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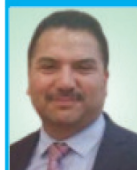


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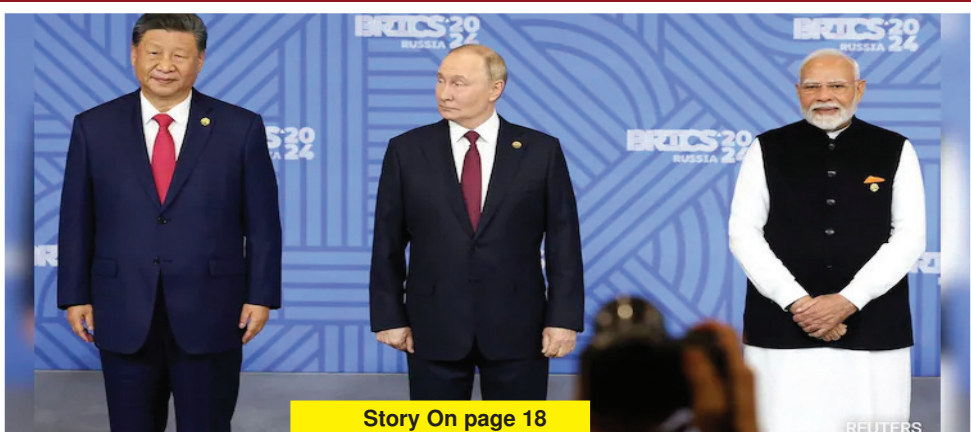
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## Cheap Oil, Heavy Costs India's China-Russia Embrace Could Backfire

## A \$1.5 Billion Lesson: An AI Firm Is On The Verge Of Destroying Its Data



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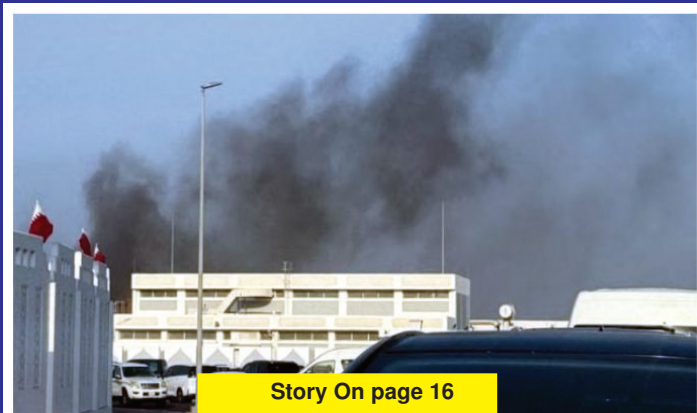


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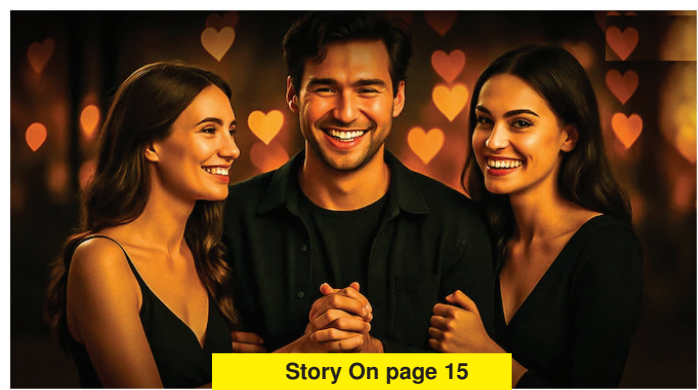
## No Place To Hide

Qatar played all sides, peacemaker to Islamist safe haven.

## The changing marriage playbook for Indians in their 30s



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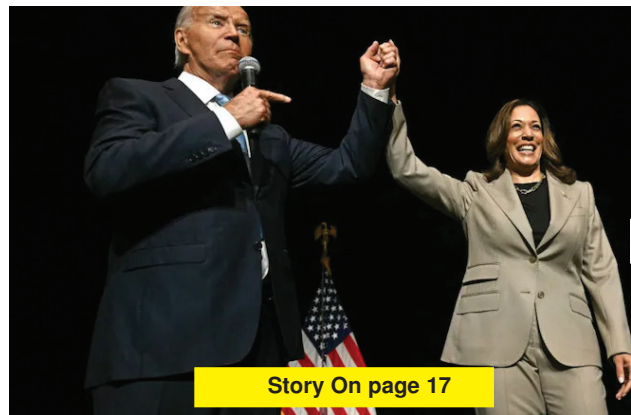


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## Not A Revolution, Mobocracy Ousted Oligarchy In Nepal



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**Kamala  
Harris Cites  
"Recklessness,  
Ego" In Joe Biden's  
Decision To Run  
Again**

# Canada has Rejected 80% Of Indian Student Visas In 2025 So Far



(Our Staff Reporter) : Canada, long considered a preferred hub for international education, especially among Indians, has imposed its most restrictive visa regime in a decade. This has altered global student mobility. According to data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), nearly 80% of Indian student visa applications were rejected in 2025. Indian students comprise around 40% of Canada's international students. Four out of five Indian applicants received refusals in the second quarter of 2025, education outlet The PIE News reported, citing figures from BorderPass. As per data from the Canadian government, 1.88 lakh Indian students were admitted in 2024. This number was more than double two years ago. While

Ottawa hasn't shared a country-wise breakdown, The PIE News reported that the high rejection rate is affecting students across Asia, Africa and beyond, showing how Canada is changing its approach to international education. For decades, North America was the default choice for many students drawn by safety, opportunity and world-class institutions. But recent figures point to a major shift. Canada's share of preference among Indian students has fallen from 18% in 2022 to just 9% in 2024. At the same time, Germany has overtaken it as the top choice, now preferred by 31%. Ottawa's decision to tighten visa approvals is closely tied to domestic challenges, including housing shortages, strained infrastructure and political calls to prioritise local

talent. "It's clear that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is applying far greater scrutiny to new applications," Jonathan Sherman, vice president of sales and partnerships at BorderPass, told The PIE, describing the change as a "fundamental shift" in government processing. Additional barriers are also in place. According to VnExpress, Canada has doubled the minimum financial proof required for students to CA\$20,635 (about Rs 13.13 lakh), while work regulations for international students have become stricter. The government plans to issue 4.37 lakh study permits in 2025, which is nearly 10% fewer than 2024, VnExpress reported.

## Germany Sees Rise In International Enrolments

Germany is seeing a rise in international enrolments. With its strong economy, publicly funded universities and expanding English-language programmes, it is reportedly becoming a prime destination for Indian students. According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, the number of Indian students has more than doubled over the past five years, rising to nearly 60,000 in 2025 from 49,500 in 2023.

# 'Tricked Into Joining Russian Army': Seven Indians Appeal to MEA to Save Their Lives

(Our Staff Reporter) : Haryana. Gursewak, 26, from Jalandhar. At a time when several Indians who had joined the Russian Army remain missing in the Russia-Ukraine war, another case has surfaced of young men being forcibly sent to the frontline. A group of seven men who had travelled to Moscow on study and business visas said they were deceived by a third-party agent and taken to a Russian Army camp on August 18, 2025, where they were forced to construct bunkers. They were allegedly lured with promises that they would be paid Rs 20 lakh per month as construction workers outside Moscow, amounting to Rs 80 lakh for a three-month contract. However, in reality, the contract bound them to the Russian Army, they said. Trapped in the camp, the men shared videos with The Wire via WhatsApp, pleading with the Indian embassy in Moscow and external affairs minister S. Jaishankar to secure their safe release. The seven, now at the camp in occupied Ukraine's Selydove in the Donetsk region, have been identified as Gursewak Singh, Sachin Khajuria, Sumeet Sharma, Buta Singh, Geetika Kumar, Ankit and Vijay Singh, who hail from Punjab, Jammu and

Mehta village in Punjab's Gurdaspur district, was taken to the frontline around 6 am on Wednesday (September 10) Russian time. His wife Suman, also in Moscow on a work visa, said she had contacted both the embassy and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) but that no action had followed. Gursewak spent Rs 3.5 lakh for a study visa. Others also nt almost the same amount. He told The Wire on Tuesday night that his visa was due to expire before his deployment on September 19, yet Russian Army officials ignored his appeals. "Earlier, I worked in Dubai for two years, then moved to Russia on a study visa in September 2024. I joined a one-year Russian language course at the Moscow State Linguistic University (MSLU). As we could work while studying, I took construction jobs to earn good money," he said. While working at a site in Moscow, Gursewak and others met a woman who promised Rs 20 lakh a month for construction work and arranged for their travel from Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport to a place called Chillymyi. "She told us it was a Russian government site. We fell for the promise of high salaries.

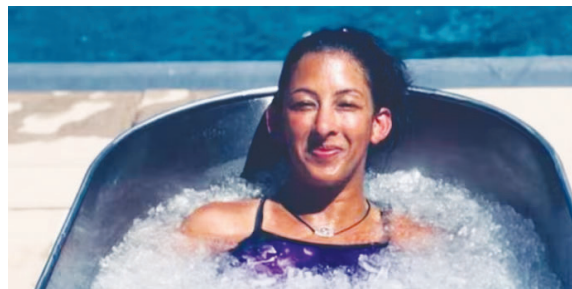
# Drugged patients, had oral sex: Indian-origin doctor in Canada guilty of abuse

(Our Staff Reporter) : Indian-origin physician Dr. Suman Khulbe has had her licence revoked after being found guilty of sexual abuse and boundary violations with patients in Canada. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) announced the decision after a tribunal concluded that Khulbe engaged in sexual acts with one male patient and maintained unprofessional relationships with two others. The disciplinary panel said Khulbe failed to treat her patients solely as patients, instead blurring professional lines. "She saw them as her friends, her social life, her athletic life and her business partners," the panel observed. According to tribunal records, one of the most serious complaints came from a gym trainer who met Khulbe in 2015. The patient approached her for vitamin therapy, which later

shifted into physical therapy for muscle recovery. The trainer alleged that these sessions escalated into sexual acts, including oral sex, kissing and manual stimulation, often while he was under the influence of procaine -- a local anaesthetic administered by Khulbe. The gym trainer also alleged that Khulbe would do breathing exercises while she had her hands on his genitals. He also said he was drawn into conversations about starting a sports nutrition business with her, further complicating the doctor-patient boundary. The tribunal found that Khulbe hosted gatherings at her clinic where alcohol was consumed. During her testimony, she admitted to having sexual relations with the trainer but called it a consensual relationship.

## PATIENTS TREATED AS BUSINESS PARTNERS

The panel also found that Khulbe had personal connections with other patients, and she even entered into business relationships with two of them. In some cases, she allegedly professed her love to patients while also providing medical treatment. The tribunal said such behaviour reflected a serious breach of professional ethics. "She had a sexual relationship with one patient and deep personal relationships with others. She had business relationships with two of these patients," its decision read. Khulbe has denied wrongdoing beyond a consensual relationship. "Many facts of my case were omitted and not brought out during the public hearing. Attending this contested hearing came at considerable financial and personal sacrifice to both me and my parents in order for my



voice to be heard," she told the National Post. In her testimony, Khulbe said she was "raised in an Indian home with traditional values."

## WHO IS SUMAN KHULBE?

Khulbe began her career as a family physician in 2001 and soon converted a house in Kanata, Ontario, into her private medical clinic. In 2018, she left family practice and launched an executive holistic clinic in order to focus on regenerative medicine, peptide therapy, anti-ageing

treatments and biohacking techniques designed to enhance physical performance. Her official website says she was amongst the first doctors in Canada to incorporate platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy into her practice. She is also certified in aesthetic medicine by the American Academy of Aesthetic Medicine. Even after losing her licence, Khulbe said she expects the ban to last around five years but remains resolute in her decision to appeal, hoping to clear her name.

# Modi Calls for Calm as Deadly Nepal Protests Escalate

(News Agency) Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appealed for peace in Nepal after two days of violent unrest left at least 19 people dead and sparked widespread destruction. Modi described the violence as "heart-rending" and emphasized that stability in Nepal is of "utmost importance" to India.

The Prime Minister chaired a Cabinet Committee on Security to review the crisis shortly after returning from visits to flood-hit Himachal Pradesh and Punjab, where he announced relief packages worth more than ₹3,000 crore. In his message on X, Modi expressed anguish over the

loss of young lives and urged Nepal's citizens to support peace during this volatile period. The protests erupted after police fired on demonstrators on Monday, killing 19 people. Protesters, many from Nepal's younger generation, have since burned government buildings, set fire to Parliament, and stormed the residences of senior leaders. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was forced to resign, and the army has taken charge of security across the country as arson and looting spread.

Among the most tragic incidents was the attack on former prime minister Jhala Nath Khanal's home, where his

wife Rajyalaxmi Chitrakar was severely burned and later died from her injuries. Reports also surfaced of violent clashes at the home of Sher Bahadur Deuba, where he and his wife were attacked and sustained minor injuries. The unrest was fueled by frustration over corruption and a government-imposed social media ban, which has since been lifted. India has issued a travel advisory urging its citizens to avoid visiting Nepal and provided emergency helpline numbers. As the crisis deepens, both regional stability and the safety of civilians remain under grave threat.



# India's \$1.8M Lobbyist Meets Trump as Tariff Dispute Heats Up



(News Agency) :As trade tensions between Washington and New Delhi escalate, Jason Miller, India's high-profile lobbyist in the United States, recently met with President Donald Trump and senior administration officials. Miller's firm, SHW Partners LLC, was contracted by the Indian Embassy in May for \$1.8 million a year to provide strategic counsel, tactical planning, and government relations support in the U.S. capital. Posting photos of his meeting on social media, Miller praised Trump's leadership but did not disclose details of their discussions. Known for his close ties to the former president, Miller previously served as an informal liaison, briefing Trump and members of Congress on India's counter-terrorism strategy. His role now is expected to be critical as India navigates a sharp downturn in relations with the U.S. The strain follows Trump's decision to double tariffs on Indian imports to 50 percent, including an additional

25 percent duty tied to India's continued purchase of Russian crude oil. New Delhi has condemned the move as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable," while the tariffs have added new pressure on an already sensitive trade relationship. Despite the heated rhetoric, both leaders have made efforts to soften the standoff. On Friday, Trump called the India-U.S. partnership "special," adding that he would "always be friends" with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "He is a great Prime Minister," Trump said, though he expressed frustration with India's current policies. Modi responded positively, saying he "deeply appreciates and fully reciprocates President Trump's sentiments" and reaffirmed the strength of what he described as a "positive and forward-looking Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership." With Miller now acting as a key intermediary, India is betting that skilled lobbying in Washington could help ease tensions and preserve vital economic and strategic ties.

# Amid floods, Punjab farmers seek effective, government-funded crop insurance

(News Agency) : Lakhbir Singh from Baddowal, Ludhiana, echoed: "The 20,000 per acre compensation announced by the Punjab government is too little. Given the repeated damages, there must be crop insurance, with the government paying the premium. Only then can farmers survive these natural calamities." He added, "This year, not only crops but also houses and livestock were destroyed. The government should at least give 50,000 per acre for crops and 1 lakh per animal lost." SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhama emphasised the need for a proper insurance scheme. He said floods have caused massive damage to standing crops, yet the government has failed to provide adequate protection. According to him, farmers suffer repeatedly due to natural disasters like floods, heavy rains, and fires, but no long-term mechanism exists to secure their

livelihoods. Dhama stressed that crop insurance must be made mandatory and effective so that farmers are not left helpless after each calamity. Dhama criticised the authorities for not forming a special committee to address the crisis. He said the present system does not cover farmers adequately, leaving them burdened by losses year after year. Dhama demanded a comprehensive policy where the premium is paid by the state so farmers are not financially strained, and noted that disaster compensation so far is far below actual losses. He insisted that farmers need real assurance of protection, not token relief. Political figures have also lent support to the farmers' calls. Malvinder Kang, AAP MP from Anandpur Sahib, told India Today: "Yes, there must be crop insurance. There is already a Centre government scheme, but it needs to be corrected."



# India Responds Cautiously as Trump Softens Tone on Tariffs

(News Agency) New Delhi is taking a guarded approach after U.S. President Donald Trump struck a more conciliatory note on India, calling the bilateral relationship "special" and praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "great leader." The remarks came just weeks after Washington imposed steep 50 percent tariffs on Indian imports, sparking one of the sharpest downturns in ties in years. Modi acknowledged Trump's comments on social media, saying he "deeply appreciates" the sentiment, but notably stopped short of referring to the U.S. president as a friend — a departure from past

exchanges. Indian officials, speaking anonymously, said they welcomed the softer rhetoric but remained wary, viewing it as a tactical shift rather than a genuine reset. Analysts noted that Trump's negotiating style, outlined in his book *The Art of the Deal*, often involves aggressive pressure followed by sudden gestures of goodwill. Still, underlying issues remain unresolved.

Trump has repeatedly accused India of undermining U.S. efforts in Ukraine by continuing to buy

Russian oil, while New Delhi insists it will act in its own economic interests. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stressed that Modi places "what suits us best." External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar stressed that Modi places "importance" on U.S. ties, but Washington's abrupt policy swings risk driving India members closer to rivals. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick argued that such missteps undermine efforts to position India as a counterweight to Beijing. For now, experts in New Delhi say Trump's words may ease tensions but do little to resolve the deeper disagreements over trade, energy, and strategic alignment.



we've lost India and Russia to deepest, darkest China" after Modi met with Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping at a regional summit. Former U.S. officials have warned that U.S. ties, but Washington's abrupt policy swings risk driving India members closer to rivals. Jake Sullivan, who served as national security adviser under the previous administration, Howard Lutnick argued that such missteps undermine efforts to position India as a counterweight to Beijing. For now, experts in New Delhi say Trump's words may ease tensions but do little to resolve the deeper disagreements over trade, energy, and strategic alignment.

## RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale Hospitalised in Jodhpur, Declared Healthy

(News Agency) Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale was admitted to AIIMS Jodhpur on Monday after he experienced a sudden rise in blood pressure, hospital officials confirmed.

Doctors attending to Hosabale, who serves as the RSS sarkaryawah, said his condition improved quickly, and he was kept under observation as a precaution. "Hosabale's health suddenly deteriorated in the afternoon, following which he was immediately rushed to AIIMS," a hospital doctor said.

RSS national publicity and media head

Sunil Ambekar later updated that Hosabale is now "completely healthy." In a post on X, Ambekar explained that Hosabale had only gone to the facility as a precaution after feeling slightly unwell.

Hosabale was in Jodhpur to participate in the RSS's three-day annual coordination meeting, which concluded on Sunday. The gathering was attended by senior RSS functionaries, national leaders of 32 affiliates, including the BJP, and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat.

Doctors have since cleared Hosabale, noting that his health remains stable and there is no cause for concern.



