

8th November 2024

Bihar Kokila Sharda Sinha passes away



Key Points:

- ❖ Popular folk singer and 'Bihar Kokila', Smt. Sharda Sinha passed away on 5 November 2024. She was suffering from multiple myeloma and was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), New Delhi, where she breathed her last.
 - ❖ She was 72 years old. Sharda Sinha, who was a household name in Bihar for her Chhath Puja songs, died on the first day of the Puja this year.
 - ❖ President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and other prominent personalities expressed grief over her demise.
 - ❖ Bihar Kokila Sharda Sinha was born on 1 October 1952 in the Hulas village of Raghapur subdivision of the present-day Supaul district of Bihar. She started her singing career in 1971 with Akashvani (All India Radio).
 - ❖ Her songs, sung in Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Magadhi dialects, based on the great festival of Chhath, Vivah Geet, and other rituals specific to Bihar, caught the public imagination, earning her the sobriquet of Bihar Kokila.
 - ❖ Sharda Sinha also sang about the life of the Girmitiya labourers, which became very popular in Mauritius, Seychelles, Fiji, and other places.
 - ❖ Girimitiya are indentured labourers who, during British rule, left India to work in the sugar plantations of British colonies like Fiji, Mauritius, Seychelles, etc. The labourers were mainly from present-day Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh.
- ❖ Sharda Sinha was known for her melodious depictions of deities, gods, and goddesses in Vivah Geet. Even her love songs about newlywed couples are still admired by families and continue to enjoy high regard.
 - ❖ Sharda Sinha also sang songs in Hindi films, such as Kahe Toh Se Sajna in Maine Pyar Kiya, Taar Bijli in Gangs of Wasseypur 2, and Kaun Si Nagaria in Chaarfutiya Chhokare.
 - ❖ Sharda Sinha was awarded India's third highest civilian award Padma Bhushan in 2018, fourth highest civilian award Padma Shri in 1991 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award.

About multiple myeloma disease

- ❖ Multiple Myeloma is a rare type of blood cancer that affects the plasma cells in the bone marrow. Bone marrow are soft tissue found in human bones. Due to multiple myeloma, the uncontrolled growth of plasma cells in the bone marrow causes cancer. The uncontrolled growth of plasma leads to a decrease in red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets.
- ❖ Red blood cells carry oxygen and transport it to the whole body, white blood cells help fight infections, and platelets help clot blood.
- ❖ The reduction of red blood cells in the bone marrow causes anaemia, the reduction of white blood cells makes the body defenceless against infections, and a decrease in platelets can cause excessive bleeding in humans.
- ❖ Infected cells produce an abnormal level of antibody called M protein, which can damage the kidneys and other organs of the human being.

Chhath Puja

Key Points:

- ❖ Chhath Puja is a four-day festival that starts after six days of Diwali. It takes place on the sixth day of the Kartik month, which falls in October/ November.

- ❖ The festival honours the Sun God and his sister, Chhathi Maiya.
- ❖ The festival is observed in Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Nepal and all around the world, where there is a sizeable expatriate population of Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand.

Deepening the Indo-US Strategic Partnership

Key Points:

- ❖ India-US relations are entering a transformative phase with the election of the 47th US President. This bilateral relationship, central to India's foreign policy, spans key areas such as defense cooperation, technology transfer, and energy partnerships. The shift in US leadership brings both opportunities and challenges for India's strategic interests, especially in defense, trade, and regional diplomacy.

Why is the United States Significant for India?

- ❖ **Economic Partnership:** US retained top spot as India's trading partner (Jan-July 2024) with \$72 billion trade; Indian exports rose 9.3% to \$48.2 billion.
- ❖ **Strategic Defense:** Defense ties grew to \$20 billion since 2008; India signed foundational agreements (LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA, ISA); QUAD partnership strengthens Indo-Pacific security.
- ❖ **Technology & Innovation:** US-India Global Digital Partnership advances tech in Asia, Africa; Silicon Valley fosters Indian tech talent.
- ❖ **Energy Security:** US supplies India with 3.86 MT LNG (2021); \$1 billion in IBRD funds to expand clean energy supply chains.
- ❖ **Geopolitical Balance:** US aids India's strategic autonomy; QUAD commits \$50 billion for Indo-Pacific.

- ❖ **Healthcare:** India supplies 40% of US generics; Indo-U.S. Health Dialogue strengthens pandemic preparedness.
- ❖ **Space Cooperation:** NASA-ISRO NISAR mission set for 2024; Deep Space Network assisted Chandrayaan-3.
- ❖ **Education & Human Capital:** 200,000 Indian students contribute \$7.7 billion to US; remittances from US to India hit \$125 billion (2023).

