

## Telangana shivers Cold wave grips Hyderabad as temperatures plunge, fog blankets outskirts

Hyderabad: A fresh spell of cold wave-like conditions has gripped Hyderabad and parts of Telangana State, causing a steep drop in minimum temperatures and extensive fogging in the early hours of Thursday. In Hyderabad, University of Hyderabad (UoH) campus in Gachibowli recorded the lowest at 11 degree Celsius while Sirpur in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district recorded 7.3 degree Celsius on Thursday morning. As temperatures dropped considerably, a layer of thick fog has shrouded several places, especially the outskirts in Hyderabad including Kompally, Patancheru, L B Nagar and Vanasthalipuram on Thursday. Based on the weather data from Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS), the minimum temperatures in multiple regions of Hyderabad, which used to hover between 15 degree Celsius and 19 degree Celsius till last few days, now has dropped to less than 15 degree C. At Moula Ali, the minimum temperature dropped to 12.1 degree C while Rajendranagar recorded a minimum of 12.3 degree C. At State-level, single digit minimum temperatures ranged from 7.3 degree C to 9.9 degree C Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Sangareddy and Adilabad districts. Another mandal in Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Tiryani recorded a minimum of 8 degree C while Kohir in Sangareddy district recorded a minimum of 8.4 degree C.

opment Planning Society (TSDPS), the minimum temperatures in multiple regions of Hyderabad, which used to hover between 15 degree Celsius and 19 degree Celsius till last few days, now has dropped to less than 15 degree C. At Moula Ali, the minimum temperature dropped to 12.1 degree C while Rajendranagar recorded a minimum of 12.3 degree C. At State-level, single digit minimum temperatures ranged from 7.3 degree C to 9.9 degree C Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Sangareddy and Adilabad districts. Another mandal in Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Tiryani recorded a minimum of 8 degree C while Kohir in Sangareddy district recorded a minimum of 8.4 degree C.



## Does that peg of rum actually warm you up: The big winter question answered



Hyderabad: As the winter continues to have an on and off relationship with Hyderabad, there are many who still prefer to wind up the day with a peg of rum or whiskey in hand, a plate of kebabs or tandoori chicken and their favourite web series. One peg, or two, keeps the chill away is the belief. Really? Let's find out whether alcohol can actually make us warm. The medical myth busters around the world say this is one of the biggest winter myths. Alcohol does have a warming effect, but not quite on the body, and more on your thoughts is what they say.

Drinking alcohol makes blood vessels near your skin open up, with more blood flowing into them and creating a feeling of warmth on your skin. Note the point – a “feeling of warmth”, not “warmth”. But the blood being diverted away from your vital central organs can cause your core temperature to drop, something, which according to medical ex-

perts, can lead to hypothermia if left unchecked. That is the risk in severe cold weather conditions. Alcohol reduces your perception of cold air temperatures and can also lessen some of the natural responses designed to help you stay warm, like shivering. In other words, that ‘rum jacket’ or ‘brandy jacket’ can put you at greater risk in strong winter conditions. Alcohol is already known to impair your decision-making ability, and we have known alcohol to prompt us taking risks that we wouldn't when sober. Mythbusters say the combination of alcohol and cold weather can be lethal. For example, taking the decision to walk outside without a jacket when it's really chilly outside, emboldened by those few pegs inside, could lead to a dramatic fall in your body temperature. In short, a couple of pegs might lift your mood, but make sure it does not make you take off your jacket.

## Sri Vaishnavi wins Gold Medal at CM's Cup in under 14 Yogasana Rhythmic Yoga Sports Championship 2024

Hyderabad: Sri Vaishnavi, a Class VII student of University of Hyderabad (UoH) Campus School, has been awarded Gold Medal at the Chief Minister's Cup in the under 14 Yogasana Rhythmic Yoga Sports Championship 2024 held at Saroornagar indoor stadium. The event brought together talented participants from across the state to compete in various categories, showcasing the physical, mental, and spiritual discipline of Yoga.

Sri Vaishnavi, who represented UoH Campus School, displayed exceptional flexibility, balance, and grace. Her rigorous training included mastering advanced postures, breathing techniques, and synchronization of movements, which proved instrumental in her success at the championship. Competing in the Under-14 Rhythmic Yoga, Sri Vaishnavi's impeccable performance earned her the gold medal in the Under-14 Rhythmic Yoga, a press release said.



# Why inflation will matter more in 2025: Explained

It has been what one may call, a bitter-sweet year for the economy, with a sweet first half, when growth surprised everyone, including the government. And a difficult latter half by the end of which the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Finance Ministry mandarins are sparring, as diplomatically as possible, over who is to be blamed for sputtering growth, a persistently resurgent inflation trajectory and the flux this creates for policy making.

Why is there a clamour for a rate cut?

Top government functionaries have been making noises since late November about the need for RBI to cut rates, with some suggesting it should ignore volatile food prices and prioritise growth and investments. The reason for their seemingly urgent pitches became clearer when the Q2 GDP numbers revealed a 7-quarter low growth of 5.4%, with urban demand tottering and showing up in underwhelming corporate results that also affected market sentiment.

How were things this time last year?

India's stock markets were at record highs, the Gross Domestic Product was reported to have risen 7.7% in the first half of 2023-24, from 7.2% a year earlier. The Finance Ministry expected growth to be "over 6.5%" for the full year, as it geared up for an interim Budget ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. The RBI was expected to start an interest rate cut cycle in the second half of 2024 as it had projected inflation to average 4% — its median target — through July-September.

But didn't the economy do far better in 2023-24?

Yes, the National Statistical Office (NSO) growth estimates for 2023-24 turned out to be way healthier than all projections, partly because of revisions in earlier quarters' numbers. The first half of 2023-24 was reckoned to have grown around 8.1%, followed by an 8.6% spike between October and December 2023 (third quarter, or Q3), a 7.8% growth in the first three months of 2024. 2023-24 had ended up with a remarkable 8.2% uptick. The first quarter of 2024-25 was largely taken up by the election process. The BJP suffered some reverses, but attained 240 seats in the Lok Sabha and the NDA returned to office with a little help from some allies, and a semblance of continuity was maintained in the cabinet, especially for key economic portfolios like Finance and Commerce.

What did the post-poll Budget offer?

In the full Union Budget for 2024-25 presented in July, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman ramped up references to employment and the middle class and unveiled schemes to spur skilling and job creation with some token tax cuts for income tax payers, that were hoped to alleviate the effects of inflation and boost consumption. While a sustained consumption pick-up was necessary to stimulate greenfield and brownfield private investments, Ms. Sitharaman acknowledged that public spending on infrastructure had to lead the way yet again this year and announced a ₹1.11 lakh capex plan. The government exuded confidence that India would record its fourth successive year with 7% or higher growth, since COVID-19 had tripped

the economy.

