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CANADA - INDIA SPECIAL EDITION

**Canada's Economy
Faces Setback as
Visa and LMIA
Restrictions Tighten
Under Conservative
Pressure**

P9



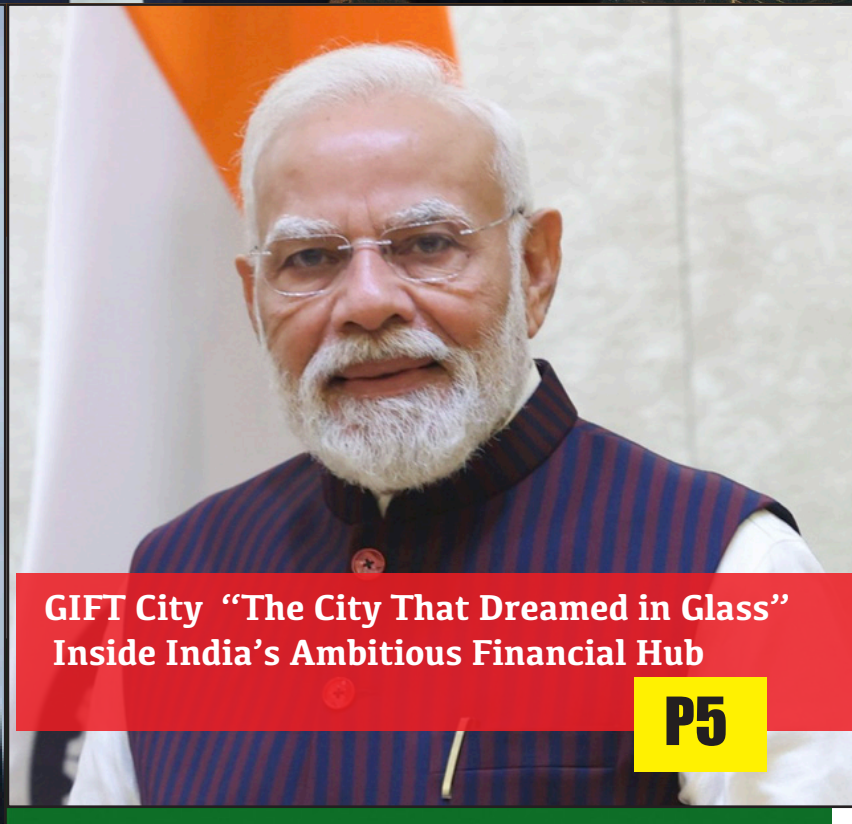
**India Denies Canada's Claim of Full
Embassy Staffing Amid Ongoing
Diplomatic Tensions**

P4



**GIFT City "The City That Dreamed in Glass"
Inside India's Ambitious Financial Hub**

P5



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Editor's Note



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Dear Readers,

In this edition, we present thought provoking stories that traverse continents, cultures, and key issues shaping our world today. Canada's immigration law amendments have become a major topic of discussion among newcomers, international students, and employers, and our in-depth coverage explains how these changes will reshape the nation's immigration landscape and impact communities across the country. From India, we highlight Gujarat's GIFT City, a visionary project transforming into a global financial hub poised to rival Dubai with its innovation, business potential, and international appeal. Our lifestyle and food features take you on a delightful journey from Belgium's authentic flavors thriving in Surrey to standout Canadian restaurants redefining culinary creativity.

In our legal advice column, seasoned lawyers share essential guidance on wills and estate planning, ensuring readers understand how to protect their assets and secure their families' futures. We also address growing concerns about visa delays at the High Commission of India in Canada, an issue affecting diplomatic staff and broader bilateral cooperation. And for travel enthusiasts, discover the serenity of a picturesque island in Japan, where nature, culture, and peace blend in perfect harmony.

At National Times, our mission remains to inform, inspire, and empower readers with stories that connect local voices to the global narrative.

*Warm Regards,
Rajeev Sharma*

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US Sends Back 54 Haryana Youths: Police Trace 'Donkey Route' Network

Arvind Arvind | *National Times*

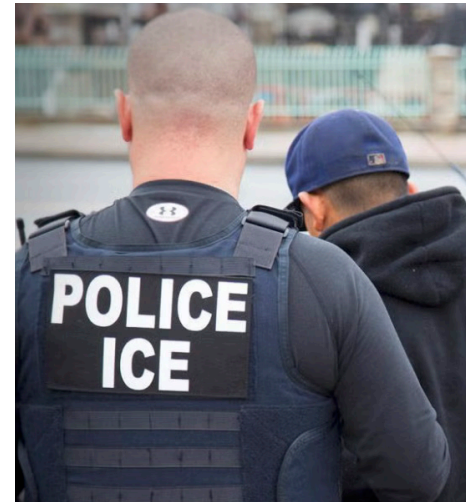
In a grim reminder of the perils of illegal migration, 54 young men from Haryana were deported from the United States after allegedly entering through the notorious "Donkey Route," a dangerous trail used by human traffickers.