## Why India's 2025 Monsoon Has Been Exceptionally Deadly

(News Agency) India is facing one of its most destructive monsoon seasons in decades, with relentless downpours triggering floods and landslides that have killed hundreds and displaced countless others. Punjab is experiencing its worst flooding since 1988, and some areas of Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan received rainfall more than 1,000 percent above normal in a single day, according to the Indian Meteorology Department (IMD). Experts say climate change is reshaping the very nature of the monsoon. Warmer oceans are feeding more moisture into the atmosphere,

leading to intense bursts of rain after long dry spells. Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Indian-



monsoon system and unusual westerly disturbances from the Mediterranean. These cold air masses collided with moisture-heavy monsoon currents, fueling days of extreme rain across northern India. Scientists point to wavier jet streams — distorted by global warming — as the reason these disturbances pushed unusually far south this year, amplifying rainfall and turning rivers into raging floods. In the Himalayas, unstable conditions have worsened the impact. Rapidly melting glaciers, collapsing permafrost, and landslides that create

temporary dams all increase the risk of sudden flooding, even without heavy local rain. Scientists warn that rain now falls in high-altitude areas where snow once dominated, destabilizing mountain slopes and accelerating glacial melt. Human activity has compounded the crisis. Expanding settlements in floodplains, poorly planned infrastructure projects, and clogged urban drains have left communities exposed. Despite forecasts of heavier-than-normal rains, embankments and drainage systems in many areas were left unrepaired. Experts say India must urgently address both climate vulnerabilities and man-made risks to reduce the scale of destruction caused by future monsoons.

# Air India and IndiGo Launch Special Flights to Evacuate Indians from Nepal

(News Agency) New Delhi: Air India and IndiGo have begun operating special flights to Kathmandu to assist Indian nationals stranded in Nepal following the temporary closure of Tribhuvan International Airport. Civil Aviation Minister K. Ram Mohan Naidu announced on Wednesday that additional flights are being scheduled to bring passengers back safely. The minister noted that many travelers were unable to return home after the airport shut down amid recent unrest in Nepal. With operations now resuming in Kathmandu, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has coordinated with both Air India and IndiGo to arrange extra flights alongside their regular services. In a statement on X, Naidu confirmed that additional flights would be running throughout the week and emphasized that airlines had been advised to keep ticket prices at reasonable levels to avoid placing extra burden on passengers. Air India said it has scheduled special flights from Delhi to Kathmandu and back for Wednesday and Thursday, ensuring stranded travelers have immediate options to return. IndiGo is also increasing capacity to manage the sudden spike in demand. The reopening of Kathmandu's airport has eased a difficult



situation for travelers caught by surprise during the closure.

Authorities in both countries are continuing to monitor conditions to ensure smooth travel in the days ahead.

## Murder accused approaches court to remove Maharashtra MP as special prosecutor



(News Agency) A multiple murder accused has approached a Mumbai court to remove BJP leader Ujjwal Nikam, who was appointed as a Rajya Sabha MP in July, as a special public prosecutor (SPP) in the case. As a result, a court in Mumbai has sought responses from Nikam, as well as the state of Maharashtra on the matter. Nikam had served as an SPP since 2012 but temporarily stepped down after being declared a candidate for the Mumbai North Central Lok Sabha constituency by the BJP in April 2024. After losing the polls, he was reappointed as an SPP. In July this year, he was nominated to the Rajya Sabha by President Droupadi Murmu. This is not the first time that Vijay Palande, who is currently serving a life sentence for the murders of Delhi businessman Arun Tikku and film producer Karankumar Kakkad, has filed a plea seeking Nikam's disqualification from the case for which he has been the SPP since 2013. In October 2024,

Palande had challenged the reappointment, but was rejected by the Mumbai Sessions Court. In his latest plea, the murder accused said Nikam continuing to hold the position of the SPP "raises serious Constitutional concerns". He has cited Article 102 (1) (a) of the Constitution on the disqualification of membership for MPs.

Article 102 (1) (a) of the Constitution says that "a person is disqualified from being a member of Parliament if they hold an 'office of profit' under the Government of India or any State government, unless Parliament has by law declared such an office not to disqualify its holder". Palande's application further says that Nikam can handle private cases like several MPs who are advocates engaged in private court practice but not the SPP which is under the state government. "It expresses an apprehension that 'due to the clout and might' of Nikam, the case will be a 'one-sided affair' and a 'David and Goliath war'." Nikam will be filing a formal reply opposing Palande's application by September 26, but he had, during his appointment as MP as well said that an SPP's appointment is not an office of profit, and he can continue his work.

## Raj Thackeray's party tilts towards Uddhav Sena, but rules out Congress tie-up



(News Agency) Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) leader Bala Nandgaonkar on Thursday said the party is moving towards an alliance with Shiv Sena (UBT), while stressing that the Congress and MNS have different ideologies. He maintained that any final decision would rest with the party high command. The statement came a day after MNS chief Raj Thackeray met Uddhav Thackeray. Following that, Raj Thackeray called a meeting of senior leaders including Bala Nandgaonkar, Nitin Sardesai, Sandeep Deshpande, Yashwant Killedar and Kunal Mainkar to discuss election preparations. "We see both brothers coming together in spirit. Today, a meeting was called to prepare for upcoming elections and appointment of leaders at local level," Nandgaonkar clarified.

On possible coordination in civic polls, a party functionary said MNS is preparing to contest around 90 to 95 seats in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections. However, seat-sharing talks have not yet begun. Asked about the possibility of Raj Thackeray attending the Shiv Sena UBT's annual Dussehra rally, Nandgaonkar said, "They have their own tradition, we have ours. They hold Dussehra gatherings, we hold Gudi Padwa gatherings. We put forward our thoughts from our platform. No invitation has been given". With Shiv Sena (UBT) tied to the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), Nandgaonkar indicated that the Congress may not be on board with the MNS. "This is an issue of ideology and policy. The two parties have not come together yet, so I will not speak further."

# Russian Billionaire's 348-Foot Luxurious Superyacht. Seller: US Government

(News Agency) The US vessel features an infinity pool, Amadea, was valued at up to government is auctioning off a eight staterooms, a grand \$350 million before being 348-foot mega yacht seized salon with a marble fireplace seized in Fiji in 2022 by the



REUTERS

Justice Department's KleptoCapture task force, which was set up to target assets of Russian oligarchs following Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Built in 2017, the six-deck vessel features an infinity pool,

from a sanctioned Russian billionaire, with bids closing this week, in a sale that could test the market for ultra-luxury vessels tied up in years of litigation. The yacht, Amadea, was valued at up to \$350 million before being seized in Fiji in 2022 by the Justice Department's KleptoCapture task force, which was set up to target assets of Russian oligarchs following Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Built in 2017, the six-deck

and piano, a sauna, gym, eight staterooms, a grand helipad, private cinema and even a lobster tank. It has been docked in San Diego since its seizure. R E C O M M E N D E D STORIESThe US government is auctioning off a 348-foot mega yacht seized from a sanctioned Russian billionaire, with bids closing this week, in a sale that could test the market for ultra-luxury vessels tied up in years of litigation. The yacht,

# Poland Says it Downed Russian Drones, Invokes NATO Article 4

(News Agency) New Delhi: about 6:30 a.m., according to DW. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk • Tusk stressed the incident was announced on Wednesday unprecedented: "This is the first



(September 10) that they have shot down at least three drones entering from Belarus, while a fourth one was likely destroyed, DW reported. Tusk said that there were 19 intrusions into Polish airspace overnight, "many of them drones entering from Belarus that were shot down". Tusk told the Polish parliament that NATO's Airborne Early Warning and Control System (AWACS) had been put on alert after reports of a large Russian missile and drone attack on Ukraine late Tuesday. The first airspace breach occurred around 11:30 p.m. local time (2130 GMT/UTC) and continued until

time in this war that they did not come from Ukraine due to errors or minor Russian provocations. For the first time, a significant portion of the drones came directly from Belarus." "The fact that these drones, which posed a security threat, were shot down changes the political situation. Therefore, allied consultations took the form of a formal request to activate Article 4 of the NATO Treaty," Tusk said, as per the report. Article 4 of the NATO treaty is invoked when a member state feels threatened by another country or a terrorist organisation.

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# Why France Is Protesting And What The "Block Everything" Movement Means

(News Agency) French President Emmanuel Macron has appointed Sebastien Lecornu as the country's fifth prime minister in less than two years, following the resignation of Francois Bayrou. Lecornu is set to take office on Wednesday just as France saw widespread protests led by a left-wing grassroots movement known as "Block Everything" (Bloquons tout). Analysts say Lecornu faces a baptism of fire, faced with a twin challenge - managing a politically fractured parliament and a highly mobilised public against the government's spending cuts and austerity measures. In Rennes, demonstrators set a bus on fire and caused damage to a power line in the southwest. Around 200 arrests have taken place so far, authorities said. What Is The "Block Everything" Movement?

The "Block Everything" collective is a citizen-led movement calling for boycott, civil disobedience, and solidarity in response to government policies. Unlike traditional strikes led by unions or political parties, the movement is independent, organised primarily through social media platforms such as X, TikTok, Telegram, and Facebook. Supporters are using hashtags like #10septembre2025 and #10septembre to spread their message, encouraging actions such as: Boycotting major retailers like Carrefour, Amazon, and Auchan. Withdrawing money from banks. Peaceful occupation of symbolic sites like town halls.

Organising neighbourhood assemblies and strike funds. Although the protests did not fully achieve their self-declared

goal of "blocking everything," they caused widespread disruption and showed growing public anger. Why Are People Protesting? The immediate trigger is Francois Bayrou's 2026 budget, which proposes Cutting 43.8 million Francs from the national budget. Reducing the country's deficit. Removing two national holidays.

## Freezing pensions

Slashing 5 billion Francs from healthcare. Who Supports It And Who Doesn't? Supporters: Predominantly left-wing voters, with 69 per cent of surveyed supporters having voted for former parliamentarian Jen-Luc Melancon in the 2022 election. Opposition: Major unions have largely refused to participate, citing alternative strike dates (September 18). Only the hard-left CGT union



is formally backing the protests. Even before September 10, the protests caused significant disruption across the country. Demonstrators attempted to block highways in Bordeaux, while a cable fire in Toulouse affected rail traffic. Early actions in Paris led to 75 arrests, and the highway operator Vinci reported blockages in Marseille, Montpellier, Nantes, and Lyon. To manage the unrest, Interior Minister Bruno

Retailleau confirmed that 80,000 security personnel had been deployed nationwide. Why Francois Bayrou Resigned Nine months into his term after failing to secure support in the National Assembly for his deficit-cutting budget, Francois Bayrou quit the PM's office. He had replaced Michel Barnier, who also stepped down in December after losing a no-confidence vote.

## "We Don't Always Act In Interests Of...": Israel Rebukes Trump's Doha Remark

(News Agency) Israel's UN envoy defended targeting Hamas leaders in Qatar as the "right" decision on Wednesday, after the strikes on the US ally's soil drew a rare rebuke from President Donald Trump. The White House said Trump did not agree with Israel's decision to take military action on Tuesday and had warned Qatar in advance of the incoming strikes. But Qatar, which hosts a large US military base and has spearheaded repeated rounds of Gaza truce efforts, said it had not received the warning from Washington until the deadly attack was already under way.

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, sought to justify the decision, telling an Israeli radio station: "We don't always act in the interests of the United States." "We are coordinated, they give us incredible support, we appreciate that,

but sometimes we make decisions and inform the United States," he said. "It was not an attack on Qatar; it was an attack on Hamas," Danon told 103FM. Palestinian militant group Hamas said six people were killed in the strikes, including an aide and an adult son of its top negotiator Khalil al-Hayya, as well as three bodyguards and a Qatari security officer. But the group said its senior leaders had survived, affirming "the enemy's failure to assassinate our brothers in the negotiating delegation". Danon said Israel was "still waiting for the results" of the operation. "It is too early to comment on the outcome, but the decision is the right one," he added. According to sources close to Hamas, six Hamas leaders including Hayya and former top leader Khaled Meshaal were in the building targeted by Israel at the time of the strike. AFP has been unable to reach any of them

since then. Qatar said the strikes targeted the homes of several members of Hamas's political bureau residing in the Gulf country.

## 'Not thrilled'

Trump said he was not notified in advance of the Israeli attack and was "not thrilled about the whole situation". Speaking to reporters during a rare outing to a Washington restaurant, he said: "We want the hostages back, but we are not thrilled about the way that went down today." Qatar's prime minister said it reserved the right to respond to the Israeli attack, which it said constituted a "pivotal moment" for region. Defence Minister Israel Katz vowed that Israel would "act against its enemies anywhere". "There is no place where they can hide," he wrote on X, adding that "everyone who took part in the October 7 massacre will be held fully accountable," referring to Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel that sparked the

nearly two-year Gaza war. In a post on social media, Trump insisted that "this was a decision made by Prime Minister Netanyahu, it was not a decision made by me". "I view Qatar as a strong Ally and friend of the U.S., and feel very badly about the location of the attack," he said, adding Hamas's elimination was still a "worthy goal".

## 'Grave violation'

Russia and China meanwhile joined an international chorus of condemnation on Wednesday, with Moscow saying the operation undermined peace efforts in the Middle East. "Russia considers the incident a grave violation of international law... an encroachment on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of an independent state, and a step leading to further escalation," said Russia's foreign ministry. Beijing expressed similar concerns and "dissatisfaction with actions by certain parties

that undermine the ceasefire negotiations in Gaza". Along with the United States and Egypt, Qatar has led multiple attempts to end the Israel-Hamas war and secure the release of the remaining hostages. Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack resulted in the deaths of 1,219 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 64,605 Palestinians, most of them civilians, according to figures from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza that the United Nations considers reliable. EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday she would push to sanction "extremist" Israeli ministers and curb trade ties over the dire situation in Gaza. Israel's foreign minister, Gideon Saar, hit back, writing on X that Europe was sending "the wrong message that strengthens Hamas and the radical axis in the Middle East."

# Did Qatar backstab Hamas? What next after Trump-Modi sweet talk?

## 3 theories behind the brazen Israeli attack

Israel knew. The US knew. Qatar knew. But, neither the US nor Qatar showed the urgency in stopping or even thwarting the audacious Israeli strike targeting Hamas's leadership in Doha. It raises an important question. Did Qatar quietly agree to Israel's 'Summit of Fire' operation, backstabbing Hamas?

Since Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, Tel Aviv has invaded Gaza and attacked five countries, including Iran and Syria. In these two years, Qatar has remained off Israel's radar despite hosting Hamas's political office since 2012. Even when Israel assassinated Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh, it did so when he came to Iran, even though he had been living in Qatar for several years. In short, Israel has avoided alienating the Gulf nation, an economic powerhouse and an important intermediary.

Geopolitical experts have floated three major theories on why the strike could have possibly been a coordinated plot between Israel, the US, and Qatar, with a little help from Saudi Arabia.

### QATAR ATTACK: THEORY 1

Firstly, Hamas was becoming a headache and dead wood for Qatar.

Since the 2023 attack by Hamas militants, which killed 1,200 Israelis, Qatar has played a key role in facilitating negotiations between Israel and Hamas. After over a year, in January 2025, Qatari negotiators helped reach a temporary ceasefire agreement that saw the release of some Israeli hostages from Gaza. However, since then, negotiations have hit a dead end, with Hamas dragging feet on accepting a peace deal proposed by the US, and backed by Israel.

American author and analyst Mosab Hassan Yousef said this left Qatar quite frustrated, and it was looking towards an exit ramp.

"Hamas became dead weight - rigid, turning Qatar from a mediator profiting off chaos into a loser... Qatar ditched Hamas the second they stopped being leverage and became a liability," Yousef said.

There were also tell-tale signs of Qatar's growing frustration with Hamas. Earlier this month, Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed pressed Hamas to "respond positively" to the new US ceasefire proposal in a meeting in Doha.

Ironically, the Israeli attack came when Hamas leaders, including Khalil al-Hayya, the group's exiled Gaza leader and main negotiator, huddled to discuss the US peace proposal.

In such a scenario, the strike aligned with the interests of all the three countries. "Qatar wanted out, quietly. Trump wanted to end the war. Israel wanted to end Hamas. Their interests aligned," Yousef said in his

analysis. Secondly, the logistical complexity of the attack implies some level of tacit cooperation from Qatar. The Israeli strike was not on a secret compound in a remote area. The target was a residential building in a high-security Doha neighbourhood that houses schools and foreign embassies. It is close to Doha's central business district and around 25 km from the Al Udeid Air Base, the biggest US military base in the Middle East.

Now, since it was a posh area in Doha, the strike required precise coordination. An accidental strike on civilian targets could have turned the gamble into a debacle. Add to that the fact that the US has a ton of assets in Qatar.

This, such a brazen strike without the tacit approval of Qatar, seems quite implausible.

As part of the operation, 15 Israeli fighter jets dropped 10 bombs on the residential building where the senior Hamas leaders gathered.

Qatar, itself, has a major arsenal of air defence systems, including both American-made Patriot and THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence). It is quite surprising that none of these systems detected the incoming missiles.

The Qatari government only said that Israel used weapons that were "not detected by radar" without elaborating. Analysts have also raised doubts over assertions by both the US and Qatar that the information received on the attack was too little, too late. Such a level of attack usually takes months of preparation. Israeli officials told CNN that plans to attack Doha took place over two to three months. That the US didn't have an inkling of it seems far-fetched.

"This is not an operation that happens in a day or two. This is something you create for many years - create a safe haven for someone so they keep going there and (eventually) eliminate them in a way they do not expect," defence analyst Hamze Attar told Al Jazeera.

Moreover, for Israeli jets to reach deep inside Qatar, it would have flown nearly 2,000 km over Saudi Arabia and Jordan. How did neither of the nations detect the jets? It has led to speculation that the Gulf nations were aware of the plan and possibly turned a blind eye.

Interestingly, a report in The Wall Street Journal said Turkey and Egypt warned Hamas's political leadership to tighten security around their meetings in the weeks before the September 10 attack. The report was based on interviews with officials from Israel, the US, Qatar and other Arab countries. It further lends credence to the fact that it might have been a coordinated plot.

The recent exchange of happy messages between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi represents a functional adjustment, not a return to old times when the vibes were good and the confidence high.

The two leaders have taken tentative first steps towards stabilising the partnership and announced the resumption of trade negotiations. They may have walked the relationship back from the brink after weeks of sharp rhetoric and punitive measures from the US side, but the road ahead is not easy. Yet it must be travelled because it's important.

While Trump was indulging in pleasantries with PM Modi, it came out that he had asked the European Union to slap tariffs of up to 100 per cent on India and China. Alarming and unsettling, the news sapped some of the enthusiasm. Clearly, everything is not what it seems. Uncertainty is the only certainty in this convulsing world.

