

#LIFE

Turning Over a New Leaf

Nature reminds us that entering a new season in our lives is nothing to fear!



Change can be unsettling. Good or bad, exciting or unexpected, there's an undeniable anxiety that accompanies seeing our lives shift. We've all likely felt that instinctive resistance to 'the new,' unsure what a new job, a new diet, a new house, or a new town might bring. I even remember seeing it in my kids as they moved through grade school, hesitant to start a new school year with an unfamiliar classroom or teacher.

Thankfully, nature reminds us that entering a new season in our lives is nothing to fear. Right now, trees around the country are already beginning to welcome their next chapter. Soon, green leaves will fade, replaced by the telltale hues of autumn. We already know trees have a positive effect on people's mental health, but during this time of the year, it feels like forests are just dishing out endless joy for free. And I'm not the only one looking to soak it all in. What's now known as 'leaf-peeping' has become a highly lucrative form of tourism in the United States. A researcher from Appalachian State University estimates that across 24 states in the eastern half of the country, fall foliage tourism contributes more than \$30 billion to local economies. In Maine alone, tourists looking to check out the fall colours make up about 20-25% of all the visitors the state sees in an entire year. And even though climate change has made it more difficult to predict when exactly foliage will peak, it hasn't stopped people from trying to figure it out.

Tourism leaders from the Smoky Mountains recently released their annual fall foliage prediction map. It's a popular interactive tool that uses weather science data to help travelers plan out when they have the best chance to catch those gorgeous autumn views, county by county.

There's such majesty in trees, and this is the season we take the time to marvel at the spectacle. Perhaps, part of what makes the foliage so special is the innate understanding that it's temporary. Eventually, branches will become bare, and we'll stop snapping photos for social media. And as the seasons change and we feel that familiar longing for what was, trees will once again embrace their evolution. Because even when they aren't adorned with flashy fall colours, even when their internal systems slow down during dormancy, trees are still supporting the ecosystem. Their fallen leaves are broken down by bacteria and fungi and infuse the soil with nutrients that the tree needs to grow. Insects take up shelter in their bark, eventually becoming food for other wildlife, seeking a place to nest. Their strong roots stabilize the soil, preventing erosion from winter snowmelt. A leafless tree is not a lifeless tree. Fall foliage or not, trees are important all year round. By taking care of trees and continuing to plant them, we're protecting ecosystems and wildlife. We're making people happier and healthier. And we're also helping to preserve this everlasting reminder that growth is beautiful.



The Power Dynamics

Shaping This War

As per reports, Mossad-operated drone base was inside Iranian territory, near Tehran. This base played a pivotal role in the early stages of the operation, with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) launching overnight to neutralize surface-to-surface missile launchers, radar systems, and air defense networks. These strikes from within were not high yield in firepower but strategically designed to create temporary blind spots in radar coverage, and confuse ground coordination during the critical opening moments of the Israeli air campaign. The base was established through gradual smuggling of drones, surveillance gear, and command modules via Mossad intelligence networks, and is believed to have operated with local assistance from sleeper cells or sympathetic insiders. This is similar to what was witnessed in the Ukrainian drone strike on Russian strategic assets.



In the early hours of Friday, the 13th, Israel began a series of air and precision strikes on Iranian military and nuclear targets, culminating in the killing of top Army Generals and Nuclear Scientists. The attacks, dubbed Operation Rising Lion, had been widely suggested as threats but few expected them to take place as Iranian nuclear talks with the United States were underway with the next round of talks, which were scheduled for 15 June in Oman. Israel launched Operation Rising Lion preemptively to 'roll back the Iranian threat to Israel's very survival.' Some 200 Israeli Air Force jets struck dozens of nuclear

and military command targets deep inside Iran. Apparently, Israeli intelligence had concluded that Tehran was about to cross the threshold towards weaponisation. Israeli sources said that the Revolutionary Guard had capabilities to assemble 15 nuclear bombs. Targets included nuclear enrichment facilities, ballistic missile production sites, and the homes and offices of senior Iranian military and political leaders. Major General Hossein Salami, Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Major General Mohammad Bagheri, the Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces, were killed in the strikes. Among the scientists reported killed were Dr. Fereydoon Abbasi-Davani, former head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran and a leading nuclear physicist, and Dr. Mohammad Mehdi Tehrani, a prominent academic and advocate of Iran's advanced scientific and AI capabilities. Iran, of course, retaliated on 14 June with ballistic missile strikes on Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

