

1776

US Congress proclaims the Declaration of Independence and independence from Great Britain

1785

Geologist James Hutton publicly reads an abstract of his theory of uniformitarianism for the first time at a meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh

1803

The Louisiana Purchase is announced to the American people by President Thomas Jefferson

1934



Hungarian physicist Leó Szilárd patents the chain-reaction design for the atomic bomb

Trump heads for Mount Rushmore as US turns 250

Anniversary festivities heavily feature Trump's political brand



An American flag flies at the visitor's center at Mount Rushmore National Monument

● Campaign-style rally planned.

● Nation remains politically divided

● Anniversary sparks mixed reactions

AFP | Washington

President Donald Trump kicked off America's 250th birthday weekend yesterday with a trip to a landmark upon which many suspect he would like to see his own face carved in rock -- Mount Rushmore.

On the eve of Independence Day, Trump was set to give a speech beneath the giant granite heads of four of his legendary predecessors at the national monument in South Dakota.

It's a fitting image for a president who views himself as being one of the greats himself, and who has at every stage tried to turn the United States' big anniversary into a celebration of himself.

Republican Trump's supporters have even introduced legislation to have his likeness chiseled beside those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.

On July 4 itself, Trump will hold a huge campaign-style political rally on the National Mall in the capital Washington, along with flyovers by military

jets and what he has billed as the world's biggest fireworks display.

For Trump -- the billionaire former reality TV star who became the consummate political showman -- taking center stage is in his blood.

"Trump likes the spotlight, and I think he's trying to take the spotlight," Peter Loge, director of George Washington University's School of Media, said.

'Really long speech'

But America under Trump is deeply divided at what should be a time of national unity.

Trump's approval ratings are near historic lows, fuelled largely by the war in Iran and the cost of living. His Democratic opponents have castigated him over his immigration policies, family wealth and attempts to extend presidential power.

His attempts to stamp his political brand on America's 250th anniversary have, meanwhile, not always gone to plan.

A Trump-linked organization called Freedom 250 has taken control of many of the festivities from the bipartisan America250 group, leading many people to stay away from key events.

A "Great American State

61%

of Americans believe the United States is currently failing to live up to the foundational ideals stated within the Declaration of Independence

Fair" in the capital designed as a celebration of the country's birthday has drawn sparse crowds and widespread mockery for its empty booths.

In June, Trump held a widely criticized Ultimate Fighting Championship cage fight on the White House lawn during which one fighter shouted the false claim that former first lady Michelle Obama "is a man."

A dangerous heat wave is even expected to sweep across Washington and much of the US throughout the anniversary weekend, when several football World Cup knockout matches are also being played.

"On July 4 it's going to be approximately 107 degrees (41C) out, and I'm going to go and I'm going to make a really long speech -- just to show that I can do anything," Trump said on Wednesday.

'Great holiday'

The mood largely reflects the country's own.

"The Fourth of July really is a moment of freedom, but I have to be honest, in these political times, it hasn't been as exciting to me over the last few years," Amy Kimaara, a 49-year-old special education teacher wearing a Team USA jersey and a star-spangled banner knot to tie her ponytail, told AFP in Los Angeles.

As it marks two-and-a-half centuries of triumphs and tragedies, slavery and freedom, civil war and world wars, surveys show the nation is pessimistic about the chances of realizing the "American Dream."



TOP
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TWEETS

01



Faced with the current global challenges, the EU must accelerate its reforms, complete the single market, simplify its rules, mobilize investments, and strengthen its partnerships. A stronger, more autonomous, and more competitive EU is our best response.

@eucopresident

02



The devastating earthquakes in Venezuela have upended the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. UNICEF is responding with safe water, hygiene supplies, medicine, nutrition and protection services, including child-friendly spaces for children to play and help them recover.

@unicefchief

03



Donald Trump is declining across every front, but the power he still wields is real, and dangerous. We must remain vigilant.