How did things pan out?

The first growth data for 2024-25, released after the Budget, showed GDP had risen at a five-quarter low of 6.7%. However, this didn't ring any alarm bells at the time -- the prolonged polling process had affected capital spending plans by the Centre and the States which effectively scuppered a major growth lever. The mood was still upbeat but some had begun to worry. "Growth moderated in the April-June quarter as high interest rates temper urban demand," said Louis Kuijs, Asia-Pacific chief economist at S&P Global Ratings in September. The firm expected India to grow 6.8% this year at the time, well below the 7.2% projected by the RBI. After the Q2 growth shock, many have pared their 2024-25 growth projections down, including the Finance Ministry which now expects it to be around 6.5%, while some worry India has entered the throes of a prolonged cyclical slowdown. Meanwhile, though consumer price inflation remained under 6% through most of the year, it didn't get near the RBI's goal till July when it hit a five-year low of 3.5%, followed by another benign print in August. Yet, rate cut hopes in the October monetary policy review were scotched by food prices that shot up, starting in September, lifting the headline inflation closer to 6% again. With food prices still a worry and edible oils spurting up, the RBI did not budge



on interest rates this month as well, even as it noted the growth-inflation situation is no longer well-poised, slashing its 2024-25 growth projection to 6.6% from earlier hopes of 7.2%.

With slowing growth and high inflation, what next?

While high interest rates hurt demand and lower rates will help private consumption and, in turn, investments too, inflation hurts consumption spending as well. The government has appointed a new Governor at the RBI, but a change of guard may not suffice for a rate cut in February as inflation

needs to ebb quickly too. That North Block and Mint Street are not seeing eye to eye on who needs to blink first to break this growth-inflation flux was apparent as the year drew to a close. An RBI article made a solid case for 'excoriating inflation now' to get consumption, growth and investment going on a strong footing.

The latest economic review by the Finance Ministry, in turn, sought to blame the "monetary policy stance" for some of the recent demand slowdown. The growth and inflation rebalancing act, therefore, will be the one to watch out for in 2025, apart from any surprises the next U.S. President throws up.

## Understanding sleep paralysis and its causes

Hyderabad: Sleep paralysis is a condition where a person temporarily cannot move or speak while transitioning between sleep and wakefulness. This experience can last from a few seconds to a couple of minutes and is often accompanied by vivid hallucinations and a sensation of pressure on the chest. While unsettling, sleep paralysis is usually harmless. Causes:

**Disrupted sleep patterns:** Lack of sleep is one of the primary causes of sleep paralysis. Inadequate or poor-quality sleep can increase the chances of having sleep paralysis. **Sleep disorders:** Narcolepsy, a disorder characterised by extreme daytime sleepiness, is closely linked to sleep paralysis. People with narcolepsy may also experience sudden muscle weakness and vivid dreams. **Insomnia,** or difficulty falling and staying asleep, can disrupt normal sleep cycles and contribute to sleep paralysis episodes.

**Stress and anxiety:** High levels of stress and anxiety can negatively impact sleep quality, often leading to sleep disturbances like sleep paralysis. These episodes can feel more intense when accompanied by nightmares or panic attacks. **Sleeping position:** Some research suggests that sleeping on your back may make sleep paralysis more likely. This position may create a sen-



Lack of sleep is one of the primary causes of sleep paralysis. Inadequate or poor-quality sleep can increase the chances of having sleep paralysis.

sation of pressure on the chest, contributing to feelings of breathlessness or discomfort during episodes. **Mental health issues:** Conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, and PTSD are known to interfere with sleep and increase the risk of sleep paralysis. Emotional distress can also be a contributing factor. **Ways to reduce the risk of sleep**

paralysis: Going to bed and waking up at the same time daily helps regulate your body's internal clock.

Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night to avoid sleep deprivation. Engage in activities like meditation, deep breathing, or yoga to help reduce anxiety and promote relaxation.

# Savitribai Phule is the symbol of independence and a pioneer of women's rights: CM Saini

Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), January 3: Savitribai Phule was not only India's first woman teacher but also a symbol of independence and a pioneer of women's rights, said Haryana Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini on Friday. He was addressing a programme in Bahadurgarh on the occasion of Savitribai Phule Jayanti. Paying homage during the programme, the Chief Minister announced that Savitribai Phule's birth anniversary will be celebrated officially by the government.

Praising Savitribai Phule for her exceptional work, the Chief Minister said that Savitribai Phule is not just a name but a story of women's empowerment and girls' education. He said that Savitribai Phule's vision inspires Haryana's women empowerment initiatives. The Government Women's College in Loharu, Bhiwani, has been renamed after Mata Savitribai Phule. The government is committed to educating and empowering women and continuous efforts are being made toward this goal, said Saini. Describing Savitribai Phule as the forerunner of social revolution and a strong voice for women's empowerment, the Chief Minister said that not only was she India's first woman teacher, but also an independent personality and a trailblazer for women's rights. He said that Savitribai dedicated her life to women's education, widow remarriage, eradication of untouchability, and women's emancipation. Despite facing numerous obstacles, she courageously established India's first girls' school in Pune, Maharashtra, in 1848, shared the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister said that inspired by Savitribai Phule's vision, the present state government has opened colleges within a 20-kilometer radius to provide higher education. In the last 10 years, 79 government colleges have been established, including 30 exclusively for girls, he shared. CM Nayab Singh Saini further shared that in February 2015, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi launched the nationwide Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign from Panipat. Haryana has actively worked with NGOs to save daughters under this initiative. The state's gender ratio has improved from 871 to 916. Haryana is now recognized as a state that empowers daughters rather than one that suppresses them, marking a true tribute to Mata Savitribai Phule, he said.

The Chief Minister said that the Haryana government has provided 50 percent representation to women in Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies. He also thanked the Prime Minister for granting 33 percent reservation to women in legislatures. To ensure women's safety, 33 women police stations have been established in the state. The government has set a target of creating 5 lakh Lakhpati Didis. So far, 1.46 lakh women have achieved this milestone. Under the Drone Didi Scheme, the government aims to provide free drone pilot training to 5,000 women and drones worth Rs. 8 lakh. To date, 100 women have received training and free drones under this scheme. CM Saini also announced that the state government will expedite the proposal to extend the metro line from Bahadurgarh to Asaudha. He announced Rs. 5 crores exclusively for development works in Bahadurgarh. Besides this, the construction of Chhath Puja Ghats in Wards 7 and 10 will



also be done, announced the Chief Minister. He said that Bahadurgarh Municipal Council will be upgraded to a Municipal Corporation upon meeting the required standards. He further said that feasibility checks will be done to proceed with projects such as constructing an underpass at the railway

crossing, renovating Bahadurgarh roads, developing a park on the vacant land adjacent to the old court, and establishing a Vyayamshala and Yogshala on the vacant land near the old bus stand. The construction of the incomplete northern bypass and the new grain market will also be acceler-

ated, said Saini. The Chief Minister said that unauthorized colonies have been regularized by the government and basic amenities will be provided to the residents of these colonies. He assured that other such colonies will also be regularized after fulfilling the required criteria.