What are the Main Challenges in India-US Relations?

- ❖ **Trade Tensions:** Disputes over tariffs, IP rights, digital tax; \$36.74 billion trade surplus (2023-24) concerns US; IP protection issues on Special 301 Report.
- ❖ **Strategic Autonomy:** India's Russia ties, S-400 purchase, all-alignment approach clash with US alliance expectations.
- ❖ **Data Governance:** India's data localization affects US tech operations.
- ❖ **Visa Issues:** H-1B limits, 1 million Indians await green cards.
- ❖ **China Factor:** India-China trade hits \$136.2 billion (2023).
- ❖ **Climate Policy:** \$1 trillion climate finance sought by India.
- ❖ **Agriculture:** WTO disputes over subsidies, GM crop barriers.

What Future Opportunities Can India and the US Explore to Strengthen Their Partnership?

- ❖ **Defense Technology Partnership 2.0:** Focus on next-gen tech, with joint AI in Warfare and hypersonics research centers; fast-track tech transfers and joint production facilities in India to support *Make in India* and reduce reliance on traditional suppliers.
- ❖ **Strategic Supply Chain Resilience:** Build alternative supply chains for critical minerals with the Mineral Security Network; joint semiconductor manufacturing in India to address chip shortages and reduce China dependence; industrial parks for US firms relocating from China to boost investment.

- ❖ **Energy Security Cooperation:** Establish long-term, stable-priced LNG agreements; collaborate on renewable projects in solar and green hydrogen; create joint energy storage research facilities and startup funds for clean energy innovation.
- ❖ **Digital Economy Framework:** Develop shared standards for data privacy and cross-border flows; joint digital security certifications; establish a bilateral fintech sandbox to foster financial service innovation.
- ❖ **Healthcare Partnership Enhancement:** Joint vaccine development and production to improve global health security; telemedicine links between countries for remote healthcare; collaborate on research for tropical and emerging diseases.
- ❖ **Climate Action Collaboration:** Explore a joint carbon trading mechanism; facilitate green tech transfer; develop climate-resilient infrastructure projects.
- ❖ **Educational and Research Integration:** Expand joint degree programs in AI, quantum computing, and biotech; establish research centers under the *iCET* initiative for emerging technologies.
- ❖ **Strategic Regional Cooperation:** Joint infrastructure projects for Indo-Pacific connectivity; trilateral partnerships with Japan, Australia, and France; develop a joint maritime security framework for free navigation.
- ❖ **Cultural and Soft Power Exchange:** Institutionalize cultural ties with joint media production platforms; preserve traditional knowledge; initiate sports development programs like the ICC T20 World Cup 2024 in the US to engage youth.
- ❖ The US-India relationship is a complex partnership with vast potential. Despite ongoing challenges, areas such as defense, technology, and trade present significant opportunities. By resolving trade disputes, building trust on strategic matters, and working together on global challenges,

India and the US can strengthen their partnership, yielding benefits for both nations and positively impacting the global order.

Recalling India-US relations in Trump 1.0

Key Points:

- ❖ India grew from being a strategic to an indispensable partner to the United States during Donald Trump's first term as President, between 2017 and 2021. India and the US became closer than ever before during this period. With Trump set to return to the White House, here is what Trump 1.0 looked like from New Delhi.

Cooperation on defence, terrorism & energy

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the White House in June 2017, six months after Trump assumed office. During this meeting, Trump promised Modi that he would visit India during his term — a promise he delivered on three years later, when he addressed thousands of people in Ahmedabad's newly-built Narendra Modi Stadium.
- ❖ The two met several times between 2017 and 2020. The fruits of this high-level bilateral engagement were seen in the Trump administration's robust support to India on terrorism. The US supported the designation of Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist by the UNSC following the Pulwama attack in 2019, as well as the grey-listing of Pakistan by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in 2018.
- ❖ India's defence procurement from the US climbed to \$ 18 billion annually in 2019, as India was elevated to the Tier I of the Strategic Trade Authorization (STA) license exception.
- ❖ The energy sector was another area in which the India-US relationship grew during Trump 1.0. The Trump presidency saw the launch of the bilateral Strategic Energy Partnership in April 2018, with India starting to import crude and LNG from the US.