The group arrived at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on Flight OAE-4767 earlier this week. Officials said the deportees came from several Haryana districts: 16 from Karnal, 15 from Kaithal, 5 from Ambala, 4 each from Yamunanagar and Kurukshetra, 3 from Jind, 2 from Sonapat, and one each from Panchkula, Panipat, Rohtak, and Fatehabad.

Most were aged between 25 and 40, seeking better opportunities abroad. Karnal Police questioned and then released them to their families, while no action has yet been taken against the agents involved. DSP Sandeep Kumar confirmed that they used the "Donkey Route," which passes through multiple Latin American countries, often beginning in Ecuador or Mexico. He warned people against falling into such traps, stressing that illegal migration often leads to exploitation or deportation.

Since Donald Trump's return to the White House, U.S. authorities have intensified crackdowns, deporting hundreds of undocumented Indians this year. Meanwhile, Haryana's Special Task Force (STF) arrested Lakhwinder Singh alias Lakha, a close aide of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi. Operating

from the U.S. since 2022 under Bishnoi's brother Anmol, Singh was deported and arrested by STF Ambala after global coordination. Wanted in over a dozen extortion and firing cases across Haryana and Punjab, Singh's arrest marks a major success in curbing cross-border crime exploiting unemployed youth.



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India Denies Canada's Claim of Full Embassy Staffing Amid Ongoing Diplomatic Tensions

Dr. Rajeev Sharma / *National Times*

Diplomatic strains between India and Canada have resurfaced after India's High Commissioner to Canada, Dinesh Kumar Patnaik, rejected Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand's assertion that Ottawa can now fully staff its embassy in New Delhi. Anand had declared during her recent India visit that the two countries had agreed to "restore the full complement of diplomats." Patnaik countered that India "never agreed" to such a deal, pointing specifically to persistent visa and accreditation delays affecting Indian-posted diplomats in Canada. He noted that some applications took months, and others were withdrawn after six months without progress.

The downturn in relations dates to 2023 when then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused India of involvement in the killing of Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia allegations New Delhi dismissed as "absurd and politically motivated." India dropped the demand for "diplomatic parity," prompting Canada to withdraw 41 diplomats and their families. In mid-2025 both countries initiated a cautious reset and issued a joint statement "Renewing Momentum Towards a Stronger Partnership." However, full staffing and trust remain elusive.

Amid this strained backdrop, India and Canada have simultaneously laid out a New Roadmap for bilateral collaboration across trade, energy, technology and education. According to their October 2025 joint declaration, bilateral trade reached US \$23.66 billion (\approx CAD 31 billion) in 2024, and early initiatives will include relaunching the Canada-India CEO Forum in early 2026, minister-level talks on trade and investment, and the Canada-India Ministerial Energy Dialogue focusing on clean technologies, green hydrogen, and critical minerals. They will also relaunch the Joint Science & Technology Cooperation Committee, expand cooperation in AI and digital infrastructure, and deepen agri-food supply-chain collaboration and education exchange.

Still, despite these frameworks, the operational



roadblocks remain: visa delays for Indian officials in Canada, limited staffing of the Canadian mission in India, and unresolved security and trust concerns around the 2023 accusations. Analysts describe the relationship today as "functional but fragile."



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GIFT City “The City That Dreamed in Glass” Inside India’s Ambitious Financial Hub

Dr. Rajeev Sharma | National Times

The Vision & Origins :

The Vision & Origins : Back in 2007, planners in the state of Gujarat unveiled an audacious idea: build India’s first smart financial city not just a business park, but a full-fledged urban ecosystem where finance, tech and modern living converge. The site was chosen for its strategic location between Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, and the initiative has been backed by both state and central government policy frameworks.

Infrastructure that Speaks of Ambition:

The city is structured as an integrated development over an area of approximately 886 acres (with future expansion planned). The master plan envisages 62 million sq ft of built-up area, with around 67% commercial space, 22% residential and 11% social/amenity space. Cutting-edge infrastructure examples: A Tier-IV certified green data centre, district cooling systems, automatic waste collection, underground utility tunnels all suggest a “city of the future” blueprint.

Connectivity and data readiness: For example, the data centre facility Yotta Data Services’ “G1” in GIFT City boasts 350+ racks, 2 MW IT capacity, cloud & AI compute infrastructure, all located inside the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) zone.



