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NEW YORK NEWS

The Voice of People

From New York



Photo: US pushes diplomacy as blockade continues
Image Source: Jacquelyn Martin/AP

Ceasefire on Edge

US, Iran prepare for fresh negotiations

Alexandar Sullivan

President Donald Trump announced that U.S. negotiators will travel to Pakistan on Monday for renewed talks with Iran, as efforts intensify to extend a fragile ceasefire set to expire this week. The delegation, led by Vice President JD Vance along with envoys Steve Witkoff

and Jared Kushner, aims to bridge deep divisions over Iran's nuclear program and control of the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian officials signaled willingness to continue diplomacy but emphasized that "there will be no retreat," highlighting ongoing disagreements. Tensions remain high in the region, with restricted ship movement through the strait—a corridor responsible for roughly one-fifth of global oil trade—raising concerns about worsening energy instability. Iran has insisted that transit remains "impossible" under current U.S. blockade measures, calling them an "act of aggression." As both sides trade warnings and maintain firm positions, international mediators, including Pakistan, are working to keep dialogue alive. With the ceasefire nearing its deadline, the outcome of the upcoming talks could prove critical for regional stability and global markets.

Pope Clarifies Remarks

Denies criticism aimed at Trump

Lily Anderson

Pope Leo XIV said on Saturday that his recent remarks criticizing "tyrants" were not directed at U.S. President Donald Trump, seeking to defuse growing speculation of a political clash between the Vatican and Washington. Speaking to reporters aboard a flight to Angola, the pontiff said the speech had been written "a fortnight earlier," well before Trump's criticism of him. "It was looked at as if I was trying to debate the president, which is not in my interest at all," he added. The clarification follows tensions earlier in the week, when Trump called the Pope "terrible

for foreign policy" after the pontiff criticized global military spending and violence in a speech delivered in Cameroon. In that address, Leo condemned leaders who spend billions on war while neglecting education and recovery. Vice President JD Vance welcomed the Pope's explanation, noting that public disagreements



Photo: 'Not my interest at all' to debate President Trump, says Pope
Image Source: Online

HIGHLIGHT

•Pope denies targeting Donald Trump

•Speech written before recent tensions

•Comments made during Africa tour

•US officials respond to clarification

can be more nuanced than portrayed. As Leo continues his Africa tour, the episode underscores the sensitive intersection of global politics and moral leadership.

Low-Key Australia Tour

Sussexes' trip lacks past royal fanfare

Henry Bob

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle wrapped up a four-day visit to Australia's east coast, a trip that echoed the structure of a traditional royal tour but drew a notably quieter public response. Unlike their widely celebrated 2018 visit, when large crowds gathered across multiple cities, this trip saw limited public awareness

and engagement. The couple attended events focused on Indigenous culture, mental health, and community initiatives, but largely avoided large public walkabouts. Experts said the itinerary appeared "carefully controlled" to minimize negative reactions. Despite lower visibility, the couple connected with individuals at select appearances, including meetings with community members and charity groups. However, criticism emerged over potential taxpayer-funded security costs and commercial elements tied to the visit. Supporters highlighted the positive impact of

HIGHLIGHT

•Visit lasted four days in Australia

•Limited public interest compared to 2018 tour

•Mixed reactions over costs and commercial ties

•Focus on charity and community engagement

their charitable work, while critics questioned the timing and tone amid economic challenges. The visit underscored the evolving role of the Sussexes as private figures balancing public engagement with independent ventures.

Soldier Fights Charges

Victoria Cross recipient vows to clear name

John Paul

Ben Roberts-Smith, Australia's most decorated living soldier, has vowed to fight war crime charges after being accused of five counts of murder linked to his service in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2012. The 47-year-old Victoria Cross recipient, released on bail on Friday following his arrest at Sydney Airport on April 7, denied all allegations in a public statement. "I'm proud of my service in Afghanistan... I have never run from a fight," he said, adding he would use the case to "finally clear my



Photo: Australia's most-decorated soldier vows to fight war crime charges
Image Source: Sam Mooy/The Sydney Morning Herald via Getty Images

name." Roberts-Smith is accused of involvement in the deaths of unarmed detainees, either directly or by ordering subordinates. He described his arrest as a "sensational" and "unnecessary spectacle." The criminal charges

follow a 2023 civil defamation case, where a judge found "substantial truth" in some allegations. The upcoming legal battle is expected to be lengthy, with the court noting the case could take "years" before reaching trial, underscoring its significance for Australia's military and legal institutions.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

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Pioneer Academy opens new student and teacher areas

NYN Desk

A ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 13 celebrated the opening of new wellness-focused spaces at P.S. 307Q Pioneer Academy in Corona, marking a significant investment in student and staff well-being. The event, held at 40-20 100th St., brought together community leaders including Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, Council Member

Shanel Thomas-Henry, and school officials, alongside representatives from partner organizations. The newly unveiled teacher wellness lounge and student movement atrium aim to support mental health, physical activity, and overall school engagement. “These investments are about your future,” Richards told students. “Education is your tool... to dream big.” Developed in partnership with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue



Photo: P.S. 307Q students and staff celebrate the opening of a new teacher wellness lounge and student movement atrium. Image Source: Ramy Mahmoud

Shield, iHeartMedia, the New York Liberty, and the Impact Fitness Foundation, the spaces provide areas for relaxation, movement, and recovery. School leaders say the initiative reflects a growing emphasis on holistic education, where both academic success and well-being are prioritized for students and educators alike.