All hopes are now pinned on Sergio Gor, Trump's nominee to be the US Ambassador to India, whose arrival in Delhi could ease some of the political tension. Gor is extremely close to the Trump family, especially the oldest son, Donald Trump Jr and son-in-law Jared Kushner. Indian diplomats see his nomination as a "sign of importance and priority of India-US ties and a commitment to strengthen the bridges of friendship". While Gor would play a crucial role because he can get straight to the president, repairing the tattered tapestry would require many workers on both sides. An important next step after the Trump-PM Modi exchange would be concluding the India-US trade deal that's been under negotiation for months. From all accounts, the deal is ready. It has been taken to the Oval Office at least three times by Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, only to be rejected by Trump with a demand for more. It's unclear whether the trade deal has become a piece in the larger geopolitical play vis-à-vis Russia that Trump is attempting. The

imposition of 25 per cent extra tariffs as a penalty for buying Russian oil has put India in the highest US bracket of 50 per cent tariffs. The impact on certain sectors (gems, stones, leather) is severe, with livelihoods being lost overnight. Foreign investment flows to India may also be affected. Trump's hard signalling to US companies to come back and manufacture at home is another potential problem.

The severity of the tariff punishment heaped on India is directly related to Trump's inability to force Russia to end the war against Ukraine. The summit with President Vladimir Putin in Alaska didn't yield much, forcing Trump to scour for new ways to increase the pressure on Moscow. Punishing a strategic partner to choke off Putin's lucrative revenue stream from oil is part of the play.

But the selective nature of the punishment - China thus far has escaped penalty tariffs despite being the largest buyer of Russian oil - makes it hard for Delhi to understand the logic. It's unclear whether the Europeans will band with the US to mount a joint effort to impose further tariffs on India and China.

Indian companies buying Russian oil and making profits by selling refined products to Europe and the US has become an increasingly thorny issue - it's difficult to explain and hard to simplify for political consumption. Even though India is operating under the rules set by Western countries, no one in the US administration seems to remember the past.

There are more questions than answers facing India and the US as they plot and plod the path forward. An essential element in short supply is trust. It has gone missing, and until some of it is found again, India may find it difficult to forgive and forget all that has been thrown at it. Doubts about the US as a reliable partner are once again at the forefront for India's strategic community. "The quality of the relationship has been damaged by thoughtless outbursts," said one observer. Indeed, and to what end?


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# America alone can't match China. With allies, it just might.

For the first time in its modern history, the United States faces a rival — China — that has greater scale in most of the critical dimensions of power, and American national capacity alone may not be enough to rise to the challenge. We are entering an era where the true measure of American primacy will be whether Washington can build what we call allied scale: the power to compete globally in tandem with other countries across economic, technological and military domains.

President Trump appears to be moving in the opposite direction. His go-it-alone, tariff-centric diplomacy has alienated allies and left openings for Beijing to build its own coalitions. Mr. Trump's recent imposition of high tariffs on India are just one example. The United States spent three decades courting



India as a geopolitical counterweight to China. But after the tariffs were applied on India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week visited China for the first time in seven years, where he and President Xi Jinping agreed to moved past a recent history of tense relations and work as partners, not rivals. Mr. Trump is playing with fire. Throughout the 20th century, America outproduced and out-innovated Germany, Japan and the Soviet Union. But China is different. On the metrics that matter most in strategic competition, it has already surpassed the United States. Its economy, while slowing, is still nearly 30 percent larger than America's when one accounts for purchasing power. China has twice the manufacturing capacity, producing vastly more cars, ships, steel and solar panels than the United States and more than 70 percent of the world's batteries, electric vehicles and critical minerals. In science and technology, China produces more active patents and top-cited publications than the United States. And militarily, it has the world's largest naval fleet, a shipbuilding capacity estimated to be more than 230 times as great as America's and is fast establishing itself as a leader in hypersonic weapons, drones and quantum communications. China has its problems, such as a shrinking and aging population, excess industrial capacity,

rickety state finances and high debt. But any serious U.S. strategy toward China must reckon with the Cold War aphorism "Quantity has a quality all its own." The rise and fall of great powers has often turned on scale — the size, resources and capacity that make a nation formidable. Once countries reach similar levels of economic productivity, those with larger populations and continental size eventually surge ahead. Britain's first-mover advantage in the Industrial Revolution gave way once larger countries like the United States and Russia caught up. In the 20th century, America awed its enemies: Hitler called it a "giant state with unimaginable productive capacities," and Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto, architect of the attack on Pearl Harbor, admitted he could run wild in the Pacific Ocean for only so long before American industry overwhelmed Japan. Today, that sense of daunting scale describes China. America's best hope for matching that lies in maximizing its own strength through alliances. That means no longer treating U.S. allies as dependents under our protection, but as partners in building power jointly by pooling markets, technology, military capability and industrial capacity. Investments in American renewal are necessary, but insufficient by themselves.

Alone, the United States will

be smaller compared with China by many important metrics. But together with economies such as Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, Canada, Mexico, Taiwan and others, there is no competition. This coalition would be more than twice China's G.D.P. when adjusted for purchasing power, more than double its military spending, the top trading partner of most countries in the world, and would represent half the world's manufacturing to China's one-third. It would possess deeper talent pools, create more patents and top-cited research, and wield a degree of market power that could deter Chinese coercion. Allied scale would win the future. The aim is not to contain China — an impossible goal — but to balance it. Only through partnerships can we protect our shared industrial bases, technological edge and the ability to deter China.

The Biden administration favored persuasion in winning over other countries. It helped create the Trade and Technology Council with Europe; elevated the so-called Quad grouping that combines the United States, India, Japan and Australia to balance China's growing influence; reached a nuclear submarine deal with Australia and Britain; and struck new export control and trade arrangements.

Mr. Trump is not entirely

allergic to this approach. In his first term, he pursued initiatives such as the Abraham Accords in the Middle East, signed the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, and it was he who initially revived a previously dormant Quad. But he was often more comfortable with bilateral coercion, which alienated allies.

This is true once again. Mr. Trump's hardball tactics target the very economies that the United States should be pulling closer. Even his handshake trade deals with Japan, South Korea and Europe focus narrowly on reducing bilateral trade deficits, raising tariff revenue and securing vague investment pledges rather than balancing China. U.S. allies have publicly likened his approach to a "landlord seeking rent." America's global popularity has plummeted, even falling behind China's in many countries.

A Trumpian path to achieving allied scale, if it exists, is likely to lean on more coercion. That might generate short-term concessions from desperate partners, but it would deplete trust over the long term. Mr. Trump is not wrong to seek more from allies. But he is squandering America's precious leverage on the wrong objectives. Instead of settling for vague pledges from trade partners, he should push them for significant and specific long-term investment in sectors that

will spark American reindustrialization. Instead of focusing on trivial disputes — like trying to sell more American rice to Japan — he should push them to commit to building a multilateral tariff and regulatory wall that protects the industrial bases of the countries behind it from being hollowed out by China's mercantilism. The destination is visible. If Japan and South Korea follow through on pledges to help build American ships, Taiwan builds more semiconductor plants in America and the United States sells some of its best military technology to allies — all under better trade terms than each of them offers to China — this would be consistent with Mr. Trump's preferences and serve as templates for future deals. These two-way flows of capacity could garner bipartisan support and buy-in from our international partners. It is a path to allied scale that might work.

What won't work is punishing our friends while courting Beijing. Offering China tariff relief or access to U.S. semiconductors in exchange for hazy promises to buy American goods would offer fleeting benefits but permanent damage to America's position. It could alienate potential partners and lead them to embrace China, just as India appears to be doing now.

America's singular advantage in the global power landscape is its allies and partners. Many of these, fearing abandonment, are prepared to accommodate Mr. Trump in ways few would have expected. Under U.S. pressure, South Korea has offered major investments in shipbuilding, Vietnam announced it would drop all tariffs on U.S. goods, and Europe is increasing military spending. Countries like these are willing to do more than those that Mr. Trump chases after, like Russia and China, ever would. It's not too late for Washington to build allied scale, even through Mr. Trump's coercive style. But unless the president redirects his leverage toward the goal of balancing China's overwhelming capacity, he will leave America smaller and more isolated. The next century, then, will be China's to lose.

# Why The Great Nicobar Project Is An Ambitious Leap

The Great Nicobar Project, a visionary endeavour of the Modi government, is poised to transform the Great Nicobar Island into a strategic and economic hub, reinforcing India's stature in the Indo-Pacific. This Rs 75,000-crore mega-infrastructure initiative, a cornerstone of the Act East Policy, harnesses the island's unique geostrategic location to drive national security, economic prosperity, and regional connectivity. While the project promises immense benefits, the Modi government has also prioritised environmental sustainability and the welfare of indigenous tribal communities. In contrast, the Congress party's opposition to this transformative initiative reflects a historical pattern of resisting progress, lacking the foresight to champion bold gamechanger projects.

## Strategic and Economic Benefits

The Great Nicobar Project is a multifaceted plan designed to capitalise on the island's proximity to the Malacca Strait, a critical artery for global trade. Its key components - an International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT), a greenfield international airport, a modern township, and a 450 MVA gas and solar-based power plant - promise to reshape India's maritime and economic landscape. The Great Nicobar's location, just 150 km from Indonesia, places it at the crossroads of vital sea lanes. The ICTT at Galathea Bay, capable of handling 16 million TEUs, will position India as a major transshipment hub, reducing dependence on foreign ports such as Colombo and Singapore. This strengthens India's maritime influence, complementing the Indian Navy's INS Baaz airbase to enhance surveillance and counter regional geopolitical challenges, particularly China's expanding presence in the Indian Ocean. By securing control over these critical routes, the project bolsters India's role as a net security provider, safeguarding national interests and global trade flows. The ICTT will transform the Great Nicobar into a global shipping hub, slashing logistics costs for Indian trade and saving foreign exchange. The greenfield international airport, designed to handle 4,000 passengers per hour by 2050, will serve both civilian and defense needs, connecting the island to mainland India and Southeast Asia.

The planned township, accommodating 3-4 lakh people, will foster economic activity through residential, commercial, and institutional developments.



Aligned with the Act East Policy, the project will deepen trade and investment ties with ASEAN nations, positioning the Great Nicobar as a gateway for regional commerce and enhancing India's economic competitiveness.

Moreover, the Great Nicobar's pristine beaches, lush rainforests, and rich biodiversity make it a prime destination for ecotourism. The project envisions infrastructure for activities like river cruises, kayaking, and bird watching, drawing visitors while preserving the island's natural allure. Enhanced connectivity via the airport and port will boost local businesses, creating jobs and economic opportunities for residents. Managed by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO), the project ensures that economic benefits reach local communities, transforming the region into a vibrant hub for tourism and trade.

As part of the Holistic Development of Islands programme, the Great Nicobar Project integrates the Andaman and Nicobar Islands into India's strategic and economic framework. By establishing the island as a maritime and tourism hub, it strengthens north-south connectivity, fostering closer ties with Indo-Pacific nations. This aligns with India's ambition to lead

in the region, countering geopolitical challenges while promoting economic cooperation. With a 30-year phased implementation, the project

reinforces ecological accountability.

The welfare of the Nicobarese and Shompen, including the particularly vulnerable Shompen

potential.

## Congress's Habitual Opposition

The Congress party, led by its seniormost leaders like Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, has criticised the Great Nicobar Project as a threat to the environment and tribal rights. This opposition mirrors a broader pattern of resisting initiatives that propel India forward, revealing a lack of vision and enterprise that has long hindered India's decisive progress. In the past, the party's tenures have been marked by missed opportunities in critical sectors like semiconductors and manufacturing. While the Modi government's Make in India initiative has attracted global investment and established India as a manufacturing hub, Congress failed to foster industrial growth during its decades in power. Similarly, the India Semiconductor Mission has positioned India as a high-tech leader, an area Congress neglected. The Great Nicobar Project, like these initiatives, demands bold leadership and long-term planning - qualities Congress has consistently lacked.

By demanding an "immediate suspension" of the project without offering constructive solutions, Congress priorities political posturing over national interest. Its resistance echoes past opposition to transformative policies like GST and Defence Manufacturing. The Modi government, in contrast, has demonstrated a commitment to inclusive development, addressing environmental and tribal concerns through proactive measures. Congress's critique ignores the project's strategic and economic imperatives, reflecting a regressive mindset. It needs no reiteration that the Congress party's rule was plagued by delays and indecision in infrastructure development, with projects like the Golden Quadrilateral languishing until accelerated under NDA leadership. The Great Nicobar Project requires the same decisive action that Congress historically failed to deliver.

The Great Nicobar Project is a bold step toward securing India's strategic and economic future in the Indo-Pacific. By transforming the island into a maritime, trade, and tourism hub, it strengthens national security and regional connectivity leading up to South East Asia.

reflects a forward-looking commitment to sustainable growth and regional influence.

## Safeguarding Environmental Concerns

The Modi government recognises the ecological and cultural significance of the Great Nicobar, home to unique biodiversity and indigenous tribes like the Nicobarese and Shompen. While critics highlight risks of deforestation and tribal displacement, the government has implemented robust measures to ensure sustainable development and protect these communities.

The project secured environmental and forest clearances in 2022, with strict conditions to minimise ecological harm. Compensatory afforestation programs will offset tree felling, preserving the island's biodiversity-rich rainforests. The government has prioritised protecting critical habitats, avoiding turtle nesting sites and coral reefs to safeguard species like leatherback sea turtles, dugongs, and Nicobar macaques. The adoption of gas and solar-based power plants underscores a commitment to cleaner energy, reducing the project's environmental footprint. Collaboration with institutions like the Wildlife Institute of India ensures rigorous biodiversity monitoring, while adherence to Coastal Regulation Zone norms

living in voluntary isolation, is central to the project's planning. The government has engaged with the Tribal Council of Little and Great Nicobar Islands to address land use concerns, resolving tribal rights under the Forest Rights Act to facilitate sustainable development. ANIIDCO oversees land acquisition and relocation, prioritising community welfare and participation. Rehabilitation plans for the Nicobarese, many displaced by the 2004 tsunami, offer modern amenities while respecting traditional livelihoods. Measures to limit external exposure, protect the Shompen's cultural integrity, ensuring their tribal reserve remains intact. Through consultation and consent, the government aims to empower indigenous communities as stakeholders in the project's success.

The Modi government's approach reflects a commitment to harmonising strategic and economic goals with environmental and social responsibility. The project's phased implementation allows for continuous monitoring, enabling adjustments to address ecological and tribal concerns. By integrating sustainable technologies and fostering inclusive dialogue, the government is crafting a model of development that respects Great Nicobar's unique heritage while unlocking its

# Corruption, 'Nepo' Baby Rage: Why Nepal Meltdown Was Long In The Making

Nepal stands at an inflexion point. In the last two days, there has been a complete overhaul of the country's political system. The Prime Minister resigned citing the need to resolve the issue politically, in line with the country's constitution. His resignation was a major demand of the protesters who considered him culpable in the death of 19 protesters on September 8. Many senior leaders were targeted inside their own houses and their residences, both of the opposition and the ruling coalition were set ablaze while the supreme court, the parliament complex and other official buildings were also set on fire. On September 9, the Nepal army deployed troops on the streets, with the chief of the army staff urging people to step back and let them handle the law and order situation.

## A First Since 2008

This sharp escalation in violence, not seen since the overthrow of the monarchy in 2008, followed the Gen Z protests against endemic issues plaguing the country. The directive ordering a ban on 26 social media sites was seen as the immediate catalyst for the movement. Only three applications were working, including TikTok, which had registered with Nepal's law last year and thus was not listed in the current ban. The application was banned back in 2023 and only became accessible with the return of the Oli led government to power.

But the demands of the protesters were all-pervasive, calling for an end to corruption and misgovernance in the country. A few days before the ban was imposed, videos on social media circulated under the 'Nepo Baby' trend- a critique of the difference in lifestyle between the families of the political elites and the common people. They were criticised for funding their lavish lifestyle through taxpayers' money while the common people struggled, either within the country or by migrating to the Gulf, Europe, the United States and Australia where they were stuck doing low paying jobs. Economic growth in the country has been stagnant,

while employment in the productive sectors is scarce, with the shortage of skilled labour also rendering any existing vacancies futile. The migration of youngsters abroad has created this vacuum while making the economy dependent on the receipt of remittances from abroad.

## Nepal Has Always Been On Boil

In its seventeen years as a democracy, stability has always been elusive for Nepal. The fruits of a federal democratic republic have over the years failed to fall in the basket of the common people. The game of musical chairs that the three mainstream political parties were playing for the Prime Minister's post - trying to protect their vested interests and their goals of self-aggrandisement - have dented the people's confidence. Nepal's Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has over the years charged former Prime Ministers of being involved in cases of corruption. Even in the development of big infrastructure projects, there have been allegations of favouritism, with Chinese companies being favoured over others without due process and many Chinese funded projects coming under the radar for financial mismanagement like the Pokhara international airport. This red tape surrounding big ticket infrastructure projects which allowed corrupt leaders to earn favour and increase their wealth and which adversely affected the quality of infrastructure development in the country had been a cause of concern.

## Broken Promises

When the CPN (UML) and Nepali Congress coalition assumed power in July 2024, they assuaged concerns about the frequent government changes by assuring that they will work towards adopting a common framework for governance. But as the term progressed, no consensus could be formed and the Prime Minister governed through the passing of executive orders unilaterally, bypassing the parliamentary procedure. The ban on social media thus didn't emerge in a vacuum and



was perceived as the government's attempt to stifle dissent. The allegations of corruption, on all major political leaders and their impunity against the judicial process and the tendency to stifle any form of dissent pushed the youngsters on the edge. This simmering discontent finally came out in the open with full force in the latest protests.

But the protests soon turned violent and chaos ensued as some protesters broke through the barricades and entered the parliament. The ensuing use of force by the armed police led to the death of 19 people on the first day. Three more people succumbed to their injuries the next day, while around 400 are being treated in hospitals. When the street protests erupted on September 8, nobody could have foreseen the scale and intensity with which they would grow. Young people in droves, dressed in school uniforms and with books in their hands carried the banners of 'youth against corruption' and 'GenZ Movement of Nepal' and mobilised on the streets. They called for an end to misgovernance, corruption and nepotism. But soon, pictures of blood-soaked streets and youngsters carrying their peers

to hospitals emerged. By the end of the day, some senior leaders from the coalition, particularly the Home Minister, had resigned, while opposition parties were creating pressure on the ruling government to listen to the demands of the people. In a meeting of the council of ministers, the government decided to set up a judicial probe on the events of the day. The following day, despite the imposition of curfews banning large gatherings in major city centres, people came on the streets. On social media, visuals of the Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba and her husband and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba being assaulted in their house, the Finance Minister being paraded on the streets and the scrambling hustle of helicopters ferrying leaders away from their houses started circulating. By the afternoon, the Prime Minister had resigned.