No Longer A Shadow War

The confrontation that long seemed a shadow war is now fully in the open. Following the 07 October Hamas attack, Israel has been systematically focusing on the elimination of several of Iran's proxy forces. Tehran's regional sway has been weakened by Israel's attacks, ranging from Hamas in Gaza to Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and militias in Iraq as well as by the ousting of Iran's close ally, Syrian dictator Bashar Assad. Israel has also been targeting Iran with missiles and felt that it is weak as sanctions have also hit Iran's oil exports and the economy is reeling from a collapsing currency and rampant inflation, as well as energy and water shortages. This is the moment that has been anticipated with great concern for a long time. Over the past year, Iran's defensive and offensive capabilities have been revealed to be far less capable than many had expected, which in theory would temper fears of where things could now be headed. However, the Iranian regime is now facing a potentially existential threat. That



#OPERATION RISING LION

Modern Warfighting Technologies



What distinguishes this operation from past Israeli campaigns is not just the breadth of targets, ranging from the Natanz enrichment facility to missile sites and senior Iranian officials, but the technology behind the strikes. More than 200 aircraft dropped over 330 munitions on 100 targets, achieving real-time coordination and minimising collateral damage. This level of synchronization would be only possible with AI-assisted battle management systems, real-time intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) fusion, and autonomous asset deployment.

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Further evidence of Israeli electronic and intelligence superiority emerged from their use of jamming systems and

previously tested air corridors, made possible through partial complicity or evasion of regional air traffic control systems. While this is conceivable for stealth aircraft, it is almost impossible for refueling tankers, suggesting either pre-cleared aerial routes or degraded radar visibility due to internal disruption.

This integrated operation targeted Iran's strategic triad: nuclear infrastructure, ballistic missile systems, and command leadership. The convergence of cyber, kinetic, and autonomous strikes reflects a new playbook for 21st-century warfare, where manned and unmanned systems are fused under a single operational tempo governed by machine learning and predictive analytics. The diffusion of AI-assisted warfare is no longer hypothetical, it is unfolding in real time.

Options

How the Iranian regime decides to react and what America's other regional partners, particularly the Arab Gulf states, choose to do in the coming days will shape the trajectory of events across the region. The US has the largest military footprint of any external actor in the region.

An option could involve a return to clandestine warfare, reminiscent of the 1980s with bombings targeting US and Israeli Embassies and military installations.

Iran's leaders cannot afford to appear weak in the face of Israeli military pressure, raising the prospect of further escalation, including attacks on Israel or even the option of testing a nuclear device and building a nuclear bomb. As per some experts, Iran could also withdraw from the NPT which would signal the acceleration of their nuclear

enrichment programme. Presently, there is uncertainty about how much quantifiable damage Israel has dealt to Iran's nuclear program. But the more important question is if Israel's attack has destroyed Iran's will to move forward.

On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has positioned himself as a central actor regarding Iran. He may choose to pause after absorbing Iran's retaliation, and allow a brief window for renewed diplomacy. The aim would be a deal that includes zero uranium enrichment and full dismantling of Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Alternatively, Israel could pursue sustained military operations, as it has done with Hezbollah in Lebanon, to further degrade Iran's nuclear program and weaken its leadership and decision-making apparatus.



Music is a Therapy

There's nothing in the world like the sound of your favourite song coming on, it just gets right into your head and your body and makes you move. Or maybe, it takes you on a journey to a faraway place and time, where you languish in a memory of times gone by and people who are no longer present. Some of our favourite songs can lift us up out of depression and worry, and make an otherwise horrible day suddenly seem like it's not so bad. World Music Day celebrates music in all its forms and the impact it's had on the world and the human spirit. It is a day to sing along, create music and experience it, as a truly endless adventure.



The US Presence

Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, emphasised in the first official response to the attacks that this was a unilateral action by Israel and the US was not involved in the campaign. However, Iran is not buying that argument. The New York Times reports that Iran's Foreign Ministry said the attack could not have happened without 'coordination and authorisation' from the US and 'as Israel's main supporter, would also be responsible for the consequences.'

