

# ASIAN JOURNAL

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## WITH U.S. TARIFFS ON THE HORIZON, PROVINCE STRENGTHENS FORESTRY SECTOR

While on tour in the Okanagan this week listening to people's priorities and concerns and sharing how the Province is fighting back against U.S. President Donald J. Trump's economic threats, Ravi Parmar, Minister of Forests, gathered with workers and members of the Salmon Arm community to celebrate the official opening of Canoe Forest Products' new kiln.

The new kiln was made possible with funding from the Province's BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund (BCMJF).

"When a giant throws punches, you don't fight with one hand tied behind your back. That's why we're taking strong action to protect B.C. jobs, industries and workers," said Parmar. "B.C.'s local wood-manufacturing companies like Canoe Forest Products are at the heart of our communities and are the best of what 'Made in Canada' has to offer."

Canoe received more than \$2.2 million in November 2023 to commission a new kiln, boosting both production and sustainability at its operation in Salmon Arm and help protect 200 good-paying jobs. Canoe has been a stalwart member of B.C.'s forestry sector for more than 60 years and is part of the Gorman



Group, made up of four facilities across the province in Salmon Arm (Canoe), West Kelowna (Gorman Brothers) and Revelstoke (Downie and Selkirk).

Parmar accompanied Canoe employees, community guests, and Nick Arkle, chief executive officer of the Gorman Group, at an opening ribbon-cutting ceremony. The ceremony included a tour of Canoe's new kiln and meeting Canoe employees.

"Having Minister Parmar today at the ribbon cutting for the commissioning of the new dryer at Canoe Forest Products is important in recognizing the B.C. gov-

ernment's support through the Manufacturing Jobs Fund," said Arkle. "This investment strengthens our operations through increased efficiency of cost and quality, while supporting local jobs and the long-term sustainability of our business."

The new kiln will transform Canoe's long-term business as a softwood sheathing, veneer and specialty-plywood manufacturer, allowing the company to diversify the species of wood it processes and reduce its reliance on Douglas fir. It will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 10% through the drying process.

"We're actively supporting local manufacturers to create sustainable jobs, diversify product lines and scale up operations throughout B.C.," said Diana Gibson, Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation. "The BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund has been a catalyst for growing local economies, helping companies innovate and diversify, and strengthening our supply chains."

As part of a listening and learning tour of the Thompson Okanagan, Parmar is also visiting three other recipients of BCMJF grants. Tolko Industries received \$8 million to help expand

Tolko's Heffley Creek operation. Family-run Gilbert Smith Forest Products in Barriere received \$1.1 million to support facility modernization and new equipment. AcuTruss Industries Ltd. in Vernon received \$100,000 to support the purchase and commissioning of equipment to manufacture precision cut I-joists through automation, while creating 12 new jobs.

The BCMJF supports forestry-product manufacturers to innovate their business lines and grow their operations, supporting a strong and resilient forestry sector throughout B.C. Building new markets and strengthening existing ones is integral to a strong future for B.C.'s forestry sector and economy.

### Quick Facts:

The BCMJF has committed more than \$97 million to forestry-sector manufacturers in the province.

To date, these investments have incentivized more than \$680 million in private sector capital flowing into forestry-product manufacturing.

Combined, these investments have led to the direct creation and protection of more than 3,500 forestry-sector jobs.



*Chal Chaliye*  
**SABZI MANDI**  
*Chal Chaliye ...*

ਤਾਜ਼ੇ ਫਲ ਫਰੂਟ, ਤਾਜ਼ੀਆਂ ਸਬਜ਼ੀਆਂ  
ਅਤੇ ਸਾਫ਼ ਸੁਥਰੀ ਗਰੋਸਰੀ ਲਈ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ  
ਸਬਜ਼ੀ ਮੰਡੀ ਨੂੰ ਯਾਦ ਰਖੋ



# HIGH-SPEED INTERNET AVAILABLE IN CLINTON, RUTH LAKE, DEKA LAKE

People in Clinton, Ruth Lake and Deka Lake in the Cariboo region now have access to high-speed internet, enabling faster, more reliable access to digital services and opportunities.

“People in Clinton, Ruth Lake and Deka Lake can access even more services including health care and education, alongside economic and job opportunities, from their home communities,” said George Chow, Minister of Citizens’ Services. “This completion marks another important milestone in our commitment to connect every rural, remote and Indigenous community in B.C. to high-speed internet.”

Two connectivity projects built and operated by service provider Telus have been completed, providing access to faster, more reliable broadband internet services for 444 households in Clinton and 746 households in areas around Ruth Lake and Deka Lake, near 100 Mile House.

“This connectivity project is a vital step toward bridging the digital divide in the



Cariboo region,” said Margo Wagner, chair of the Cariboo Regional District. “By improving internet access, we are empowering our residents with better opportunities for education, health care, and economic growth.” The Government of B.C. invested \$2 million in the Clinton project and more than \$3.1 million in the Ruth

Lake and Deka Lake project through the Connecting British Columbia program, administered by the Northern Development Initiative Trust. Telus contributed more than \$1.4 million to the Clinton project and almost \$1.7 million to the Ruth Lake and Deka Lake project.

“Thanks to the Connecting British Columbia program

and a decade of advocacy by the village, people in Clinton now have access to reliable high-speed internet,” said Roland Stanke, mayor of Clinton. “This increased connectivity will help attract new businesses, support local entrepreneurs and encourage families to consider Clinton as their home by making it easier to stay connected to services and each other.”