## This Isn't The End

As violence escalated, many groups, speaking on behalf of the Gen Z protesters released statements denying their involvement in any acts of vandalism, blaming vested interests for fomenting trouble and trying to take the movement away from them. Notwithstanding these

concerns, even as the resignation of Prime Minister Oli was perceived as a necessary outcome of the protests, with many celebrating through victory marches and the leader of the youth organisation that mobilised the youth regarding it as their win, the emphasis is on the need to control the fast evolving situation from deteriorating further. Any conversation on the next steps for the country can only take concrete shape once there is a halt in the violence as concerns emerge about the takeover of the protests were vested groups not part of the initial protests.

As the country now grapples in the aftermath of the protests, questions and speculations about how the new political framework will be structured abound. Leaders like Balen Shah, the mayor of Kathmandu and Rabi Lamichhane who was released from the jail as fears about a possible picketing of the prison gained ground, have all urged the protesters to stop their vandalism and no longer burn the country's infrastructure. Any understanding of how the situation will develop will depend on how quickly the violence is clamped down and peace prevails.

# A 'Star Wars' Dome To Defend India? Why That's Dazzling, But Not Practical

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech contained a striking announcement: the launch of a Sudarshan Chakra Mission, a technology-driven 'security shield' meant to protect not just strategic assets but also civilian centres - hospitals, railways, and even places of faith. Inspired by mythology, the Prime Minister described it as a system that would neutralise enemy attacks and strike back with precision, developed indigenously by Indian talent.

The vision is ambitious. The idea that every Indian citizen, every critical facility, could be wrapped in a dome of protection is attractive and politically resonant. But history, geography, and recent experience all caution us against believing in the possibility of an all-encompassing shield. Pursuing such a dream risks diverting scarce resources away from the urgent and practical needs of India's defence.

## America's "Star Wars" Lesson

India would not be the first country to dream of a national shield. In the 1980s, US President Ronald Reagan launched the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), quickly nicknamed 'Star Wars'. Its aim: to render nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete" by deploying space and ground-based interceptors to intercept Soviet missiles. When it became clear the project was technologically and fiscally unfeasible, it was quietly

shelved in the 1990s.

More recently, US President Donald Trump floated the Golden Dome project, another vision of a protective shield, though its details remain vague. What is clear is the scale: estimates suggest it could cost hundreds of billions of dollars.

If the United States, with unmatched resources and favourable geography, has struggled to realise such a concept, India must think very carefully before embarking on its own ambitious shield in the sky.

## The Iran-Israel Experience

Even more relevant is the recent war between Iran and Israel. Israel has perhaps the world's most sophisticated multilayered defence system - Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow interceptors - all heavily backed by US technology and resources. When Iran launched waves of drones and missiles from 1,500 km away, Israel had precious warning time, a small-sized homeland to defend, and active combat support from the US and European allies.

Despite these powerful advantages, several missiles still got through and struck Israel. Why? Because interceptors are not failsafe. The other problem is magazine depth: an attacker can overwhelm defences simply by launching more projectiles than

the defender has interceptors. Unfortunately, for defenders, resupply in wartime is slow and costly.

## India's Realities



India's situation is starkly different from America's or Israel's. Geography and Warning Time: India neighbours both its primary adversaries. Therefore, missiles launched from sites in China or Pakistan would give Indian defences mere minutes to detect, track, and intercept these attacks. This compresses decision-making in a way that even the most advanced shield would struggle to handle.

Technological Gaps: India is still developing many of the enabling technologies that even a modest version of such a shield would require. These technologies include space-based sensors, AI-enabled

battle management, and interceptor missiles. Closing this gap will take not just money but decades of sustained R&D.

Cost: Even a limited missile

allowing them to concentrate force where it is most needed. As the old aphorism goes, if you seek to defend everything, you defend nothing. Defensive

defence system requires tens of thousands of crores. A truly national shield covering civilian infrastructure is not just impractical but risks being a bottomless pit for resources.

## An Unworkable Shield

The Prime Minister's speech set 2035 as the deadline for deploying this shield may not be achievable, given how some of the technologies required like hypersonic interceptors and directed-energy weapons are still in development around the world. Even the US, Russia, and China, with vastly larger defence-industrial ecosystems, have not mastered them.

The danger is not just that the shield will fail. It is that the attempt to build it will divert resources from urgent priorities. The Indian Air Force is operating at half its sanctioned squadron strength. The Navy has no destroyer currently under construction and its submarine fleet is dwindling. The Army continues to face shortages in artillery. These gaps affect deterrence and warfighting ability today, not in a hypothetical missile-saturated future.

At a more fundamental level, the Sudarshan Chakra project may need a rethink conceptually. Militaries prioritise the defence of key assets,

capabilities also need to be married to offensive actions, whether those be retaliating against an adversary or preemptively degrading their offensive capabilities.

## A Smarter Path Forward

None of this is to dismiss the importance of air defence or emerging technologies. India does need:

Layered air and missile defence for strategic assets such as nuclear command centres, major cities, and military bases. Investment in counter-drone and counter-hypersonic research, areas that will define future conflict. More resilient infrastructure through hardening, dispersal, and redundancy. Above all, accelerated modernisation of the core platforms - fighters, submarines, and destroyers - that provide credible deterrence and real fighting capability. The Prime Minister invoked the Sudarshan Chakra of Lord Krishna, a divine weapon of perfect precision. As a symbol, it is powerful. As a policy goal, it risks setting expectations that no real-world system can meet. India's resources are finite and the threats it faces are immediate. A strong, balanced, and modern military will keep India secure. A mythical shield might not.



# Tariffs, Dumping And Dharma: Why India Needs Its Own Economic Model

In the midst of tariff war and the intensifying tussle of economies, India stands at a critical juncture. Despite pursuing the policy of liberalisation and globalisation for over three decades, the challenges thrown by the unilateral tariffs of the United States and consistent dumping of goods by China compels us to introspect about our current development model.

In this context the idea of Swadeshi—self-reliance rooted in India's civilizational wisdom—deserves fresh consideration. Swadeshi, by its critics, has been projected as an isolationist and the relic of freedom struggle. However, if one goes back to our traditional texts, Swadeshi reflects the vision of balanced and community centric growth. Incidentally, Swami Vivekananda had also rejected the western model of development way back in 1893 and that had attracted sharp criticism from several 'western' educated intellectuals. Interestingly, Margaret Noble, follower of one of the most famous anarchists of late 19th and early 20th century in Europe Prince Kropotkin, arranged the meeting between the latter and Swami Vivekananda. However, after meeting with Swami Vivekananda, she herself became a life-long proponent of Hindu values and was famously known as Sister Nivedita. One of the major critiques of the 'Hindu model of development' is that there is no structured body of knowledge available regarding this model. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There are thousands of treatises written by Hindu economists starting from Rig Veda that have given shape to 'Hindu Economics' by MG Bokare which has specific theories on price, demand, supply, welfarism, role of the state, taxation, income and expenditure of nation, foreign trade, employment.

These theories and principles of Hindu economics have been clouded by the dominance of the western economic thought.

## Traditional Indian Texts

Hindu economics is the manifestation of Holy Vedas in Economics, of abundance consistent with the theories of modern economics. The exploration of the past reveals inter-alia three facts: 1. Economics as a discipline of market had been conceived in ancient India (BC) for the first time in the world history of economic thought.

You May Like2. The first books of economics in the world were written



in ancient India (BC)

3. First definition of economics was presented by Shukracharya and Kautilya in the world history of economics. Holy Vedas have clear references of markets, supply and demand, price, trade, interest and profit, and tax. By interpolation, we can deduce lease-rent and wages also for people without property for income. Mercantile laws governing the economy are codified. The history of economic thoughts flow from Holy Vedas to Mahabharata, especially Shanti-Parva and Vidura-Niti. Then follow the smritis of Yajnavalkya, Gautama, Manu, Shukracharya, Kautilya, etc. Smritis are codifications of economic activities with some measures of quantifications of the variables. Cost of production, market price, per centage of profit, per centage of tax, wage-rates, interest rates etc are stated in the codified smritis. Competition and monopoly are clearly identified. Foreign trade has been explained. The codification in Smritis is the last phase. Kautilya's Arthashastra is the last book on economics in ancient India. In keeping with the Bharatiya tradition, Kautilya pays his homage to Shukra, Brihaspati and others at the very beginning of the Arthashastra. He also states that his treatise is a compendium of almost all the Arthashastras composed by ancient teachers. He mentions his predecessors as many as one hundred and fourteen times, though very often with a view to express his differences with them on various issues. This indicates a thoughtful evolution of Hindu economics that adapted its

principles and formulations to the changing times.

This also indicates that long before Kautilya this branch of knowledge i.e. economics was properly developed and its literature was arranged scientifically and was treated holistically in special manuals of instruction.

Long before the Western economists developed theories of self-employment, Hindu economics took cognisance of and systematised self-employment as well as wage employment. In the sphere of wage-employment, the employer-employee relationship was properly regulated thousands of years before the West became industrialised and started talking about wage employment. Shukraniti deals with this subject in detail. It categorises various types of wages; provides definitions of piece-rate, time-rate, time-cum-piece rate wages; periods of payment; types of wages; payment of wages; register of wages; resolution of industrial disputes; leave rules; annual leave with pay; sickness benefit; provident fund in principle; pension and family allowance; priority of relatives in service; general bonus and efficiency bonus; and the psychological handling of the employees- all these are provided for by Shukra. For example, regarding the issue of 'bonus', Shukra enjoins: Every year an employee should be granted one-eighth of his or her earnings as 'bonus'; if he does his work efficiently, he or she should be granted one-eighth of the piece rate

earnings, i.e. his remuneration for that work as efficiency bonus.

Shukra's regulations were meant for wage-earners under an economy of full-employment. The western economic theories concerning themselves solely with wage-employment to the exclusion of self-employment could not conceive of the condition of full-employment. The industrial relations regulations formulated against the background of western theories could not, therefore, be qualitatively at par with those of Shukra and other Hindu lawgivers.

A large section of intellectuals has refused to accept the possibility of having 'Hindu Economics' as a body of knowledge as they thought that our wise seers were not capable of taking interests in the mundane or earthly affairs like market-yards, weights, measurements, sub-standard goods, buyer-seller relationship, or unfair trade practices. They were therefore not in a mood to believe that Chapter 2 of the fourth Adhikarna of Kautilya's Arthashastra had laid down legal provisions for the protection of consumers from the unfair practices of traders. In addition, there are further detailed legal provisions for protection of consumers in Chapter 9 of Manusmriti, Chapter 2 of the Yajnavalkya Smriti and Chapter 9 of Narada Smriti.

In fact, one of the fundamental differences between the Hindu and Western economics is that the slogan of the Western classical economics is "Buyers! Beware" but the slogan of Hindu or Vedic economics is "Sellers! Beware"

# Nepal's Gen Z And The Reckoning: Rewiring A Broken Democracy



Kathmandu's streets erupted with the fury of a generation on September 8. Thousands of young Nepalis took to the streets and stormed parliament amid anger over corruption and a social media ban. The response was brutal: reports indicate at least 22 protesters have been killed in clashes with police, with violence escalating into a second day as demonstrators defied curfews, setting fire to government buildings and the homes of political leaders. Nepal's "Gen Z Revolution" is a movement that transcends its immediate triggers—a social media blackout and entrenched corruption—to challenge the very wiring of a fragile democracy. These young people are not just demanding change; they are exposing a deeper truth: democracy in Nepal, and perhaps beyond, needs a radical reboot to survive. Their protests signal a generational shift, one that

could redefine how power listens—or fails to. By late Tuesday, September 9, Nepal's military began deploying troops in Kathmandu to restore order, as rampaging protesters targeted the political elite, torching parliament, the Supreme Court, and residences of figures like former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli resigned that day, a dramatic concession, but the unrest shows no sign of abating. Nepal's Gen Z is not just fighting for free speech or clean governance.

They are demanding a system that is responsive, transparent, inclusive, and accountable. The People's Movement in 2006 marked another milestone in Nepal's democracy, leading to the abolition of the monarchy in 2008 and the establishment of Nepal as a republic. It promised inclusion and prosperity. Yet, two decades later,

it is just a patchwork of broken institutions and unkept promises. Corruption festers—take the 2017 Airbus deal, where Nepal Airlines lost \$10.4 million to shady dealings, with culprits barely punished. Youth unemployment is around 20 per cent, forcing thousands to toil abroad as migrant workers, their remittances propping up a third of the GDP while politicians' children flaunt wealth on TikTok. The social media ban, imposed on September 4 for the platforms' failure to register, was the spark, but the kindling was years of neglect. This is not just about Nepal. Across South Asia—Sri Lanka in 2022, Bangladesh in 2024—youth-led uprisings have toppled governments, driven by economic despair and elite impunity. In Nepal, hashtags like #NepoKid and #NepoBabies have gone viral, exposing the lavish lifestyles of leaders' children against the grind of

ordinary lives. It is a generational cry, amplified by digital tools, against a democracy that feels rigged.

The government's reversal of the social media ban on September 8, after Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak's resignation, was a start—but a grudging one, overshadowed by Oli's exit and the military's deployment. Real change demands structural reforms: an independent, powerful anti-corruption body, not just the toothless Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority.

Gen Z's digital fluency and global awareness make them uniquely suited to shape policy—perhaps through a national youth council with real power, not tokenism. Economic opportunity must replace despair. Investments in education and local jobs could stem the brain drain, keeping talent in Nepal. Finally, democracy through

needs transparency. Open data on government spending and public trials for corruption cases would signal accountability.

But Oli's government argued that social media regulation was about curbing misinformation and fraud, not silencing dissent.

They pointed to Nepal's economic recovery efforts and claimed protesters exaggerated the scope. Yet, this justification crumbles when police fire on unarmed youth, curfews choke free expression, and the army is called in to quell a movement that has now set the nation's capital and various parts of the nation ablaze.

Nepal's Gen Z is doing more than protesting; they are forcing a reckoning. Their movement challenges us all to rethink democracy's wiring. With Oli gone and the military stepping in, the protesting leaders should suspend demonstrations and pursue a peaceful resolution through dialogue.

# The changing marriage playbook for Indians in their 30s



As you grow older, you realise that high school romances don't always last a lifetime, and even that one great college love you thought would endure often fades after a few ups and downs.

Love marriages may have their fairy-tale charm, but arranged marriages can be just as fulfilling and romantic. Think of them as a gentle nudge toward meeting 'the one' and beginning a new adventure. Traditionally, marriage in India has meant committing to just one person, or as Bunny in *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* called it, "the same dal chawal for life." But the dynamics are shifting. People in their 30s are increasingly exploring the idea of open marriages within the arranged marriage setup. A viral Reel by influencer Vagmita Singh recently sparked a debate around this trend.

## So, are people looking for open marriages?

"While arranged marriages are still prevalent in India, views on marriage are changing, particularly for people in their 30s, many of whom are financially independent and clear about their expectations from relationships," Sybil Shiddell, country manager of dating app Gleeden (India), tells *India Today*. She adds that a survey by Gleeden indicates that 35 per cent of people are currently in an open relationship, and 41 per cent said they would be open to one if their partner suggested it.

"This represents a move towards more openness about alternative relationships – even in arranged marriage situations, where emotional connection may take some time to build," says Shiddell. Meanwhile, data from Ashley Madison, a platform for discreet relationships, shows that smaller Indian cities are now more open to non-traditional relationships. Leading the list is Kanchipuram, which ranks highest in India for interest in extra-marital affairs. Further, Ruchi Ruuh, a Delhi-based relationship counsellor, shares that people always have a yearning for novelty, especially at later stages in a marriage. "Earlier, many relied on unethical forms of non-monogamy, but now they are more aware of the possibilities of practising ethical non-monogamy, such as open marriages," she says.

She adds, "Now more partners want to balance societal expectations of marriage with personal desires for freedom and exploration. It's not mainstream in India, but the conversations are happening quietly within certain circles."

However, Mumbai-based relationship expert and author Shahzeen Shivdasani feels that open marriages are rare. "Most people entering arranged marriage setups are looking for stability, family, shared values, shared outlooks on life. So monogamy is still the default expectation."

## Does age factor play a role?

Priyanka Kapoor, a Mumbai-based couples and family counsellor, explains that by the time people reach their 30s, they are often focused on building careers and planning families, carrying experiences that shape how they view marriage.

At this stage, practicality takes centre stage — priorities are clearer, and family expectations and responsibilities weigh heavily in decision-making. That's why open marriages, when they do happen, are more common in the 30s, as individuals try to balance personal needs with family obligations.

Ruuh also notes that age is significant. "While open marriages remain somewhat niche in India, they are becoming more accepted," says Shiddell. According to Gleeden's data, acceptance is higher in Tier 1 cities, but curiosity about non-monogamy is growing in Tier 2 cities as well.

Shiddell explains that the drivers of this change are financial independence and exposure to global cultures and ideas, providing individuals with more space to explore relationships beyond traditional

norms.

Ruuh adds that open marriages require transparency, trust, and emotional maturity.

In India, where family involvement, societal judgment, and lack of privacy are significant factors, sustaining an open marriage can be challenging. "It's possible, and many people do practice open marriages in India, but most remain somewhat secretive," she says.

Shivdasani agrees that open marriage is far from mainstream in India. While it may be accepted in certain progressive or niche circles, it is unlikely to become widespread given the country's deep-rooted cultural values.

## Monogamy: Societal obligation or choice?

Across many parts of India, monogamy remains the default, shaped by family and social pressure. But people in their 30s are beginning to question what loyalty, love, and relationships really mean. A Gleeden study found that 61 per cent of married respondents felt monogamy can be a constraint. Many in their 30s want it to be a choice rather than an expectation, prioritising personal happiness and emotional connection over social norms.

Kapoor notes that monogamy isn't an obligation but a personal choice. Many still prefer monogamy, seeking a deep connection with their partner in their 20s and 30s. For them, true satisfaction comes from commitment.

However, some in their 30s feel restricted by monogamy. Those interested in open marriages remain a small minority, while others who don't want to feel bound often stay single, marrying only under social or family pressure.

## What about social stigma?

"There's undoubtedly a strong stigma around open marriages, while monogamy continues to be socially validated. Choosing openness often invites judgment and criticism, as it challenges traditional ideas of marriage," Shivdasani says.

Shiddell adds that marriage is heavily linked to family honour, religion, and tradition, which often prohibits discussions about open marriages.

"While attitude changes may be slow, there is hope for more open dialogue around alternative relationships. Younger Indians are starting to see marriage as an equal partnership rather than a social formality, and conversations about emotional needs are slowly reducing the taboo," she says.

Emotional risks of open marriage  
Open marriages bring challenges like jealousy, insecurity, and fear of losing a partner's desire, explains Ruuh.

Even with clear communication and transparency, some may perceive a loss of intimacy, especially if participation is reluctant.

Without clearly set boundaries, one partner may feel neglected or betrayed. In cultures like India, where marriage is linked to honour, this can feel dishonourable.

Is this a generational shift?