DOT reports fewer cars, more cyclists ahead of expansion



Photo: The city will move ahead with a full redesign of northern McGuinness Boulevard this spring. Image Source : Kirstyn Brendlen

Staff Reporter

A partial redesign of McGuinness Boulevard in Greenpoint has led to fewer vehicles and a surge in cycling, according to the NYC

Department of Transportation (DOT), as officials prepare to expand the project. Speaking to Community Board 1 on April 14, DOT engineer Zach Wyche said removing a traffic lane

between Calyer Street and Meeker Avenue has reduced peak-hour traffic by up to 400 vehicles while doubling cyclist numbers since 2021. Travel times increased slightly—about one minute northbound—but remained manageable. The redesign, featuring protected bike lanes, has also encouraged more diverse riders, including families and casual cyclists. “It feels like a part of the neighborhood now,” said resident Nicholas Otto, noting improved comfort for walking and biking. However, safety concerns persist on the northern stretch, where cyclists face turning vehicles and pedestrians navigate wide crossings. DOT plans to extend the full redesign to Freeman Street later this spring or summer, with ongoing monitoring and adjustments expected as the project evolves.

Sailing program revived at Seaport this summer



Photo: Harbor Camp provides a first-hand opportunity for children to learn about sailing. Image Source: Manhattan by Sail

Senior Reporter

Manhattan by Sail has revived its long-awaited Harbor Camp, bringing a hands-on sailing experience back to the Seaport after a seven-

year hiatus. The half-day program will run during the last two weeks of August at Pier 17, welcoming children ages 11 to 14 for immersive sessions on New York Harbor. Partnering with nonprofit

Buoyant USA, organizers are offering reduced-cost spots for about 30% of participants to increase accessibility. Founder Tom Berton said the camp combines recreation with education, teaching skills such as knot tying, water safety, teamwork, and environmental awareness. “It was always wonderful to see the kids just light up,” Berton said. The revival follows the closure of the original Harbor Camp program years ago. For Berton, restoring it fulfills a long-standing goal to reconnect city youth with the harbor’s natural and historic environment. Operating from 89 South St., Manhattan by Sail continues to offer daily and seasonal sails, while the camp adds a meaningful educational dimension to its summer programming.



Photo: Rep. Ritchie Torres urges a long-term stability plan for Ved Parkash buildings in foreclosure. Image Source: Rep. Torres’ office

Ritchie Torres pushes CPC to address troubled properties

Community Desk

U.S. Rep. Ritchie Torres is urging the Community Preservation Corporation (CPC) to intervene in several distressed apartment buildings linked to landlord Ved Parkash, citing serious safety and habitability concerns. In a letter to CPC CEO Rafael E. Cestero, Torres highlighted properties at 89-20 161st Street in Queens and 3435 Giles Place and 2015 Creston Avenue in the Bronx, all currently in foreclosure. The buildings have generated hundreds of complaints, including lack of heat, infestations, and structural issues, according to city records. Torres said the situation

demands more than financial restructuring, calling for “a clear and enforceable plan” to ensure repairs, oversight, and long-term affordability. CPC is in the process of acquiring distressed loans following the collapse of Signature Bank in 2023. Tenants have described worsening conditions over time. Yolanda Richardson, displaced after a 2025 fire at another Parkash property, said, “It’s difficult... to find something I can afford.” Torres has requested a meeting with CPC leadership to push for immediate action, emphasizing the need for accountability and safe living conditions for residents.

Prayer Time IN New York

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04:43	12:54	04:42	07:44	09:06
04:41	12:54	04:42	07:45	09:08
04:39	12:54	04:43	07:46	09:09
04:38	12:54	04:43	07:47	09:11

OPINION

Ritchie Torres pushes
CPC to address troubled
properties
Page-02

Living with Clarity in a Chaotic World

— Imam Shamsi Ali

We live in a chaotic world. Wars, killings, and genocide continue in many places, particularly in the Middle East.

Worse still is how reality is twisted: good is made to look bad, and bad is dressed up as good.

This is not new. It is a classic human attitude. The Holy Qur'an described it with precision: "And when it is said to them, 'Do not cause corruption on the earth,' they say, 'We are only reformers.' Unquestionably, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive it not" (Al-Baqarah: 11–12). In today's turmoil we watch powerful nations attack others with little regard for international law. Often, they claim to bring freedom and to save humanity.

This chaotic moment offers us hard but necessary lessons.

First, unchecked power breeds arrogance and corruption. It brings to mind Pharaoh, and how those around him: Haman, the political advisor, and Qarun, the oligarch, collaborated to ruin a civilization. That is why Allah commanded His Messenger: "And consult them in the matter." (Ali 'Imran: 159) The Prophet (pbuh) consulted his companions in worldly affairs. The strategy for the Battle of the Trench

(Khandaq) is a clear example: he took Salman al-Farisi's suggestion to dig a trench, a tactic unknown in Arabia.

Even 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, was publicly corrected by a woman in the mosque regarding the dowry (mahar). She said: "The dowry belongs to us, and no one has the right to change it except Allah or ourselves." 'Umar accepted it. Power must be checked, even at the highest level.

Second, we see the danger of misusing religion for political or worldly gain.

Many in the West criticize Muslims for mixing religion with politics. On one hand, I agree that religion should not be reduced to a political tool. Religion is far bigger and more noble than that. Yet Islam is a comprehensive way of life. It speaks to all aspects of human existence, including politics and governance.