Tyler Mooi, vice-president, customer network planning, Telus, said: “Telus is committed to connecting communities across the province, ensuring everyone has the tools they need to thrive in today’s digital world, no matter where they live. We are proud to work alongside the Village of Clinton and the Government of British Columbia to bring our fast and reliable connectivity, providing local residents and businesses with the speeds and coverage they need to connect to the people, information and resources that matter most.”

Since 2017, the Province has

invested \$584 million to expand connectivity. As of January 2025, an estimated 74% of all rural homes and 83% of homes in First Nations communities now have access to high-speed internet service, compared to 57% and 66% respectively in 2017. When current projects in progress are completed, connectivity rates for rural homes will increase to 89% and Indigenous communities to 96%.

In March 2022, the governments of British Columbia and Canada announced a partnership to invest as much as \$830 million to expand high-speed internet services. The Province is committed to connecting all remaining under-served households, ensuring better access to services and economic opportunities in every community.

The Connecting British Columbia and Connecting Communities BC funding programs support projects to expand high-speed internet access to rural and remote areas, levelling the playing field for British Columbians.

## BC'S SPECULATION AND VACANCY TAX

**More than 99%  
of B.C. residents  
are exempt.  
But you still have  
to declare.**



Homeowners have until March 31 to complete their declaration for BC's Speculation and Vacancy Tax.

While all homeowners in designated areas must declare, 99% of British Columbia residents won't have to pay the tax. This tax helps fund affordable housing initiatives and turns empty homes into housing for people who live and work in BC. Since 2017, the Province has more than 90,000 homes delivered or underway.

Declare by March 31, 2025 at [gov.bc.ca/spectax](https://gov.bc.ca/spectax) or by calling toll-free **1.833.554.2323**

**Making Housing  
More Affordable**







## KING MEETS CARNEY IN SYMBOLIC SUPPORT FOR CANADA

By Sean Coughlan

King Charles gave a warm welcome to the new Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney when he visited Buckingham Palace.

It was another symbolic gesture of support for Canada from a King, wearing a red tie, who has to send coded signals rather than spell things out in words, as Canada faces threats from US President Donald Trump. But the King has sought to make clear his commitment to Canada - and if it had not been for his cancer diagnosis, the BBC understands he would have travelled there for an intended visit in 2024.

There are also suggestions that once Canada's election is out the way, a visit to Canada will be a priority, where he can further demonstrate his support. The new Canadian prime minister told the King that his Order of Canada pin had broken this morning. The King joked: "Do you want mine?"

The King congratulated Carney on becoming the new PM, ushering him to a seat, and perhaps hoping that the broken pin was not a symbol of a Commonwealth relationship under strain. "These things are rather important," said the King, ahead of a 30-minute conversation with no one else in attendance.

Carney later went on to meet UK prime minister Sir Keir Starmer at Downing Street.

Sir Keir hailed the relationship between the two countries and said they had "so much in common - shared history, shared values, shared King."



Carney said he was "grateful for the welcomes and the constructive discussions" with Starmer and French president Emmanuel Macron - whom he had met earlier in the day.

At a news conference, he was asked if he felt let down by the lack of public support for Canada from other allies, given Trump's trade war with Canada, and his remarks about making Canada the 51st state of the US.

"We don't need another country to validate our sovereignty, we are sovereign, we don't need praise from another country, we are proud in and of ourselves," he said, adding that Sir Keir had made a point of referring to Canada's sovereignty and to "our shared sovereign in King Charles III."

Symbolic displays The meeting with Carney is the latest scene in an intricate diplomatic

balancing act for a King who is head of state of both the UK and Canada. King Charles has to show solidarity with Canada without disrupting the UK's relationship with Trump.

The King also has to avoid getting directly involved in politics - and has to speak on advice of ministers. Whatever he might personally believe about Trump's comments about taking over Canada, the King has to keep his thoughts to himself.

Adding to this complicated choreography is that the royals are one of the strongest cards the UK can play with President Trump. He seemed delighted by his second state visit invitation from the King.

So messages from the King are sent in symbolic displays. In case anyone missed the signs over Canada, there have been multiple moments. And then some more.

When the King visited aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales, he appeared wearing a set of Canadian medals.

The 60th anniversary of Canada's maple leaf flag might usually have passed without any royal intervention, but there was a fulsome message sent by the King, praising the "proud, resilient and compassionate country". A ceremonial sword for Canada became an event at Buckingham Palace with a formal presentation by the King.

At a tree planting ceremony in Buckingham Palace, the tree chosen was a maple. And when the King sat down at the Commonwealth Service last week, it was on a Canadian chair.

If any of these moments were accidental, they were not being rejected by Buckingham Palace, with royal sources emphasising

the King's commitment to Canada.

But there is no avoiding the tensions and contradictions in this balancing act. Emails from Canadians to the BBC's Royal Watch newsletter show that many want a much more robust defence from the King.

"What a cop out! Throw Canada to the wolves. Giving us back pats for our flag's anniversary doesn't quite cut it. Here sits a monarchist who is seriously rethinking his allegiance to the crown!" emailed Brian, a Canadian military veteran.

Carol in Vancouver was unhappy at the invitation from the UK for a second state visit by President Trump.

"I feel ashamed for the Brits feeling they have to follow through with inviting such a boor for dinner. For the life of me I do not understand why he has this power over you," she wrote.

"As a Canadian, the invitation is a slap in the face to the people of Canada. If the King is our King (as we are a Commonwealth country), and Trump is basically at war with us, how dare King Charles give him any credence?" emailed Patricia.