Experts agree that this change is generational. Millennials and Gen Z are redefining marriage and questioning the idea that lifelong exclusivity is the only path to happiness.

"There really isn't a right or wrong here; it's a matter of exposure to global thinking, financial independence, and a desire for authenticity. Older generations equate marriage with duty and family reputation, while younger Indians prioritise happiness and emotional well-being," Shiddell says.

Kapoor adds that younger people are more practical, focusing on what truly matters instead of blindly following culture. For them, happiness and relationship satisfaction may lie outside conventional norms. However, this mindset is more common in urban areas than in rural or semi-rural regions.



# Qatar played all sides, peacemaker to Islamist safe haven. Now there's no place to hide

As the world order threatens to buckle under new strains, peacemaking is becoming an ever more dangerous business.

There, standing in a grey puddle of light under the glass-domed lounge at the Bayerischer Hof in Munich, Germany, former Afghan spymaster Amarullah Saleh understood the nation he had given his life to build was about to die. For almost a decade, the Taliban had enjoyed safe haven in Doha, operating a de facto embassy there with diplomatic protections. They received funds, drew up combat plans, and travelled to meet their top leaders in Karachi and Peshawar. The killing in Afghanistan, however, had continued without interruption—and President Ashraf Ghani wanted the jihadists gone. He said as much to the Emir of Qatar during the Munich Security Conference in 2020. A smile on his face, the Emir replied: "Well, we have only permitted them to stay in Qatar. Everything else, including their expenses, is managed and overseen by the Central Intelligence Agency. If you want this to end, ask the CIA to stop." This week, Qatar's role as peacemaker in the Middle East came under assault, as a squadron of Israeli combat jets targeted terrorist group Hamas' headquarters, not far from Doha's famous Corniche. The bombing took place just as Hamas was discussing a Gaza ceasefire proposal made by US President Donald Trump. There was no reaction from the formidable air defences at Al-Udeid air base, home to the Qatar Emiri Air Force, the United States Air Force, and the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force.

For decades, Qatar has sought security and prestige as the mediator between the United States and nations in conflict across the Middle East—sending billions of dollars to Hamas with the complete approval of the Israeli Prime Minister, funnelling cash to Benjamin Netanyahu's aides, helping the Islamists who seized power in Syria, and exerting influence from Egypt to Libya and Tunisia.

As the world order threatens to buckle under new strains, however, peacemaking is becoming an ever more dangerous business. Earlier this year, Al-Udeid was struck by Iranian ballistic missiles, in retaliation for American attacks on that country's nuclear infrastructure. The haven in the desert

"The Kaaba of the dispossessed"—that's what the founding ruler of Qatar, Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani, once called his Emirate. Located at the fringes of the reach of two great empires, Britain and Turkey, Qatar had long provided safe haven to those who had reason to flee elsewhere, from pirates to traders and rebels. Late in the nineteenth century, though, tensions between the tribes grouped around Sheikh Jassim and the



Turkish rulers escalated. In 1892, Sheikh Jassim won an historic victory against Turkish forces, establishing himself as the region's most important chieftain, historian Habibur Rahman recounts.

Inside months, though, the Sheikh would learn his imperial patrons were in decline. The British, committed to the defence of Bahrain, launched a pre-emptive attack on Sheikh Jassim's forces in 1895. This established the British as the principal power in the Persian Gulf. Following the outbreak of the First World War, the Turks evacuated their last outposts in Qatar, after which Jassim's Qatar became a British protectorate.

Like other Persian Gulf emirates, Qatar soon found itself confronted with the problem of creating a modern nation-state. The discovery of oil in 1939 eventually led to some revenues becoming available, but the entire country did not have a single modern school operational in that year, scholar David Roberts has written. The one educational institution was a seminary set up by the Saudi cleric Al-Sheikh Abdul-Aziz Al-Manna, who also served as the Emirate's sole judge.

The task of setting up an education system fell to Jassim Al-Darwish, a former student of al-Manna. The first school founded in Qatar was up and running in 1951, but had just 241 students, all boys, taught by six male teachers. To hire more recruits, Al-Darwish turned through his seminarian contacts to the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan Al-Banna. Al-Banna picked another Brotherhood member, Abdul Badi-Saqr, to head the building of an education system.

As Roberts notes, though, these hiring decisions were at least as much the consequence of opportunity as of ideological choice. The availability of educated Muslim Brotherhood cadre was the consequence of Egypt's growing crackdown on the religious right-wing. Later, Khalifa Bin Hamad Al-Thani, who

ruled from 1972 to 1995, also recruited Arab nationalists like the Syrian Abdullah Abd Al-Daim.

## The West's jihadists

The real force behind the hiring of Islamists, though, was the United Kingdom. Fearing Arab nationalism would prove a toxic influence, the British forced the sacking of Al-Daim. Then, in 1958, Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leader Ezzeddin Ebrahim was appointed assistant director of knowledge, in charge of devising a school syllabus. The director of the Islamic Sciences division of the education department, Abdullah Bin Tukri Al-Subai, was despatched to the famous Al-Azhar seminary in Cairo to hire teachers. The most famous of his hires would turn out to be Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, who emerged as a pole star for the Brotherhood in the Gulf.

Figures like Al-Qaradawi were to play a critical role in what became known as the Islamic Awakening of the 1970s, the ideological movement that laid the ground for the large-scale recruitment of Arab youth into the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan, and later into national jihadist movements. Together with other influential figures in the Brotherhood, Al-Qaradawi would give religious sanction to so-called martyrdom operations.

Across the region, British influence was placing Islamists in similar positions of authority, part of a programme intended to roll back Communist influence. Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first Prime Minister, gave Islamist leader Said Ramadan a radio slot and wrote the foreword to one of his books. The Brotherhood repaid the favour, propagandising for Pakistani causes in the Middle East. Among other things, Al-Banna described the accession of Hyderabad and Kashmir to India as an illegitimate occupation of Islamic lands. Yet the Brotherhood were not the only radicals to find safe haven in

Qatar. Large numbers of Palestinians displaced from the West Bank and Gaza made a home there, wielding influence in the intelligentsia. Mohammad Yusuf al-Najjar and Kamal Adwan, both later assassinated by Israeli intelligence for their role in the 1973 massacre of Israeli Olympic athletes, spent many years in the Emirate. The final act?

Learning from Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait that small, oil-rich states were also vulnerable, Qatar moved to tighten its links with the United States after 1990.

From 1996, Qatar sank billions of dollars into Al-Udeid air base, which currently hosts over 11,000 United States troops and more than 100 aircraft. And, when needed, Qatar has proved willing to moderate its ties with the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. Following a bruising six-year spat with its neighbours Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, all of which opposed the Brotherhood, Qatar agreed to scale down the visibility of the Emirate's clients.

To many experts, it seems clear the Emirate's alliance with Islamists is driven by a desire for glory. Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, who ruled from 1995 to 2013, sought to win global support for Qatar by bringing about an Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. He saw himself, Gil Feiler and Hayim Zeev argue, as a kind of Islamist Gamal Abdul Nasser, the founder of a new kind of Arab identity.

Even if the current Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, isn't driven by those messianic passions, he clearly understands Qatar derives its value from its parallel ties to Islamists and the West. In Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, Qatar succeeded in placing Islamists whom the West hopes it will be able to control. This is a dangerous place to be—but fate has placed the Emirate in a part of the world where there is no quiet place in shade to hide.

# Kamala Harris Cites "Recklessness, Ego" In Joe Biden's Decision To Run Again

Former Vice President Kamala Harris says it was "recklessness" for Democrats to leave it to President Joe Biden to decide whether to continue seeking another term last year, but she defends his ability to do the job, according to an excerpt of her new book. Harris, in an excerpt of "107 Days" published Wednesday in The Atlantic, writes that as questions swirled about whether the then-81-year-old Biden should seek reelection, she and others left the decision to him and first lady Jill Biden.

"Was it grace, or was it recklessness? In retrospect, I think it was recklessness," Harris said.

The remarks are the first time Harris has been publicly critical of Biden's decision to run again - an ill-fated decision that saw him drop out in July 2024 after a disastrous debate performance, leaving her to head up the Democratic ticket and ultimately lose to Republican Donald Trump.

"The stakes were simply too high," Harris writes in the book. "This wasn't a choice that should have been left to an individual's ego, an individual's ambition. It should have been more than a personal decision."

Biden's office did not immediately have a comment Wednesday.

Throughout the campaign and in its wake, Harris had avoided much criticism of the president she served beside and defended him amid questions about his mental acuity.

In the book excerpt, Harris continues to defend Biden's ability to do the job but describes him in 2024 and especially at the time of his "debate debacle" as "tired." "On his worst day, he was more deeply knowledgeable, more capable of exercising judgment, and far more compassionate than Donald Trump on his best. But at 81, Joe got tired. That's when his age showed in physical and verbal stumbles," Harris writes. "I don't think it's any surprise that the debate debacle

happened right after two back-to-back trips to Europe and a flight to the West Coast for a Hollywood fundraiser. I don't believe it was incapacity."

She adds that if she believed Biden were incapacitated, she would have said so out of loyalty to the country.

Harris also blames those close to Biden for unflattering media coverage throughout the time she served as vice president and throwing her under the bus to boost Biden's public standing.

She writes about receiving a high level of scrutiny as the first female vice president but says "when the stories were unfair or inaccurate, the president's inner circle seemed fine with it. Indeed, it seemed as if they decided I should be knocked down a little bit more."

Harris writes that she often learned that Biden's staff was "adding fuel to negative narratives" that surrounded her, such as stories about her vice presidential office being in disarray and having high turnover.

The former vice president also accuses Biden's staff of being afraid of her upstaging him, describing a speech she gave in Selma, Alabama, in March of last year in which she called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and more humanitarian aid to be delivered to people there.

"It went viral, and the West Wing was displeased," Harris says, "I was castigated for, apparently, delivering it too well."

She suggests that diminishing her also diminished Biden, especially "given the concerns about his age."

Harris' success, she writes, would be a marker of Biden's good judgment and a reassurance to the public that if something happened to the president she could step in.

"My success was important for him," she writes. "His team didn't get it."

Harris' book, whose title is a nod to the length of her abbreviated presidential campaign, is set to be published by Simon & Schuster on Sept. 23.

## The Beginning

### MAD MEN

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#### About the Author



Sharanjit Thind Singh, for more than 29 years has spent his career immersed in the world of advertising, marketing, and media. His professional journey includes working with well known Media, FMCG and Telecom Companies in India and the US.

Hailing from a small postal stamp size city in Punjab, Thind's academic background reflects his drive for excellence. After completing a Bachelor of Commerce degree, he pursued an MBA. He further strengthened his expertise with a Post Graduate Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication. This combination of business knowledge and media insight became the foundation of his career.

He founded and, is CEO of Nu Way Advertising in Manhattan now known as Nu Way Media Group Inc. He has served as a Commissioner of the Nassau County Human Rights Commission in New York.



The Beginning

MAD MEN OF NU WAY ADVERTISING

Sharanjit Thind Singh

## The Beginning

A True Story of the iconic rise of an Indian American Advertising Agency in Manhattan, New York in early 2000

Sharanjit Thind Singh



### MAD MEN

OF

### NU WAY ADVERTISING

# Cheap Oil, Heavy Costs: How India's China-Russia Embrace Could Backfire

India's pivotal shift in consolidating a Russia-India-China (RIC) axis, though tactically alluring, risks rendering it more vulnerable and increasingly isolated as a purported leader of the democratic Global South. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Tianjin, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi walked hand-in-hand with Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin, crystallised a new phase of India's strategic signalling at a time when our economy is more interlinked with China and Russia than ever before despite having areas of disagreeable distance. For Beijing and Moscow, the optics at SCO were a symbolic coup: Xi spoke of the "dragon and elephant dancing together", while Putin and Modi announced expanded trade in energy and agriculture. For Washington, however, the trilateral choreography was interpreted as a defection. President Donald Trump bluntly declared on social media that the United States had "lost India and Russia to deepest, darkest China". His frustration was compounded by India's continued imports of discounted Russian oil and its profitable resale of refined products into Europe, an arbitrage that prompted Washington to impose punitive secondary tariffs of 50% specifically on Indian goods.

On the surface, India's alignment with the RIC bloc offers clear, calculable rewards. Russian hydrocarbons, procured at deep discounts, sustain India's refiners and provide immediate fiscal breathing room; Chinese upstream inputs from lithium-ion cells to APIs are indispensable for manufacturing and green transition projects; and the trilateral framework flatters New Delhi with the image of belonging to a powerful multipolar club. For a country squeezed by US tariffs, Western protectionism, and secondary sanctions, the immediate temptation to hedge through the RIC axis is undeniable.

## The Russian Hydrocarbon Windfall

India's tilt towards Russian hydrocarbons has been extraordinary both in scale and speed. In fiscal year 2024-25, bilateral trade surged to a record \$68.7 billion, dominated almost entirely by Indian imports, with \$63.84 billion accounted for by

mineral fuels and crude oil. Indian refiners, state-owned and private alike, seized on the arbitrage opportunities created by discounted Urals crude. By maximising plant utilisation and exporting refined products such as diesel and gasoline, they captured significant margins while reducing landed energy costs for the domestic economy. Tanker-tracking intelligence confirmed that by mid-2025, India was importing an average of 1.6 million barrels of Russian crude per day, with major facilities such as Jamnagar institutionalising this new energy axis. Conservative estimates suggest cumulative fiscal savings in the billions since early 2022.

## Precarious Gains

But these gains are precarious. They sit uneasily alongside the retaliatory instruments of US trade policy. Recent tariff pronouncements from Washington directly endanger nearly 55% of India's merchandise exports to the United States, a market worth over \$87 billion annually. The potential for order cancellations, diminished investment flows, and reputational risks could quickly overwhelm the fiscal relief derived from Russian oil. In pure cost-benefit terms, the calculus is stark: the marginal billions saved on crude are dwarfed by the tens of billions at risk through reduced access to the world's largest consumer market.

What appears to be short-term fiscal breathing room thus masks a long-term strategic liability. The fungibility of crude oil in global markets is not mirrored by the stickiness of export relationships, which anchor entire industries in textiles, pharmaceuticals, and engineering goods. The inescapable lesson from this dynamic is clear. Energy security procured through Russian imports buys immediate fiscal breathing room and a degree of policy autonomy. But, by embedding itself too deeply in sanctioned energy flows, India exposes its economy to the volatility of great-power contestation and risks exchanging stable, rules-based trade with advanced economies for fragile tactical bargains.

## Sino-Indian Asymmetry

If Russian oil constitutes an acute conundrum, India's trade relationship with China represents a chronic and slow-

burning structural vulnerability. In 2024-25, India imported \$113.5 billion worth of goods from China while exporting only \$14.3 billion, producing a trade deficit of nearly \$99.2 billion. This imbalance is not merely a question of numbers; it encodes profound asymmetries of leverage.

Chinese imports are overwhelmingly concentrated in inelastic, upstream inputs essential for India's industrial production base and green transition. More than half of India's needs for solar cells, lithium-ion batteries, Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), and Key Starting Materials (KSMs) are sourced from Chinese suppliers. These are not commodities easily substitutable in the short run. Any disruption, whether geopolitical, tariff-induced, or deliberate, would cascade across the Indian economy, spiking costs, halting production, and jeopardising national priorities from energy transition to "Make in India".

At the same time, India's exports to China remain limited to price-elastic raw materials and low-value-added goods, such as iron ore and basic chemicals. This asymmetry grants Beijing coercive leverage while leaving India with minimal retaliatory capacity. The imbalance is further underscored by the ballooning semiconductor import bill - 1.71 lakh crore in FY 2023-24, reflecting dependence on Chinese wafers and integrated circuits, even as domestic assembly advances. In effect, India's manufacturing and green ambitions are constrained at the upstream level by a dependency that China can weaponise with little cost to itself.

This is not interdependence but strategic vulnerability. The more India integrates with China's industrial ecosystem, the more exposed it gets to the structural asymmetry at its core. Unlike Russian oil, which can be diversified with some difficulty, Chinese inputs represent chokepoints that cut directly into the foundations of India's future economy.

## The Strategic Mirage of the RIC Bloc

Given India's distinct economic and structural vulnerabilities, deepening integration within the Russia-India-China (RIC) framework offers little strategic mitigation. An objective assessment of empirical

evidence underscores that such a move would be inherently flawed. Russia's economy, with a GDP smaller than Italy's, lacks the scale and domestic demand to absorb Indian exports at levels sufficient to offset potential losses from Western markets. China, while being a far larger economy, already enjoys a substantial trade surplus with India and pursues policies aimed at technological self-sufficiency rather than absorbing low-value Indian exports. Its control over critical upstream chokepoints means any deeper economic integration would likely entrench, rather than reduce, existing asymmetries. The political costs further compound these economic risks. Expanding ties with a sanctioned Russia invites third-party reprisals, including coordinated tariff retaliation from Western nations, while deeper dependence on China, a country with which India shares a contested and militarised border, heightens exposure to upstream supply shocks in semiconductors, chemical intermediates, and other critical inputs.

The RIC framework, therefore, does not create a resilient or integrated economic space. Instead, it magnifies systemic risk while providing only narrow, point-specific benefits, such as discounted energy and legacy defence equipment. It exemplifies the perils of substituting diversified, rules-based market access with concentrated, politically volatile dependencies, mistaking tactical, short-term gains for durable strategic resilience.

The data are stark. Annual energy savings, in the low single-digit billions, are far outweighed by tens of billions at risk in lost exports. Structural reliance on Chinese inputs leaves India with minimal leverage in sectors vital for industrial modernisation and technological advancement. What may be seen as a shrewd hedging strategy risks becoming a high-stakes economic cul-de-sac, exposing India to the unintended consequences of concentrated dependencies amid a volatile geoeconomic landscape.

## Hedging or Entrapment?

India's reliance on Russia and China has delivered short-term dividends in forms of cheap

Russian oil, legacy defense equipment, and indispensable Chinese inputs. Yet these gains conceal mounting vulnerabilities: inelastic dependence on Chinese intermediates, growing exposure to punitive U.S. tariffs and widening asymmetries in bargaining power.

Addressing these structural risks requires a portfolio approach diversifying markets, suppliers, and strategic alignments. India's sustainable comparative advantages lie not at the bottom of the value chain but in high-value services, sophisticated engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and, increasingly, assembly-heavy electronics. Services exports alone reached \$387.5 billion in FY 2024-25, dominated by IT and software, a geoeconomic strength unmatched by most peers.

The outlook is clear: India cannot rely solely on tactical arbitrage through the RIC axis. Polycentricity is the way forward.

A multi-pronged approach can be developed on three fronts. Domestically, expanding PLI schemes, strategic stockpiling, and targeted R&D investment can reduce upstream dependence and enable self-reliant production of critical inputs. Internationally, accession to CPTPP, selective RCEP engagement, and EU/UK CEPAs can diversify market access while insulating India from concentrated dependencies. Finally, multilateral frameworks like IPEF and the Quad offer mechanisms for coordinated supply-chain resilience, technology standard-setting, and trusted investment corridors.