For the US, its military and diplomatic presence across the region will now be directly in Iran's crosshairs. Iran has made no secret of their potential intent to

strike at US interests in the event of such an acute challenge to their security. While there will be concern about the Gulf, the most acute threat will be in Iraq and Syria, where several thousand US troops remain deployed in the range of Iranian proxies. A resumption of the Houthi targeting of US vessels off the coast of Yemen also seems inevitable.

It is unlikely that the US will be able to benefit both ways from the Israeli strikes on Iran, by enjoying the geopolitical benefits of a defanged Iranian nuclear infrastructure while avoiding the negative consequences of direct involvement in the operation.



Conclusion

The Israeli strike against Iran, confirmed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a 'targeted military operation to roll back the Iranian threat,' marks a dangerous new chapter in the long-simmering tensions between these two regional rivals. While the assault on Iran could turn out to be a devastating blow against the regime in Tehran, but it also brings to the fore a bewildering range of outcomes, including some that can directly affect not only Israel and the US but the Gulf countries.

The real risk lies in escalation of the conflict that could drag in the US and destabilize the Gulf with consequent reverberations

across the globe. Should the conflict escalate, the potential for an economic calamity due to its impact on crude oil prices, both regionally and globally, will be high. The fact is that this cycle of violence indicates that while nothing is ever the same yet nothing changes. As Clausewitz famously said, 'War is the continuation of politics by other means.' The political endgame of the Israeli military action now remains to be unveiled. More so is that achievable, and mindful of broader regional and global stability. Absence of such a strategy risks escalation without resolution.

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#GOODBYE

Arrowhead Leaves But With A Roar

Final act of defiance against her illness came just three days before her death, Arrowhead took down a crocodile in Padam Talab.

Tigress Arrowhead (T-84) is no more, with her ends an era in Ranthambore. Till just two days before her death due to bone cancer, she was looking after her young brood, her semi-grown cub was relocated to another part of the jungle just the day before. She was one of India's most iconic tigers, whose life journey became a symbol of grace, strength, and resilience. Known as the 'Queen of Ranthambore,' Arrowhead's reign over the wilds of Rajasthan's Ranthambore Tiger Reserve was marked by her impressive hunting skills, fierce protection of her cubs, and a lineage that made her an emblem of conservation success.



Ranthambore National Park's tigress Arrowhead dies hours after daughter Kankati's relocation.

Early Life and Lineage: The Making of a Legend

Arrowhead was born in 2014 to Tigress Krishna (T-19), herself a celebrated figure in Ranthambore, and sired by Star Male, a dominant and respected tiger in the reserve. The iconic bloodline didn't stop there. Arrowhead was also the granddaughter of Machhli (T-16), one of the most famous tigers in Indian wildlife history. Machhli, often referred to as the 'Queen of Ranthambore' in her own right, was the oldest known tiger in the world, living to the age of 20. Her legacy, marked by her astonishing

ability to hunt crocodiles, would be passed down to Arrowhead, who would also go on to carve her own remarkable place in the park's history. Arrowhead first captured public attention in March 2014 when she was seen alongside her mother and siblings in the heart of Ranthambore, with her distinctive arrow-shaped mark on her left cheek, giving her the name 'Arrowhead.' The mark made her instantly recognizable, and as she grew, so did her reputation for being a fierce and intelligent predator.



