strategic agenda, bringing the mutual relationship much closer at a time of major trade disruptions amidst Washington's tariff policy.

(The writer is a former UN spokesperson) South Asia Monitor

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New Delhi must engage Europe with fresh urgency and recapture the moral leadership of the Global South -- while maintaining practical ties with Washington and Moscow and seeking cautious normalization with Beijing

blance of agenda-setting role in geopolitics, it must do more than sit equidistant from rival capitals. New Delhi must engage Europe with fresh urgency and recapture the moral leadership of the Global South -- while maintaining practical ties with Washington and Moscow and seeking cautious normalization with Beijing.

President Donald Trump's decision to levy heavy tariffs on India -- tied to trade imbalances and New Delhi's purchase of discounted Russian crude -- punctured the illusion that personal chemistry between Modi and Trump could immunize India from the latter's transactional instincts. The public humiliation and taunts that followed -- "dead economy", "Russia's laundromat" -- underlined a hard truth: influence is partly a function of perceived indispensability, and in 2025 India's indispensability

heavy ordnance, and contested accounting of losses. Islamabad's damage control and outreach, distinctly aided by sudden U.S. coziness, at times outpaced New Delhi's own public diplomacy.

Pakistan's Diplomatic Theatrics

Pakistan's recent success in weaving ties with China and Russia, resetting relations with Washington, and clinching a Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement with Saudi Arabia, has reshaped regional optics. By nominating Trump for the Nobel Prize for Peace, Pakistan craftily pampered the U.S. president's ego. The Saudi pact carries real consequences for Gulf alignments, and by extension for India's calculations in an energy-sensitive region where millions of its nationals work. Pakistan's ability to



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NOBLE PEACE FLAUNTED

President Trump sincerely tried brokering peace between Israel and Hamas but the problem is the scale of Israel's war against Hamas seems to have gone beyond America's control. The cease-fire initiated appears to have gone waste. He was trying too hard for the Nobel and that also worked against him without any visible results in the Middle East. Besides, he was caught unaware of Pakistan's leaders propping him as the main peace initiator between India and Pakistan, quite like Musharraf who fooled America by milking US tax payer's dollars even while harboring Bin Laden in Pakistan. Incidentally, Modi had denied his role of mediation after India's 'Op Sindoor'.

The Nobel Committee loathes overt campaigning. Its mystique depends on dispassion. Trump tried too hard, and even put pressures on foreign leaders to support his campaign. The Peace Prize honors those who advance fraternity amongst nations. What Trump did was the opposite. He pulled out US from the Climate accord. He withdrew from key issues such as WHO and disowned treaties from key allies. To top it off he imposed unreasonable tariffs on his allies. He mocked NATO and said UN's role has diminished in the world today. He stopped extending support and funds, towards democracy and freedom, for which America has stood for decades as world leader. His policy towards ongoing Iran nuclear negotiations failed, and one can't say where that will now lead. He tried to take credit in bringing peace between Thailand and Cambodia's conflict but they have restarted their war.

U.S. and many European countries have been supporting Ukraine for many years. All of a sudden Trump invites Putin to Alaska to talk peace without Ukraine's President Zelenskyy. What a folly he committed so too his key advisors, who may have advised him? Now he is pushing Zelenskyy to give away key areas they had fought for, for many months. Definitely this suited Putin and he is happy with Trump on his new found plans to end Ukraine war with Russia.

Trump's policy was initially seen in the affirmative, in dealing with illegal immigrants entering United States. Political parties across the spectrum supported his move but now he is targeting genuine immigrants America needs. Like the H-1B and similar legal aliens US genuinely needs.

At the domestic front too Trump has failed terribly. During his campaign, he vowed to make housing more affordable, lower grocery prices, especially for basic staples like eggs, and reduce the overall cost of living. But since taking office, he has failed to deliver on these promises. Instead, job creation has slowed. Inflation has surged to 3 percent. Key consumer protections are under attack.

Rather than addressing the rising cost of living, Trump has sown chaos and pushed policies that are hurting working families. His plan to shut down the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau the only watchdog against predatory practices by big banks and corporations will drive up costs for everyday Americans.

Meanwhile, he continues to prioritize tax breaks for the wealthy while ignoring critical issues like housing, childcare, healthcare and, grocery prices. Hope he rouses one morning and brings America face to face with the realities globally and at home.

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Ranthambore is one of the best tiger reserves of the country, known to have "friendly" tigers and chances of sighting one here is reasonably better than many other tiger reserves of India. Along with this Ranthambore has one of the richest flora and fauna making it an absolutely must visit area

Nestled in the foothills of Vindhya and Aravali Hills, Ranthambore is famous for its tiger reserves and the variety of flora and fauna found. The Ranthambore National Park, along with the Ranthambore Fort and the surrounding hills and valleys, altogether make Ranthambore a traveller's delight. The place is a boon for wildlife photographers and is perfect for excursions and sightseeing. Safari Rides add to the adventure along with hot Rajasthani picks for shopaholics. With an area of 392 kilometers square, Ranthambore National Park is a natural habitat for a variety of exotic species. It is an absolute delight for birdwatchers and an ideal place to watch animals in their natural habitat.

The Ranthambore Fort, built in the 10th century, stands tall over the entire National Park. Built by the Chauhan Dynasty, the Fort is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Located inside the fort is the majestic temple of Lord Ganesha, the Trinetra Ganesh Temple. Ganesha devotees flock the temple throughout the year. The other two temples are dedicated to Lord Shiva



and Ramlalaji respectively. Two Jain temples, devoted to Lord Sumatinath and Lord Sambhavnath are other attractions of the Fort. The Padam and Surwal lakes are two among many that are a haven for bird watching. The ideal time to visit these lakes is early morning. Located adjacent to the Padam lake is the Jogi Mahal, a red sandstone marvel. Kachida Valley, famous for locating panthers and bears, along with Raj Bagh Ruins and the surrounding deciduous forests altogether score brownie points for Ranthambore.

PLACES TO VISIT IN RANTHAMBORE

Ranthambore Tiger Reserve: Spread in an area of 392 sq. Km, the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve is one of the largest and famed tiger reserves in the country, famous for the magnificent Bengal Tiger found there. The Ranthambore Tiger Reserve derives its name from the Ranthambore Fort located in the region. Situated in the Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan, it forms a part of Project Tiger reserves, by the Government of India, set up in 1955. Ancient religious ruins found within the forest, surrounded by the rich biodiversity and aesthetically crumbling cenotaphs make Ranthambore Tiger Reserve a favorite spot for photographers, wildlife enthusiasts and travellers.

Ranthambore Fort: Ranthambore Fort is a magnificent fort erected by a ruler belonging to the Chauhan Royal family located in Ranthambore in Rajasthan. The regal fort is said to have existed since the 12th century and is a perfect tourist attraction for those wanting to explore Royal Rajasthan. The splendid fort of Ranthambore stands strong amidst dense forests that form the Ranthambore National Park.

Jeep Safari: Jeep Safari is the best way to explore the various zones of the Ranthambore National Park. Wildlife photographers and bird watchers often opt for these safaris to capture thrilling moments in the National Park. Jeep safaris need to be booked well in advance to ensure availability.

Ganesh Trinetra Temple: One of the most famous temples of Lord Ganesha is located atop the fort. The local post office receives and delivers thousands of invitation cards to the Lord Ganesha temple as people symbolically send the first invitation card for major functions like weddings, house warming, etc. to Lord Ganesh.

Wildlife Safari: Wildlife Safari at Ranthambore is a famous activity amongst nature and wildlife lovers where one can see various species in their natural habitat. The Ranthambore National Park has separate safaris to explore the park in separate zones. One of the favorites is the one to see the majestic tiger in its natural habitat.

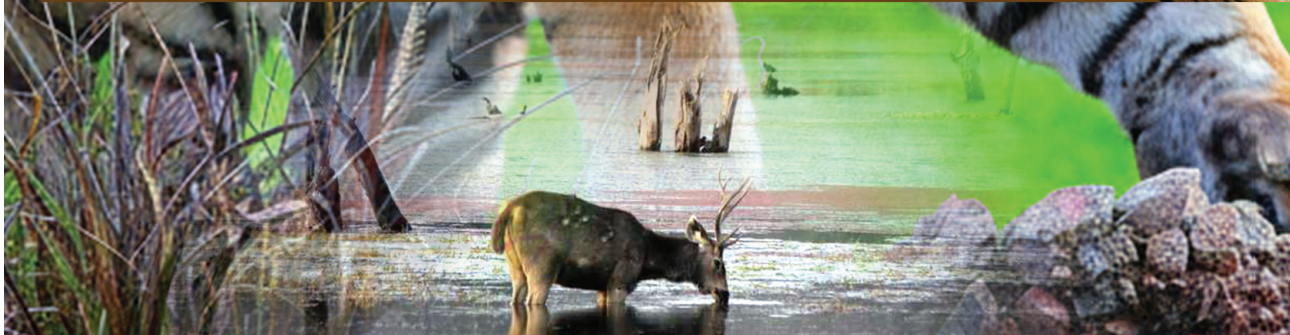
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