Recently, the public clash between the President of the United States and the leader of the Catholic Church showed that religion and politics cannot be fully separated. Religion must retain



— Imam Shamsi Ali :
Director, Jamaica Muslim
Center & President,
Nusantara Foundation

the moral authority to correct politics when it becomes corrupt. Third, this chaos exposes many forms of hypocrisy. Nations invade others in the name of values: freedom, justice, and human dignity. But we see those values invoked only when they serve particular interests. And often, for some people, not for all. Fourth, we are reminded that balance is a universal

law of life.

Allah says: "And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance, that you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance." (Ar-Rahman: 7–9)

This applies to global affairs. World power must be balanced. Hegemony by a single superpower must end. Muslim nations must unite and form alliances that help restore balance, not simply bow to the powerful.

Fifth, we are reminded again that this Ummah needs to heal from a long illness.

The Prophet foretold that nations would one day call each other to attack this Ummah, like diners calling

others to their plate. The companions asked, "Will we be few then?" He said: "No, you will be many, but you will be like foam on a flood. Allah will remove your fear from the hearts of your enemies and will cast "al-wahan" into your hearts. They asked, "What is al-wahn?" He replied: "Love of the dunya and hatred of death." (Abu Dawud) This is the severe illness afflicting the Ummah today. It explains much of our suffering across every sphere of life. Finally, American Muslims carry a special responsibility.

As part of this nation (America), a nation currently involved in many conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, it is our duty to remind those in power. This is part of our civic responsibility, and it is also our moral and religious obligation.

As I have said before, the only way to change America, including its foreign policy, is from within. What we witnessed in the Senate recently is a sign that change is possible in this country. And we must take part in that process.

The world is chaotic, but our response must be clear: uphold truth, check power, refuse hypocrisy, seek balance, heal our hearts, and engage with courage.



"The world is chaotic, but our response must be clear: uphold truth, check power, refuse hypocrisy, seek balance, heal our hearts, and engage with courage."

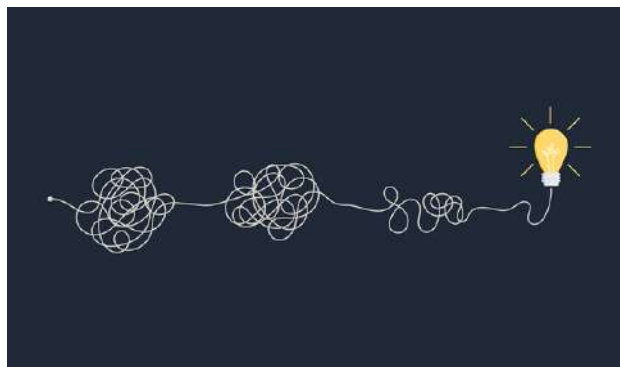


Image Source: Online



"Power must be checked, even at the highest level."

Bangladesh's Representation at the United Nations

— Akbar Haider Kiron

Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Salahuddin Noman Chowdhury, formally assumed office on January 13, 2025, presenting his credentials the same day to UN Secretary-General António Guterres. More than a year into his tenure, a range of observations and concerns have emerged within segments of the Bangladeshi diaspora and among some policy observers regarding the scope and visibility of the Mission's diplomatic engagement.

Historically, Bangladesh's Permanent Mission to the United Nations has combined formal diplomatic responsibilities with a broader role in public diplomacy. This has included regular interaction with international and Bangladeshi media, active participation in UN forums, and the organization of national and cultural events—particularly on occasions such as Independence Day, Victory Day, and International Mother Language Day. These events often ensured broad-based participation, bringing together diplomats, scholars, cultural figures, and members of the diaspora in settings that informally reinforced Bangladesh's international profile.

In recent months, however, some community stakeholders and observers have noted a perceived reduction in such outward-facing activities. Reports suggest limited

structured engagement with diaspora representatives and fewer large-scale public events organized by the Mission. At the same time, several attendees of consulate-affiliated programs have described a more restricted format of participation by senior officials, with fewer opportunities for extended interaction beyond formal remarks.

Additional observations relate to participation in United Nations-based activities. According to some observers, the Permanent Representative's presence across various UN forums, side events, and high-level discussions has appeared relatively limited, although comprehensive attendance data is not publicly consolidated.

Longstanding diplomatic practices—such as hosting receptions in honor of visiting dignitaries, diplomats, and distinguished scholars—have historically been part of Bangladesh's engagement strategy at the UN. These events have functioned as informal platforms for dialogue, networking, and the projection of national priorities. Some sources suggest that such practices have been less consistently observed during the current tenure, though no official



— Akbar Haider Kiron
Senior Journalist, New
York

policy shift has been articulated.

A specific instance cited in community discussions concerns the observance of Bangladesh's Independence Day on March 26. According to mission-related sources, a "special event" was held at the Millennium Hotel rather than within the Mission's own facilities. Observers note that guest participation at this event appeared to be more limited than in previous

years, with fewer representatives from the broader community and media reportedly included. However, the Mission has not publicly detailed the rationale for venue selection or guest composition.

Engagement with Bangladeshi professionals working across various UN agencies has also been referenced in discussions, with some individuals suggesting that institutional interaction may be less active than in prior periods. At the same time, it is important to note that diplomatic styles and operational priorities can vary significantly between administrations and individuals, and not all aspects of diplomatic work are visible to the public.

Comparatively, previous Permanent Representatives of Bangladesh

to the United Nations were often noted for maintaining high levels of visibility across diplomatic, media, and community platforms. Their approach frequently emphasized both formal multilateral engagement and informal outreach as complementary tools of representation.