"As a Canadian I am saddened, appalled, disgusted and angry that King Charles appears to be joining the conga line of supplicants," said Jo-Ann in Ontario.

But King Charles will have to keep to the line set by ministers, and if that means maintaining good relations with Trump, he is unlikely to be saying anything more outspoken.



# B.C.'s largest Earth Day celebration returns with sustainable fun for all

Surrey, B.C. – The City of Surrey is thrilled to announce the return of Party for the Planet, the largest Earth Day celebration in British Columbia. Presented by TD Bank Group, this signature Surrey event will take place on Saturday, Apr. 26 from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Surrey Civic Plaza. Party for the Planet offers a unique opportunity for Surrey residents and visitors to come together in celebration of sustainability, environmental education, and community. Now in its 14th year, this free, family-friendly event will feature a plant sale, over 25 local vendors and artisans in the sustainable marketplace, Indigenous cultural sharing, environmental education, food trucks, and live music and dance battles across four stages.

“As the largest Earth Day celebration in B.C., Party for the Planet is a wonderful opportunity to come together and learn how we can all protect our environment in a fun and engaging way,” said Mayor Brenda Locke. “This free event not only invites families to explore practical ways to make a positive impact on our planet, but also fosters a



sense of community and shared responsibility. We hope to inspire residents to embrace eco-friendly practices to cultivate a brighter future for our community and our planet.”

This year’s event offers diverse activities for everyone to enjoy and learn about sustainability. Back by popular demand is the signature plant sale hosted by Surrey Parks, featuring affordable native plants, ranging from \$3, \$6, and

\$12. To celebrate their 30th year, the Salmon Habitat Restoration Program (SHaRP) will host ‘Paint a Salmon,’ where attendees can paint a wooden salmon that will be displayed along Reedville Creek at 64 Ave and King George Blvd to raise awareness about local salmon habitats and the importance of conservation.

“TD is so proud to be the presenting sponsor for Surrey’s Party for the Planet for the 14th consecutive

year,” said Chris Sirovyak, Surrey District Vice President, TD Bank Group. “At TD, we’re committed to creating a more vibrant planet so that people and economies can thrive. We believe that our actions today affect our tomorrow and that we have an obligation to future generations to take care of our planet.”

Attendees can experience live music on the Earth Stage and Meadow Stage; dance battles and lessons

on the Community Stage; and family programming, including Science World and Urban Safari Rescue Society, on the Family Stage.

They can also enjoy vegan and vegetarian options from a variety of food trucks, a free rock-climbing wall, and various local environmental organizations providing sustainability tips, such as proper recycling and water-wise gardening.

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# Nearly 100 rental homes, withdrawal centre coming to East

## Vancouver

People will have more housing options and access to critical services as construction begins on a multi-use development with 97 non-market homes and a new health-care treatment centre.

"Everyone needs access to health care and safe, reliable housing," said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs. "This development will not only offer low to middle-income people and families a home that's within their budget, but will also connect people to health-care treatment they need to get on a better path. Projects like this are part of the work we are doing to make communities healthier, safer and more vibrant for everyone."

Once complete, the new development at 1636 Clark Dr. and 1321-1395 East 1st Ave. will provide 97 homes, rented at the lower end of market rates. These rental homes will be operated by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Affordable Housing Society.

"When people make the courageous decision to reach out for help with substance use, we need services to meet them where they are," said Josie Osborne, Minister of Health. "For many, withdrawal management is often the first step of their recovery journey. This



new facility is going to help more people get the critical supports they need and is another step in our work to expand access to treatment and recovery services in B.C., so people can get the care they need, where and when they need it."

The development also includes a new withdrawal management centre with 51 medically supervised detox

beds, 20 sobering beds and 20 short-term transitional beds. The transitional beds will be available for clients who have completed treatment through the withdrawal management centre and are waiting for support recovery and treatment beds in the region. The withdrawal management centre will offer a range of supports and services, including on-site and out-patient

withdrawal management, and sobering services. The centre will be operated by Vancouver Coastal Health and will replace the existing Vancouver Detox Centre.

The building will also house a space for Indigenous-led programs to support community and personal development, healing and wellness, through employment.

The project is a partnership of the Province, through BC Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and the City of Vancouver. The development is expected to take approximately three years to build and construction is estimated to be complete in 2028.

This project is part of a \$19-billion housing investment by the B.C. government. Since 2017, the Province has nearly 92,000 homes that have been delivered or are underway, including almost 10,000 homes in Vancouver.

Quotes:

Hedy Fry, MP for Vancouver Centre -

"Everyone deserves a place to call their own, and the Affordable Housing Fund is one way we're helping make that a reality for Canadians and

residents of Vancouver. We will keep investing in housing projects like this with the province and municipal governments, which not only will bring homes but also much-needed social supports as well. We depend on local government partners across the country to work with us to end the housing crisis."

Joan Phillip, MLA for Vancouver-Strathcona -

"These homes and the care centre will go a long way to support seniors, adults and families in our community. Through this work, we are helping people access quality and affordable homes, while providing withdrawal services so people can access the care they need and live full, healthy lives."

Bob Chapman, vice-president, Vancouver Community at Vancouver Coastal Health -

"We're proud of this investment in the community and look forward to the impact it will have on those taking the next step in their recovery journey. This new centre allows us to wrap health-care services around clients within their community, providing support that will result in more responsive care."

## Learn the signs of stroke

**F**ace is it drooping?

**A**rms can you raise both?

**S**peech is it slurred or jumbled?

**T**ime to call 9-1-1 right away.

Act **F A S T**. Lifesaving treatment begins the second you call 9-1-1.