The Financial Engine: IFSC:

Under this designation, financial institutions located in the IFSC zone of GIFT can undertake transactions in foreign currency, serve clients outside India, and operate under a liberalised regulatory regime.

This regulatory “special” zone is intended to attract global banks, fund-managers, insurance companies and fintech players who otherwise might operate offshore.

Real-World Progress & Major Milestones :

The journey from vision to reality is always messy, but several key milestones mark GIFT City’s evolution. Expansion: In 2023–24 it was announced that GIFT City’s area would expand more than three-fold, from about 1,065 acres to approximately 3,365 acres to accommodate growth and prevent haphazard development. Data-centre investment: Yotta’s G1 data centre (investment ~Rs 500 crore) went

live inside GIFT City, underscoring momentum in the digital/tech layer of the ecosystem.

The Human and Urban Side: Living, Working & Being

A city isn’t just its offices. GIFT City envisions a “walk to work” lifestyle: residents, employees, families and amenities all within reach. The design incorporates residential towers, schools, clubs, hotels and recreational spaces.

Why It Matters — For India, and For the World: GIFT City can be seen through several lenses:

A national infrastructure play: By creating world-class facilities, India is signalling that it can host global finance and tech talent on its home turf.

A gateway for international business: As global firms seek lower-cost, high-capability hubs tied into Asia-Pacific time zones, GIFT presents a compelling alternative. trating only in metro-cities.

Gwalia Calgary: Redefining Culinary Excellence and Celebration Experiences

Himani Sharma | National Times

Gwalia Calgary, passionately led by owners Parul Desai and Dhaval Desai, stands as one of Calgary's most distinguished and trusted catering services, renowned for its personalized, client-centered, and experience-driven culinary artistry. Dedicated to excellence, Gwalia specializes in curating bespoke menus and premium event services that transform every occasion into a flavorful celebration.

From lavish weddings and high-profile corporate events to intimate birthday parties, festive gatherings, and cultural celebrations, Gwalia has built a reputation for delivering



exceptional food, impeccable service, and uncompromising quality. Each menu is a carefully balanced blend of authentic Indian delicacies, continental classics, and creative fusion innovations, all prepared with fresh, high-quality ingredients and presented with refined elegance.

Festive Season & Corporate Gifting Excellence

This holiday season, Gwalia introduces exclusive catering packages and handcrafted gourmet gift hampers for Diwali, Christmas, New Year, and seasonal celebrations. These thoughtfully curated hampers, filled with premium sweets, artisanal snacks, exotic savories, and signature delicacies, make perfect gifts for clients, employees, and business partners. Parul Desai emphasizes, "Our goal is to design food experiences that are meaningful, memorable, and uniquely tailored to every client's preferences." Dhaval Desai adds, "From festive banquets to corporate gifting, our focus remains on quality, creativity, presentation, and heartfelt service."



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Okinawa: The Japanese Island of Longevity , Where Over 1,300 People Live Beyond 100

Arvind Arvind / National Times

Far from the rush of modern city life, in the southernmost corner of Japan, lies Okinawa a stunning island that has become a symbol of health, happiness, and longevity. Known as one of the world's celebrated "Blue Zones," Okinawa is home to more than 1,300 centenarians people aged 100 years or older who live vibrant, active, and purposeful lives.

The Secret Is in Their Diet

The traditional Okinawan diet is one of the healthiest in the world. It is mostly plant-based, with meals built around fresh vegetables, tofu, seaweed, and sweet potatoes. Fish is eaten occasionally, while red meat and sugar are rare. Meals are served in small portions, following the age-old principle of "Hara Hachi Bu," which means "eat until you are 80% full."

Purpose and Positivity

Beyond food, Okinawans live with a deep sense of purpose, known as "Ikigai." It's the belief that everyone has a reason to get up in the morning — whether it's family, community service, or a lifelong passion. This sense of meaning brings peace, reduces stress, and adds years to their lives. Equally important is the concept of "Moai," a strong network of friends who support each other emotionally, socially, and sometimes financially. These lifelong relationships ensure that no one feels alone — a key factor in emotional and physical



well-being.

Naturally Active Lives

Okinawans don't rely on gyms or exercise plans. Their activity comes naturally — gardening, walking, dancing, and taking care of daily chores.

A Calm Mind and a Thankful Heart

Mental peace is another secret behind their longevity. Many Okinawans practice mindfulness, meditation, and gratitude, focusing on life's blessings rather than its stresses. Their optimism and strong spiritual connection create an environment of joy and serenity that contributes to lasting health.