The recent visit of Foreign Minister Dr. Khalilur Rahman to New York has also been mentioned in this context, with some observers noting limited public-facing engagement during the visit. As with other aspects, no formal explanation has been provided by relevant authorities.

No official response has yet been issued addressing the broader set of observations outlined above. As such, many of the points raised remain within the realm of perception rather than formally substantiated assessment.

Taken together, these developments have prompted a broader analytical question: to what extent do variations in diplomatic style—whether characterized as "quiet diplomacy" or reduced public engagement—affect the visibility and perceived effectiveness of a country's representation in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations?

This question remains open and may warrant further observation over time.

LEADERSHIP

Mamdani's 100-Day Address Blends Policy and Politics

The mayor points to childcare, housing enforcement, and neighborhood fixes as signs of progress

James Anderson

At a packed event in Queens, Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani used his 100-day address to present his first months in office as proof that city government can take on both large affordability challenges and everyday quality-of-life concerns. Speaking at the Knockdown Center, Mamdani addressed a crowd of supporters, labor leaders, faith leaders, organizers, and city workers. Framing his administration's early record around what he called practical delivery, he told attendees, "Nothing is too big for New York City to take on. And over the past 14 weeks, we have proved that there is no task too small either."

A central focus of the event was affordability. Mamdani said the city had secured a \$1.2 billion partnership with Governor Kathy Hochul to expand childcare, adding that New York would begin offering



free childcare for two-year-olds, starting with 2,000 children this fall, 12,000 next year, and eventually expanding further. He described the initiative as a direct response to the financial strain faced by working families. Housing was another major theme. Mamdani said that since taking

NYC

Office of the Mayor

office, his administration had delivered more than \$34 million in settlements, judgments, and repairs for tenants, improved conditions in 6,070 apartments, and issued 195,829

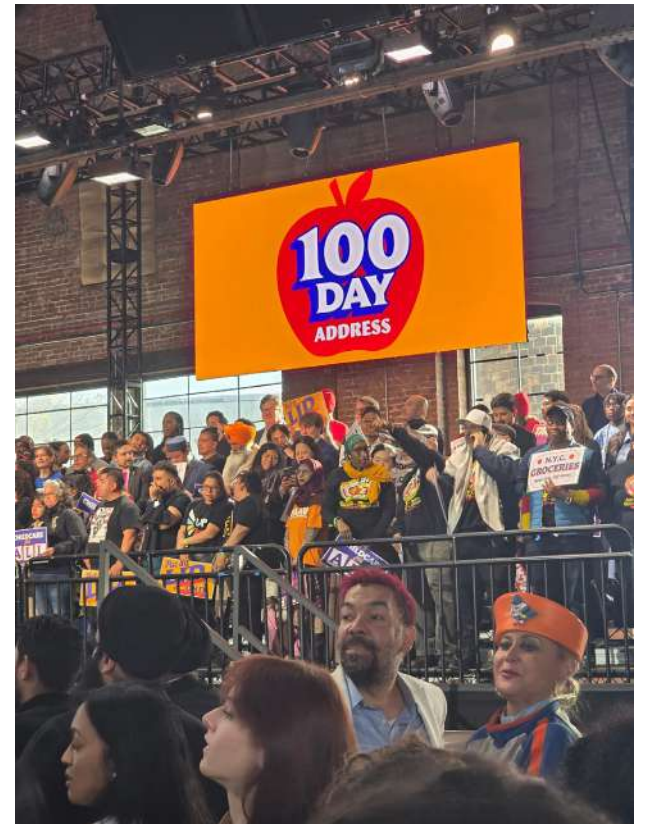
violations. He also said the city had held rental ripoff hearings across the five boroughs and accelerated the construction of new housing. The mayor also highlighted visible city-service accomplishments, especially street repairs. "If government can't do

the small things, how could you ever trust it to do the big ones?" he said, pointing to more than 102,000 potholes filled since January 1. During the address, Mamdani announced several next-step initiatives, including a plan to open five city-owned grocery stores, beginning with one in

La Marqueta in East Harlem, a citywide trash-containerization campaign, and a push to speed buses on 45 priority corridors. "We made a promise to New Yorkers to make buses fast and free. Tonight, we're delivering the fast."