## Society should take responsibility to eradicate child labour

Stringent measures to eliminate child labour system that destroys children's childhood: CP Sudheer Babu



Hyderabad: Rachakonda Commissioner Sri Sudheer Babu, has called for the eradication of the child labour system which spoils the childhood of children who should be happily studying and playing. The convergence meeting of Operation Smile-XI was held today at Rachakonda Commissionerate Office, Nerademet. Speaking in the occasion, the Commissioner stated that the child labour system has become a disease in the society and opined it is destroying the childhood of many innocent children.

CP said that the root cause of child labour is mainly due to the poverty of the parents that the children are caught in the clutches of begging and losing their golden future as well. He said that there is a possibility that children who get caught in the clutches of anti social elements due to poverty sometimes become juvenile criminals and there is also a probability of anti-social forces using young children for committing crimes. CP advised the parents not to push their children into the labour market regardless of their financial situation. CP stated that the government is offering many free wel-

fare programs and schemes for the education of the children and advised to take advantage of them. He called for public participation in eradication of child labour and opined that people should also consider it as their moral responsibility.

The CP stated that stringent measures are being taken to eliminate human trafficking and child labour from Rachakonda. "We are keeping an iron foot on human trafficking and rescued children by special teams and cases have been registered on the traffickers' CP added. He reminded that work site schools are set up in their locality for the workers migrated from other states like Odisha and Bihar, so that their children will continue their education.

DCP Crime Aravind Babu, DCP Admin Indira, DCP Women Safety Usha Vishwanath, M. Purnachander rao AD, Education Dept. RR Dist, Yadadri CWC Chair Person Jayashree, Assistant Commissioner of Labour Prasad, BachPan Bachao Andolan representative Venkateshwarlu and other Rachakonda officers and staff participated.

## OPPO India highlights the essence of Reno Series with 'Live in the Moment' campaign featuring Siddhant Chaturvedi, Ishaan Khatter, and Vedang Raina

Hyderabad:OPPO India today unveiled its latest campaign, 'Live in the Moment', featuring Siddhant Chaturvedi, Ishaan Khatter, and Vedang Raina, to spotlight the true essence of the Reno Series. The campaign highlights how Reno is not just a smartphone, but an extension of your life, encouraging you to fully engage in experiences, rather than just capturing them. The brand film features the highly-anticipated Reno13 Series, set to launch in India on December 9, 2024. Launched across the social media platforms of OPPO India and OTT networks, the film opens with the trio in their office, wrapping up a highly intense yet successful meeting. As they step out, a boy's 'Live it Abhi' t-shirt catches their eye – igniting a spontaneous journey of unforgettable moments. From a carefree road trip to beachside football and vibrant party scenes, the AI-powered camera of the Reno13 Series captures it all, bringing to life the spirit of 'NOW' and celebrating the beauty of living in the moment. Watch the exciting video on OPPO India's YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter pages.

Commenting on the campaign, Sushant Vasishta, Head of Digital Marketing, OPPO India, said, "At OPPO India, we believe life is about enjoying every moment, big or small. Through the 'Live in the Moment' campaign, we celebrate the vibrant spirit of today's youth who embrace every moment with passion, energy, and authenticity - perfectly embodied by Siddhant, Ishaan, and Vedang. The film also features our upcoming Reno 13 Series, which brings flagship-level AI technology to elevate camera experience and performance, empowering users to immerse in their moments and effortlessly capture lasting memories." The



Reno13 Series brings OPPO's advanced AI features in imaging and productivity, delivering comprehensive AI capabilities within its price range. The Reno13 Series packs a full stack of OPPO's AI Imaging advancements such as AI Livephoto, AI Clarity Enhancer, AI Unblur, AI Reflection Remover and AI Eraser 2.0 that bring professional photo-editing into the hands of everyday users. Siddhant Chaturvedi added, "A smartphone isn't just a tool; it's a partner that empowers us to live boldly and capture life in all its vi-

brancy. The Reno Series stands out by enabling us to experience the world as it is—unfiltered and dynamic—while seamlessly enhancing our productivity and creativity. It's a reminder that technology, when done right, doesn't just keep up with our lives; it enriches them." Sharing his experience, Ishaan Khatter said, "We often get so focused on planning for the future that we forget to appreciate the present. Through OPPO India's 'Live in the Moment' campaign, I am reminded of the value of embracing life's real,

authentic experiences and living in the now. We put the upcoming Reno13 Series to test during the shoot and the pictures speak about the remarkable capabilities of the phone." Vedang Raina commented, "Today's young generation seeks technology that enhances their experiences, not interrupts them. We are all looking for gadgets that seamlessly fit into our lives, making everything smoother and more enjoyable. The Reno13 Series, with its AI-powered features, aims to elevate every moment."

## Rotary Club of Lake District Moinabad Distributes Sanitary Pads to Support Young Girls

Hyderabad:A large distribution drive for reusable sanitary pads was conducted at girls' school hostels across Marredpally, Neredmet, Malkajgiri, and Alwal On 3rd January, 2025. This noteworthy initiative reached over 1,400 students from below-poverty-line families, providing access to safe, sustainable, and eco-friendly menstrual solutions. Organized by the Rotary Club of Global Wizards in partnership with the Rotary Club of Lake District, Care-O-Safe, and Terminus – The Finest, the event was attended by Chief Guest RTN Chiranjeev Singh Saluja, President of Rotary Club of Lake District, and Guest of Honour Mrs. Dimple Agarwal, Secretary of Rotary Club of Lake District. The presence of RTN Uday Pilani, Founder of Rotary Club of Lake District and District Governor Nominee for 2026-27, further highlighted the event's value. Speaking on the occasion, RTN Chiranjeev Singh Saluja stated, "It is rewarding to see initiatives like this taking shape. By providing reusable sanitary pads, we address an immediate need, encourage sustainability, and ensure these young women can focus on their education without distractions."

Mrs. Dimple Agarwal, in her address, commented, "Supporting young girls with access to menstrual hygiene solutions is an important step toward building their confidence and independence. This initiative reflects our shared commitment to their well-being." Adding to the conversation, RTN Uday Pilani noted, "Joint efforts like these show the core spirit of Rotary – bringing communities together to create meaningful change. By focusing on sustainable solutions, we are ensuring a better future for these young girls and the environment." The reusable sanitary pads distributed are designed for comfort, durability, and affordability, promoting both personal health and environmental sustainability. The event also aimed to reduce the stigma surrounding menstruation, raise awareness about sustainable practices, and encourage girls to

embrace their potential with confidence. This Club of Global Wizards, along with RTN



noteworthy initiative was supported by RTN Namburi Venkata Raju, President of Rotary

Poruri Phani Malini, Secretary, and RTN V Madan Mohan, Director.

# Why cervical cancer risk goes up because of these misconceptions: Here is what you need to know

Cervical cancer remains one of the most prevalent and deadly cancers affecting women in India, accounting for nearly 60,000 deaths annually. Despite significant advancements in medical research, treatment options and preventive measures, the impact of cervical cancer continues to be devastating. This is largely due to misconceptions, and a lack of awareness.

Does cervical cancer only affect older women?

Contrary to popular belief, cervical cancer is not exclusive to older women. While the majority of cases are diagnosed in women over 30, studies indicate that younger women, particularly those with early sexual activity or exposure to the human papillomavirus (HPV), the cancer-causing virus, are also at risk. According to the National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP), 25 per cent of cervical cancer cases in India occur in women under 40. Regular screenings like Pap smears and HPV tests are critical for early detection, irrespective of age.

Are poor hygiene practices the primary cause?

While hygiene plays a role in overall reproductive health, the primary cause of cervical cancer is persistent HPV infection. Data from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) shows that nearly 70% of cervical cancer cases in India are caused by high-risk HPV types. Vaccination against HPV, coupled with regular screenings, significantly reduces the risk.

Does cervical cancer treatment guarantee a cure?

Treatment advancements have made cervical cancer one of the most treatable cancers when detected early. However, the possibility of recurrence cannot be ignored, especially in cases diagnosed at advanced stages. Studies indicate that up to 30 per cent of women treated for cervical cancer experience recurrence within two years. Adhering to follow-up care, a healthy lifestyle and timely screenings are essential to minimise this risk.

Can women with cervical cancer ever get pregnant?

One of the most distressing myths is that cervical cancer renders women infertile. While certain treatments, like hysterectomy, may impact fertility, newer fertility-sparing techniques are now available. Procedures like conisation (removal of a cone-shaped tissue) and radical trachelectomy (surgery to remove cervix, vagina and surrounding tissue) allow women with early-stage cervical cancer to preserve their fertility. A 2022 study highlights that nearly 85 per cent of women who underwent these procedures successfully conceived within three years.

Is HPV screening painful?

HPV screening is a quick and relatively painless procedure. It is often performed during a routine pelvic exam, and most women report little to no discomfort during the test. A healthcare provider will collect a sample of cells from the cervix using a small brush or spatula, which typically causes minimal discomfort. The procedure is much less invasive and painful than many women expect, and the benefits of early detection far outweigh any temporary discomfort.

Why do I need HPV screening if I have

had the HPV vaccine?

While the HPV vaccine significantly reduces the risk of infection from certain high-risk HPV strains, it does not protect against all strains of the virus. The vaccine primarily protects against the most common cancer-causing types but it does not guarantee immunity against every potential strain that could lead to cervical cancer. Therefore, even women who have been vaccinated should continue to undergo regular HPV screenings as part of their overall cervical cancer prevention strategy. The combination of vaccination and regular screening offers the best protection.

Does a positive HPV test mean I have cervical cancer?

A positive HPV test result does not mean you have cervical cancer. In fact, most HPV infections, particularly those caused by low-risk strains, are cleared by the body on their own within a couple of years. However, a positive test for high-risk HPV strains indicates an increased risk of cervical cancer, but it does not mean cancer is present. If you test positive, your healthcare provider will likely recommend follow-up testing, such as a Pap smear or a colposcopy, to monitor any



potential abnormal changes in cervical cells. Early detection and regular screenings are

crucial for identifying pre-cancerous changes before they develop into full-blown cancer.

## Have you made your own emojis yet?: AI has entered the chat

I created tiny stickers to this effect, so I could send them to friends and family, to sum up my experience of house-hunting — the grief of leaving one and trying to find another — in Mumbai. I made the little icons using a tool called Emoji Kitchen. Launched by Gboard, the Google virtual-keyboard app, in 2020, it allows users to mash emojis together to create new ones compatible with platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat and Telegram. It has been more widely used since 2023, when it became available via Google search (without the need to download the app). Another tech giant has now entered the space of customisable emojis.

In December, Apple released Genmoji, which uses artificial intelligence (AI) to generate customised emojis across Apple devices. It's as simple as typing the idea into the emoji option in iMessage. A public demonstration in June saw an Apple executive generate, in real time, a funky icon of a crocodile wearing a tutu on a surfboard. A public demonstration of Genmoji by Apple in June saw an Apple executive generate, in real time, a funky icon of a crocodile wearing a tutu on a surfboard. The graphic-design platform Canva allows premium users to generate custom emojis using AI. Since 2022, Telegram has had a custom emoji feature in its premium offerings too. Meanwhile, Unicode Consortium, the US-based non-profit that approves and standardises the world's official, universal set, has been approving fewer and fewer new ones.

"The Unicode Emoji Subcommittee (ESC) has entered a new era where the primary way... to move forward is not merely to add more... but to consider how the ones added provide the most linguistic flexibility," illustrator-designer Jennifer Daniel, who leads this effort, said on her blog, Did Someone Say Emoji?. The focus, going forward, is to ensure that the emoji library doesn't become a "junk drawer", she added. In 2024, then, just eight new ones have been approved: 1) face with bags under the eyes, 2) lifeless tree, 3) harp, 4) shovel, 5) fingerprint, 6) purple splatter (a mess, paint, ink, stain), 7) beetroot (for a vegetarian diet) and 8) the flag of Sark, a self-governing British dependency in the English Channel. That's a sharp drop from 31 new emojis in 2022 (including the long-requested pink heart), 112 in 2021 (including the disco ball and saluting face), 117 in 2020 and 230 in 2019. Rather than new ones, recent updates to the emoji standard have focused on a greater representation of cultures, communities, genders and skin tones. In 2019, for instance, about 17 icons representing the differently abled were added.\*\*\*With AI set to sprout a garden of emojis, and Unicode prepping to encode fewer of them, what does the future look like, for us and them? The aim is to eventually have so wide an expression of events, possibilities and emotions that one may use to express joy, or combine and to express quite the opposite. AI could help in this mission as well as hurt, says cognitive scientist, comics theorist and emoji researcher Neil Cohn, who has worked with Daniel over the years to create emojis.

"AI-generated emojis may help people



come up with interesting ways to express themselves visually, but I also think it might be too wide open. One of the advantages of the emoji is that they use a fairly small, fixed set of expressions. Because of this, people have internalised many, and their meanings are, by and large, clearly understood," he says. The ability to craft emojis in seconds could help bridge the gaps that exist in the current set, which is still quite West- and Japan-centric, adds Lieke Verheijen, assistant professor of language and communication at Radboud University in the Netherlands. However, unless these emojis are standardised or freely accessible on a global scale, they cannot meaningfully impact the lack of representation. "Perhaps, with AI entering the picture," Verheijen adds, "this would be a good time for Unicode to reassess who approves new emojis, and how."

# Why will India's foreign policy be a tightrope walk?: Explained

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi was sworn in for a third time in June, the year was jam-packed with incoming and outgoing visits. Above all, 2024 was full of global insecurity and shocks in the neighbourhood, particularly Bangladesh. As 2025 looks to be even more uncertain, Indian foreign policy's biggest challenge is to remain poised for change.

What were the high points in India's external relations?

The most difficult negotiation completed this year was for disengagement at the Line of Actual Control with China. While restoring ties and rebuilding the trust shattered by the Chinese PLA's transgressions since 2020 is a more prolonged task, the first formal Modi-Xi Jinping meeting in five years at Kazan, on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia, was a turning point. The year began with a visit from French President Emmanuel Macron as a guest on Republic Day and a reaffirmation of the dependability of bilateral ties. Mr. Macron was not the government's original invitee, as Mr. Modi had hoped to host U.S. President Joseph Biden and also hold the Quad in Delhi that time. But when Mr. Macron stepped in, Mr. Modi set the seal on a number of India-France future forays in defence, energy and maritime cooperation. Early in 2024, the conclusion of the India-European Free Trade Association agreement, India's first with Europe, was heralded as a template for India to complete other such negotiations, although the year ended without similar progress on FTAs with Australia, the U.K., and the European Union. The neighbourhood was also the subject of some bright spots, including the attendance of leaders of most of the neighbouring countries for Mr. Modi's swearing-in. Pakistan wasn't invited, but External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made the first such visit in nearly a decade to Islamabad for the SCO summit. Several visits by the Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay as well as Mr. Modi's visit to Thimphu to receive an award, and successful visits by the new Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, setting aside the tensions earlier, were other high points of the year.

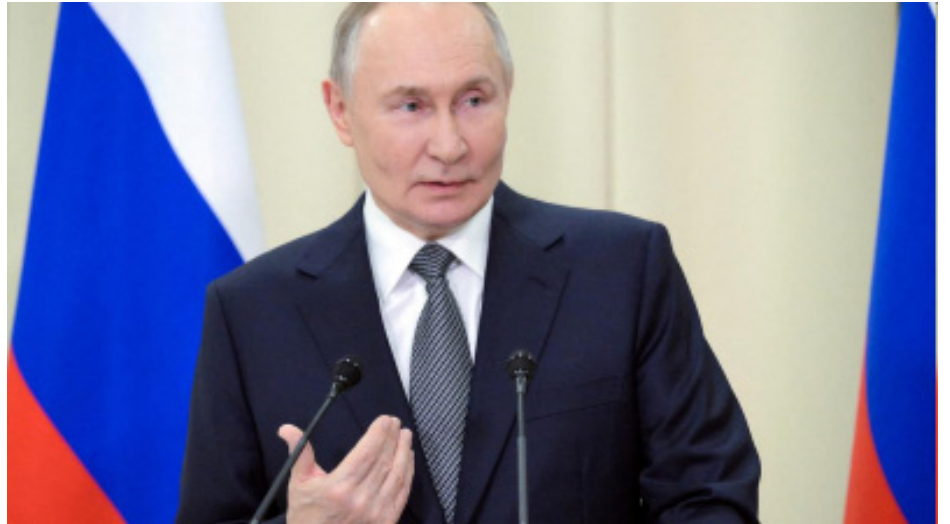
What kept South Block awake at night in 2024?

The transformation of Bangladesh, from a friendly neighbour and most important connectivity partner under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, to becoming estranged over her ouster from power in August was the year's biggest shock for New Delhi. The MEA repeatedly raised concerns over the sharp rise in attacks on Hindu minorities that followed, and Ms. Hasina's stay in India has become the biggest thorn in the once close partnership. Ties with Canada took a turn for the worse as Canadian authorities doubled down on allegations that Indian officials had ordered the Nijjar killing, even naming Home Minister Amit Shah in the alleged conspiracy. New Delhi dealt with Canada by slamming its doors shut on PM Justin Trudeau, with the hope a new government will be elected there in 2025. But it wasn't easy to do the same with the U.S., where the Department of Justice filed indictments against the Adani

group and a new indictment against an Indian official for the alleged Pannun assassination plot. The U.S.'s role in the South Asian neighbourhood, especially with the changes in Bangladesh, and China's forays into Nepal and other neighbours are a continuing challenge. However, the election of U.S. President Donald Trump and the largely pro-India team he has picked could be a breather.

How did Indian foreign policy navigate global conflict?

With both the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Israel's war in Gaza, India consistently put itself on the "side of peace". Mr. Modi's visits to Russia and Ukraine within weeks of each other raised speculation that he would play mediator in future negotiations. There were no high-level visits from or to Israel, and Mr. Modi made a point of meeting Palestinian PM Mahmoud Abbas at the UN. While New Delhi repeatedly called for an end to the civilian casualties, it continued to hedge its position at the UN on resolutions seeking to bring Israel to account for the killing of more than 45,000 in Gaza. With multilateral initiatives like IMEC (India-Middle East Europe-Economic Corridor) and I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and U.S.) in trouble, India sought to engage West Asian countries bilaterally. In 2025, a more difficult tightrope walk for



South Block is expected between Iran and the Israel-U.S. combine.

What's on the diplomatic calendar in 2025?

Mr. Jaishankar's year-end visit to Washington and meetings with the Trump transition team indicate that ties with the U.S. will be a priority in 2025. Mr. Trump is expected to visit India for the Quad Summit next year and Mr. Modi is likely to call on him in

Washington before that. 2025 is expected to begin with a ministerial visit from Iran, followed by U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan for a last-moment iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology) meet.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will be the Republic Day guest. All eyes will be on Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Delhi, his first since the war began, expected to be finalised early in 2025.

## Keeping up with UP: RSS chief cautions against raking up temple-mosque disputes

Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat has raised hackles with his advice against raking up temple-mosque disputes, especially in Uttar Pradesh. The advice ahead of the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, where the Akhil Bhartiya Akhada Parishad, the highest body of 13 Akhadas (Hindu monastic organisations), is likely to take a position on issues, which may include the growing claims of Hindus on temples Muslim rulers allegedly demolished to build mosques. The RSS chief's statement came against the backdrop of violence in Sambhal over the survey of the Shahi Masjid that emperor Babur said to have been built in 1529 after demolishing a temple. The Akhada Parishad may take a divergent view. On December 19, Bhagwat said the Ram Temple in Ayodhya was built to respect the sentiments of the Hindus but to use it to become a "Hindu leader" was unacceptable. Several parishad members have appreciated chief minister Yogi Adityanath, and he may once again muster their support for his ongoing campaign to restore historical temples. Swami Jitendranand Saraswati criticised the RSS chief's remarks, saying despite Bhagwat's similar comments in the past, temple structures have been identified at 56 sites, signalling sustained interest in the contentious issues. He emphasised that religious organisations often align their actions with public sentiment rather than political agendas. The efforts to reclaim the Kashi and Mathura temples is the other contentious issue on which the Akhada Parishad may take a contrary view. The RSS is not pushing for

Kashi and Mathura temples. It neither controls nor spearheads the movement for it. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, an ancillary body of the RSS, had demanded the liberation of Ayodhya, Mathura, and Kashi temples. It sought the Akhada Parishad's support for the Ayodhya temple. Kashi is more state-sponsored. Adityanath has been hinting at the renovation of Mathura temple. Earlier, Bhagwat advised Hindus against looking for Shivlinga under every mosque and creating social disharmony. There have been few takers for his advice even in the Sangh's associated organisations amid heightened Hindu assertiveness. There has also been a fresh campaign to find abandoned and deserted temples in Muslim areas in places such as Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, and Kanpur which have a history of communal riots. The demographic profile of districts in western Uttar Pradesh changed after communal clashes from 1987 to 2013. In Kanpur, Muslim families started moving from the Hindu-dominated Mall Road, Kamla Towers, Ludhera, Dalepurva, etc since the 1931 riots. Kanpur mayor Premlata Pandey recently inspected Muslim areas, reopening temples, and ordering their renovation. Some of these deserted temples were encroached upon. Pandey vowed to revive temples. She claimed there were 125 ancient temples in Muslim areas, including Bekanganj, earlier known as Sunar Wali Gali. She ordered the removal of encroachments and warned of "bulldozer action" if Muslim residents created any obstruction. Small and big temples are being cleaned and whitewashed so that daily

worship can resume. Sudhir Dwivedi, vice president of Sanatan Math Mandir Raksha Samiti, is restoring temples with the help of the local community. The focus remains on Raja Yayati Fort said to be centuries old at Jajmau in Kanpur. ASI declared it a protected heritage site after it was discovered in 1968 during the construction of a bridge. In Muzaffarnagar, Hindus and Muslims relocated in the 1990s and this continued until after the 2013 riots. Large-scale migrations to safer zones in western Uttar Pradesh led to a change in demographics. A Hindu, who moved from Muslim-dominated Mehmoodnagar, told HT the situation worsened after homes were attacked during the 1990 riots. "I sold my house for a song and moved out after living there for 26 years. Two Hindu lanes sandwiched between Muslim settlements in a locality have virtually disappeared." Muslims have been leaving Kakra village 20 km away. The mosque here is abandoned and Gayoor, the last of the Muslim inhabitants, is preparing to leave. "Migration of Muslims from urban areas began after the 1987 riots. [Farmer leader] Mahendra Singh Tikait tried to regain the confidence of Muslims but Arya Samaj threw a spanner while the Sangh Parivar's temple movement put up a barrier," Allahabad-based professor A Satyanarayana said. The ghettos that developed after every communal riot in these cities hampered interactions between the two communities that could have addressed conflicts and averted violence. People abandoned temples and mosques. In Kanpur, two mosques in Kamla Nagar have not been functional for decades.

# I will be smarter and go for the top-50, says Sumit Nagal

Sumit Nagal had a mixed 2024. At the Australian Open, he came through the qualifiers and stunned the then World No. 27 Alexander Bublik in the first round, and in February, he broke into the ATP top-100 for the first time. In April on the Monte Carlo clay, he started in the qualifying rounds and nearly entered the round of 16 before losing narrowly to Holger Rune (No.7) in three sets. Propelled by a trophy and a runner-up finish in consecutive Challengers in June — again on his beloved red dirt — he got to a career-best ranking of No. 68 in mid-July.

But the 27-year-old's lack of success at the other three Slams — French Open, Wimbledon and US Open — will rankle him, and so will his 1-11 win-loss record on the Tour starting from the Paris Olympics. There was also the controversy regarding his non-availability for the Davis Cup World Group I tie against Sweden in September — an issue he did not want to comment on — that India lost badly (0-4). As the 2025 season looms, Nagal, now ranked 98th in the World, told *The Hindu* in an interview that he was confident of learning from the experiences of the last 12 months and making a push for the ATP top-50. Excerpts: Since breaking into the top-100, you have managed to stay there. How do you describe your season?

I feel like I played two different seasons. The first seven months were different, and around the US Open and post-US Open, things were different. The first few months I was really fit and playing well. The confidence was high and I really enjoyed being on the court. Once my back gave up a bit, and I really couldn't find out what the reason was, the training became less and there was a lot of worrying on the court. I lost track a little there. You competed at all four Majors, a first in your career. Then, you played a few Masters tournaments which included your Monte Carlo high, a few ATP 500s and 250s. What were the biggest learnings from being in the upper tier?

If I am talking about playing the higher-ranked opponents, [I learnt that] you have to be on top of your game because the margin is very less. Everyone serves well, hits well, moves well. So, you have to show that you are ready to fight and play the first and last points at the same high level. That's the difference I feel from Challengers to the ATP Tour. You don't get so many free points [on the Tour]. So how do you rate yourself? Do you feel you belong to this stage? Definitely. I very much believe that I belong to the top-100. I will back myself for it. I just have to be a little smarter in a few things, like scheduling, fitness routines... if that is done, I should be okay.

You are the only Indian playing in singles in the bigger events. Do you feel the pressure?

Not really. I just feel sad. I wish I also had some Indian friends playing. It is nice to see two, three people at a bigger event, share the biggest stage and share some dinners. It gets very lonely otherwise. Obviously, in tennis, things don't change overnight. I really hope there's a time when we have two or three people playing at a very high level. You have put together winning streaks

in Challengers. Earlier in 2024, you won the title in Chennai and reached the semifinals in Bengaluru in back-to-back weeks. What does it take to replicate something similar at the Tour level? What is the gulf in challenge that you're looking at? It's very similar if you look at the physical side of things. You have to be fit because matches are getting longer and harder. There were a few times in the ATP 250s where I felt like I should have won, but didn't. So, instead of losing in the second round or round of 16 on a Thursday, I could have gone deeper in the tournament. There was a match where I was serving 40-love up and ended up losing. Then there was one where I was a set and a break up and lost. If I could have turned around those, the year would have been very different. But it's fine. It's my first experience. Obviously, I can't expect a good draw all the time and sometimes I have to take it up as a challenge.

How does your game measure up to the prevailing standards in men's tennis? We see players getting bigger and taller...

I wish I was taller. I really wish. But then, I cannot change that. So, for me, to give myself a chance, it is to be like how David Ferrer was. I have tried to copy him. If I can be physically fit and mentally strong, fighting for every ball, making that extra ball all the time, I will be doing well. Game-wise, what have you worked on? What do you have to get better at?

I'm practising a lot of serves, backhands and transitions to the net. These three are my biggest goals. I am getting better, but there's a lot of room to upscale. When you play at big tournaments, you meet a lot of top players. What have you learnt from them? When the top players get the racquet on the ball, they don't miss. It is incredible how they do it because it is super tough. They hit it hard and they don't miss. It's very simple to say but tough to do. That's where the dif-



ference comes. People who are able to do it will go high up the rankings. I played the World Tennis League in Abu Dhabi last year too and that was probably the first time I got to see so many top-ranked players. It was the same thing with everyone — if they have the racquet in position, they do not miss.

What do you think was the high point of 2024? And what could you have done better? To be able to compete for many months. For almost a year and a half, nothing major happened to me and I was on the court practising and getting better. That was really good. In the past, I couldn't really play for the whole year. It was on and off, and that didn't give me the chance to play at the highest level. Towards the end of 2023, I knew I was playing really good tennis. I was eager and hungry to start the next year.

Are you feeling the same now?

Yes. I'm actually looking forward to it. I've never enjoyed going to Australia but since the beginning of 2024, my perspective has changed.

What did that one win against Bublik tell you? I don't think it was just that one match. It was the whole tournament. It felt like I had figured out how to play on those courts. When I was young, I struggled quite a bit. But now, I am more comfortable playing in those conditions. If I enjoy the conditions, nothing matters to me. How do you maintain your focus? You have dealt with many injuries in the past. Recently, the never-ending controversy regarding Davis Cup selection flared up again... Nothing, to be honest.

You just keep doing your own thing. Tennis is a very lonely sport. It doesn't really bother me because I have bigger and better things to do, and I have to improve so much on my game that my whole focus goes towards it. Have you set any targets for 2025? What do you want to improve on? I would love to break into the top-50. I'm going to push for it because 2024 was a good learning experience. It was the first time playing the ATP calendar. In the coming season, I'll be smarter with scheduling and I'll go for the top-50.

## Add these 5 nutritious millets to your diet for better health

Hyderabad: Millets are a highly varied group of small-seeded grasses, widely grown around the world as cereal crops or grains for fodder and human food. Kodo, Foxtail, Little, Barnyard, and Brown Top millets, including their nutritional value and typical uses. Kodo Millet: Its scientific name is *Paspalum scrobiculatum*. Kodo millet is packed with fiber, protein, and essential minerals such as iron, magnesium, and phosphorus. It is naturally gluten-free, making it a good choice for individuals with gluten sensitivity. It is commonly used in Indian dishes like khichdi, upma, or as a rice substitute. Kodo millet can also be incorporated into soups, salads, and porridge.

Foxtail Millet: Its scientific name is *Setaria italica*. Foxtail millet is rich in protein, fiber, and B-vitamins, as well as important minerals such as iron, calcium, and magnesium. Its slow-digesting carbohydrates help in stabilising blood sugar levels. This millet

is versatile and can be used in dishes like porridge, upma, dosa, and even in baked goods such as bread and muffins. It can also be milled into flour for making flatbreads. Little Millet: Its scientific name is *Panicum sumatrense*. Little millet is a great source of protein, fiber, and minerals like iron, calcium, and phosphorus. It also contains antioxidants and has a low glycemic index, making it ideal for those looking to control blood sugar. It is often used in traditional recipes such as upma, khichdi, and pulao. Little millet is also a rice alternative and can be used to make flour for baking.

Barnyard Millet: Its scientific name is *Echinochloa frumentacea*. Barnyard millet is known for its high fiber content, along with protein and minerals like calcium, iron, and magnesium. It is also rich in antioxidants, supporting overall health. This millet is commonly used in dishes like porridge, khichdi, and upma. It is a popular option for gluten-



free diets and can be used as a substitute for rice or couscous in various meals. Brown Top Millet: Its scientific name is *Urochloa ramosa*. Brown top millet offers a high amount of fiber, protein, and B-vitamins. It is also a good source of minerals such as calcium, magnesium, and iron. This millet is frequently used in South Indian cuisine, where it is prepared in dishes like porridge, upma, and as a substitute for rice. It can also be ground into flour for use in baking or flatbreads.

# U.S.-India ties will be strengthened, but expect tariff trouble, FTA push: Former Ambassador Juster

India should expect raised tariffs, and a renewed push to get a Free Trade Agreement finalised from the United States as Donald Trump gets set to begin a second term in office, said former Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster. In an exclusive interview to The Hindu via videoconferencing from New York, Mr. Juster, a former U.S. department of Commerce official who was appointed by Mr. Trump to India in the first term (2017-2021) said that the first tenure and Mr. Trump's campaign pronouncements were indicators that the second term would see a further strengthening of India-U.S. ties, but certain irritants in ties, such as over high tariffs, market access in areas like "agricultural exports from United States to India and the IT (information technology) equipment sector and medical devices", and differences over Iran policy could also return. In Mr. Trump's first term, the U.S. had withdrawn India's GSP status for exporters, and forced India to cancel all oil imports from Iran. Mr. Juster pointed out that Mr. Trump's cabinet nominees thus far had very strongly pro-India positions, and that they also saw China as the U.S.'s "major strategic challenge", pointing in particular to NSA-designate Michael Waltz, currently co-chair of the India Caucus in the House of Representatives, whom External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met in Washington last week. Mr. Juster said that it was unlikely the Department of Justice indictments in the Pannun case and against the Adani group would have "any substantial effect on the broader US-India relationship".