The Crocodile Encounter: A Fitting Final Act

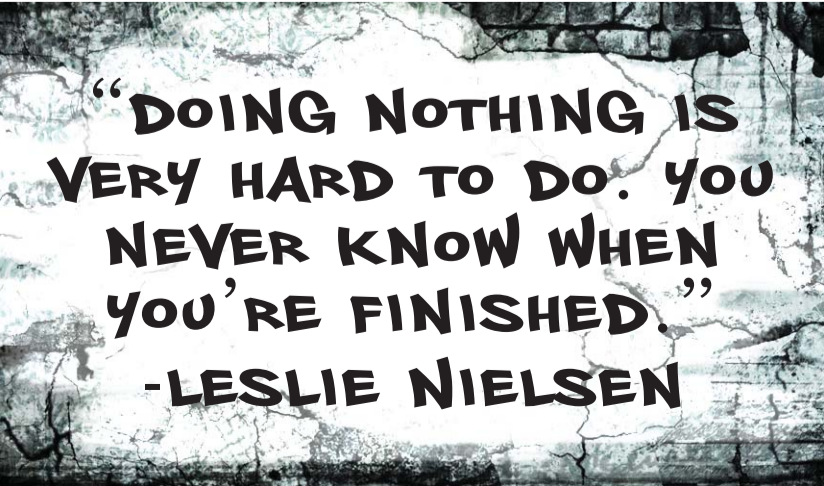
Arrowhead's final act of defiance against her illness and age came just three days before her death. On June 16, 2025, in a moment that would go down in the history of Ranthambore, Arrowhead took down a crocodile in Padam Talab, a feat that mirrored the legendary actions of her grandmother Machhli, who was famously known for killing crocodiles in the same waters. The encounter was dramatic. As Arrowhead lay at the edge of the water, she suddenly sprang into action, ambushing a crocodile that had emerged from the lake. With swift and calculated precision, she grabbed a chunk of meat from the crocodile's neck and dragged it out of the water, showing that even in her final days, she had the power of a queen. Her daughter, Riddhi, had also managed to kill a crocodile in the same waters, cementing the generational strength of this remarkable family.

The Queen Lives On

While Arrowhead's physical presence may have left, her legacy will continue to inspire wildlife enthusiasts, photographers, and conservationists. Her story is one of survival, power, and the unbreakable bond between a mother and her cubs. Arrowhead's life and death remind us that even in the face of inevitable decline, the wild retains its raw beauty and strength and an enduring force that lives on in the stories we share and the land we protect. As the sun sets over Ranthambore, the echoes of her roar will forever linger in the forests, a legacy carved in the very heart of India's tiger conservation efforts. The Queen of Ranthambore may be gone, but she will never be forgotten.



THE WALL

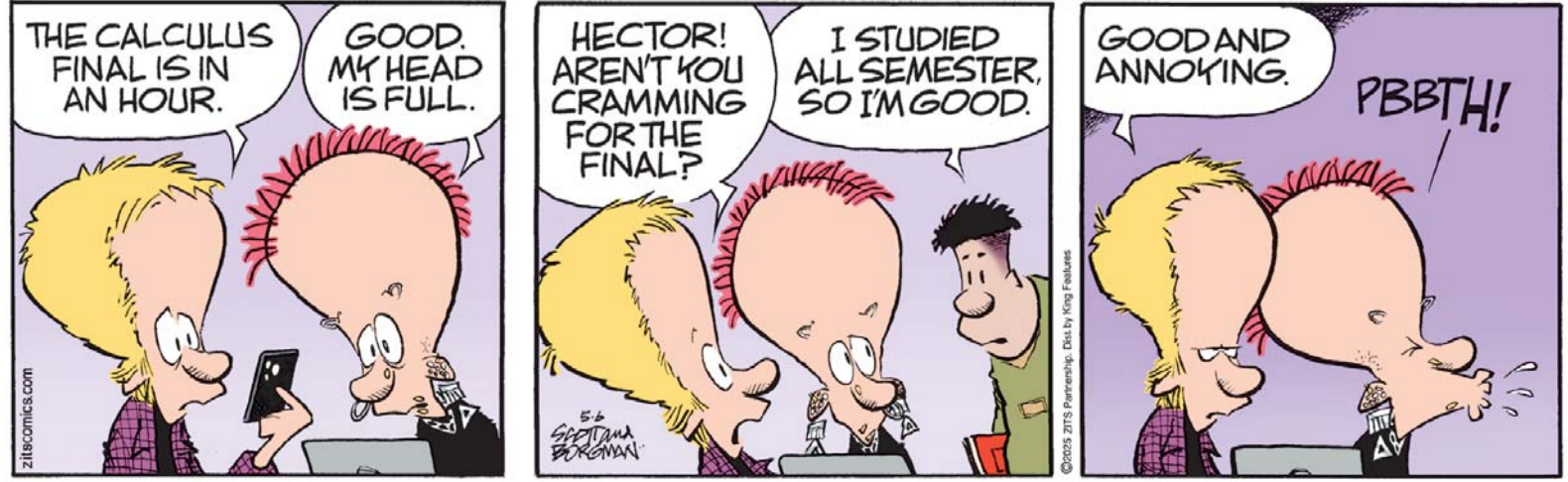


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman