

Why Valentine's Day in India causes strife and disputes about Indian culture and Western influence



SURJIT SINGH FLORA

On February 14, Valentine's Day in India arrives like a pop-up festival, bright and impossible to ignore, yet still not "official" in any civic sense. It isn't a public holiday. Schools run, offices stay open, Government contractors work their usual hours, and traffic flows the same by noon.

And still, the day matters, especially in big cities. For many young Indians, it has become a yearly ritual that fits neatly around lectures, shifts, and metro rides. That's also why it sparks mixed reactions: excitement, eye-rolls, and, in some places, backlash. The argument around the day often says more about modern India than the day itself. The transformation of a typical workday into a modern ritual for urban youth is noteworthy.

Valentine's Day in India doesn't pause the calendar; it squeezes into it. The celebration is often less about grand gestures and more about timing. The celebration often involves a quick meet before class, a small surprise at lunch, a lengthy call in between meetings, and a plan that begins after dark. Urban life makes that pattern

feel normal. College schedules and entry-level office routines can be strict, so couples treat February 14 like a weekday birthday. There's a sense of "don't miss it" but also "don't get late to work." The result is a celebration that looks casual on the surface yet is carefully planned underneath. Public spaces also shape the day. Malls, cafés, parks, bookstores, and metro stations become the backdrop, not because people want attention, but because cities offer neutral places to meet. Many young adults also prefer settings that feel safe and ordinary, where they can blend in.

At the same time, the day doesn't land the same way everywhere. In some neighbourhoods, it's just another Tuesday. In others, it's visible from morning, with roses outside stations and "special menus" chalked on café boards.

What February 14 looks like when offices and colleges stay open the day often begins small. A chocolate bar slipped into a backpack, a note folded into a diary, a single rose handed over the college gate.

Some couples meet for a short coffee between classes, then return to campus like nothing happened. The main focus is on the evenings. After work, restaurant tables fill fast, cafés get louder, and flower stalls do steady

business. In many cities, the celebration spills into the nearest weekend, because February 14 might fall mid-week. That's when movie plans, day trips, or longer dates happen with less pressure. Social media plays its part, but not always in the loud way people assume. Some post photos, some post jokes, and some post nothing. Many couples keep it private on purpose.

Privacy isn't only about family expectations; it can also be about comfort and safety. Choosing quieter venues, meeting in groups, or avoiding crowded public parks can be a practical decision, not a sign of shame. The significance of the day resonates most strongly with young, urban Indians.

City life gives young people more chances to meet and date. That doesn't mean everyone has full freedom, but it does mean there are more social circles, more mixed-gender spaces, and more room for personal choice. A set date like February 14 becomes a simple prompt to say what might otherwise stay unsaid.

Media exposure matters too. Films, TV, music, and the internet have carried the idea of Valentine's Day for decades, making it familiar even to those who don't celebrate. In colleges, peer culture adds fuel.

When friends plan dinners and exchange gifts, opting out can feel

like missing a shared moment, even for people who don't care much about the holiday.

Across regions and smaller towns, the picture varies. Some places celebrate quietly, some ignore it, and some face more social pushback. Still, the urban pattern is clear: for many young adults, Valentine's Day has become a modern marker on the calendar, like a yearly reminder to speak up.

The 1990s shift that made romance a product and why it worked. The growth of Valentine's Day in India was not accidental.

Economic liberalisation in the early 1990s changed what was available in markets and how brands spoke to consumers. As shopping culture expanded, special days became easier to sell. Valentine's Day fits that need because it's simple: one date, one theme, one emotion.

Businesses didn't invent love, but they packaged it into straightforward choices. A person doesn't have to write a long letter when a greeting card says it in five lines. A busy couple doesn't need a full plan when a restaurant offers a set menu and a "couple table" option. Convenience sells, especially in cities where time is tight.

This commercial layer also helped standardize the celebration. It turned a once-niche idea into a predictable season, with the

same colours, the same offers, and the same gift cues returning each February. Businesses built the season through various means, from greeting cards to big discounts. In many Indian cities, the market signals start early. Roses appear at traffic signals, heart-shaped boxes show up in shop windows, and bakeries advertise themed cakes. Gift options span both the familiar and the new: chocolates, greeting cards, jewellery, watches, perfume, beauty services, and curated hampers. Restaurants and cafés often run February 14 bookings, special menus, and small add-ons like a free dessert. Malls and local markets create photo corners and bundle offers. Delivery apps and online stores add speed to the tradition, making last-minute gifting easier than ever.

Promotions often run for a full week, sometimes longer. Social media influencers and short videos add extra heat, turning gift ideas into trends that travel fast between friend groups.

When love turns into a checklist, it loses its significance. When romance is sold like a preset kit, it can start to feel like homework. Some people feel pressure to spend, stop, and prove. Others feel left out if they're single, broke, heartbroken, or simply uninterested. The loudest version of the day can shrink the space for quieter

relationships. Still, the commercial side isn't all negative. Small businesses earn well in February, from florists to home bakers. Many couples genuinely enjoy having an excuse to plan something sweet in the middle of a busy year.

The backlash is part of the story, but it does not prevent the celebration of the day. Valentine's Day in India also carries a recurring conflict. Every few years, debates flare up about "Indian culture" and "Western influence." Some conservative and right-wing voices argue that this day promotes behaviour they see as improper, especially in public. The focus often lands on young couples, public displays of affection, and the fear that social norms are loosening too fast.

This tension is not uniform. It can vary by city, neighbourhood, and mood of a given year. In many places, nothing happens beyond online arguments. In some places, couples choose to be more careful, not because they doubt their feelings, but because they don't want trouble. Some groups resist Valentine's Day, and the debate surrounding it continues to resurface.

The objections tend to repeat: Valentine's Day is framed as imported, overly sexual, or against tradition. For critics, it can feel like a symbol of unwanted change, with young people considered

coping the West. There's also a public space issue. In crowded cities, people have different comfort levels around affection.

When norms clash, the debate shifts to determining who sets the rules and whose choices are visible. A practical middle ground: respect in public, choice in private. A workable approach is simple: adults can celebrate without trying to shock others, and critics can disagree without policing or harassing people.

Respect in public doesn't mean hiding; it means behaving with basic sense and consent. India already has many ways to express love, through family bonds, friendships, and partnerships. Valentine's Day can sit alongside those traditions as one option, not a replacement.

The line should be clear: no one owes anyone a performance, and no one deserves intimidation for a personal choice. The day will keep changing, shaped by city routines, markets, and social attitudes. The simplest takeaway holds steady: freedom matters more than moral panic, and meeting matters more than marketing. What would February 14 look like if more people treated it as a quiet choice to be kind?

Writer is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brompton Canada

Thailand's ruling Bhumjaithai party tops polls

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Bangkok

The Bhumjaithai Party of Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul is on track to win the most seats in Thailand's general election, according to unofficial results released by the state Election Commission after about 94 per cent of polling stations had reported on Monday. It's the first decisive victory of a conservative party in Thailand in years.

Sunday's election came against a backdrop of slow economic growth and heightened nationalist sentiment. Voter turnout stood at around 65 per cent, significantly lower than in the 2023 election.

The commission's running count, shown on its website, indicated that Bhumjaithai won about 193 seats in the 500-member House of Representatives. The House comprises 400 lawmakers directly elected based on constituencies, while 100



others are chosen from "party list" nominees, who gain seats according to each party's proportional share of the vote on a separate ballot indicating party preference. A simple majority of 251 seats is needed for the body to elect a prime minister. The figures indicate Bhumjaithai will have to seek one or two partners to form

a coalition Government with Anutin returning as its head. The progressive People's Party, which had been tipped to win the most seats, was holding down second place with 118 seats. It swept all constituencies in Bangkok and a majority in the capital's neighbouring provinces. The party also took a lead in the party list totals, taking about

3.8 million more votes on party list ballots than Bhumjaithai. Pheu Thai, the populist party representing the political machine of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, trailed behind with 74 seats. It's considered a disappointing result for a political force that has often dominated Thai elections.

Election warms up in Nepal's Jhapa seat

SHIRISH B. PRADHAN
Kathmandu

Weeks ahead of the March 5 general election, jhapa constituency in eastern Nepal has been hosting a series of meetings with former Kathmandu mayor Balendra Shah 'Balen' taking on the deposed prime minister KP Sharma Oli.

On Sunday alone, Balen, popular rapper-turned-politician, and the prime ministerial face of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), reached the jhapa-5 constituency in Koshi province while Oli, the chair of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist) CPN-UML already reached there two days ago to launch door-to-door campaign to woo voters. Oli has won parliamentary elections from jhapa district six times out of seven in the past. In the last election, he defeated Nepali Congress candidate by a huge margin. "However this time, the fight will be tougher for Oli, who will be forced to resign during the Gen Z movement in September last year," said Charan Prasad, senior rights activist, who is closely watching Nepalese politics.

The March 5 election was necessitated after Oli resigned on September 9 following violent protests by a youth-led Gen Z group against his Government over corruption and a ban on social media. Sushila Karki became the interim prime minister on



September 12 and recommended to the president to dissolve the House of Representatives and hold general election on March 5. This is the second time that Balen launched a campaign in jhapa in as

many weeks. "On Sunday alone, Balen visited at least a dozen places and met voters during the door-to-door campaign," said RSP sources. Balen ventured to choose jhapa-5, Oli's stronghold, as he has already declared to directly take on the legacy party and aim for the top executive position of the country.

As electioneering gained momentum, security has been intensified in jhapa district from where these two influential candidates are contesting, said Nepal Police sources. (PTT)

Tarique Rahman calls polls a turning point for Bangladesh

ASHOKE RAJ Dhaka

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Acting Chairperson Tarique Rahman on Sunday delivered a nationally televised address, calling the February 12 general election a historic opportunity to restore democracy and return state power to the people after years of what he described as authoritarian rule. Speaking at length to the nation, Rahman said Bangladesh had reached a decisive moment in its democratic transition.

Referring to Article Seven of the Constitution, which states that all powers of the Republic belong to the people, he alleged that a "fallen, defeated, and expelled fascist clique" had stripped citizens of their political rights and captured state institutions. He said the upcoming election would allow the people to reclaim ownership of the state through direct voting.

Rahman said the current democratic opening was the result of more than one and a half decades of struggle by BNP and other pro-democracy forces. He claimed thousands of people were subjected to enforced disappearances, killings, and abductions during this period, and cited the 2024 mass uprising, during which he said more than 1,400 people were killed and thousands injured. He paid tribute to those who lost their lives in movements for democracy and human rights, expressing condolences to their families and solidarity with the injured.

Reflecting on Bangladesh's political history, Rahman said sacrifices made during the 1971 Liberation War, the anti-autocracy movements, and more recent struggles should not be allowed



to go in vain. He said the responsibility of the present generation was to build a just, humane, safe, and democratic Bangladesh in line with the vision of those who had given their lives. Turning to policy issues, Rahman said BNP's election manifesto focuses on political and economic empowerment across all sectors of society.

He highlighted unemployment as a major challenge, citing figures that show 27 million unemployed people, including around 900,000 graduates, with a significant portion of youth not engaged in education, employment, or training.

He said BNP aims to create 10 million jobs at home and abroad through reforms in banking, insurance, and capital markets, expansion of regional economies, and increased investment in industry and trade.

Rahman said BNP plans to prioritize emerging sectors such as information technology, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, outsourcing, and semiconductors, alongside nationwide technical and vocational training. If BNP forms the next government, he said, educated unemployed

youth would receive temporary financial allowances to help them sustain themselves while seeking work or creating self-employment. Addressing women's empowerment, Rahman announced a proposed Family Card system to be issued in the name of the female head of each household.

Under the plan, economically disadvantaged families would receive monthly financial support or essential food assistance. He said BNP would continue free education for women, expand women's participation in policymaking, support women entrepreneurs, and introduce measures such as women-only electric transport, daycare facilities at workplaces, and stricter laws against harassment and violence.

Rahman also outlined plans for farmers, students, and healthcare. He said BNP would introduce Farmers' Cards to provide agricultural information and financial support, make technical and vocational education compulsory from secondary level, and include a third language in the curriculum to improve global employability. In healthcare, he emphasized preventive care and announced plans to train 100,000 primary healthcare workers to deliver services at the grassroots.

On governance, Rahman accused previous regimes of politicizing state institutions and pledged that constitutional bodies would function independently under a BNP Government. He promised merit-based recruitment in public administration, strict anti-corruption measures, and accountability of the Government to the people. He also proposed an expatriate Card to ensure dignity, protection, and benefits for Bangladeshis

living abroad. Rahman reaffirmed BNP's commitment to religious freedom and pluralism, saying religion belongs to individuals while the state belongs to all citizens. He pledged security and equal rights for people of all faiths and communities. Concluding his address, Rahman invoked the legacy of BNP founder President Ziaur Rahman and former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. He acknowledged past mistakes made by BNP Governments and offered an apology, seeking renewed public support. Calling on voters to participate actively in the February 12 election, he urged citizens, particularly first-time voters, to cast their ballots for BNP's symbol, the paddy sheaf, saying its victory would represent the victory of a free and democratic Bangladesh.

Appeal to Voters

In the closing section of his address, Rahman invoked the legacy of BNP founder President Ziaur Rahman and former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, pledging to honor their vision of democracy and Bangladesh nationalism. He acknowledged past mistakes made during previous BNP Governments and offered an apology to the people, asking voters to give to party another mandate to build a "safe Bangladesh" for current and future generations.

Urging high voter turnout, Rahman called on citizens—particularly first-time voters—to cast their ballots for BNP's electoral symbol, the paddy sheaf, on February 12. "Let the victory of the paddy sheaf be the victory of Bangladesh," he said, concluding with prayers for peace, justice, and democratic governance.

Tenure of Nepal's Gen Z protest probe commission extended



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kathmandu

Nepal Government on Monday extended for 25 days the tenure of a commission formed to investigate excessive use of force during last year's Gen Z protests.

This is the third time the probe commission's deadline has been extended. A meeting of the Council of Ministers took the decision to extend the deadline till March 11, said spokesperson and member of the commission Bighyan Raj Sharma. The commission's tenure was ending on Wednesday, February 11.

The three-member inquiry commission, led by former judge Gauri Bahadur Karki, was formed in September last year by the interim Government of Prime Minister Sushila Karki to probe allegations of the use of excessive force and rights violations during the youth-led protests.

ReNew Akshay Urja Limited					
CIN : U40300DL2015PLC275651					
Regd. Office : 138, Ansari Chambers II, Brijay Campa Place, Delhi 110066					
Corporate Office : ReNew Hub, Commercial Block - 1, Zone-6, Golf Course Road, DLF City Phase-V, Gurgaon, 122009, Haryana, Phone - 0124-4996 670/ 80					
Statement of Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter ended 31 December 2025					
Particulars	Quarter ended 31 December 2025 (Unaudited)	Quarter ended 30 September 2025 (Unaudited)	Quarter ended 31 December 2024 (Unaudited)	Quarter ended 31 March 2025 (Audited)	Year ended 31 March 2025 (Audited)
Total Income from Operations	447	395	357	1,650	
Net Profit for the year (before Tax, Exceptional and Extraordinary Items)	229	184	163	764	
Net Profit for the year before tax (after Exceptional and Extraordinary Items)	229	184	163	764	
Net Profit for the year after tax (after Exceptional and Extraordinary Items)	168	138	127	590	
Total Comprehensive Income for the year (Comprising Profit/Loss for the year (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	168	138	127	590	
Paid up Equity Share Capital	133	133	133	133	
Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	4,798	4,589	4,086	4,306	
Equity component of compulsory convertible debentures	1,144	1,144	1,144	1,144	
Net worth	6,035	5,867	5,363	5,581	
Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares*	1.92	1.92	NA	NA	
Debt Equity Ratio*	1.92	1.92	2.09	2.09	
Earnings Per Share (of Rs. 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations)	7.35	6.03	5.54	25.93	
1. Basic	7.35	6.03	5.54	25.93	
2. Diluted	7.35	6.03	5.54	25.93	
Capital Redemption Reserve*	314	314	NA	NA	
Debiture Redemption Reserve*	2.19	1.30	2.36	1.61	
Debiture Service Coverage Ratio	3.12	2.94	2.72	2.92	
Interest Service Coverage Ratio	7.35	6.03	5.54	25.93	
Long Term Debt to Working Capital*	0.98	1.16	1.25	1.17	
Total Debt to Total Assets Ratio*	0.36	0.37	0.46	0.40	
Current Liability Ratio*	1.11	1.11	1.11	1.11	
Debt to Equity Ratio	1.29	0.97	1.09	1.43	
Disclosures pursuant to Regulations 52(4) and 52(5) Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosures Requirements) Regulations, 2015.					
* Credit Rating: ND AA- (ICR)					
- Change in credit rating: No					
- Debt Equity Ratio: mentioned above					
- Debt Service Coverage Ratio: mentioned above					
- Interest Service Coverage Ratio: mentioned above					
- Outstanding redeemable preference shares (Quantity and Value): Not Applicable					
- Net Worth** (31 December 2025): INR 6035 (31 March 2025): INR 5,581					
- Net profit after tax: mentioned above					
- Earnings per share: mentioned above					
- Debiture Redemption Reserve (31 December 2025): INR 314 (31 March 2025): INR 305					
- There are no material revision in the use of proceeds of issue of Non Convertible Debentures from the objects stated in the offer document (Regulation 52(7A))					
Notes:					
1. Ratios have been computed as follows:					
- Earnings per share (Basic & Diluted) = Profit after Tax / Weighted average number of equity shares					
- Debt Equity Ratio = Debt (Amount due to Debiture Holders) / Equity (share capital + share premium + equity reserve / Short term borrowing but excluding unsecured loans)					
- Interest Service Coverage Ratio = Profit before interest, prior interest, tax, extraordinary items and depreciation / Total Interest Expense					
- Debt Service Coverage Ratio* = (PAT based on Project Revenues realized (including non-cash adjustment) + Depreciation + Interest (Interest, Guarantee Fees, other financing costs payable under Debiture and Project Documents) / Interest + Principal Repayment-Guarantee Fee)					
- Asset Coverage Ratio = Total Assets / Debt (Amount due to Debiture Holders)					
- Current Liability Ratio = Current Liabilities / Current Liabilities					
- Current Liability Ratio = Current Liabilities / Total Liabilities					
- Long Term Debt to Working Capital = Non-Current borrowing including current maturities of Non-current borrowings (Current Assets - Current Liabilities (including current maturities of Non-current borrowings)) / Long Term Debt					
- Total Debt to Total Assets Ratio = Total outstanding debt / Total Assets					
- Debt Turnover Ratio = Revenue from operations / Average Trade Receivables					
* As per Debiture Trust Deed dated 20 September, 2017.					
** There are no material revision in the use of proceeds of issue of Non Convertible Debentures from the objects stated in the offer document (Regulation 52(7A))					
2. The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarterly financial results filed with the National Stock Exchange under regulation 52 of the Listing Regulations. The full format of the quarterly financial results is available on the website of the Stock Exchange.					
3. The company is in the business of development and operation of solar power. There is only one segment (business and/or geographical) in accordance with the requirements of IND AS - 108 "Operating Segments".					
4. For the other items referred in regulation 52(4) of the Listing Regulations, pertinent disclosures have been made in the National Stock Exchange and can be accessed on the URL - https://www.renew.co.in/companies-listing/corporate-finance-announcements					
5. The above financial results of the Company for the quarter and nine months ended 31 December 2025 have been approved by the Board of Directors of the Company at the meeting held on 03 February 2026. The statutory auditors of the company have carried the limited review for financial results of the Company for the quarter and nine months ended 31 December 2025.					
For and on behalf of ReNew Akshay Urja Limited (Sd/-) Parul Agrawal Managing Director, DIN : 06452687					
Place: Gurgaon Date: 09 February, 2026					