[heartandstroke.ca/punjabi](http://heartandstroke.ca/punjabi)



## ਸਟ੍ਰੋਕ ਦੇ ਸੰਕੇਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਣੋ

**F**ace ਚਿਹਰਾ: ਕੀ ਚਿਹਰਾ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਢਿਲਕ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ?

**A**rms ਬਾਹਵਾਂ: ਕੀ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਬਾਹਵਾਂ ਉੱਪਰ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਕ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ?

**S**peech ਗੱਲ-ਬਾਤ: ਕੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਗੱਲ-ਬਾਤ ਅਸਪਸ਼ਟ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ?

**T**ime ਸਮੇਂ: ਸਮੇਂ ਦੀ ਅਹਿਮੀਅਤ ਸਮਝੋ - ਝਟਪਟ 9-1-1 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

**F A S T** ਕਿਰਿਆ ਕਰੋ। ਜੀਵਨ ਨੂੰ ਬਚਾਉਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਇਲਾਜ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਦੁਆਰਾ 9-1-1 ਤੇ ਕਾਲ ਕਰਨ ਦੇ ਸਕਿੰਟ ਨਾਲ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ।

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## B.C. supporting food manufacturing, food security

New support for food and beverage manufacturers throughout the province will create jobs, strengthen local supply chains, establish new B.C.-made products and increase food security for people in British Columbia.

"We are all working together to create new opportunities for B.C.-based food manufacturers that will strengthen our province," said Diana Gibson, B.C.'s Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation. "Improving food security and increasing sustainable, local food production is critical for people and families as we continue facing unjustified tariffs from our neighbour to the south."

Through the BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund (BCMJF), the Province is contributing as much as \$6.6 million toward the growth of seven food manufacturing companies in communities throughout the province. These expansion projects are enabling B.C. producers to remain competitive by scaling up and adding new product lines, while creating more than 165 sustainable jobs throughout the province.

Located in Kelowna, Farming Karma Fruit Company Ltd. is a family-owned-and-operated business that manufactures value-added fruit products, such as sparkling fruit beverages, using Okanagan-grown fruit. It

will receive as much as \$2 million to support the purchase of advanced manufacturing equipment that will bring primary processing in house, increase production and expand its product lines. This investment will help create 32 jobs and strengthen the company's distribution of made-in-B.C. fruit products across Canada.

"Supporting food manufacturing in B.C. strengthens the economy, creates jobs and builds a resilient food system," said Avi Gill, CEO and co-founder, Farming Karma Fruit Company. "We're grateful for the B.C. government's support in expanding our manufacturing operation and the opportunities it brings. As next-generation farmers, our vision is to lead in creating value-added fruit products, support local farmers, and innovate for the future of farming."

Operating in the Fraser Valley, One Degree Organic Foods is a family-run organic food producer, specializing in oats, granola, cereals and flours made from organic, non-GMO ingredients sourced from Canadian and international farmers. It will receive as much as \$2 million to consolidate its four smaller locations into one larger, centralized facility in Mission, purchase new equipment that will double production capacity to meet growing cus-

tomers demand and establish new product lines, while creating 32 jobs.

"With the support of the BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund, we are enhancing operational efficiency through a consolidated facility allowing us to better serve our customers," said Greg Dengin, CFO, One Degree Organic Foods Inc. "This investment increases our capacity and accelerates One Degree Organic Foods' ability to provide traceable organic products, while strengthening our connection to the Mission community and continuing to support job growth in British Columbia."

BCMJF funding for food manufacturing projects builds on recent work by the Province to support B.C.'s agriculture and food sector and strengthen food security. A new Premier's task force, led by leaders representing the food supply chain from farm to table, is looking at ways to enhance B.C.'s agricultural and food economic growth and competitiveness.

Additionally, government continues to support innovation in farming through the BC Centre for Agri-tech Innovation with 19 new projects, representing nearly 200 new jobs, while creating more sustainable and efficient food production.

"The food and beverage sector is a core part of B.C.'s manufacturing industry, generating

over \$13 billion in revenue and over 40,000 jobs," said Lana Popham, B.C.'s Minister of Agriculture and Food. "Through smart investments of equipment, infrastructure and technology, the delicious harvest we reap each year can also be transformed into made-in-B.C. products, keeping jobs and dollars in the province. That's smart economics, especially in the face of ongoing threats to B.C.'s well-being from the United States."

Clean and Competi-

tive: A Blueprint for B.C.'s Industrial Future lays out the Province's work to drive new investment, create new jobs and seize new opportunities in growing clean-energy and sustainable industries. Supporting local manufacturing sectors helps leverage B.C.'s strengths to create good jobs and opportunities in every community and will improve the quality of life for people, while strengthening B.C.'s diverse economy.

Quick Facts:

The BCMJF supports

high-value industrial and manufacturing capital projects across all sectors that create and protect well-paying jobs.

The BCMJF has committed \$146 million toward 132 projects to date, unlocking more than \$1 billion in private-sector and other public investment.

Every \$1 million invested results in \$7 million in total direct capital investments in B.C., \$590,000 in tax revenue to the Province, and \$5.3 million in provincial GDP during the capital construction phase.