Looking forward, India's strategic trajectory should shift from reactive hedging to proactive structural autonomy. By combining market diversification, supplier plurality, and technological sovereignty, India can convert short-term gains from the RIC engagement into durable economic and geostrategic resilience. Failure to do so risks entrenching dependencies that could compromise the broader geopolitical leverage of the country.

# A \$1.5 Billion Lesson: Why An AI Firm Is On The Verge Of Destroying Its Data

Anthropic, the company behind the Claude AI chatbot, has agreed to pay \$1.5 billion to settle a lawsuit filed by authors. The authors claimed Anthropic illegally used their copyrighted books to train its artificial intelligence without permission. If approved by US District Judge William Alsup, this would be the largest copyright settlement in history and marks a turning point for how AI companies handle creative content.

At approximately \$3,000 per book, plus interest, Anthropic has not only agreed to compensate authors but has also committed to destroying the datasets containing their copyrighted works. This isn't merely a financial transaction; it's an acknowledgment that the Silicon Valley mantra of "move fast and break things" has finally encountered an immovable object in copyright law.

Anthropic's settlement is just the tip of the iceberg in what has become a comprehensive legal assault on AI companies' training practices. The landscape is littered with similar lawsuits: authors Sarah Silverman, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and others have ongoing cases against OpenAI and Meta, news organisations have sued companies over unauthorised use of their articles, and visual artists have filed suits against Stability AI, Midjourney, and other image-generation platforms. Approximately a dozen major lawsuits have been filed across California and New York courts, collectively representing the most significant challenge to AI development practices since the technology's emergence.

The pattern is remarkably consistent across these cases. AI companies, in their race to create more sophisticated models, have systematically harvested content from "shadow libraries" - repositories of pirated books - scraped websites, and digitised archives without seeking permission from copyright holders. The scale of this appropriation is staggering: millions of books, articles, images, and other creative works have been fed into training datasets, with companies justifying this as falling under fair

use provisions. However, the Anthropic settlement suggests that this justification may not hold water in courtrooms. The company's willingness to pay such an enormous sum - and agree to destroy training data - indicates that its legal team likely assessed the copyright infringement claims as credible and potentially ruinous if litigated to conclusion.

While this precedent establishes a powerful deterrent for AI companies operating in US markets, its global impact may be more complex than initially apparent. The international AI landscape presents a fragmented picture where copyright enforcement varies dramatically across jurisdictions.

In Europe, where copyright protections are generally stronger and regulators have shown greater willingness to constrain tech companies, similar legal challenges will likely gain momentum. The European Union's AI Act already imposes significant transparency requirements, and this settlement may embolden European authors and publishers to pursue their own legal remedies.

However, the situation becomes murkier when we consider AI development in countries with weaker intellectual property enforcement. Chinese AI companies like Baidu and ByteDance, along with developers in India, Brazil, or Russia, may face fewer copyright constraints, potentially creating a competitive advantage for companies willing to relocate their training operations.

This geographic arbitrage presents a troubling possibility: as western AI companies face mounting legal costs and restrictions on training data, the center of AI innovation could shift toward jurisdictions with more lenient copyright enforcement. The result could be a bifurcated AI ecosystem, where responsible AI development competes with more aggressive approaches that externalise the costs of content creation onto authors, artists, and publishers. While the Anthropic settlement represents a victory for authors' rights, it has significant

limitations as a comprehensive solution.

First, this settlement is inherently reactive - it compensates for past infringement but doesn't prevent future violations. As new AI companies emerge and existing ones develop more sophisticated models, the cycle of infringement and litigation may simply repeat. Second, the settlement model may not scale effectively. If every major AI company faced similar liability for their training datasets, the aggregate cost could fundamentally undermine the economics of AI development. This raises uncomfortable questions about whether the current copyright framework is compatible with the data requirements of modern AI systems. Third, detecting and proving copyright infringement in AI training remains technically challenging. Unlike traditional piracy, AI training creates derivative works that may not obviously reference their source material, making it difficult for authors to prove their specific works were used.

The Anthropic settlement highlights the need for more systematic approaches to the tension between AI development and copyright protection. Several potential paths forward deserve consideration: Compulsory licensing schemes could establish standardised royalty rates for using copyrighted works in AI training, similar to music broadcasting royalties. This would provide predictable compensation for creators while allowing legal access to training data.

Enhanced fair-use frameworks specifically tailored to AI training could provide clearer guidelines for when uses are permissible while maintaining strong protections for commercial applications.

International harmonisation efforts could establish consistent copyright standards across jurisdictions, reducing incentives for regulatory arbitrage and ensuring respect for creative rights doesn't become a competitive disadvantage. The Anthropic settlement marks a turning point in the relationship

between artificial intelligence and creative rights. For the first time, an AI company has acknowledged - through its willingness to pay a historic settlement - that copyright holders deserve meaningful compensation for their contributions to AI development. However, this settlement also exposes fundamental tensions that will define the next phase of the AI revolution. At issue is not just the financial welfare of authors and artists, but the very sustainability of creative industries in an AI-dominated future. If AI systems can freely appropriate human creativity without compensation, we risk creating a world where the incentive to create original content withers away, ultimately impoverishing the cultural ecosystem that makes AI training possible.

The \$1.5 billion settlement is more than a legal resolution - it's a down payment on a future where artificial intelligence and human creativity can coexist in mutual benefit rather than exploitative competition.

## Not A Revolution, Mobocracy Ousted Oli-garchy In Nepal

There's no heroism in anarchy. Indeed, to elevate the deprivations witnessed on the streets of Kathmandu to the level of dissidence is an act of profound dishonesty. It's being said that the eruption in Nepal was a spontaneous coming together of long-felt resentments. That a leaderless phalanx of idealistic youth banded together under the banner of Gen Z to reflect their generation's disillusionment with a government that had stopped listening. A government that was serving only its own at the cost of those who voted for it. Within two days of Gen Z hitting the streets, the Communist Party-led coalition government of K.P. Oli was ousted. But not before Oli, who had been prime minister for the last year, had to seek refuge in the Army Headquarters to escape the clutches of blood-baying mobs. Oli's cabinet colleagues and other coalition partners were not so lucky, as they were chased and murderously assaulted in the streets. The malevolent mob didn't even spare the Parliament building, the Supreme Court, offices belonging to private and state media, hotels, and locally owned shops. All were set alight with an indiscriminate zeal that bordered on vandalism for the sake of

vandalism. Mass lynchings, lootings, and lawlessness are not the work of "revolutionaries". Even revolution requires a foundation of order and constitutionalism, if only to provide a meaningful context for what comes next.

In Nepal, the almost casual embrace of a morally stripped extra-constitutionalism suggests that only decay is destined to follow. The coup, from its conception to its execution, followed a trajectory that has played out in Kabul, Colombo, Dhaka, and now Kathmandu. Coincidence? Unlikely. While it would be premature to attribute all these instances of regime change to a foreign hand or a non-state actor, there's little doubt that the eruptions are not organic - the unintended consequence of idealism gone too far.

Creative headlines thought up to romanticise the horsemen of the apocalypse that ravaged Nepal are undermining the Weberian order. They are setting a precedent for the normalization of mob justice as a political instrument. Are we entering an era where no constitution, no popularly elected executive authority, can remain safe from the next eruption of public rage?

# How Public Fury Toppled Leaders In Nepal, Sri Lanka And Bangladesh

The swelling wave of public anger first swept through the island nation of Sri Lanka in 2022 and ousted the president. Two years later, it erupted in Bangladesh as protesters toppled the ruling government. On Monday public fury exploded in Nepal, forcing its prime minister to resign a day after. Each protest movement began with a specific grievance that flared up, ending in the rejection of the government or its leaders. In many ways, the protest movements share a common feature: disillusioned peoples' resentment against the ruling elite and an entrenched political system they hold responsible for rampant corruption, deepening inequality and economic disparities. Often led by young people, the protests have sparked deadly violence and sometimes left behind a political vacuum filled by unelected leaders and a worsening law and order situation. perception of ruling elites as being both corrupt and ineffective at delivering a plausible path forward has created a structural basis for major crises," said Paul Staniland, a politics professor specializing in South Asia at the University of Chicago. The youth-led protests in Nepal began on Monday as simmering discontent over years was ignited by the government's ban on major social media platforms. Many were particularly angry that the children of political leaders seem to enjoy a lavish lifestyle, while most of the population was dealing with economic problems, rising unemployment and widespread corruption. The unrest has left at least 19 people dead. Protesters - who have not clearly spelled out their demands apart from rallying under the anti-corruption call - burned the parliament building, presidential house, and residences of several ministers and other politicians. Bending to mounting public pressure, Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli reversed the social media ban and quit. However, he will still lead a caretaker government until a new one is in place. It is unclear what the new government would look like and whether it will constitute the

old political guard. Many Nepalis fear a familiar sequence of bargaining among the same political class they want to overthrow. Nepal is fraught with frequent political instability and each prime minister's tenure has lasted just a year or two since the new constitution came into effect in 2015. The country abolished its monarchy in 2006, after a violent uprising that forced its former king to give up his authoritarian rule. Staniland said the violence could make it "much harder to determine who should be in charge or how they should proceed." "The big question now in Nepal will be whether order can be restored and new, stable political dispensation forged," he said. Those in Nepal looking for answers about its future will not find solace in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The lack of consensus on basic reform demands like elections and anti-corruption mechanisms, and an uncertain road map for the future, have

denied the democratic progress in those countries and further exacerbated the problems they face. In Bangladesh, student-led protests started with anger against rules that limited the number of civil service jobs based on merit. They morphed into a massive nationwide uprising in July last year that culminated in the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Hundreds of people, mostly students, were killed in violent protests. Hasina fled to India, and an unelected interim administration, headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, was installed. He promised to restore order and hold a new election after necessary reforms. One year on, Bangladesh remains mired in instability. Political parties are bickering over election dates. Mob violence, political attacks on rival parties and groups, and hostility to vulnerable minority groups by religious hard-liners have surged. In Sri Lanka, the then-Prime minister Ranil



Wickremesinghe took over the country after protesters forced the powerful Rajapaksa clan out in 2022. The country later had a democratic transition of power after Marxist lawmaker Anura Kumara Dissanayake was elected as president last year. He promised to improve standards of living, clean up government and hold corrupt politicians responsible for their actions. Almost a year later, Sri Lanka's problems seem far from over. Its people continue to deal with issues like

economic hardships, human rights concerns and foreign-debt default. "There is no sign of the ideals of change desired by the protesters," said Veeragathy Thanabalasingham, a Colombo-based political expert. Recent popular revolts have also rocked other nations in the region. In Indonesia, deadly protests last week over lawmakers' perks and the cost of living forced the country's president to replace key economic and security ministers.

## The Era Of Uncertainty In Bangladesh

An Indian politician from the Opposition camp recently called a journalist in Dhaka. He wanted to know the state of affairs in Bangladesh. The journalist replied that things were as good as they could be in a "civil war situation". The metaphor explains the degree of uncertainty that has engulfed the country after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League (AL) government on August 5, 2024. Uncertainty is not new to Bangladesh. The country has never seen sustained political stability, except for the 15 years under Hasina (2009-2024) and seven years of General H. M. Ershad (1983-1990). All governments — except for Hasina's 1996-2001 term — tried to prolong their stay in power through unfair means and eventually fell to street protests or army coups. Since the end of military rule in 1990, every government, including the Dr. Muhammad Yunus administration, has outdone its predecessors in abusing democratic

values and institutions. Revenge politics remains a common thread. That said, the current disruption is too big to be quelled by a mere election, as demanded by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which is keen on a shortcut to power. They approved the ban on AL. It is only a matter of time — or opportunity — before they may approve a ban on JP as well. These three parties together secured 87 percent of the votes in the non-controversial 2008 election. AL alone commands over 30 percent loyal voters. On the surface, the Islamic forces — led by Jamaat-e-Islami and the newly formed National Citizen Party (NCP), both enjoying administrative backing — want to curate the political space. They do not have the numbers. So, an election (let alone a fair one) is not their first choice. But if forced to go to polls, they would like it managed "their own way." A curated mandate may deprive BNP of a brutal majority (better still, deliver a hung Parliament) and ensure

a second spot for Jamaat. That would make it a cakewalk for the Islamists to eat into BNP's space. The ultimate goal is to make Bangladesh an Islamic country. This plan has pushed Bangladesh into an unprecedented socio-political conflict, which is likely to intensify in the days to come. Unless one of the warring sides meekly surrenders — which is unlikely — bloodshed is unavoidable. Peace and stability will be held to ransom.

**Opportunity for Islamists**  
The primary problem is that the Islamists have become exceptionally ambitious. Except for the nine months of the Liberation War in 1971, staunch Wahhabi Muslims, who make up no more than five percent of the population and are considered the core support base of Jamaat, have never enjoyed as much attention and administrative support in the 78-year history of the land, dating back to East Pakistan. The second problem is that prevailing geopolitical uncertainty has opened a window of opportunity.

Turkey's ambition to lead the Islamic world, Pakistan's known aspirations, the US-Pakistan-Turkey axis, overt US interest in Myanmar, the rift in India-US relations, and the India-China rivalry — all have worked in the Islamists' favor. Jamaat wants to seize the moment before it vanishes. This has created a host of issues. The biggest among them is a vicious effort to erase or demean the Liberation history of 1971 and its greatest inspiration — Hasina's father, Mujibur Rahman. Since India is inseparable from Bangladesh's Liberation, there is a conscious attempt to vitiate bilateral relations. Rising exchanges with Pakistan and Turkey are part of the plot. Threatening India's security is an unspoken goal. The blueprint is not new, but the ferocity and vicious nature of its implementation are exceptional. Back in 1971, Jamaat-led Islamists formed militia groups, popularly referred to as Razakar (volunteers), to suppress dissent against Pakistani rule.

# Over 7,000 Prisoners Escape From Nepal Jails Amid Violent Protests

(News Agency) At least five juvenile inmates died during a clash with security personnel at a jail in western Nepal, while more than 7,000 prisoners escaped from different jails across the country during the violent anti-government protests, according to media reports. The massive anti-government demonstrations across Nepal that forced Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to resign on Tuesday led to a serious law and order situation across districts, prompting the Nepal Army on Wednesday to impose nationwide restrictive orders followed by a curfew. Inmates took advantage of the protests and tried to escape from jails, resulting in clashes across several prison facilities since Tuesday. "Five juvenile inmates died in a clash with security personnel at the Naubasta Correctional Home in Naubasta Regional Jail located in Bajinath Rural Municipality-3 of Banke on Tuesday night," The Rising Nepal newspaper said.

The five juvenile inmates were killed and four were seriously injured when police opened fire during a clash that broke out when inmates tried to take over the weapons of security personnel of the correctional home, the newspaper said, quoting the Naubasta Juvenile Correctional Home office. According to authorities, 149 of the 585 inmates from the prison and 76 of the 176 detainees from the juvenile home escaped during the incident. MyRepublica newspaper reported that around 7,000 inmates across the country have escaped from various prisons. Citing Home Ministry sources, the paper said that the escapes were reported from multiple facilities, including Dillibazar Jail (1,100), Chitwan (700), Nakkhu (1,200), Jhumpka in Sunsari (1,575), Kanchanpur (450), Kailali (612), Jaleshwar (576), Kaski (773), Dang (124), Jumla (36), Solukhumbu (86), Gaur (260), and Bajhang (65). "The prisoners threat-



ened security personnel while breaking out. With convicts serving sentences for various crimes now at large, fear has gripped the public. Many victims of these crimes have reportedly fled their homes, fearing reprisals," it said. In a separate report, the paper said all 471 inmates, including 43 women, escaped from the district jail in Sindhuligadhi, Sindhuli in southern Nepal's Bagmati prov-

ince. According to the prison administration, the inmates set fire inside the facility on Wednesday morning and broke the main gate to flee. Superintendent of Police Laldhwaj Subedi confirmed that all prisoners have broken out of the jail, the news portal added. The Kathmandu Post newspaper said more than 500 inmates escaped from the Nawalparasi West District Prison in southern Nepal.

"Prisoners at the district jail in Nawalparasi West have escaped after they set fires and raised slogans demanding release inside the prison," the newspaper said. Despite efforts to control them, most inmates managed to flee, it added. In Kathmandu, a prisoner who attempted to escape from Dillibazar Jail was captured by local youths and handed over to the Nepali Army. Several inmates escaped from Rajbiraj prison in Saptari after setting fire inside the facility on Wednesday afternoon. Despite security personnel firing multiple rounds of tear gas to control the situation, some inmates managed to flee. The prison housed 397 inmates at the time of the incident, officials said. In Parsa, inmates had attempted to escape Birgunj prison by breaking a large hole in the southern wall of the facility. Prison chief Khemraj Bhusal said the situation was brought under control after hours of effort by security personnel.

## Pakistan declares climate, agriculture emergency as floods rage on

(News Agency) Pakistan on Wednesday declared a climate and agriculture emergency as authorities raced to rescue at least 1.6 million people at risk of massive flooding in downstream areas. "We have decided to impose a climate emergency and agriculture emergency," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told a cabinet meeting, citing the destruction of crops and inundation of thousands of hectares of fertile land. Rice, cotton and maize crops have been destroyed in 4,400 villages in Punjab province. An assessment of agricultural losses will be announced next week. A committee comprising heads of the federal and provincial governments will formulate a comprehensive plan to try to cope with the situation. The swollen rivers, flash floods, urban inundation and landslides triggered by heavy monsoon rains, cloudbursts and glacial lake outbursts

have killed 928 people since late June, the disaster agency said. Nearly 6 million people have been affected by the floods in the northern Hi-



malayan region, north-western mountainous terrain and the central plains so far, the UN disaster agency said. Around 1.6 million people were at risk of massive flooding and might need relocation or rescue, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said, as the swollen rivers entered the southern province of Sindh. "We have already evacuated

around 200,000 people ... and are ready to rescue more," Sindh's Chief Minister Murad Shah said. Rescue workers and soldiers backed by boats and helicopters have already evacuated more than 2 million people in the central province of Punjab, including nearly 300,000 in the past two days, the regional disaster agency said. Schools were closed and streets were deserted in the port city of Karachi on Wednesday after heavy rains overnight that flooded much of the metropolis. The monsoon, a season of heavy rains in South Asian regions that runs from July to September, has been unpredictable and harsher in recent years due to climate change, killing thousands every year and affecting millions. More than 2,000 people were killed in major floods that hit Pakistan in 2022, including subsequent diseases.