- ❖ Despite the US becoming India's largest trading partner, and bilateral trade in goods and services growing by more than 10% per annum between 2016-18 to reach \$142 billion, Trump always wanted better tariffs from India, and a more predictable regime to conduct business in.
- ❖ But perhaps the single biggest controversy between India and the US under Trump came when the president offered to mediate between New Delhi and Islamabad on the Kashmir issue — a longstanding “no go” for Indians.
- ❖ Trump welcomes Prime Minister Modi to the White House for their first face -to -face meeting.
- ❖ Though Trump had raised sharp disagreements with India over trade, climate change, and H -1B visas, these issues are sidelined during the leaders' summit, and their joint statement emphasizes strengthening their defense partnership, cooperating on counterterrorism efforts, and June 26, 2017 boosting economic ties.
- ❖ During a “**two -plus -two**” dialogue in New Delhi, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis sign an agreement with Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj and Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.
- ❖ The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) gives India access to advanced communication technology used in U.S. defense equipment and allows real -time information sharing between the two countries' militaries. The agreement had been under negotiation for nearly a decade.

Trump Ends India's Special Trade Status

- ❖ The Trump administration terminates India's preferential trade status, part of a program dating back to the 1970s that allows products from developing countries to enter the U.S. market duty free.

- ❖ Trump says India has not provided “equitable and reasonable access” to its own market. Weeks later, India slaps tariffs on twenty -eight U.S. products in response to U.S. duties on steel and aluminum imposed in 2018. New Delhi had drafted the retaliatory tariffs earlier but held off on implementing them amid trade talks.
- ❖ At an Ahmedabad rally with an audience of more than one hundred thousand people, President Trump praises the U.S.-India relationship and Prime Minister Modi's leadership.
- ❖ The two leaders announce plans to work together on counternarcotics and mental health. India agrees to purchase \$3 billion in U.S. military equipment, and U.S.-based oil company ExxonMobil announces a deal with state-owned Indian Oil Corporation.

Officials Sign Deal to Boost Intelligence Sharing

- ❖ The top U.S. and Indian defense and foreign affairs officials sign an intelligence-sharing agreement during the third round of their two-plus-two dialogue.
- ❖ The Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) is the last of four foundational military agreements signed by both countries over the past two decades. It allows for the sharing of sensitive geospatial data to boost the accuracy of Indian drones and cruise missiles.
- ❖ During a press conference, U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper emphasizes the countries' commitment to keeping the Indo-Pacific free and open, “particularly in light of increasing aggression and destabilizing activities by China.”

Andhra Pradesh CM Launches Deepam 2.0 Scheme for Women

Key Points:

- ❖ On November 1, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu visited Edupuram in Srikakulam district to launch the Deepam 2.0 scheme, aimed at empowering women by providing them with free gas cylinders.

- ❖ On November 1, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu visited Edupuram in Srikakulam district to launch the Deepam 2.0 scheme, aimed at empowering women by providing them with free gas cylinders. During his visit, Naidu personally handed over a gas cylinder to a beneficiary, Santhamma, and even lit her stove, preparing tea as a gesture of support for the initiative.

Deepam 2.0 Scheme Objectives

- ❖ The scheme aims to empower women by providing free access to clean cooking energy.
- ❖ Women will receive three free gas cylinders per year under the scheme.
- ❖ The initiative is part of Naidu's broader efforts to improve living conditions in Andhra Pradesh.

Key Features of the Scheme

- ❖ Free cooking gas cylinders are distributed to eligible women, reducing the financial burden of traditional cooking methods.
- ❖ The initiative promotes the use of cleaner cooking fuel (LPG), enhancing household health and safety.
- ❖ Subsidies are provided for acquiring and managing LPG connections and equipment.

MP Cabinet Approves 35% Job Reservation for Women in State Services

Key Points:

- ❖ Madhya Pradesh cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, approved a 35 percent reservation for women in all state government recruitments.
- ❖ The decision was made during a cabinet meeting held at the Mantralaya in Bhopal. Madhya Pradesh cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, approved a 35 percent reservation for women in all state government recruitments. The decision was made during a cabinet meeting held at the Mantralaya in Bhopal.



Women's Reservation in Government Services

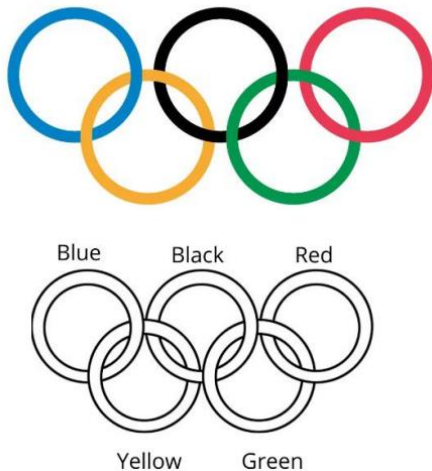
- ❖ Increase in Reservation: The cabinet approved raising women's reservation in state government recruitment from 33% to 35%.
- ❖ Statement by Deputy CM Rajendra Shukla: Described this as a "major step toward women empowerment."

India Submits Formal Bid for 2036 Olympics

Key Points:

- ❖ India has formally submitted its bid to host the 2036 Summer Olympics, with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) expressing interest through a Letter of Intent to the IOC.
- ❖ This bid, supported by PM Modi, aims to transform India's sports infrastructure and empower youth, marking a historic milestone. India has officially submitted a Letter of Intent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games, marking a significant step in realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of hosting the prestigious event.
- ❖ The bid was submitted by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on October 1, 2023, as part of the ongoing effort to elevate India's global sporting profile. This would be the first time India hosts the Olympics, fulfilling a dream long cherished by its citizens.

- ❖ The first-ever Olympics were held in Athens, Greece in 1896. Since then, the Olympic Games are held every four years.
- ❖ The five Olympic rings symbolise the 'five parts of the world' in which the Olympic movement prevails.
- ❖ The Olympic motto is 'Citius-Altius-Fortius'. The three Latin words translate to 'Faster-Higher-Stronger' in English.



India's Commitment to 2036 Olympics

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been vocal about India's aspirations, reiterating the country's determination to bring the games to Indian soil. At the 141st IOC session in Mumbai, Modi emphasized, "We will leave no stone unturned in organizing the Olympics in India in 2036." With the country's growing sports infrastructure and participation in global sporting events, this bid is seen as a transformative opportunity for India's sports sector.

Northern Command of Army inducts Indigenous 550 Asmi machine pistols

Key Points:

- ❖ The Northern Command of the Indian Army has successfully inducted 550 indigenously designed, developed, and manufactured Asmi machine pistols.
- ❖ The Asmi machine pistols are manufactured by Hyderabad-based Lokesh Machine Limited. Earlier, the company

successfully delivered 550 indigenously designed, developed, and manufactured Asmi submachine guns to the Northern Command of the Indian Army.

- ❖ The induction of the Asmi submachine guns and machine pistols marks an important landmark in the Indian Army's commitment to Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan and support for the Indigenous defence industry.



Developer of the Asmi Machine Pistol

- ❖ The Asmi is short for Asmita, which means pride in Hindi. Colonel Prasad Bansod of the Indian Army designed the Asmi pistol in partnership with the central government's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- ❖ The technology was transferred to Lokesh Machine Limited for manufacturing purposes. The weapon was manufactured by Lokesh Machine Limited at its Toorpan factory in the Medak district of Telangana.

Features of the Asmi Machine Pistol

- ❖ The Asmi pistol has been designed according to the specifications of the Indian Army for close-quarter combats and for special operations conducted against the terrorists and insurgents.
- ❖ The weapon is called a machine pistol because it can be used both as a pistol or as a submachine gun and can be operated single-handedly. This dual feature of the weapon is due to its unique semi-bullpup design. Due to its unique bullpup design, the Asmi's machine pistol's overall length can be significantly decreased without reducing the barrel length.

MEA Confirms India as Headquarters for Biofuel Alliance

- ❖ In a significant development for the renewable energy sector, India has officially signed the Host Country Agreement (HCA) with the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA), paving the way for the establishment of the Alliance's Secretariat in India.
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- ❖ The agreement was signed by Dammu Ravi, Secretary (Economic Relations) from the Ministry of External Affairs, and Pankaj Jain, Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, who is also the Interim Director General of the GBA.

Launch of the Global Biofuels Alliance

- ❖ The GBA was launched on September 9, 2023, during India's G20 Presidency, initiated by the Indian Prime Minister and leaders from eight other countries.
- ❖ Founding members include Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Italy, Mauritius, Singapore, the UAE, and the USA.

Goals and Objectives

- ❖ The GBA aims to promote global biofuel usage by addressing challenges like feedstock availability and improving the biomass supply chain.
- ❖ It focuses on attracting investments in biofuel production, particularly for clean cooking solutions, while establishing common technical standards for biofuels.

Membership Growth

- ❖ Since its inception, the GBA has rapidly expanded, now comprising 27 countries and 12 international organizations.

- ❖ This growth underscores the increasing global interest in sustainable biofuel initiatives.

Opportunities for Indian Experts

- ❖ The establishment of the GBA Secretariat in India is expected to create new job opportunities for Indian biofuel experts.
- ❖ It also provides a platform for India's private sector to showcase its innovations and expertise in the biofuels industry.

Bihar's Sultanganj Station Gets New Name Ajgaibinath Dham

Key Points:

- ❖ Sultanganj railway station in Bihar's Bhagalpur district is set to be renamed in honor of the revered Hindu shrine, Ajgaibinath Dham. The announcement was made by Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader, Samrat Choudhary.
- ❖ Sultanganj railway station in Bihar's Bhagalpur district is set to be renamed in honor of the revered Hindu shrine, Ajgaibinath Dham. The announcement was made by Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader, Samrat Choudhary. He revealed that the proposal to rename the station has been approved by the municipal council of Bhagalpur.

Objective of Renaming

- ❖ The renaming aims to highlight the importance of the Ajgaibinath Dham shrine and promote tourism in the region.
- ❖ The Deputy Chief Minister emphasized that the change would help connect the region to its cultural roots.
- ❖ The state government is focused on enhancing tourism in Bihar through such initiatives.

Ajgaibinath Temple

- ❖ The Ajgaibinath temple is an ancient Hindu shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva, located in Sultanganj, Bihar.
- ❖ The temple is renowned for its carvings, stone inscriptions, and proximity to the Ganga River, attracting a significant number of Shiva devotees.

Zimbabwe Launches ZIMSAT-2 to Advance Space Programme

Key Points:

- ❖ Zimbabwe has launched its second satellite, ZIMSAT-2, from Russia to strengthen its space programme. Equipped with a high-resolution camera, the satellite will aid agriculture, resource mapping, and disaster management.
- ❖ Zimbabwe has launched its second satellite, ZIMSAT-2, from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia, a major milestone in the country's growing space programme. This satellite, equipped with a high-resolution multispectral camera, will aid in agriculture, resource exploration, environmental monitoring, and disaster management.
- ❖ It follows the successful launch of Zimbabwe's first satellite, ZIMSAT-1, in November 2022, marking continued progress in space technology and innovation.

Satellite's Mission and Features

- ❖ ZIMSAT-2, a low earth observation satellite, was launched aboard the Soyuz-2.1 spacecraft in a joint effort between Zimbabwe's National Geo-Spatial and Space Agency (ZINGSA) and Southwest State University in Russia. The satellite is designed to deliver high-resolution data that will benefit sectors such as agriculture by monitoring crop health, predicting yields, and addressing nutrient deficiencies. Additionally, it will enhance resource mapping, environmental surveillance, and disaster management efforts across the nation.
- ❖ 4th LG Cup Horse Polo-2024 Tournament Inaugurated in Ladakh
- ❖ Brigadier (Dr) BD Mishra (Retd), the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, inaugurated the much-awaited 4th LG Cup

Horse Polo-2024 Tournament at the newly constructed Polo Stadium at Goshan, Drass. Brigadier (Dr) BD Mishra (Retd), the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, inaugurated the much-awaited 4th LG Cup Horse Polo-2024 Tournament at the newly constructed Polo Stadium at Goshan, Drass.

- ❖ This event, organized by the Department of Youth Services and Sports, UT Ladakh, marked a significant milestone for the region as it showcased not only the traditional sport of horse polo but also the growing emphasis on youth development and sports infrastructure in Ladakh.

Switzerland's Burqa Ban Law to Take Effect in 2025

Key Points:

- ❖ Switzerland is set to enforce its controversial "burqa ban" starting January 1, 2025, following approval in a closely contested 2021 referendum. Switzerland is set to enforce its controversial "burqa ban" starting January 1, 2025, following approval in a closely contested 2021 referendum.
- ❖ The law, which prohibits facial coverings in public spaces, has sparked significant debate and criticism, particularly from Muslim associations.

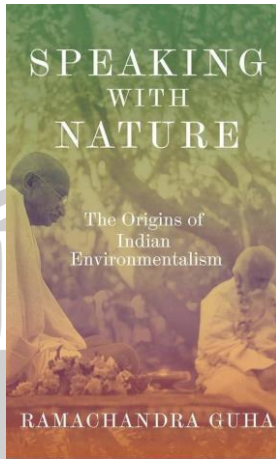


Ramachandra Guha Latest Book, Speaking with Nature: The Origins of Indian Environmentalism

Key Points:

- ❖ Renowned historian and public intellectual Ramachandra Guha is widely celebrated for his profound insights into Indian history and society, especially as the biographer of Mahatma Gandhi.

- ❖ However, his contributions extend well beyond biography and history; he is a pioneering figure in Indian environmentalism. His latest book, *Speaking with Nature: The Origins of Indian Environmentalism*, is a testament to his commitment to exploring India's unique ecological heritage.



- ❖ In this work, Guha challenges traditional Western perspectives on environmentalism and highlights India's deep-rooted environmental consciousness, which has evolved in response to socio-economic and cultural necessities.