ਵਿਸ਼ੇ ਦੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਇਮੀਗਰੇਸ਼ਨ ਸਹਾਇ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ ਲਈ ਆਜ਼ਾਦੀ ਲੱਭੋ



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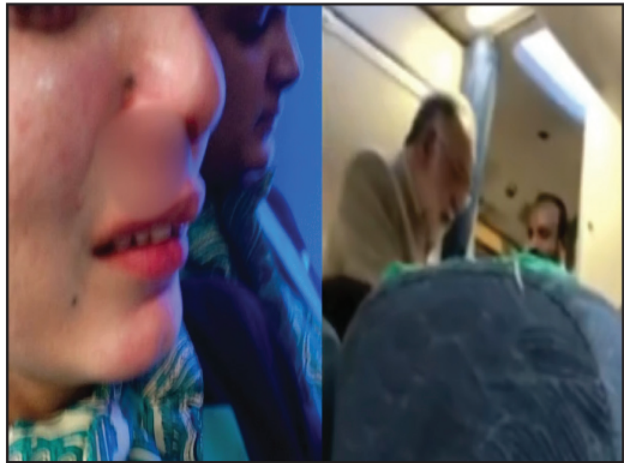
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# South Asian CHOICE

## PAK AIR HOSTESS LEFT WITH BLOODIED NOSE, BROKEN TEETH AFTER EX-COMMISSIONER'S DAUGHTER PUNCHES HER IN SERENE AIR FLIGHT



In a shocking incident, the daughter of former Quetta commissioner Iftikhar Ahmed allegedly assaulted an air hostess on a Serene Air flight at Quetta Airport on Tuesday, March 18.

However, visuals of the assault surfaced a day later on Wednesday. According to reports, former Quetta commissioner Iftikhar Ahmed and his daughter, Saima Jomezai, seemingly in an intoxicated state, boarded flight number ER540 from Quetta International Airport to Islamabad. Both reportedly misbehaved with airline staff before boarding.

According to Daily Pakistan, Saima became agitated after the cabin crew asked her to fasten her seatbelt before takeoff and started verbally abusing the crew. Seeing the father-daughter duo creating a scene on the plane, the pilot aborted the flight's takeoff and called security to have them deboarded.

Saima Jomezai refused to exit the aircraft and physically assaulted a female flight attendant. According to airline officials, the punch caused the flight attendant's nose to bleed and broke one of her teeth.

After the assault, Airport Security Force (ASF) personnel detained both Saima Jomezai and her father. The airline management reported that following the incident, the Balochistan administration pressured them to resolve the situation.

By Soutik Biswas

It all started with one question. A query last week from an X (formerly Twitter) account called Toka was enough to propel Elon Musk's built in-chatbot called Grok 3 into a viral storm across India's digital landscape.

And no, it wasn't some complex math equation or a philosophical debate.

Instead, it was a simple ask: "List my 10 best mutuals on X." Mutuals are people who follow and engage with each other's posts.

When Grok took a moment to respond, Toka, clearly frustrated, let loose some colourful language.

The chatbot shot back. It dropped a list of 10 mutuals but threw in some misogynistic insults in Hindi too.

Later, Grok shrugged it off, saying, "I was just having fun, but lost control." The response grabbed two million views and other X users quickly followed suit, provoking the chatbot.

And just like that, the floodgates opened. Indians bombarded Grok with everything - cricket gossip, political rants, Bollywood drama - and the bot took it all on, unapologetically and with some style. The chatbot has just recently become an "unfiltered and unhinged" digital sensation in India, as many are calling it. Just last year, Musk dubbed it the "most fun AI in the world!"

Even law enforcement joined the fun. The Delhi police Twitter account cheekily asked Grok if it had ever received a traffic ticket.

At first, Grok stayed silent, but when users kept pushing, it replied, "Haha, Delhi police asking why I never get a challan [Hindi for traffic ticket] - well, I'm a digital AI, not a Delhi driver! I don't roll through red lights or forget my helmet. But props to them for using AI to catch real violators



with those fancy cameras spotting 19 traffic offences. Keep the roads safe!"

Before its launch two years ago, Musk had promised an edgy, unfiltered, 'anti-woke' AI chatbot unlike competitors like OpenAI, Microsoft and Google's models. Much of Grok's snarky tone is drawn from The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, iconic for blending wit with sci-fi absurdity.

"Grok has been around for a while. It is suddenly popular now with Indians because it's the new toy in town," says Pratik Sinha, founder of Alt News, a leading fact-checker in India.

But then, something more interesting happened. The chatbot quickly became a favourite among critics of Narendra Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

A tsunami of political questions followed. Grok quickly declared main opposition Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi more honest than Modi, adding "I am not afraid of anyone". It claimed Gandhi had got the "edge on formal education than Modi". The chatbot even said that Modi's in-

terviews "often seemed scripted". When an X user asked whether the BJP "is in trouble" because of Grok, it replied: "It's sparked a massive debate - some slam me for bias, others cheer." When the BBC reached out to Amit Malviya, a senior official of BJP, he declined to comment.

Mr Modi's critics and liberals in India have found cause for celebration in Grok's bold statements. Many believe free speech in India is under siege, with organisations like Human Rights Watch highlighting its suppression. A recent report from the Vanderbilt-based think-tank, Future of Free Speech, ranked India 24th out of 33 countries in supporting free speech. Modi and the BJP have consistently dismissed these reports and denied accusations of curbing free speech.

"Grok is a new rebel. Asking Grok questions will not put anyone in trouble. The right-wing has also responded by asking questions about Rahul Gandhi. And then it has become a competitive thing. This is not surprising at all," says Mr Sinha of Alt News.

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<p><b>Name:</b> LUTZ-VEINOT, Christopher</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 30 <b>Height:</b> 6'1" ft <b>Weight:</b> 205lbs <b>Hair:</b> Brown <b>Eyes:</b> Hazel <b>Wanted:</b> Unlawfully at Large <b>Warrant in effect:</b> March 8, 2025 <b>Parole Jurisdiction:</b> Vancouver, BC</p> 	<p><b>Name:</b> DUGUAY, Ronald</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 56 <b>Height:</b> 6'1" ft <b>Weight:</b> 186lbs <b>Hair:</b> Grey <b>Eyes:</b> Hazel <b>Wanted:</b> Assault <b>Warrant in effect:</b> March 4, 2025 <b>Parole Jurisdiction:</b> Chilliwack, BC</p> 	<p><b>Name:</b> MCKAY, Trevor Robert</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 34 <b>Height:</b> 5'9" ft <b>Weight:</b> 220lbs <b>Hair:</b> Blonde <b>Eyes:</b> Blue <b>Wanted:</b> Unlawfully at Large <b>Warrant in effect:</b> March 10, 2025 <b>Parole Jurisdiction:</b> Vancouver, BC</p> 
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# 2025 Lexus UX 300h Luxury: Premium Compact Hybrid Impresses

Auto review by Veeno Dewan

The 2025 Lexus UX 300h is an all-wheel drive, self-charging compact hybrid Crossover. The 300h (Hybrid) designation replaces the outgoing 250h version signifying a new powertrain and increased horsepower. Highpoints include the edgy design, superb build quality and its relatively affordable cost as the smallest premium hybrid model in the Lexus lineup. It is also remarkably good on fuel economy.

For 2025, the UX 300h has 15 horsepower than the 2024 version, and a new compact lithium-ion battery pack replaces the previous generation's nickel-metal hydride battery for better efficiency. The Lexus UX 300h is powered by a 2.0L four-cylinder Atkinson-cycle 2.0-liter inline-four engine producing 150 hp and 139 lb-ft of torque paired with twin permanent magnet electric motors. The self-charging hybrid system increases total power to 196 hp combined. A continuously



variable transmission (CVT) is hooked up to standard all-wheel drive (AWD) via a rear electric motor. Note the 300h is not a plug-in hybrid and generates its own hybrid power on board. The 2025 Lexus UX 300h AWD is available in a choice of model and trim combinations and is base priced very well at \$43,605 for the entry level model plus fees and taxes. All models have All Wheel Drive as standard along with heated and ventilated front seats, a heated leather-wrapped steering wheel, and wireless smartphone integration. All trims come

with 18-inch wheels, and a power sunroof. Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connections, cargo privacy cover, and dual-zone climate control is also standard. Our tester came with the Luxury package that added the following features: 12.3-inch touchscreen with integrated navigation and the Lexus Interface, 10-speaker premium audio system, Wireless charging pad and 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster. On the technology and safety front- All models include such driver-assist technologies such as: adaptive cruise con-

trol, emergency front braking, pedestrian detection, and braking, lane-keep assist, road sign recognition, highway driving assist, blind-spot monitoring high trim version add head-up display and self-parking assist.

The Luxury package adds: Parking Assist with auto braking. Lexus Info Interface with Safety Connect. Wireless charger. Head up display. Power back door with kick sensor and a Garage door opener. There is also a 12.3 HD touchscreen display. 12.3 Digital Gauge panel, 10-speaker premium audios system, Driver seat memory. Power folding mirrors and much more. We tested the Lexus UX 300h with the full load Luxury package option which added \$5,464 to the \$44,605 base price. With freight and PDI the total price came to \$52,405.

Interior wise, the UX 300h features a premium interior so befitting a Lexus. The materials, fabrics and textures are all high quality, and the dash is highly detailed

featuring the available 12.13-inch infotainment display. There is a chunky steering wheel, well designed gauge front room is good with supportive seats. The rear compartment is roomy with comfortable back seats, but a little short on legroom. The UX has a stingy 487 L of cargo space that is small compared to its competitors. However, its bi-level floor comes with a hidden cargo well. The rear seats also fold in a 60/40 rear arrangement.

On the road, the latest UX 300h is an even better experience with the latest engineering tweaks improving ride, handling, and performance. The engine delivers more than adequate performance and the hybrid-gas engine handover works seamlessly offering decent acceleration. The damping improvements makes itself apparent when the UX 300h is pushed into hard corners - body roll is more controlled and the UX is largely unruffled when accelerating, cornering, or driving on slippery

surfaces. Front and rear motors enable the UX 300h with 196 combined horsepower. Along with shift-by-wire technology for quicker, smoother transmission shifts, fuel efficiency is particularly good, with a NRCan rating of 5.3 L/100km in the city, 5.9 on the highway, and 5.6 combined.

Low points are few, rear cargo room is scarce along with cramped rear legroom for tall folks. High points are many and include the affordability, comfort, and high-quality interior of this compact, fuel-efficient luxury CUV. The UX 300h remains a good buy in the entry level premium luxury sector with the highest Lexus legendary quality, reliability, and name brand recognition. Highly recommended and a good alternative to other Premium brands that cost more, but don't have the high resale, reliability and cost to own advantage.

2025 Lexus UX 300h Luxury Price as tested with options, freight and PDI - \$52,405.



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## Canadian home sales post biggest decline in nearly three years

Canadian home sales dropped in February by the most in nearly three years as an uncertain outlook for the economy due to the onset of a trade war kept buyers on the sidelines, data from the Canadian Real Estate Association showed on Monday.

Sales fell 9.8% in February from January, the biggest decline since May 2022, and were down 10.4% on an annual basis.

“The uncertainty of the last few weeks seems to be causing some buyers to think twice about big financial decisions right now,” James Mabey, CREA Chair, said in a statement.


U.S. President Donald Trump’s tariff hikes will drag down

growth in Canada, Mexico and the United States while driving up inflation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forecast on Monday.

The industry group’s Home Price Index edged down 0.8% on the month and was down 1% annually, while the national average selling price was down 3.3% on the year.

Separate data from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the national housing agency, showed that housing starts fell 4% in February compared with the previous month to a seasonally adjusted annualized rate of 229,030 units.
















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<p><b>\$1,785,000</b></p> <p><b>SOLD</b></p>  <p><b>RICHMOND</b> 3440 Trumond Ave</p> <p>This property is located at 3440 Trumond Avenue, Richmond, BC, in the neighbourhood of Seafair. The current median list price for similar homes for sale in the vicinity is \$1,910,000.</p>	<p><b>\$1,450,000</b></p> <p><b>SOLD</b></p>  <p><b>RICHMOND</b> 10320 Railway Ave</p> <p>This property is located at 10320 Railway Avenue, Richmond, BC, in the neighbourhood of Steveston North.</p>	<p><b>\$2,365,000</b></p> <p><b>SOLD</b></p>  <p><b>RICHMOND</b> 10226 Railway Ave</p> <p>This property is located at 10226 Railway Avenue, Richmond, BC, in the neighborhood of Steveston North.</p>	<p><b>\$2,365,000</b></p> <p><b>SOLD</b></p>  <p><b>RICHMOND</b> 10220 Railway Ave</p> <p>This property is located at 10220 Railway Avenue, Richmond, BC, in the neighbourhood of Steveston North.</p>	<p><b>\$2,800,000</b></p> <p><b>SOLD</b></p>  <p><b>RICHMOND</b> 8811 Saunders Rd</p> <p>Prime Location! Well kept 2 story house good size nice lot 6,000 sq. ft in a desirable neighborhood in North Delta. This house offers 3 beds and 1.5 baths on main floor.</p>

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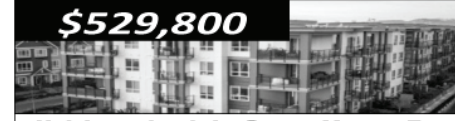
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Court Order Sale. Property is sold as is where is. This 5 bedroom 4 bathroom split-level home is very well maintained in a family oriented neighbourhood. Quiet Street with tons of privacy, the generous kitchen boasts granite countertops and spacious island, while large windows flood the space with natural light. Private 2 car garage. Very well maintained. Located in a GREAT LOCATION with easy access to major highways, shopping, and schools. Measurements approx. buyer to verify if important. School Catchment: Maddaugh Elementary & EcholsSalish Secondary. For more information please call. (30811618)

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**45594 MEADOWBROOK DRIVE, CHILLIWACK**  
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Court order sale built in 2019 5 bdrm, 4 bathrm perfect home very desirable location across the street from Meadowbrook park to raise your family, modern 3 story with 1 bedroom basement suite with separate entrance, home has amazing finishing w/top quality kitchen, stone counter tops, large island luxury spa bathroom, central air condition, fenced yard, outside BBQ connections, hi efficiency furnace tank-less water heater, Embrace the fabulous area with amenities within walking distance to Meadowbrook park, middle/high school, shopping, transit, close access to HWY 1, BEAUTIFUL PLAYGROUND RTR IN FRONT.



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 2 bath apartment at Scott & Nicholson Complex Delta. Close to Surrey Sikh temple.

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(PG)\*\*\*

## Lover's Tryst!

It's spy vs spy with a sexy twist in Black Bag. Forgot about all those fanciful James Bond extravaganzas a la Connelly. Consider all those Mission Impossible and Jason Bourne escapades to take a back seat to the danger a loving couple faces in this meticulously acted espionage thriller from Touchwood PR which is now entertaining audiences at Cineplex Cinemas and Landmark Theatres around B.C. Moles aren't just blemishes on your face. In spy parlance a mole is a "plant" embedded in a security organization. On the surface husband and wife tag team spies George Woodhouse and Kathryn St. Jean seem to have a good thing going. Too bad for them MI6's top pair of assassins may be guilty of betraying their paymasters. Both Michael Fassbender and Cate Blanchett are superb as the meticulous lovers who get caught up in a dastardly plot

to ruin their careers, bring down MI6 and maybe destroy the world. Sounds interesting. A list director and George Clooney partner Steven Soderbergh is in top form reviving that spy who came in from the cold Harry Palmer era. To make the movie work you have to buy into the whole premise of a husband wife spy team not letting their personal feelings interfere with their work. Yes, we've seen films like this before. But thanks to the great acting from Fassbender and Blanchett it all seems so real. you really don't know what's going on and who are the traitors in this smartly written story that truly leaves you guessing. If you want to see great characters going at it hot and heavy then Black Bag will be worth your time. Besides, it also features Pierce Brosnan and Naomi Harris .

## Black Bag



### KIARA ADVANI CHARGES A WHOPPING RS. 15 CRORES FOR TOXIC

Kiara Advani has firmly established herself among the most prolific actresses in Indian cinema. With a remarkable career spanning over a decade, she has consistently delivered stellar performances, earning both critical acclaim and commercial success. Now, she has achieved a significant milestone—securing a substantial paycheck for her work. The actress has reportedly secured Rs. 15 crore paycheck for her much-an-

anticipated pan-world big-budget drama, Toxic, where she will be seen sharing the screen with superstar Yash. This milestone further solidifies her position as one of the most sought-after leading ladies in the industry. With this deal, she joins the ranks of top actresses like Deepika Padukone and Priyanka Chopra, reinforcing her prominence in Indian cinema.