## Sri Lanka's Parliament withdraws perks for former presidents



(News Agency) COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Sri Lanka's lawmakers voted overwhelmingly to abolish perks and facilities provided to former presidents in response to a popular demand during recent public protests. The vote passed 151-1 while other members were absent. The measure strips state funding for housing, allowances, pensions, transport facilities and an office and a staff for former presidents and their widows. There are five living past presidents and a widow. It was an election pledge of Marxist-leaning President Anura Kumara

Dissanayake, who took office last year, riding on public resentment against politicians accused of being responsible for the country's worst economic crisis in 2022, when Sri Lanka announced it cannot pay its foreign debt. The crisis led to a severe shortage of food, medicine, fuel and electricity, and triggered protests that forced then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign. His successor, Ranil Wickremesinghe, was granted bail Aug. 27 after being arrested over allegations of misusing public funds while in office.

# The modern guide to battling relationship burnout (without breaking up)

It always begins with a spark—you can't stop thinking about that person, every conversation feels electric, and the romance blooms until every moment seems magical. But over time, that magic can start to fade. It's not that the love disappears or the bond weakens, but the rhythm changes. Conversations that once flowed endlessly now feel limited. Where there used to be excitement in sharing every detail, silence sometimes takes its place. Dinner dates turn into strategy meetings for household to-dos. Small bickering slips in more often than you'd like. Relationship burnout doesn't arrive overnight, nor does it explode with one big fight. Instead, it creeps in quietly, like termites, slowly chipping away at the connection. But the question is: can you protect your relationship from it?

## A silent struggle for many couples

"A relationship burnout is when the intimacy and love wear off, and only a duty remains to be together. It is very common, and we see a lot of such cases where there is tiredness instead of love in a relationship," Sheena Sood, consultant, psychology, P D Hinduja Hospital and Medical Research Centre, Mumbai, tells India Today. To this, Dr Rahul Chandhok, senior consultant and head, psychiatry, Artemis Lite, New Delhi, adds that it's not just the occasional fight

that makes the relationship feel like a burden; it's a deeper sense of tiredness that makes it feel like a burden. He adds that it is often faced by people who are in long-term relationships and have to deal with work stress, responsibilities, or bad communication. Meanwhile, Dr Nisha Khanna, a Delhi-based relationship and marriage counsellor, shares that relationship burnout is essentially a form of physical, emotional, psychological, and cognitive exhaustion. At its core, it's a response to unmet needs that remain unresolved for too long. It isn't about a lack of love; it's about the exhaustion that arises when couples face prolonged stress, unmet needs, and unequal emotional exchanges.

## Why do relationships burn out?

According to the experts, relationship burnout builds slowly when the spark fades, emotional needs go unmet, or unresolved conflicts pile up. While intimacy may initially fuel connection, relying only on physical closeness without nurturing emotional bonds often leaves couples feeling empty once that intimacy lessens. Over time, stress, routine, and constant fights can quietly erode the sense of togetherness. Burnout often shows up as emotional exhaustion; partners feel unseen, undervalued, or disconnected. They may lose autonomy, suppress their feelings, avoid difficult conver-

sations, or even stonewall each other. This creates a lack of meaningful connection, decreased intimacy, and a sense of carrying the relationship like a burden rather than finding comfort in it. It is also fuelled by external pressures. Financial struggles, demanding careers, family dynamics, parenting responsibilities, and unresolved personal trauma can all spill into a relationship, leaving little space for rest, closeness, or joy. Warning signs include a decline in intimacy—less affection, care, or physical closeness. Loss of joy in togetherness—preferring time alone over shared activities. Shallow or strained communication—conversations feel need-based, one-sided, or avoided altogether. Emotional disconnection—feeling distant, unsupported, or more like roommates than partners. Constant negativity—frequent nagging, criticism, irritability, or contempt. Unmet needs—feeling unseen, unappreciated, or indifferent toward each other. Growing detachment—imagining life without the partner or questioning the relationship's future.

## The emotional impact

Dr Chandhok tells us that relationship burnout can have a strong emotional effect, making people feel lonely, frustrated, or hopeless. "Over time, it can lead to long-term stress, low self-esteem, and emotional exhaustion, which is when a person feels like



they have no energy left. Burnout can also make you more likely to feel anxious or depressed because being in constant conflict or not being connected to others can hurt your mental health," he adds.

The doctor goes on to explain that stress can cause some people to have trouble sleeping, feel irritable, or even have headaches. If not dealt with, relationship burnout can have a big impact on both mental health and the quality of life as a whole. How to save your relationship? Sood suggests communicating before it's too late. Many couples wait until the distance has already widened, or until resentment has built up, to start talking about what's wrong. By then, the conversations often feel heavier, defensive, and harder to resolve. Meanwhile, Dr Chandhok says, "To keep your relationship from ending, you need to always be aware, work hard, and care about it. You can feel close to each other again by spending time together, being understanding, and doing little

things to show you care." As for Dr Khanna, one simple way to overcome relationship burnout is through three steps: rest, reflect, and refill. Rest: Take a pause, not from your partner, but from the stressors draining you. This could mean practising self-care, setting aside time for hobbies, or simply giving yourself permission to take a break and slow down.

Reflect: Use this time to think about what's causing the disconnect. Sometimes reflection also means seeking professional guidance from a therapist or counsellor who can help you see the patterns more clearly. Refill: Once you've rested and reflected, focus on refilling the relationship with positive energy. Share your needs, express gratitude, and appreciate the little things. Small gestures can bring back intimacy and connection. Prevent burnout before it starts. The mantra is simple here. Preventing relationship burnout means finding balance. Give each other space, take care of your own health, and don't spend all your energy only on the relationship.

# Grumbling stomach 35,000 ft in the air? It's jet belly (here's a fix)

One moment, you're enjoying a beautiful sundowner at 35,000 feet in the air, and the next, your stomach starts making noises that leave you feeling uncomfortable. Do you seem to experience gut issues during air travel? They're more common than you think. And there's a name for it. It's not an official medical term, but the internet (duh!) has coined one: jet belly. It's exactly what it sounds like. That bloated feeling, the urge to break wind (but too shy to do so), or a general sense of stomach discomfort. Jet belly science. Notice how a packet of chips

gets all tight and puffy during a flight? Well, that's exactly what happens to your stomach too. At high altitudes, the cabin pressure is much lower than what you experience on the ground. "Reduced pressure causes gases in our stomach and intestines to expand. That's why people often feel bloated, gassy, and uncomfortable, a condition commonly referred to as jet belly," explains Dr. Akash Chaudhary, clinical director and senior consultant, Medical Gastroenterology, CARE Hospitals, Hyderabad. While the term is suddenly in the air, the idea isn't

new. In a study conducted in 1969, researchers asked 18 military men not to pass gas during a simulated flight. As the altitude rose to about 30,000 feet, the volume of gas in their stomachs and intestines increased more than fourfold, causing them to report pain and a sensation of fullness. Experts agree it's mostly harmless and doesn't cause any permanent damage. However, it can temporarily disrupt digestion, slow down bowel movements, and make existing gut issues feel worse. Long-haul vs short-haul flight. Of course, there's a difference when it comes to long or

short-haul flights. Long flights mean you are sitting for hours, eating at odd times, sometimes consuming foods your body isn't used to and drinking less water. All these together impact digestion and can cause constipation, bloating, and acidity. While it's not necessarily bad, it's just a bit more challenging for your gut. For most healthy people, it's temporary. But if you have IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) or acid reflux, symptoms can feel more intense and noticeable. The mental health add-on. While most of it is due to air pressure, your anxious self can be a reason too. Flying

stress is real, and your gut feels it (hello, gut-brain axis). "When you are anxious, stressed, or fearful, your body releases stress hormones that can increase acidity, cause cramps, or even trigger diarrhoea in some people. In fact, many passengers with flight anxiety report more bloating or upset stomach," Dr. Chaudhary adds. Flight hacks. If you are someone who has experienced jet belly before, then you don't just need to prep for your itinerary when travelling, you need to prep your stomach too.

# Action Against Ambanis or Modi's Strategic Subterfuge?

The news that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) raided Anil Ambani's residence and corporate offices in late August 2025 sent shockwaves through the business and political establishment. For decades, Anil Ambani was not just a prominent industrialist but also a vocal supporter of Narendra Modi, famously being among the first in corporate India to declare Modi as the inevitable prime ministerial candidate in 2014. He was seen as politically protected, even after the spectacular collapse of Reliance Communications (RCom), ballooning debts, and repeated allegations of loan fraud. Despite being accused in multiple bank scams, he remained untouched — until now. The drama does not stop with Anil. Almost simultaneously, the Supreme Court ordered the formation of a Special Investigation Team, headed by Justice Jasti Chelameswar, to investigate Vantara — the sprawling wildlife sanctuary and rehabilitation project developed under Mukesh Ambani's patronage. This intervention followed petitions alleging illegal import of exotic animals and irregularities in land use and regulatory approvals. The SIT has been tasked with delivering a comprehensive report, marking a

rare occasion when India's most powerful corporate family has been subjected to judicially supervised scrutiny. These developments are remarkable not only for their timing but also for their symbolism. For years, both Ambani brothers epitomised the tight embrace between Indian big capital and political power. Modi's critics often accused his government of practising "crony capitalism," alleging sweetheart deals and policy favours benefiting corporate giants. Yet, the very fact that the 'system' has now moved against the Ambanis — albeit in different ways — demands careful interpretation. The Ambani-Modi nexus at the 2013 Vibrant Gujarat Summit, Anil Ambani offered one of the earliest corporate coronations of Narendra Modi. He likened Modi to Gandhi, Patel and Arjuna, hailed him as a "king among kings", and invoked Dhirubhai Ambani's prophecy that Modi was "destined to be PM." Ambani even corrected himself mid-speech — calling Modi the "next chief executive of India." Before an audience of tycoons and diplomats, this was no casual praise but a deliberate projection of Modi's national ascendancy, crystallising corporate India's early endorse-

ment of his journey from Gandhinagar to New Delhi. In 2012, the UPA was negotiating to buy 126 Rafale jets, with 18 in flyaway condition and 108 to be manufactured in India by HAL under a transfer-of-technology arrangement. This was overturned in 2016 when Modi sealed a new deal for only 36 jets, all flyaway, eliminating the scope for indigenous production. Controversy erupted over the offset clause, as Dassault chose Anil Ambani's newly incorporated Reliance Defence — just 12 days old when Modi announced the deal — as a key partner, sidelining the vastly experienced HAL. Critics, led by Rahul Gandhi, alleged Modi had "changed the deal" to funnel contracts worth Rs 30,000 crore to Ambani's debt-ridden firm with no record in aerospace. The government and Dassault claimed the offset choice was commercial, while Reliance argued HAL's exclusion was inevitable given the revised flyaway arrangement. In 2018, the Supreme Court cleared the government, though its verdict drew flak for factual errors. The CAG later reported that while the new deal was marginally cheaper than UPA's, the government had violated procurement norms and paid heavily for India-specific enhancements,



reinforcing suspicions of cronyism.

Anil Ambani's Reliance Group exemplifies how political proximity can shield corporate empires even amid staggering financial scandals. Between 2016-19, Reliance Mutual Fund parked Rs 21.5 billion in Yes Bank's AT-1 bonds, later written off after the bank's collapse. SEBI's probe suggested this was tied to loans Yes Bank had extended to Ambani companies in a quid pro quo arrangement. The regulator rejected Ambani's settlement pleas and passed its findings to the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Around the same time, the ED arrested a managing director of an Odisha firm in a Rs 17,000-crore loan fraud case involving fake guarantees linked to Ambani group entities, including a dubious SECI tender guarantee. Yet Ambani himself has remained untouched, reinforcing suspicions of selective enforcement. The Yes Bank case is telling. Rana Kapoor was jailed for lend-

ing in exchange for kickbacks, with the Anil Ambani Group emerging as the largest beneficiary of Rs 12,800 crore in loans that turned into NPAs. Two senior Reliance executives were arrested, but Anil Ambani, despite repeated questioning, was neither chargesheeted nor arrested, with courts even granting him protection. Investigators cite lack of direct evidence, but the optics of subordinates jailed while the chairman remains immune deepen public cynicism. Together, these episodes suggest a pattern: political patronage, business favours and regulatory indulgence, with accountability enforced only when the state deems inaction too costly. From Modi's tenure in Gujarat to his decade in Delhi, Reliance Industries consistently reaped strategic advantages. In Gujarat, Modi's government extended land and infrastructure concessions, with the CAG later noting how Reliance benefited when GSPC bore the costly upkeep of its Krishna-Godavari offshore platform.

## Detained workers from Hyundai, LG Energy Solution plant could soon fly home to South Korea

Hundreds of people who were among those detained by U.S. immigration authorities while working on building an electric vehicle battery plant for Hyundai and LG Energy Solution in Georgia are expected to fly home to South Korea on a chartered plane out of Atlanta as early as Wednesday. A Korean Air Boeing 747-8I



that departed from Seoul landed in Atlanta on Wednesday to collect those workers. U.S. officials have not said if or when any of the workers will be released from detention and allowed to return to South Korea. South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun met with Secretary of State Marco Rubio Wednesday morning in Washington, D.C. Cho arrived in the United States earlier this week,

intent on helping his fellow citizens return to Korea. A spokesperson

for South Korea's Foreign Ministry told reporters Tuesday that the plan was to fly about 300 LG employees home on Wednesday, and that a detailed plan would be announced when preparations were finished. As of Wednesday at midday, however, there had not yet been any announcements about flight plans. Nonetheless, the landing of a charter plane at Atlanta's

Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport appeared to signal that the return process was underway. "Our nationals who had been detained by U.S. immigration authorities will soon be returning home," South Korean President Lee Jae Myung said Tuesday during a cabinet meeting. Lee held a friendly meeting with President Donald Trump at the White

House on Aug. 25. But he has since blasted the controversial detention of hundreds of Korean engineers and energy specialists in the massive raid on Sept. 4. "I hope that there will never again be an unjust infringement upon the activities of our people and companies in pursuit of the shared development of South Korea and the United States," said Lee.

## Larry Ellison Tops Elon Musk As World's Richest Man. His Net Worth Is...



Larry Ellison has become the world's richest person for the first time, ending Elon Musk's nearly year-long reign in the top spot. Ellison's fortune soared \$101 billion as of 10:10 am. in New York after Oracle Corp. reported quarterly results that surpassed expectations and said there's more growth to come. The increase lifted his total fortune to \$393 billion, ahead of

Musk who sits at \$385 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. It's the biggest one-day increase ever recorded by the index. Musk became the world's richest person for the first time in 2021 before losing the title to Amazon.com Inc.'s Jeff Bezos and LVMH's Bernard Arnault. He reclaimed it last year and had held it for just over 300 days.

# The Era Of Uncertainty In Bangladesh



An Indian politician from the Opposition camp recently called a journalist in Dhaka. He wanted to know the state of affairs in Bangladesh. The journalist replied that things were as good as they could be in a "civil war situation". The metaphor explains the degree of uncertainty that has engulfed the country after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League (AL) government on August 5, 2024.

Uncertainty is not new to Bangladesh. The country has never seen sustained political stability, except for the 15 years under Hasina (2009-2024) and seven years of General H. M. Ershad (1983-1990). All governments — except for Hasina's 1996-2001 term — tried to prolong their stay in power through unfair means and eventually fell to street protests or army coups. Since the end of military rule in 1990, every government, including the Dr. Muhammad Yunus administration, has outdone its predecessors in abusing democratic values and institutions. Revenge politics remains a common thread. That said, the current disruption is too big to be quelled by a mere election, as demanded by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which is keen on a shortcut to power. They approved the ban on AL. It is only a matter of time — or opportunity — before they may approve a ban on JP as well. These three parties together secured 87 percent of the votes in the non-controversial 2008 election. AL alone commands over 30 percent loyal voters.

On the surface, the Islamic forces — led by Jamaat-e-Islami and the newly formed National Citizen Party (NCP), both enjoying administrative backing — want to curate the political space. They do not have the numbers. So, an election (let

alone a fair one) is not their first choice. But if forced to go to polls, they would like it managed "their own way."

A curated mandate may deprive BNP of a brutal majority (better still, deliver a hung Parliament) and ensure a second spot for Jamaat. That would make it a cakewalk for the Islamists to eat into BNP's space. The ultimate goal is to make Bangladesh an Islamic country. This plan has pushed Bangladesh into an unprecedented socio-political conflict, which is likely to intensify in the days to come. Unless one of the warring sides meekly surrenders — which is unlikely — bloodshed is unavoidable. Peace and stability will be held to ransom.

## Opportunity for Islamists

The primary problem is that the Islamists have become exceptionally ambitious. Except for the nine months of the Liberation War in 1971, staunch Wahhabi Muslims, who make up no more than five percent of the population and are considered the core support base of Jamaat, have never enjoyed as much attention and administrative support in the 78-year history of the land, dating back to East Pakistan. The second problem is that prevailing geopolitical uncertainty has opened a window of opportunity. Turkey's ambition to lead the Islamic world, Pakistan's known aspirations, the US-Pakistan-Turkey axis, overt US interest in Myanmar, the rift in India-US relations, and the India-China rivalry — all have worked in the Islamists' favor. Jamaat wants to seize the moment before it vanishes.

This has created a host of issues. The biggest among them is a vicious effort to erase or demean the Liberation history of 1971 and its greatest inspiration—Hasina's father, Mujibur Rahman. Since India is

inseparable from Bangladesh's Liberation, there is a conscious attempt to vitiate bilateral relations. Rising exchanges with Pakistan and Turkey are part of the plot. Threatening India's security is an unspoken goal.

The blueprint is not new, but the ferocity and vicious nature of its implementation are exceptional. Back in 1971, Jamaat-led Islamists formed militia groups, popularly referred to as Razakar (volunteers), to suppress dissent against Pakistani rule. Liberal intellectuals, Hindus, and soft-Islam followers were natural targets. This time, they are orchestrating mob attacks on the same targets. Crackdown on Liberals

The new design helps disguise institutional links. Exiled bloggers — like Elias Hossain and Pinaki Bhattacharya — openly set targets and orchestrate mob attacks on Liberation relics and pro-Liberation voices in media and politics. The Yunus government either allows the destruction or does exactly what the mobsters want them to do.

On August 28, a mob stormed a roundtable in Dhaka discussing the values of the Liberation movement. Police arrested 16 attendees under the Anti-Terror Act. The list included 85-year-old freedom fighter Abdul Latif Siddiqui, ousted from AL in 2014 for alleged "anti-Islam" remarks; Professor Sheikh Hafizur Karzan of Dhaka University; and TV journalist-turned-popular YouTuber Monjurul Alam Panna.

Monjurul was a strong critic of Hasina's rule. He loudly

supported the July protests—until he realized the "meticulous design" behind it. He then began criticizing the current dispensation. He was targeted by the exiled bloggers and Islamists. Weeks before his arrest, he spoke about alleged terror planning against India.

The crackdown on anti-Yunus, anti-Islamist, and pro-Liberation voices has been evident since July, when 71-year-old retired professor Abul Barkat was arrested on corruption charges in a midnight raid. He was known for his seminal works on terror financing and the persecution of religious minorities.