An advertisement for Isaac Bittu, a Senior Product Advisor. The image features a man in a dark suit and a red tie, smiling. In the background, there is a blurred image of a car. The text on the advertisement includes "COUNTRY HILLS" and "TOYOTA" at the top. Below that, the name "ISAAC BITTU" is prominently displayed, followed by "SENIOR PRODUCT ADVISOR". Further down, it lists the languages "ENGLISH, HINDI, URDU, GUJRATI & PUNJABI". At the bottom, it says "ALWAYS AT YOUR SERVICE" and provides a large red phone number "403-923-8000". At the very bottom, there is a line of text in Gurmukhi script: "ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਹਾਜ਼ਰ".

Gail Bains's Singles Mixer: Cultivating Meaningful Connections for Lasting Relationships

Arvind Arvind | National Times

In an era dominated by dating apps that reduce romance to a series of impersonal swipes, Gail Bains is pioneering a refreshing approach to singles events. As an event curator and relationship enthusiast, she has designed the Singles Mixer to facilitate genuine connections among participants, free from the pressures and pretenses of online dating.

Beyond the Superficiality of Swipe Culture:

The Singles Mixer, conceived by Gail Bains, defies the conventions of traditional dating events. This innovative gathering combines engaging activities with meaningful conversations in an elegant, welcoming environment. Held at upscale venues across the Lower Mainland, these events bring together singles from diverse backgrounds for an evening of icebreaker games, guided discussions, and relaxed socializing, all carefully designed to foster effortless connections. Rather than relying on algorithms, participants discover compatibility through authentic, face-to-face interactions, sharing laughter, stories, and genuine smiles. As Gail Bains astutely observes, "People are tired of curated profiles and superficial connections. They yearn for real, human chemistry the kind that sparks when two individuals meet in person and experience an instant connection."

Fostering Opportunities for Genuine Connections:

Each event is meticulously curated, with pre-screened participants, to ensure a comfortable and respectful atmosphere. The format encourages singles to mingle in small groups, engage in structured activities, and participate in speed-meeting sessions, all while maintaining an ambiance of ease and openness.

The Key to Building Relationships:

The mixer's success can be attributed to its balanced approach, combining social enjoyment with emotional intelligence. Participants are guided to share their core values, aspirations, humor, and life goals, laying the groundwork for connections rooted in compatibility rather than convenience. The event also emphasizes confidence



and effective communication, empowering attendees to rediscover their authentic selves, a crucial step in forming a strong, meaningful relationship. As one participant eloquently expressed, "It wasn't just about meeting someone; it was about reconnecting with who I am and what I truly desire."

An advertisement for Team Wireless Ltd. featuring a man in a suit, Vivek Mahajan, standing against a blue background with a pattern of white dots. The text on the right side of the ad lists five locations to serve: Bell North Hill, Calgary; Bell Carrington, Calgary; Bell Canmore; Bell Olds; and Bell Courtenay. It also mentions that the best plans and flagship smartphones are available and provides a phone number, 5874345000. The man's name, Vivek Mahajan, and his title, Director Team Wireless Ltd., are displayed at the bottom left of the ad.

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Canada's Economy Faces Setback as Visa and LMIA Restrictions Tighten Under Conservative Pressure

Dr. Rajeev Sharma | National Times

Political Tug-of-War: Who Is Really Responsible?

Many Canadians are asking: Who is truly responsible for the loss of national revenue and business confidence the Liberals or Conservatives?

Canada's once-thriving economy fueled by international students, immigrants, and a robust housing market is now under stress. Recent restrictions on student visas and Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs), introduced under political pressure from the Conservative opposition, have started to ripple across the nation's financial and labour systems, hitting education, real estate, jobs, and business sectors.

Education Sector Loses Billions

The international education industry, valued at more than \$23 billion annually, is facing historic declines. The cap on new study permits and tougher financial proof requirements have reduced the number of international students entering Canada by nearly 25% compared to last year. Colleges and universities in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta have reported steep financial shortfalls with institutions like Loyalist and Algonquin Colleges expecting losses exceeding \$30 million in 2025. The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) warns that this drop doesn't just hurt campuses, it also affects local housing, retail, and transportation industries.



Real Estate Market Cools as Demand Drops

Canada's real estate market, long supported by new immigrants and students, is cooling.

Major cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, and Brampton are reporting lower rental demand and higher vacancies in student-heavy areas.

According to the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA), new housing projects and condo launches have dropped by 18% this year. Developers are hesitant to invest amid shrinking immigration numbers and market uncertainty, warning that if restrictions continue into 2026, Canada could face a housing market correction.