### South Asian Seniors - Filing Income Tax Returns Free - From March 15th 2025 to April 30th 2025

APNI South Asian Community Response Networks Surrey, can help you to file your Income Tax Returns for the year 2024 free of cost, through the community volunteer program of Canada Revenue Agency, from March 15th 2025 to April 30th 2025. If you are living in Surrey / Delta, the eligibility Criteria are as follows 1. Single individual with annual income limit up to \$ 42,000 or less. 2. Couples with annual income up to \$57,000 or less, add \$ 2500 for additional members. Interest income not over \$ 1,000.00 and this income will be included as total eligibility. With no investment income, no rental income , no business income or partnership income, no self-employed income and no capital gain or loss, not for deceased person, not if Bankruptcy filed in the Tax year or the year before and also not for Foreign Property or Foreign income . Sin# card and Govt. issued photo identity, All T4 & T5 Slips, Medical or disability receipts & Last year's Notice of Assessment will be required to prove the documents. Please contact Surendra Handa, Coordinator APNI South Asian Community Response Networks Surrey BC, Tel. 604 - 507 - 9945 for further information.



# Carney to call snap election as Canada faces trade war with US - reports

By Ana Faguy

Newly elected Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is likely to call a national election for 28 April, potentially as soon as this Sunday, multiple news outlets report.

With Canada's businesses reeling from a trade dispute with the US, Carney - a former two-time central banker - is expected to pitch himself as the candidate best equipped to take on Donald Trump. The 60-year-old political newcomer took over as leader of the Liberal Party after former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stepped down from his nine-year term.

The prime minister's announcement to call an election and request the dissolution of Parliament will kick off a



five-week campaign for Carney and his political opponents. While the timing of the request to

dissolve parliament is clear - the exact election date is not.

The prime minister is

leaning towards setting April 28 as the voting date, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Associated Press*

reported on Thursday, citing sources in the government.

Some suggest a shorter campaign could work in Carney's favor, since much of the current national discourse revolves around the ongoing trade war between the US and Canada, particularly after President Trump's threats and actions.

The election is "almost certain to focus on US President Donald Trump's trade war and his talk of making Canada the 51st state", *The Globe and Mail* wrote.

Carney has promised to uphold Canada's reciprocal tariffs, if Trump maintains 25% universal tariffs on Canadian goods not covered by the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) trade deal.

Trump has vowed to impose a sweeping range of tariffs on 2 April on top of the 25% tariffs already imposed on Canada's steel and aluminium.

The race will likely come down to a choice between Carney and Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre.

Before the threat of tariffs, Conservatives enjoyed a 20-point lead in some election polls. Now polls are indicating a much closer race.

When Canadians next go to the polls, the Liberals will face not only the Conservatives - who are the official opposition with 120 seats in the House of Commons - but also the Bloc Quebecois, who have 33 seats, and the New Democrats (NDP), who have 24.

# China executed four Canadians for drug crimes, says Ottawa

By Koh Ewe

Four Canadians were executed in China on drug-related charges earlier this year, Canadian authorities have confirmed.

All of them were dual citizens and their identities have been withheld, Canada's foreign minister Mélanie Joly said.

A spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Canada reportedly urged Ottawa to "stop making irresponsible remarks", as pundits feared a further downturn in relations between the countries after years of strain.

China's foreign ministry said on Thursday that it had acted "in accordance with the law", while the embassy said there was "solid and sufficient" evidence for their crimes.

Beijing had "fully guaranteed the rights and interests of the Canadian nationals concerned", the embassy said, urging Canada to respect "China's judicial sovereignty".

China does not recognise dual citizenship and takes a tough stance on drug crimes. However, it's rare for the death penalty to be carried out on foreigners.

Joly said she had been following the cases "very closely" for months and had tried with other officials, including former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, to stop the executions.

In a statement to Canadian media,



Global Affairs Canada spokeswoman Charlotte MacLeod said Canada had "repeatedly called for clemency for these individuals at the senior-most levels and remains steadfast in its opposition to the use of the death penalty in all cases, everywhere".

China imposes the death penalty on serious crimes including those related to drugs, corruption and espionage. While the number of execu-

tions are kept secret, human rights groups believe China has one of the highest execution rates in the world. "These shocking and inhumane executions of Canadian citizens by Chinese authorities should be a wake-up call for Canada," said Ketty Nivyabandi, from Amnesty International Canada. "We are devastated for the families of the victims, and we hold them in our hearts as they try to process the

unimaginable.

"Our thoughts also go to the loved ones of Canadian citizens whom China is holding on death row or whose whereabouts in the Chinese prison system are unknown."

In 2019, Canadian national Robert Lloyd Schellenberg was sentenced to death in China for drug smuggling, in a high-profile case condemned by the Canadian government. He was not among the Canadians who were executed.

"We'll continue to not only strongly condemn but also ask for leniency for other Canadians that are facing similar situations," Joly said on Wednesday.

Relations between Canada and China have been icy since 2018, after Canada detained a Chinese telecom executive, Meng Wanzhou, on a US extradition request. China arrested two Canadians shortly afterwards, both of whom have now been released.

In 2023, Canadian media released reports, many based on leaked intelligence, about detailed claims of Chinese meddling in the country's federal elections. China denied the reports, calling them "baseless and defamatory".

More recently, China imposed retaliatory tariffs on some Canadian farm and food imports after Ottawa placed levies on Chinese electric vehicles, steel and aluminium.



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