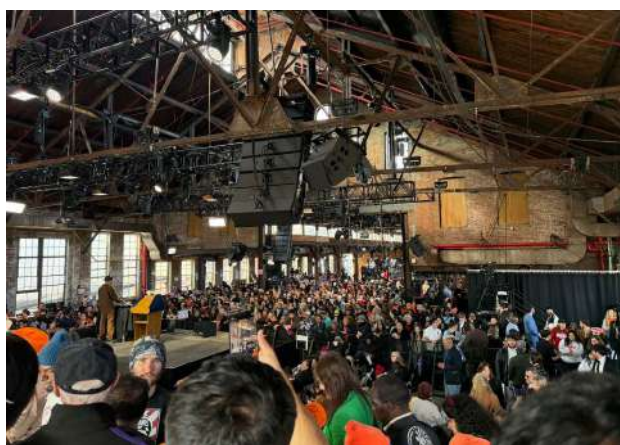
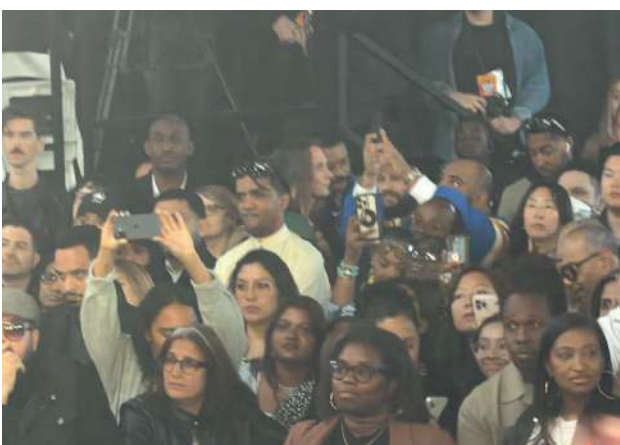
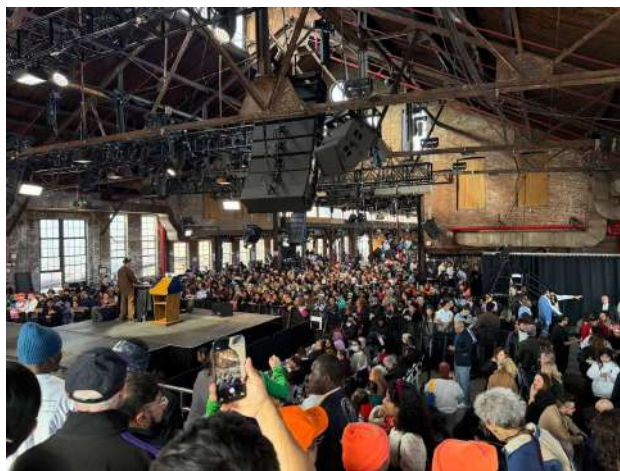
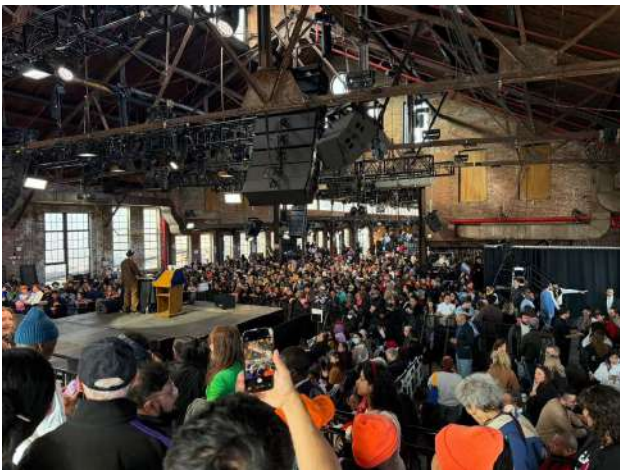
The event also featured remarks from Senator Bernie Sanders, who praised the administration's direction and said, "What you guys are doing here in New York City is important not only to the people here. What you are doing and what the mayor is doing is providing hope and inspiration not only to people all across our country, but honestly, all across the world."

Taken together, the event served as both a political milestone and a public argument: that in his first 100 days, Mamdani has tried to show New Yorkers that government can be ambitious, visible, and accountable at the same time.



LEADERSHIP

Queens event highlights childcare, housing, grocery plans, and faster buses





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REFLECTION

Reclaiming Parenthood: Dr. Gabor Maté Speaks at Khalil Center Event

A thought-provoking session urges parents to rebuild bonds through presence and attachment



Ashley Reed

A compelling conversation on modern parenting and family dynamics unfolded recently as Khalil Center – A Zakat Foundation Project hosted renowned speaker Dr.

Gabor Maté for a widely attended community event that filled the venue to capacity. Addressing a full house, Dr. Gabor Maté focused on what organizers described as “the crisis of our time,” examining how shifting social



KHALIL CENTER
A ZAKAT FOUNDATION PROJECT
dynamics have altered the traditional parent-

child relationship. He emphasized a growing concern: children increasingly taking cues from their peers rather than from their parents or caregivers, a shift that can weaken identity and emotional stability. “Parenting was never meant to become a popularity contest,” the discussion highlighted, underscoring how external influences, particularly peer groups, have begun to shape children’s development in ways that may distance them from parental guidance. According to the themes presented during the event, when peers replace parents as primary influences, “identity becomes fragile and connection between parent-child becomes conditional.” Drawing from the widely discussed work *Hold On to Your Kids*, the session

encouraged attendees to rethink what has become normalized in contemporary parenting. The central message stressed that children are not meant to raise one another, and that adults carry an essential and irreplaceable role in providing stability, guidance, and emotional grounding. Rather than advocating strict control, the conversation focused on rebuilding relationships through intentional presence and emotional connection. Organizers described the event as “a call to reclaim our roles; not through force, but through presence. Not through fear, but through attachment.” The approach emphasized that when children reorient toward their parents, a sense of security, love, and guidance can be restored.

The event also reflected strong community collaboration. Organizers extended appreciation to Siya Coffee, Anjum Photography, and Natasha’s Treats for their contributions, noting that their involvement helped elevate the overall experience for attendees. For many in attendance, the gathering served not only as a lecture but as a moment of reflection on the evolving challenges of parenting in today’s world. By bringing together families, caregivers, and community members, the Khalil Center event highlighted the importance of reconnecting with foundational values of care, responsibility, and meaningful human connection in raising the next generation.