@GavinNewsom

04



Getting ready for an incredible Fourth of July at @USUN. Happy 250th! #freedom250

@USAmbUN

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

Land of Liberty: Looking Back into 250 years



JOEL INDRUPATI

It took almost five weeks, for the news to travel across the Atlantic. But when the British learnt in August that, on 4 July 1776, the Americans had declared independence from the British monarchy, there was hardly anything they could do -- to quell a rebellion that had now escalated into a powerful movement.

Vexed with taxes, 13 British colonies in North America had formally transformed their colonies into states and declared themselves as independent from Britain.

And it was too late for the British, who couldn't afford a war then, to realize how serious the American Revolution had become for their vast empire, which spanned the world.

As the USA celebrates 250 years of its declaration of independence, it might be pertinent for us to look at the history behind the day.

British General Charles Cornwallis surrendered to US General George Washington during the 'Siege of Yorktown' in 1781. Britain then sent Cornwallis to India, appointing him as the Governor-General and commander-in-chief. He died in 1805, and lies buried in Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh, India

Indigenous populations had been living in the Americas long before European explorers made their way across the Atlantic. The Native Americans were called Red Indians simply because the great explorer Christopher Columbus -- who found the sea route from Europe to North America, in 1492 -- thought he had somehow reached his destination, India.

The place Columbus first landed is, in fact, in the current-day Bahamas, in the Caribbean; the region is now called the 'West Indies' because he had missed the 'real East India' by thousands of kilometres.

Anyway, long story short, within

USA in 250 years

Established the world's longest-lasting constitutional democracy

Built the world's largest and most innovative economy

Led scientific and technological innovation

Defended and shaped the post-1945 international order

Expanded civil rights and individual freedoms

the next 200 years, migrants and migrants' descendants from Europe were already populating the continents of both, North and South America. And by 1700s, there were 13 British colonies on the eastern coast of North America. The French, the Spaniards, and the Dutch were then controlling other parts of the continent.

In 1701, a man called William Penn wrote a 'Charter of Privileges' for the residents of his colony, Pennsylvania, which was formed when King Charles II of England granted a royal land charter.

So forward-thinking was Penn that he had envisioned a colony that permitted religious freedom, the consent and participation of the governed, and had clear laws pertaining to property rights, including those of Native Americans.

While the charter recognized the authority of the British King and Parliament over the colony, it also provided for the creation of a local governing body that would propose and execute the laws.

In fact, in 1751, it was in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of this charter that the Pennsylvania Assembly ordered a special 'bell' to be made. And this bell had, a century later, become a potent symbol for liberty during the movement for the abolition of slavery, and became known as the 'Liberty Bell'.

The significance of 'Boston Tea Party' towards US independence also cannot be understated.

In the 1760s, Britain was deep in debt. And British Parliament imposed a series of taxes on American colonists.

According to history.com, "The Stamp Act of 1765 taxed colonists on virtually every piece of printed paper they used, from playing cards and business licenses to newspapers and legal documents. And the Townshend Acts of 1767 went a step further, taxing essentials such as paint, paper, glass, lead and tea".

The Tea Act of 1773 then, took the cake! Frustrated and angry at Britain for imposing "taxation without representation," protestors got onto ships docked in Boston, and dumped 342 chests of British tea into the harbour. The tea that British East India Company prided in trading around the world went down the sea.

Angered at the Boston Tea Party, British Parliament imposed more coercive laws.

And the colonies got together, declared freedom, and called themselves the United States.

Interestingly, only 12 of the 13 states signed the declaration on 4 July. New York signed it only on 19 July.

Since then, with 'abolition of slavery', 'voting rights for women', 'ending of colour-segregation', and 'voting rights to African Americans', USA has come a long way.

And the nation continues to strive to guarantee its people -- as promised in the Declaration of Independence -- certain unalienable rights, among which are "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

(The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Daily Tribune)