

## NEWS OVERVIEW

# Understanding world events and trends



## Anniversary of Gandhi Assassination

**H**is death was regarded as an international tragedy. News of the loss stunned the world.

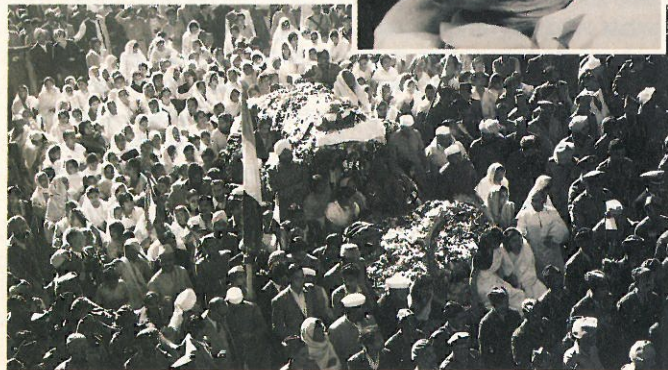
On January 30, 1948—40 years ago this month—the revered Indian nationalist leader Mohandas K. Gandhi was felled in New Delhi as he was about to lead in evening prayers.

His assassin, a Hindu, shot him with a pistol at a range of three feet. Gandhi uttered his final words: *Hai Rama!* ("Oh, Rama [a Hindu deity]"). Twenty-five minutes later, the 78-year-old Gandhi was dead.

Gandhi (no relation to

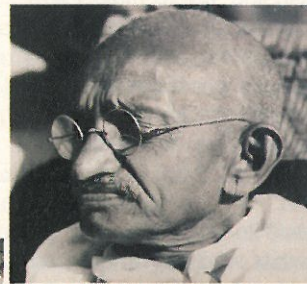
Prime Ministers Indira and Rajiv Gandhi) was the chief figure of the Indian nationalist movement against the British raj (rule) in India.

Though few of them ever fully accepted all his precepts, Indians venerated Gandhi as a saint, and called him *Mahatma* (Sanskrit, "Great Soul").



Gandhi's teaching of *ahimsa* ("noninjury") and his advocacy of nonviolence and

passive resistance to achieve political and social objectives gained worldwide attention.



Gandhi's critics, on the other hand, viewed him with suspicion and resentment.

His enemies—citing his personal habits and self-contradictory views on many issues—labeled him a hypocrite, a subversive, an impractical dreamer.

In 1947, Gandhi reluctantly supported the creation of Pakistan from the predominantly Muslim portions of British India. He endeavored to halt the consequent violence between Muslims and Hindus.

Generally respected by both factions, the frail leader undertook lengthy self-imposed fasts to force an end to communal disturbances. In the end, bloodletting gripped the subcontinent following the British withdrawal.

Though much mythology surrounds the life of Gandhi, his role as mediator and peacemaker is today widely acknowledged.