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SUMMIT

Somos New York Conference 2026 Unites Leaders in Albany

Three-day gathering highlights policy, civic engagement, and Latino empowerment across the state

William Henry

With a mix of policy dialogue, cultural celebration, and civic engagement, Somos Inc. recently concluded its 2026 Somos New York Conference in Albany, New York, bringing together thousands of leaders and advocates committed to advancing Latino communities across the state. Held under the theme “Del Momento al Movimiento — Lead, Unite, Transform,” the three-day conference from April 17 through April 19, 2026 unfolded across venues including the Albany Hilton and the Empire State Plaza. The event continued Somos’s decades-long mission of uniting communities, elevating policy discussions, and fostering civic participation. Organizers described the gathering as a space “where ideas turn into action and conversations create lasting change.” The conference opened with the Senior Summit, emphasizing “the importance of taking care of the community who has gotten us to where we are today.” Cultural elements such as salsa dancing and recognition of community leaders complemented policy-focused discussions, setting a tone of both



celebration and purpose. The conference schedule reflected a wide-ranging agenda. Day 1 featured registration, an expo exhibit, the Senior Summit, and evening networking receptions. On Day 2, attendees participated in a labor breakfast, multiple legislative workshop sessions, the Somos Mujeres Women’s Bruncheon, and the 28th Annual CUNY/SUNY Model Senate Project Mock Session, culminating in a Scholarship Gala Dinner.



The final day spotlighted the Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute, reinforcing the organization’s commitment to youth empowerment and civic engagement. Additional programming highlighted key policy

discussions shaping Latino communities. A session titled “Counting Our Power: From Campus Poll Sites to Community Counts; Empowering the Next Generation for Civic Action & the Census 2030,” held on Saturday, April 18, brought together leaders including Assemblymember Landon Dais, Assemblymember Steven Raga, and Senator Jamaal Bailey, alongside policy experts and community advocates.

The panel focused on strengthening civic participation and preparing communities for future census engagement. Another major discussion, “Expanding Professional Licensing Access for Immigrant New Yorkers,” featured panelists such as Paul Zuber, Adama Bah, Marco Carrion, and Murad Awawdeh, moderated by Senator Gustavo Rivera. The session underscored ongoing efforts to improve workforce access and remove

barriers for immigrant professionals across New York. The conference also marked a significant milestone with a 40th anniversary reception of Somos Inc., hosted by Andrea Stewart-Cousins, President Pro Tempore and NYS Senate Majority Leader, at the New York State Capitol on April 18, 2026. The celebration honored four decades of advocacy, leadership, and community impact. Attendees were further invited to explore the Somos, Inc. Museum at the Empire State Room, showcasing what organizers described as the “huge impact that Somos has had on our community over the past 4 decades.” This retrospective reinforced the organization’s legacy while connecting it to ongoing policy and advocacy efforts. Founded in 1987, Somos Inc. has grown into one of the largest Latino civic organizations in the state, with annual conference participation ranging from 8,000 to 10,000 individuals, including elected officials, community leaders, and advocates. In Albany, that mission was evident throughout the conference—where dialogue, collaboration, and action converged to shape a stronger future for Latino communities across New York State.





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CELEBRATION

A Day of Laughter and Play: SpringFest Unites the Community

Youth-focused event highlights the importance of safe and joyful spaces

Emily Parker

Amid the challenges of everyday life, a recent SpringFest event offered a refreshing moment of joy and unity, as families and children gathered outdoors for a day filled with laughter, creativity, and community spirit. The event, attended by Councilmember Nantasha Williams, highlighted the importance of creating safe and engaging spaces where young people can thrive. From the outset, the atmosphere was defined by energy and excitement. Children moved between activity stations featuring drawing sessions, interactive games, circus-style performances, and hula hoop challenges,



each designed to spark creativity and encourage participation. The vibrant setting reflected a shared effort to foster a sense of belonging and positivity within the community. Councilmember Nantasha Williams was

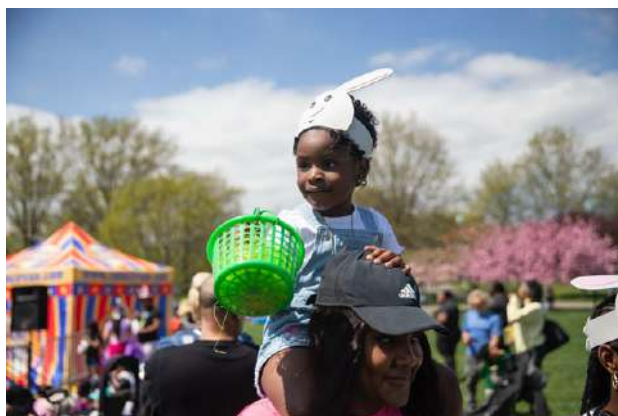


seen actively engaging

with attendees, joining in activities and interacting with children and families throughout the event. In a message shared following the gathering, she noted, "Too many smiles at SpringFest not to share. With

everything happening around us, it felt good to come together as a community. Our young people deserve spaces like this, and we're going to keep showing up for them." Her presence underscored a broader commitment to youth engagement and community building. Parents and guardians, many of whom accompanied their children, observed the value of such events in providing both recreation and connection. The combination of playful activities and open space allowed families to relax, interact, and build relationships with neighbors, reinforcing a sense of unity. While SpringFest centered on fun, its impact extended beyond entertainment. Events like these play a vital

role in supporting youth development by offering opportunities for social interaction, creativity, and confidence-building in a welcoming environment. The visible enthusiasm of participants—captured in smiles and shared moments—reflected the success of the gathering in achieving these goals. As the event concluded, the sense of community it fostered remained evident. Though an official recap is expected in the future, the immediate takeaway was clear: SpringFest served as a meaningful reminder of the power of community-driven initiatives to bring people together and create lasting positive experiences for young people and their families.