Job Market and Businesses Feeling the Heat

The tightening of LMIA approvals, which employers use to hire foreign workers, has worsened labour shortages in construction, hospitality, agriculture, trucking, and healthcare. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) reports that almost 40% of small businesses cannot find enough workers, forcing some to cut hours, scale back operations, or close entirely.

Comment from Business Leaders:

"These policy changes are hitting us hard. International students and temporary workers were vital not only to schools but also to our restaurants, stores, and logistics companies. Now, labour gaps are rising, revenue is declining, and

many small businesses are facing real survival challenges,” said Anita Sharma, CEO of a Toronto-based tech and service firm.

Large corporations are also warning that ongoing uncertainty in immigration

In reality, both sides share responsibility.

The Conservative Party, led by Pierre Poilievre, pushed aggressively for immigration and visa caps, arguing that too many newcomers were driving up housing costs and inflation.

1. The current Prime Minister, Mark Carney, executed these restrictions rather than implementing alternative economic solutions

2. Economists say both parties prioritized political optics over economic strategy, leaving businesses, workers, and students to bear the cost.

3. Conservatives demanded the cuts.

4. Carney’s government executed them.

Canada’s Revenue and Global Standing at Risk

Reduced international student enrollment and fewer temporary workers mean billions in lost revenue for federal and provincial governments. The education sector alone contributes more than \$6 billion annually in taxes and fees, while foreign workers sustain industries critical to GDP growth. Meanwhile, countries like Australia, the UK, and Germany are benefiting

from attracting talent that would have chosen Canada, strengthening their own economies at Canada’s expense.

Weak Dollar and Economic Slowdown

The Canadian dollar, now trading near 1.40 per USD, reflects weakening investor confidence.

With immigration reduced, fewer homes being built or rented, and businesses struggling to hire, Canada risks a long-term economic slowdown.

“Canada is facing a perfect storm reduced student numbers, a weakened labour pool, and cautious business investments. If these policies continue, economic recovery will be slow and job growth limited,” said Dr. Ramesh Bhatia, senior economist at Toronto Business Institute.

Conclusion: A Crossroads for Canada’s Future

Canada stands at a critical crossroads. Immigration has long been a key driver of growth supporting businesses, filling labour gaps, and fueling innovation. Canada’s immigration and visa restrictions are directly affecting business growth, employment, and revenue, showing that political decisions have real economic consequences beyond the classroom or government offices.

The recent policy decisions, shaped by Conservative pressure and executed by Prime Minister Mark Carney, threaten to undo decades of progress. While political debates continue, the real impact is on businesses, students, and workers sectors that keep Canada’s economy vibrant and competitive.

If Canada wants to maintain its global economic standing, it must balance immigration control with the needs of businesses, labour, and education, not just political strategy.



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Planning for Peace of Mind: Why Every Canadian Should Have a Will

Dr. Rajeev Sharma | National Times

In life, we plan for milestones—our education, careers, homes, and retirements. Yet, one of the most important plans is often overlooked: deciding what happens after we're gone. Having a Will and a sound estate plan is not just a legal formality; it's an act of care and foresight that protects loved ones and ensures your wishes are respected.

Across Canada, thousands of families every year face unnecessary confusion and conflict simply because a loved one passed away without a Will. The good news is that with thoughtful estate planning, these challenges can be prevented.

The Power of a Will

A Will is a legal document that outlines how your assets—your home, savings, investments, and personal belongings—will be distributed after your death. It

ensures your voice is heard even when you're no longer here to speak. Without a Will, your estate is distributed according to provincial laws, such as Alberta's Wills and Succession Act, which may not reflect your true wishes. This can lead to family disputes, delays, and unintended outcomes.

A Will gives you control.

You can:

1. Appoint guardians for your children.

Specify who inherits what—from financial assets to sentimental items.

2. Make charitable donations that reflect your values.

3. Designate a caretaker for pets and even provide funds for their care.

4. Decide how your digital assets (social media, email, or reward points) are handled.

5. Protect your beneficiaries from losing their inheritance to creditors.

Ultimately, a Will provides clarity, reduces emotional and financial stress, and gives your loved ones peace of mind during an already difficult time.

Planning Beyond the Will

While a Will addresses what happens after you're gone, two other documents ensure your wishes are respected while you're still alive but unable to make decisions for yourself.

A Personal Directive, sometimes called a Living Will, allows you to appoint someone you trust to make medical and personal care decisions on your behalf. This includes choices about medical treatment, housing, and end-of-life care. It ensures that your health and dignity remain protected according to your personal values. An Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA), on the other hand, authorizes someone to manage your financial and legal affairs if you become incapacitated. This document ensures that bills are paid, investments managed, and property maintained without disruption.

Together, these three documents—a Will, a Personal Directive, and an Enduring Power of Attorney—form the cornerstone of a responsible and comprehensive estate plan.

Avoiding the Cost of Intestacy

Dying without a Will (known legally as dying intestate) means your estate will be distributed according to provincial laws, not your personal wishes. The process can be time-consuming, expensive, and emotionally draining for those you leave behind. In some cases, family members may even have

to go to court to settle disputes or determine guardianship for children. Proper estate planning prevents this by ensuring your intentions are clear and legally enforceable.

Estate Planning for Modern Families

Modern family structures blended families, second marriages, and common-law relationships make estate planning even more important. Without specific instructions, children from previous relationships or unmarried partners may not be protected under the law.

A lawyer can help craft a plan that reflects your unique family situation, ensuring that everyone you care about is treated fairly and according to your wishes.

Taking Control of Your Legacy

Estate planning is not just about wealth it's about values, love, and responsibility. Whether you are a young parent, a professional, or a retiree, taking time to prepare these essential documents can spare your family unnecessary hardship and preserve your legacy. At Virtual Law Group, we work with individuals and families across Alberta to create personalized estate plans, including Wills, Personal Directives, and Enduring Powers of Attorney. Our goal is simple: to help you plan wisely today for peace of mind tomorrow. Harvinder is a lawyer with Virtual Law Group, specializing in Wills, Estate Planning, and Family Law. With years of experience helping clients navigate life's most important legal decisions, Harvinder is passionate about empowering Canadians to protect what matters most.



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Caring Beyond Walls: The Inspiring Journey of Dr. Hasmukh Patel, Executive Chairman of AgeCare

Dr. Rajeev Sharma | National Times

In an exclusive conversation with National Times, Dr.

Hasmukh Patel, Executive Chairman and Co-founder of AgeCare, reflected on a remarkable journey that began with a stethoscope in Medicine Hat and grew into one of Canada's most respected names in senior care. His story is one of compassion, innovation, and a lifelong commitment to building communities that care.

From Physician to Visionary

Dr. Patel started his professional journey as a family physician in Medicine Hat, Alberta, driven by a deep passion to serve people with empathy and dedication. During his early years in practice, he observed that the existing system of elder care too often separated seniors from their families and the communities they loved. He found the experience of aging to be overly institutional, lacking the warmth and social connection that every human being deserves.

That realization became the turning point of his career. In 1998, alongside a like-minded colleague,

Dr. Patel co-founded AgeCare, a senior-living organization with a clear and compassionate vision — to create vibrant communities where seniors can age with dignity, independence, and a sense of belonging.

“We wanted to reimagine how seniors live, not just how they are cared for,” Dr. Patel shared. “Our goal was to build communities where people continue to feel valued, respected, and part of something meaningful.”

The Growth of AgeCare

From its humble beginnings in Medicine Hat, AgeCare has grown into a leading name in senior living across Canada. The company now operates numerous facilities offering a full continuum of care including independent living, assisted living, long-term care, and specialized dementia care.

Under Dr. Patel's visionary leadership, AgeCare has become known for integrating compassionate care with cutting-edge innovation. His commitment to excellence has also led to the creation of Hestia Construction, a subsidiary that designs and builds purpose-driven care communities aligned with AgeCare's philosophy of “home-like living.”

Dr. Patel's educational journey complements his professional success. With an Executive MBA from the University of Oxford, he combines medical insight with strategic business acumen — a rare blend that has allowed AgeCare to balance empathy with efficiency and purpose with performance.



Innovation Rooted in Compassion

One of Dr. Patel's defining qualities is his ability to pair compassion with innovation. AgeCare has embraced technology not as a replacement for human touch but as a tool to enhance it. In 2025, AgeCare announced a partnership with Platform Calgary to develop “AgeTech” innovations — new technologies designed to enrich the quality of life for seniors through safety, connectivity, and wellness.

“Technology should amplify compassion, not replace it,” Dr. Patel emphasized. “At AgeCare, we look for ways to make people's lives better — that's the real innovation.”

Building a Culture of Dignity and Belonging

Dr. Patel's approach goes beyond buildings and business models. At its core, AgeCare is about people — residents, families, and staff who form the heart of every community. The organization's guiding principles of respect, dignity, and compassion shape every decision, from the design of common spaces to the way care teams engage with residents.

Today, AgeCare serves thousands of seniors across multiple provinces, employing a dedicated and skilled workforce committed to upholding the values on which the organization was founded.

A Legacy of Leadership

Over the years, Dr. Patel has received widespread recognition for his contributions to healthcare and community service. Yet, he remains humble and focused on the mission that started it all improving lives through compassion and care.