When asked about a possible invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Trump inauguration on January 20, Mr. Juster pointed out that foreign leaders have not traditionally attended the inauguration, but that the two leaders share a close personal relationship from Mr. Trump's previous term. With the inauguration of Donald Trump as the President of the United States for the second time just weeks away, New Delhi stepped up its outreach to the incoming administration with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri both spending the year-end week in Washington. In an exclusive interview to The Hindu over a video conference from New York, Mr. Trump's last envoy to India (2017-2021) Kenneth Juster spoke about what to expect from his next tenure in office.

Broadly, how do you think President Trump will approach India, given your experience of the ties during his previous tenure?

I think there's going to be a very strong U.S.-Indian relationship during the second term of the Trump presidency, and I base that on what happened during the first term. U.S.-India relations were among the highlights of the Trump administration's foreign policy. President Trump was the first U.S. President to label China as a strategic challenge to the United States and to popularize the concept of the Indo Pacific, which strategically links the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean regions. It was a concept that was pioneered by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, but the United States really enhanced it by its own activities, and soon the entire region and world was speaking of the Indo Pacific. Under the Trump administration, we also revived the Quad, the grouping among the United States, India,

Japan and Australia, which has continued to thrive under the Biden administration. We enhanced our defence cooperation significantly, signing three major foundational agreements, increasing the number of military exercises and having the first ever tri-services exercise. We increased energy exports to India of all types, clean coal, natural gas, oil and renewables, and worked closely with India on those issues. There was also a very strong people-to-people relationship. There was a Howdy Modi event in Houston with over 50,000 people that President Trump was at. And then there was a Namaste Trump event in February of 2020, that had over 100,000 people in Gujarat. So, there's a very strong relationship between the President and the Prime Minister, and the United States really provided very critical and important assistance to India when China came across the Line of Actual Control into disputed territory in 2020.

What should one make of Trump nominees thus far, including Rubio, Hegseth, Gabbard, Ramaswamy and Hegseth, all of whom have been positively disposed towards India?

Let me also mention Representative Michael Waltz, who's going to be the incoming National Security Advisor, who is currently co-chair of the India Caucus in the House of Representatives. And yes, I think the appointees by and large will be furthering the strength of the US-India relationship that we saw in the first term of the Trump administration. Senator Rubio, who's the nominee to be Secretary of State, had introduced legislation that would treat India as equivalent to an ally for purposes of technology transfers and provide a variety of other positive elements to the US-India relationship. But in addition, these advisors see China as the major strategic challenge that the United States faces. And in that sense, I think there's a certain strategic clarity between the United States and India as to what some of the challenges will be in the Indo-Pacific region.

What about the unusual and special relationship with Elon Musk, who has been trying to bring in companies like Tesla and Starlink to India, but asking for more concessions, tax waivers. Do you think India should be prepared to give more when it comes to business?

Well, that's going to be a business decision for India. India made concessions to bring Apple into India, and that's been a great success in terms of its manufacturing operations there. And the government of India will have to decide whether the concessions being sought by Mr. Musk relative to Tesla and Starlink, and I don't know all the specifics of that, make sense from its perspective or not.

But given Mr. Trump's threats of the past on India being a "tariff abuser" and how India lost its GSP status for exporters, should India expect more of such shock therapy?

Look, the President has been clear that he believes India should lower tariffs and is too protectionist, and he bases this on both the levels of tariffs, which the real tariff level in India is high, and the trade deficit that exists between the United States and India. And he had this opinion during the first term. I don't think it's correct to say that the GSP



issue was shock therapy. There's a statute that provides the generalized system of preferences benefits to countries, which gives tariff free entry to hundreds and even thousands of products into the United States. But the statute also requires that the beneficiary country increase its own market access to US products. There were complaints filed by the medical devices industry and the dairy industry that they were not getting access to India. So, the US Trade Representative's Office undertook a full investigation. They felt that there were other industries, including the IT services industry, that also were not getting sufficient access. But instead of withdrawing GSP right away, the US government undertook an extensive negotiation with the Government of India to try to reach some resolution of this issue. The negotiations lasted for over one year. The US government felt that they were coming close to an agreement, but it could never get concluded. And finally, under the statutory requirement, they were compelled to have to terminate GSP, and yet still continued negotiations after that to try to reinstate GSP, to get some market opening measures. Regrettably, that was still not possible. I think by the time President Trump came to India in February of 2020, it looked like the Indian side was willing to close the deal, but at that point the President was seeking a bigger deal. We have to remember that part of the effort in putting tariffs on a country is to try to get a negotiation to increase market access for the United States. So, the President-elect has indicated that he will slap tariffs of 10 to 20% on most countries around the world, and I think that would probably include India. But I also think that could be the beginning of a negotiation to open markets a bit and, from India's perspective, to try to lock down the benefits of its largest trade partner, the United States, in both goods and services. And one should think expansively in terms of what other issues of concern, whether it be in technology, in energy, or elsewhere, where the two sides could do some horse trading and reach a broader trade and economic agreement.

Will reopening FTA talks be a priority for the Trump administration, as when the Biden administration came in it made it clear it wasn't a priority?

Well, to be fair, the Biden administration chose not to move forward in the free trade agreement area and, instead, launched a different initiative, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity. President

Trump, despite being known as someone who loves tariffs, also negotiated several trade deals during his first term, including with Mexico and Canada and with Japan as well. And I think he would want to do so in the second term with India. Some of the areas that were sticky were in some agricultural exports from United States to India and the IT (information technology) equipment sector and medical devices. And I would hope that we could get beyond those issues, reduce tariffs there, and then look at other broader measures that could be addressed to enhance our economic relationship. One strategic reason for doing this is that China really dominates the Indo Pacific region with its economic strength, and if the United States and India were to strike a larger trade and economic agreement, that would begin to counter some of China's enormous presence in the region. Also, we should work out an understanding on the digital economy, because so much data flows back and forth between our two countries. Both of our technology sectors are critical to our economies and are leading technology sectors of the world.

Do you think the ease of doing business in India is now better in these last four years?

Yes, I think the ease of doing business in India has certainly improved, although I think there could still be further improvements. We've seen enormous investments by the government in infrastructure, whether it be airports, seaports, roads or highways. We've seen efforts to attract investors through a variety of different incentives, and certainly India is on the radar screen of most major US and other international companies that are looking for a major market to invest in. I still hear, though, from US companies that they find the regulatory framework can be a bit slow and burdensome, and that at times there's regulatory uncertainty. My concern at times about some of the high barriers to trade -- not to investment, but to trade -- is that this may dissuade some companies that want to move goods in and out of India from making it the supply chain hub that India would like to be.

Like with the GSP removal, the feeling in India is that the Trump administration strong-armed India- the US insisted that India must zero out Iran oil import. It's interesting that despite many requests from the Biden administration, India did not actually reduce its oil intake from Russia. What would the expectations be from India in the next four years?