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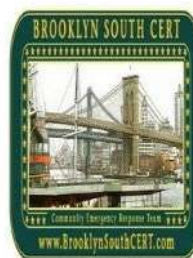
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TRAVEL

Spring Awakens America: A Season of Color, Travel, and Renewal

From blooming fields to coastal escapes, the U.S. embraces the vibrancy of spring

Jessica Morgan

As winter loosened its grip across the country, springtime in the United States recently unfolded in all its complexity—bringing with it a blend of sunshine, showers, and, in some regions, even lingering snow. The season, stretching across March through June, showcased not only the nation's varied climate but also a renewed sense of energy as communities stepped outdoors to embrace warmer days. In Central Texas, fields surrounding Austin and San Antonio transformed into sweeping carpets of blue, as bluebonnets bloomed across the countryside in April. These iconic wildflowers, joined by prickly poppies, firewheels, and winecups, drew visitors to towns like Fredericksburg, Ennis, and Chappell Hill, where seasonal festivals celebrated the region's natural beauty.



Photo: A swath of blue bonnets in the Texas Hill Country.
 Image Source: Martina Birnbaum/Shutterstock

The blooms served as both a visual spectacle and a reminder of the importance of preserving fragile ecosystems. Further west, the Central California Coast, stretching from Pismo Beach to Monterey, offered a different but equally compelling spring experience.

Early-season travelers navigated occasional rain showers, while late spring revealed mild weather and dramatic wildflower superblooms at Carrizo Plain National Monument. Offshore, the annual gray whale migration, beginning in March, added another layer of seasonal

wonder. Along the Gulf beaches of Alabama and Florida, spring marked the return of beachgoers eager for warmer waters. The relatively shallow Gulf of Mexico heated quickly, making destinations such as Destin, Panama City Beach, and Clearwater early-season

favorites for swimming and relaxation, even as spring break crowds brought bursts of activity. Urban centers also reflected the season's transformation. In Chicago, the thaw of winter gave way to bustling lakefronts, open-air dining, and the return of baseball season, while Washington, DC became a focal point for visitors as thousands of cherry blossoms, originally gifted in 1912, reached peak bloom between late March and early April, celebrated through the longstanding Cherry Blossom Festival. Meanwhile, outdoor enthusiasts turned to the dramatic landscapes of the American West. Utah's national parks, including Arches, Canyonlands, and Capitol Reef, offered ideal hiking conditions, with desert blooms contrasting against red rock terrain. In contrast,

the Colorado Rockies extended the winter sports season, where spring snowstorms and sunny afternoons created prime conditions for skiing in resorts like Breckenridge. In the Southeast, Tennessee State Parks flourished with lush greenery and flowing waterfalls, while Miami, Florida, leaned into its cultural identity with a lineup of festivals, including Carnival and Miami Beach Pride, drawing diverse crowds and energizing the city. Together, these destinations illustrated the defining character of spring in the United States—a season marked not by uniformity, but by diversity. Whether through blooming landscapes, cultural celebrations, or outdoor adventure, the months following winter once again demonstrated how the country comes alive in ways both subtle and spectacular.



Photo: Carmel by the Sea, along Monterey Bay on the central California coast.
 Image Source: David A Litman/Shutterstock



Photo: Arapahoe Basin Ski Area in Dillon, Colorado.
 Image Source: Jeffrey Wertheim/Shutterstock



Photo: The dunes at Pensacola Beach.
 Image Source: Colin D. Young/Shutterstock

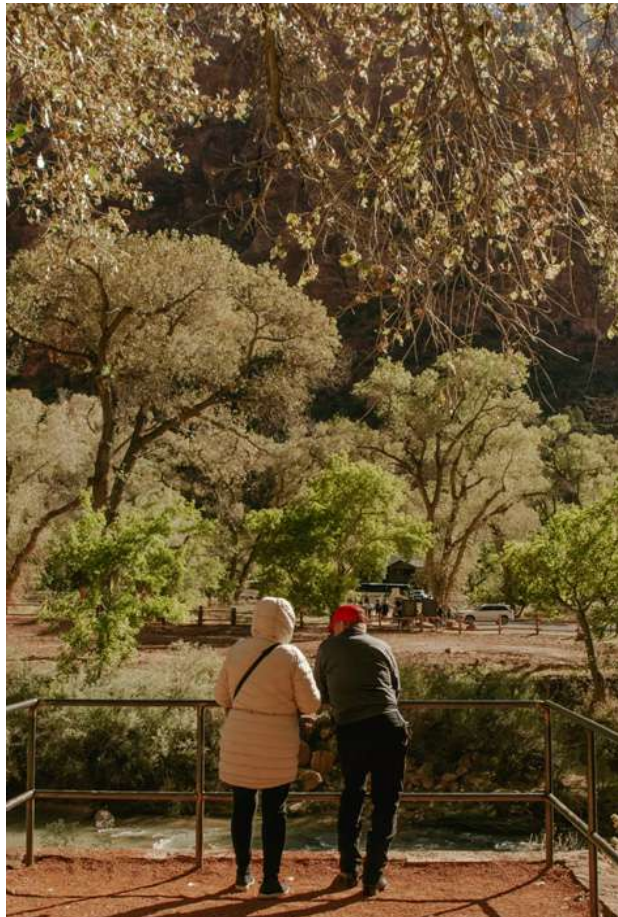


Photo: Hiking along Zion Canyon Scenic Drive.
 Image Source: Rhia Hylton/Lonely Planet