“True success,” he reflects, “isn’t measured by numbers or buildings — it’s measured by the smiles, the comfort, and the peace of mind we bring to our residents and their families.”

Looking Ahead

As Canada’s population continues to age, the need for sustainable, compassionate senior living models becomes even more critical. Dr. Hasmukh Patel’s leadership offers a guiding light for the future showing that with the right vision, empathy, and innovation, elder care can be both humane and forward-looking.

AgeCare’s story is, at its heart, a story of hope a belief that aging is not an end, but a new chapter in life that deserves the same respect, care, and joy as every other.

About AgeCare

Founded in 1998, AgeCare operates senior living communities across Canada, providing a full range of services from independent living to long-term care. Guided by its founding values of respect, dignity, and compassion, AgeCare continues to set benchmarks in the Canadian senior-care industry.



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PM Modi-led Union Cabinet Approves 8th Pay Commission: What It Means for Salaries, Pensions, and India's Fiscal Balance

Rajeev Sharma | National Times

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the 8th Central Pay Commission (CPC) — a decision that could reshape the financial landscape for millions of Central government employees and pensioners. The announcement, made after the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, sets in motion the formal review of pay structures, allowances, and service conditions for Central government staff.

Who Will Lead the 8th Pay Commission?

The Commission will be headed by former Supreme Court Judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, with one part-time member and a member-secretary assisting in the evaluation process. The panel has been given 18 months to complete its recommendations, though it may submit interim reports along the way.

What to Expect: Salary Revisions and Fitment Factor

While the government has yet to disclose the exact figures for salary revisions, early estimates suggest that the fitment factor — the multiplier applied to an employee's basic pay — will likely range between 1.83 and 2.46. This adjustment will have a cascading effect on basic pay, Dearness Allowance (DA), and



House Rent Allowance (HRA), significantly impacting take-home salaries.

For instance, under the expected formula, the new gross pay could be calculated as:

New Gross Salary = (Current Basic Pay × Fitment Factor) + DA + HRA.

Financial experts anticipate that alongside base pay revisions, the Dearness Allowance is also likely to see an upward revision to offset inflationary pressures.

When Will It Be Implemented?

The 8th CPC was first announced in January 2025, and if timelines remain

consistent, its recommendations are expected to take effect from January 1, 2026. Once approved, the new structure will benefit not only serving employees but also retired personnel whose pensions are linked to the same pay matrix.

The Broader Picture: Balancing Growth and Fiscal Prudence

Beyond individual paychecks, the Pay Commission's recommendations hold major macroeconomic implications. The panel will weigh India's current fiscal health, the need for continued investment in welfare and infrastructure, and the potential strain of increased wage expenditure on public finances.

Why It Matters

For millions of government workers, the Pay Commission represents more than a pay hike — it's a recognition of their contribution to national service amid rising costs of living. For the government, however, it is a delicate act of balancing employee welfare with fiscal responsibility.

As India approaches 2026, the rollout of the 8th Pay Commission's recommendations could become a defining moment for both its workforce and its economy — setting the tone for how the nation values, compensates, and sustains its public service machinery in an era of rapid economic transformation.

Jagat Guru Dwaracharya Swami Rajendra Das Ji Maharaj: The Divine Torchbearer of Bhakti, Seva, and Sanatan Dharma

Dr. Rajeev Sharma / National Times

In the sacred land of Vrindavan, where every step echoes the divine leelas of Bhagwan Sri Krishna, stands a spiritual lighthouse known as Sri Malook Peeth, a centuries-old seat of devotion, wisdom, and selfless service. At the helm of this holy institution is Param Pujya Malook Peethadheeshwar Sri Jagad Guru Dwaracharya Swami Rajendra Das Ji Maharaj, a revered saint whose life and mission embody the essence of Bhakti, Seva, and Go-Samvardhan (cow protection).

Custodian of a Timeless Legacy:

Sri Malook Peeth, situated in Vansivat Mohalla (Jamuna Pulin), Vrindavan, was once known as Sri Malook Das Ji Akhara. This sacred abode was home to Sri Malook Das Ji Maharaj, who lived here with around 2,500 saints dedicated to Thakur Sewa, Sadhu Sewa, and devotional music. It was a spiritual university where saints learned Bhakti Sangeet, scriptures, and the art of living a life of divine service. Under the able and divine guidance of Swami Rajendra Das Ji Maharaj, this heritage continues to flourish, carrying forward the same light of devotion and compassion that Sri Malook Das Ji ignited centuries ago.

A Mission Rooted in Devotion

Swami Rajendra Das Ji Maharaj has infused new life and vigor into the Peeth's activities. Under His leadership, Sri Malook Peeth has expanded its horizons to include various spiritual and social welfare

initiatives:

1. Daily Thakur Sewa and Sadhu Sewa offer continuous worship and care to saints and devotees.
2. Gurukul Programs nurturing the next generation of students in Sanatan Dharma and moral values.
3. Music and Bhajan Training preserving India's devotional heritage through classical instruments like Harmonium and Tabla and traditional Bhajan singing.
4. Humanitarian Efforts providing food, clothing, and medical support to the needy and poor.

The Sacred Gausala: A Home of Compassion

Just a kilometer away from the temple, on Chaar Sampradaya Ashram Road, lies the Sri Malook Peeth Gausala, a sanctuary for hundreds of Vedic cows. Here, every cow is treated as Gau Mata, receiving pure affection, nutritious food, and dedicated care.

The milk and dairy products from the Gausala ghee, buttermilk, yogurt, and milk are used for divine rituals and as prasadam for saints and devotees. Daily arrangements are made to bring fresh fodder, grains, and gur, ensuring the cows' well-being. The Gausala also includes medical facilities for the treatment of ailing cows, reflecting Swami Ji's profound commitment to Gau Seva.

Shri Brij Kamad Surabhi Van Evam Shodh Sansthan (Jadkhor Godham)

One of Swami Rajendra Das Ji's most remarkable contributions is the establishment of the Shri Brij Kamad Surabhi Van Evam Shodh Sansthan (Jadkhor Godham) in the Bharatpur district of Rajasthan. The chosen



land holds immense spiritual significance, it is believed to be the very place where Lord Krishna and Balram once tended to their beloved cows. Today, over 9,000 cows reside peacefully in Jadkhor Godham. Many of them are elderly or rescued from slaughterhouses, living their remaining days in safety and dignity.

A Spiritual Visionary

Beyond rituals and traditions, Jagad Guru Swami Rajendra Das Ji Maharaj emphasizes the practical application of spirituality transforming faith into service. His teachings inspire devotees to live with compassion, truth, and humility. Through his discourses (Kathas), he consistently advocates for cow protection. "Seva is the highest form of worship. When we serve cows, saints, and the needy, we serve the Lord Himself."

Leon's Café: A Belgian Family Legacy Brews in South Surrey

Dr. Rajeev Sharma | National Times

From handcrafted waffles to community bingo nights, this cozy café seamlessly integrates authentic Belgian flavors with heartfelt family values, thereby fostering a unique dining experience.

Tucked away in the vibrant neighbourhood of South Surrey, Leon's Café is a hidden gem where every cup of coffee tells a story, every waffle speaks of heritage, and every customer is welcomed like family. More than just a café, it's a living tribute to generations of love, food, and European tradition.

A Dream That Crossed Oceans: The story begins in 1995, when Frederic Horry arrived in Canada from Belgium with a dream: to one day bring the culture, warmth, and cuisine of his homeland to his new community. That dream simmered for years until, with the unwavering support of his wife Marisa Bonilla Contreras and their son Louis André Leon, it finally came to life. In 2019, Leon's Café opened its doors, named in honor of Frederic's beloved grandfather Léon, the man who taught him the joy of cooking and the art of bringing people together through food.

"It was never just about coffee or waffles," Frederic shares. "It was about creating a place where people could taste my roots feel the warmth of our culture, and sit down to something real."

Authentic Belgian Flavors,

Made with Heart: At Leon's Café, authenticity is not just a buzzword it's a commitment. The menu showcases traditional Belgian recipes, many made with ingredients imported directly from Belgium, ensuring every bite is as genuine as it is delicious. From the sweet caramelized chew of a Liège waffle to the airy crispness of a Brussels waffle, customers are treated to the same flavors you'd find on a cobblestone street in Europe. The café also offers an assortment of handcrafted Belgian chocolates, filled and flavored in-house, along with a wide selection of European-style coffee.

"Every dish here is prepared with care, and you can taste the difference," says Claire Dean, a loyal customer. "The waffles are incredible, but it's the feeling you leave with that keeps me

coming back."

The café caters to all appetites with hearty meals for meat lovers and flavorful vegetarian options, embodying the owners' commitment to inclusion, diversity, and hospitality for everyone who walks through their door.

Building Community, One Cup at a Time: Leon's Café has quickly become more than just a local eatery it's a community hub. In addition to its warm ambiance and delicious food, the café hosts monthly Bingo Days, where local businesses are invited to share their services and connect with the community. These events foster a spirit of collaboration and friendship that reflects the family's values.





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