Photo: Ocean Drive in South Beach, Miami.
 Image Source: MDV Edwards/Shutterstock



Photo: River North, Chicago.
 Image Source: Loren Toney for Lonely Planet



Photo: Washington, DC's iconic cherry blossoms.
 Image Source: Getty Images



Bronx Education Spotlight

Mayor and Obama engage with young students



Photo: NYC Mayor Mamdani and former President Barack Obama read to a group of toddlers at Learning Through Play Pre-K Center in the South Bronx. Image Source: AP Photo/New York Post

HIGHLIGHT

• Mamdani meets Obama for first time

• Visit held at Bronx pre-K center

childhood education and community engagement. The meeting took place at the Learning Through Play Pre-K Center on Union Avenue, where the two leaders spent about 90 minutes interacting with children, reading "Alone & Together," and leading a singalong of "Wheels on the Bus." The visit followed a private discussion between

Mamdani and Obama. The appearance underscored Mamdani's focus on supporting families and investing in education, a key priority during his early months in office. While the visit was not widely publicized in advance, it offered a meaningful opportunity to connect with young students and educators. School principal Carlyn Rahynes described the moment as "exciting" and said she was especially happy for the children. The visit reflected a broader effort to center community, learning, and opportunity in the city's future.

Amkel Nourush

Mayor Zohran Mamdani met former President Barack Obama for the

first time on Saturday, joining him for a visit to a pre-K center in the South Bronx that highlighted early

Kyiv Condemns US Move

Russian oil waiver extension draws sharp criticism from Zelensky

Nassr Al Shams

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has sharply criticized the United States for extending a waiver that allows the sale of certain Russian oil despite Western sanctions, arguing the decision will directly benefit Moscow's war effort. The waiver permits countries to buy Russian oil and petroleum products already loaded onto ships until May 16. Washington has said the move is intended to ease global energy pressure caused by



Photos: Zelensky condemns US extension of Russian sanctions waiver Image Source: Online

conflict in the Middle East, particularly disruptions linked to the war involving Iran and instability around the Strait of Hormuz. Zelensky condemned the decision on Sunday,

saying "every dollar paid for Russian oil is money for the war." He warned that Russia's so-called shadow fleet could generate billions of dollars that would be converted into new

attacks on Ukrainian cities and communities. His comments came as Ukraine continues to face heavy drone, bomb, and missile strikes. The dispute underscores widening strain between Kyiv and Washington over how to balance energy stability with pressure on the Kremlin. With peace efforts already slowed and fighting continuing, Ukraine fears any relaxation of sanctions could weaken the broader international campaign to isolate Russia.



Photo: An adult female dead gray whale floated into the San Francisco Bay in California in March Image Source: Kathi George / The Marine Mammal Center / BBC

Gray Whales in Trouble

Scientists study deaths in San Francisco Bay

Julian Alvez

Scientists are racing to understand why increasing numbers of Eastern North Pacific gray whales are entering San Francisco Bay—and why so many are dying there. A new study found that 21 dead gray whales were recorded in the broader bay in 2025, the highest number on record. So far this year, seven more have died. Researchers say many of the whales arriving in the bay appear unusually thin, suggesting shrinking food supplies in the Arctic may be pushing them into unfamiliar waters in search of prey. But hunger alone may not explain the deaths. Scientists say

the crowded bay, filled with ferries, container ships, and other vessels, has become especially dangerous for weakened whales. Nearly one-fifth of the gray whales entering the bay in recent years have died there, often after ship strikes. Researchers are also worried by earlier seasonal sightings and low calf counts, which may point to a broader population crisis. Gray whale numbers have fallen from 27,000 in 2016 to 12,500 in 2025. Even so, experts say the bay may still offer hope. If protections improve, San Francisco could become a safer stopover for whales adapting to a changing ocean.

Wedding at Chernobyl

A couple married as disaster unfolded nearby

Adrian Smith

As the Chernobyl nuclear disaster unfolded in the early hours of April 26, 1986, Iryna Stetsenko and Serhiy Lobanov pressed ahead with their wedding, unaware that the world's worst nuclear accident had just begun less than 2.5 miles away. The young couple, then 19 and 25, woke to rumbling, shaking windows, and disturbing signs outside their apartment blocks, including



Photo: "We really can't be one without the other," says Iryna after 40 years of marriage Image Source: BBC

something was terribly wrong. By the next morning, the newlyweds were rushing to evacuate. Iryna, having returned to her mother's apartment to change, said she ran barefoot through puddles in her wedding dress. The pair boarded a train believing they were leaving for only a few days. "We left for three days, but ended up going for our entire lives," Serhiy recalled. Now living in Berlin after fleeing war in 2022, the couple say the disaster shaped

everything that followed. Forty years later, their wedding remains one of the final personal milestones in a city that would soon become a symbol of catastrophe, displacement, and endurance.



Photo: Bomb disposal experts detonated the bomb in situ Image Source: Prefet de Police/BBC

WW2 Bomb Blasted

Thousands evacuated in Paris suburb

Charles Lewis

Thousands of residents in Colombes, a northern suburb of Paris, were evacuated on Sunday after authorities carried out a controlled explosion to destroy an undetonated

World War Two bomb. The device had been discovered on April 10 during construction work on Rue des Champarons. Officials said an initial effort to remove the detonator failed, forcing bomb disposal teams to destroy it in place.

Nearly 800 police officers were deployed as residents within a 450-meter radius were ordered to leave their homes. The controlled blast was completed in the afternoon, and the evacuation order was lifted shortly afterward.