On August 7, Professor Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah of Dhaka University was also arrested again on corruption charges. Kalimullah, who heads an election monitoring group, was vocal against the Yunus administration and was targeted by the blogger gang. This is in addition to the hundreds of arrests of lawyers, judges, journalists, activists and others. In a striking similarity all are denied bail. Prominent lawyers pointed out that Bangladeshi courts have virtually stopped granting bail.

BNP has either surrendered to these forces or is complicit. Last month, the party suspended chairperson's adviser Fazlur Rahman—a freedom fighter and former MP—who had been extremely critical of Hasina. In recent months, he rose to prominence for his vociferous rejoinders defending Liberation history. Bloggers targeted him. A mob harassed the 77-year-old advocate.

## Return of 1971

The situation on the ground is turning from bad to worse. Human rights organisation ASK reported 441 rape incidents during January–June 2025—more than the 401 rapes recorded in 2024. Rape was a prime weapon of intimidation in 1971. Recoveries of dead bodies from rivers rose by 20 percent to 43 per month during January–July. One-third of these were unidentified.

As of May this year, 266 journalists were facing criminal cases. ASK says 196 journalists were attacked in the first six months of the year. At least two journalists were killed in August, and one editor committed suicide after alleging censorship by Yunus's media handlers and the resulting job loss.

Hindus remain the softest target in Bangladesh. Videos of Hindu women being stripped—and even raped in front of their families—are circulating online. The Yunus administration largely blames this on the community's traditional support for the Awami League. Only a fraction of cases brought forward by minority groups are admitted.

Sufi Muslims, who follow a softer version of Islam, are under sustained attack by fundamentalists. In a mid-January release, the Yunus administration admitted attacks on 40 Sufi shrines (mazars) and 44 dargahs (graves of Sufi saints) since the July protests. Unofficial estimates quote a higher number. In a recent case, the body of a Sufi saint (pir) was exhumed and burned. The mob claimed he was "not Muslim enough."



# Over 7,000 Prisoners Escape From Nepal Jails Amid Violent Protests

The massive anti-government demonstrations across Nepal that forced Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli to resign on Tuesday led to a serious law and order situation across districts, prompting the Nepal Army on Wednesday to impose nationwide restrictive orders followed by a curfew.



The massive anti-government demonstrations across Nepal that forced Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli to resign on Tuesday led to a serious law and order situation across districts, prompting the Nepal Army on Wednesday to impose nationwide restrictive orders followed by a curfew. At least five juvenile inmates died during a clash with security personnel at a jail in western Nepal, while more than 7,000 prisoners escaped from different jails across the country during the violent anti-government protests, according to media reports. The massive anti-government demonstrations across Nepal that forced Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli to resign on Tuesday led to a serious law and order situation across districts, prompting the Nepal Army on Wednesday to impose nationwide restrictive orders followed by a curfew. Inmates took advantage of the protests and tried to escape from jails, resulting in clashes across several prison facilities since Tuesday. "Five juvenile inmates died in a clash with security personnel at the Naubasta Correctional Home in Naubasta Regional Jail located in Bajinath Rural Municipality-3 of Banke on Tuesday night," The Rising Nepal newspaper said.

The five juvenile inmates were killed and four were seriously injured when police

opened fire during a clash that broke out when inmates tried to take over the weapons of security personnel of the correctional home, the newspaper said, quoting the Naubasta Juvenile Correctional Home office. According to authorities, 149 of the 585 inmates from the prison and 76 of the 176 detainees from the juvenile home escaped during the incident.

MyRepublica newspaper reported that around 7,000 inmates across the country have escaped from various prisons.

Citing Home Ministry sources, the paper said that the escapes were reported from multiple facilities, including Dillibazar Jail (1,100), Chitwan (700), Nakkhu (1,200), Jhumpka in Sunsari (1,575), Kanchanpur (450), Kailali (612), Jaleswar (576), Kaski (773), Dang (124), Jumla (36), Solukhumbu (86), Gaur (260), and Bajhang (65).

"The prisoners threatened security personnel while breaking out. With convicts serving sentences for various crimes now at large, fear has gripped the public. Many victims of these crimes have reportedly fled their homes, fearing reprisals," it said.

In a separate report, the paper said all 471 inmates, including 43 women, escaped from the district jail in Sindhuligadhi, Sindhuli in southern

Nepal's Bagmati province.

According to the prison administration, the inmates set fire inside the facility on Wednesday morning and broke the main gate to flee.

Superintendent of Police Laldhewaj Subedi confirmed that all prisoners have broken out of the jail, the news portal added.

The Kathmandu Post newspaper said more than 500 inmates escaped from the Nawalparasi West District Prison in southern Nepal.

"Prisoners at the district jail in Nawalparasi West have escaped after they set fires and raised slogans demanding release inside the prison," the newspaper said.

Despite efforts to control them, most inmates managed to flee, it added.

In Kathmandu, a prisoner who attempted to escape from Dillibazar Jail was captured by local youths and handed over to the Nepali Army.

Several inmates escaped from Rajbiraj prison in Saptari after setting fire inside the facility on Wednesday afternoon.

Despite security personnel firing multiple rounds of tear gas to control the situation, some inmates managed to flee. The prison housed 397 inmates at the time of the incident, officials said.

In Parsa, inmates had attempted to

escape Birgunj prison by breaking a large hole in the southern wall of the facility.

Prison chief Khemraj Bhusal said the situation was brought under control after hours of effort by security personnel.

"According to a video circulating on social media, the inmate had broken through a windowpane to flee the prison premises. Witnesses said locals chased him down after spotting him running away," news portal KhabarHub said.

The detainee was restrained by residents before being handed over to security forces stationed nearby, it said, without specifying if the incident occurred on Tuesday or Wednesday. In another incident, at least 36 prisoners escaped from a jail in Chandanath Municipality-6, Jumla, a district in the hilly terrain of western Nepal, the news portal said.

According to police, the escape occurred at 12:02 am on Wednesday when the prisoners reportedly hit the jail warden with a wooden rod and broke the main gate to flee. DSP Rabin Babu Regmi, the chief of police in Jumla, said the search for the escaped prisoners is ongoing. "The jail held 98 inmates in total, of whom 36 have escaped, while 62 remain in police custody. A total of 15 soldiers have been deployed under the Nepal Army command to secure the jail," the news report said.

# Trump-Modi: True Healing Will Need More Than A Tweet

Today's posts by Trump are an opening overture, perhaps, but they are not yet a full thaw. They are a starting point, a test of how much the past can be forgiven and how quickly trust can be rebuilt.

The statements were startling in the context of President Trump's recent pronouncements on India. "I will always be friends with Modi. He is a great Prime Minister" the American president told the assembled reporters at the White House on Friday. "India, the United States have special relationship. There is nothing to worry about," he added. When asked about his Truth Social post the previous day saying that India and Russia had been "lost" to "deepest, darkest China", he said, unflappably, "I don't think we have". He went on to add, "I get along very well with Modi. As you know, he was here a couple of months ago, we went to the Rose Garden."

The Indian prime minister was quick to respond to the tone and substance of the American President's remarks. "Deeply appreciate and fully reciprocate President Trump's sentiments and positive assessment of our ties," Narendra Modi posted on X. "India and the US have a very positive and forward looking Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership." Modi took care to tag both the American president's official handle, @POTUS, and his personal one, @realDonaldTrump.

## An Overture, Not A Thaw

Was the Trump-Modi bromance of the former's first administration back on track? The latter's digital olive branch notwithstanding, it's too soon to say. Can the acrimony of recent weeks be overcome with a conciliatory tweet?

While Trump's words are a welcome, if long overdue, sight, we must not mistake a simple overture for a full thaw. The past few weeks of insults and tariffs - at 50%, India has been singled out (along with Brazil, with whom Trump has a different quarrel) for the highest tariffs in the world - have inflicted a deep and palpable wound on the relationship, particularly in India.

The public sentiment in the



country remains bruised, and for good reason. President Trump's earlier remarks, pouring scorn on India's economic policies and questioning its standing, caused deep offence. His administration's tariffs, unilaterally imposed and often accompanied by thinly veiled insults, were a direct challenge to the mutual respect that is the bedrock of any successful strategic partnership.

## Trump Has Inflicted Serious Damage

The reactions in India have been loud and clear, echoing not just from the halls of power but from the streets and social media feeds of a proud and sensitive nation. It is a sentiment that will not heal overnight.

This is why, as I argued previously in my cricket-themed advice to bat for a big innings, India should play the long game. A great power's diplomacy must be guided by enduring strategic interests, not by the shifting tides of personal temperament.

While the immediate offence of tariffs and insults was difficult to stomach, a more sober and far-sighted perspective reveals that the

fundamentals of the US-India relationship - and its necessity in the current geopolitical landscape - remain unchanged.

## Shared Strengths

The two nations share a common interest in a stable Indo-Pacific, a desire for resilient supply chains that don't depend on a single power, in developing technological and security cooperation, and a commitment to democratic values, however imperfectly practised on both sides. In addition, the nearly four million Americans of Indian descent are a potent glue in the relationship between the two countries. These shared interests are the ballast that has been built over decades, and they must, in the end, help neutralise the acrimony caused by any single administration.

For this ballast to hold, however, the steadying process must continue beyond a few conciliatory tweets. Public opinion in India, deeply engaged and at times fiercely patriotic, will gradually calm itself, but the relationship will require constant, careful evaluation.

The Healing Lies Elsewhere This is where policymakers on both sides must assume leading roles, acting as the indispensable engineers of the relationship. Their work is to create the kind of institutional scaffolding that can withstand the inevitable storms of personalised diplomacy.

The strength of the partnership lies not only in the bonhomie between two leaders but in the joint military exercises, the technology exchanges, the vibrant diaspora, and the countless back-channel communications that sustain the alliance behind the scenes. It is in these forums that true reconciliation - a healing of bruised sentiments and a rebuilding of trust - can be reaffirmed.

Of course, this process is fraught with the unpredictable. Personalised diplomacy, especially as practiced by the American President, is inherently mercurial. Just yesterday, he had declared that India and Russia were "lost" to China, a pronouncement that sent ripples of alarm and confusion across the world. His pronouncements are often volatile and seemingly contradictory, making any

gesture of rapprochement feel tentative at best.

## Politics Is Never Static

Today's posts are an opening overture, perhaps, but they are not yet a full thaw. They are a starting point, a test of how much the past can be forgiven and how quickly trust can be rebuilt.

True healing needs more than text. It needs sustained dialogue, tangible actions, and a return to the composed, mutual respect that once characterised this indispensable partnership. In the end, today's posts serve as a reminder that politics is never static. They are a sign that even the most acrimonious relationships can be steered back toward a path of cooperation.

But the work has just begun. The task now falls to policymakers, diplomats, and leaders on both sides to seize this moment and build something more enduring than a 280-character message.

To go back to my favourite sport, It's time to duck the last few bouncers and resume the long game with a straight bat and a keen eye for the scoring opportunities. A better result will be sure to come.

# Three Lessons India Can Learn From The Coups In Nepal And The Neighbourhood



India's neighbourhood resembles a bowling alley. Regimes falling one after the other like pins as an invisible force rolls its wrecking ball through nations, overturning governments, and installing a new set of pins of its choice till those fall again.

Who throws that wrecking ball is anybody's guess. But the fall of the skittles in the region is for all to see.

In spite of winning the 2020 elections, Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested in a February 2021 coup by the Tatmadaw, or military. She is serving a 27-year sentence.

Then the Taliban stormed back to power in August 2021, overthrowing the elected Afghanistan government, sending back US and NATO troops in a hurried, disgraceful withdrawal.

Then Pakistan's Imran Khan government was toppled, and the leader jailed. Coup attempts by his supporters failed. In 2022, massive public protests in Sri Lanka against President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his family led to a mob storming the presidential palace. Five days later, Rajapaksa fled the country and sent his resignation from Singapore. It was hailed as a victory for the "aragalaya", or people's struggle.

Next to go was Bangladesh's Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024, chased out by a murderous mob

protesting her allegedly autocratic ways. Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, known to be a US Deep State plant, was put in charge, who later turned out to be a puppet in the hands of the Jamaat-i-Islami and other Islamist forces.

And now, Nepal PM KP Sharma Oli is gone. Believed to be China's man, Oli fled in a helicopter after protests by young Nepalis reached his doorstep. Again, it is hard to believe that an agitation of this scale, intensity, and purpose is entirely spontaneous, without any external help.

Who gains from this series of regime changes is not the subject of this piece. Since all this has been happening in India's neighbourhood, it is prescient to ask if India is immune to regime change ops.

Didn't we witness such attempts to fuel mass protests and provoke some reckless government action with the anti-CAA agitation, anti-farm law stir, and the Nupur Sharma episode?

The Narendra Modi government handled it calmly, maturely, and with the kind of restraint and deftness which comes from foreseeing trouble from a long distance.

But there are still lessons to be learnt from Nepal or Bangladesh, for

instance.

First, if regime-change agents bring a five-lakh-strong mob on the streets, the ruling dispensation must be able to counter-mobilise 10 lakh people to take them on. If Oli, instead of manipulating weak coalitions, spent energy and resources in building a strong party and popular government, his own people would have confronted the protesters. If you have genuine popularity, regime change attempts are destined to fail. Second, to retain that popularity, make sure that the government or the party in power does not lose touch with the ground. Hasina did, Rajapaksa did. They sidelined genuine leaders and party workers. In their hubris, they started running the government with a small coterie of stooges, totally cut off from the ground.

Such lackeys are parasites who shun the grassroots and derive power by sucking up to their bosses and telling them only what they wish to hear. Third, do not dilute the street power of your cadre and rely excessively on the police, army, and the rest of the government machinery. One's own people power is the most effective way to defeat sponsored mobs.

When it comes to dealing with civilians, uniformed forces either make the mistake of committing excesses

and triggering sympathy for the opponent, or when the water rises above their nose, they refuse to protect the government and meekly surrender to those they feel could be their next bosses.

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# How Public Fury Toppled Leaders In Nepal, Sri Lanka And Bangladesh

Each protest movement began with a specific grievance that flared up, ending in the rejection of the government or its leaders.

The swelling wave of public anger first swept through the island nation of Sri Lanka in 2022 and ousted the president. Two years later, it erupted in Bangladesh as protesters toppled the ruling government. On Monday public fury exploded in Nepal, forcing its prime minister to resign a day after.

Each protest movement began with a specific grievance that flared up, ending in the rejection of the government or its leaders.

In many ways, the protest movements share a common feature: disillusioned peoples' resentment against the ruling elite and an entrenched political system they hold responsible for rampant corruption, deepening inequality and economic disparities.

Often led by young people, the protests have sparked deadly violence and sometimes left behind a political vacuum filled by unelected leaders and a worsening law and order situation. "A perception of ruling elites as being both corrupt and ineffective at delivering a plausible path forward has created a structural basis for major crises," said Paul Staniland, a politics professor specializing in South Asia at the University of Chicago.

The youth-led protests in Nepal began on Monday as simmering discontent over years was ignited by the government's ban on major social media platforms. Many were particularly angry that the children of political leaders seem to enjoy a lavish lifestyle, while most of the population was dealing with economic problems, rising unemployment and widespread corruption.

**The unrest has left at least 19 people dead.**

Protesters - who have not clearly spelled out their demands apart from rallying under the anti-corruption call - burned the parliament building, presidential house, and residences of several ministers and other politicians. Bending to mounting public pressure, Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli reversed the social



media ban and quit. However, he will still lead a caretaker government until a new one is in place.

It is unclear what the new government would look like and whether it will constitute the old political guard. Many Nepalis fear a familiar sequence of bargaining among the same political class they want to overthrow.

Nepal is fraught with frequent political instability and each prime minister's tenure has lasted just a year or two since the new constitution came into effect in 2015. The country abolished its monarchy in 2006, after a violent uprising that forced its former king to give up his authoritarian rule.

Staniland said the violence could make it "much harder to determine who should be in charge or how they should proceed."

"The big question now in Nepal will be whether order can be restored and new, stable political dispensation forged," he said.

Those in Nepal looking for answers about its future will not find solace in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The lack of consensus on basic reform demands like elections and anti-corruption mechanisms, and an uncertain road map for the future, have dented the democratic progress in those countries and further exacerbated the problems they face.

In Bangladesh, student-led

protests started with anger against rules that limited the number of civil service jobs based on merit. They morphed into a massive nationwide uprising in July last year that culminated in the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Hundreds of people, mostly students, were killed in violent protests.

Hasina fled to India, and an unelected interim administration, headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, was installed. He promised to restore order and hold a new election after necessary reforms.

One year on, Bangladesh remains mired in instability. Politic parties are bickering over election dates. Mob violence,

political attacks on rival parties and groups, and hostility to vulnerable minority groups by religious hard-liners have surged.

In Sri Lanka, the then-Prime

minister Ranil Wickremesinghe took over the country after protesters forced the powerful Rajapaksa clan out in 2022. The country later had a democratic transition of power after Marxist lawmaker Anura Kumara Dissanayake was elected as president last year. He promised to improve standards of living, clean up government and hold corrupt politicians responsible for their actions.

Almost a year later, Sri

Lanka's problems seem far from over. Its people continue to deal with issues like economic hardships, human rights concerns and foreign-debt default.

"There is no sign of the ideals of change desired by the protesters," said Veeragathy Thanabalasingham, a Colombo-based political expert.

Recent popular revolts have also rocked other nations in the region.

In Indonesia, deadly protests last week over lawmakers' perks and the cost of living forced the country's president to replace key economic and security ministers. The protests have led to the death of at least seven people.

In Myanmar, imprisoned former leader Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically-elected government was ousted by the military in 2021. Resistance to the military government has grown, and the country is now in the midst of a brutal civil war.

Staniland said while "most protests come and go without such dramatic results" as those seen in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, "the kindling is there for miscalculations and unexpected events to spiral."

"I think Nepal represents the new politics of instability in South Asia," he said.



# Never done anything wrong: Raj Kundra on Rs 60-crore against him, Shilpa Shetty

Raj Kundra, businessman and film producer, has responded to recent allegations of defrauding involving him and his wife, actor Shilpa Shetty. While in Delhi for the promotion of his Punjabi film 'Mehtar', Kundra addressed a question concerning the Rs 60-crore cheating case. He reaffirmed his confidence in their innocence and expressed trust that the truth would become clear in due course.

During an exclusive interaction with India Today, Kundra was asked about the Rs 60-crore cheating case against him and Shilpa Shetty.

He acknowledged the recurring nature of controversies in his public life, but indicated a calm and measured approach. Kundra stated that neither he nor his wife had made any public statements so far. Kundra addressed the allegations with a clear stance,

saying: "Let's just wait and watch because that's life for you, and we have not said anything about it because we know we haven't done anything wrong. The truth will come out eventually. We've never done anything wrong in life, and we never will." The businessman did not discuss any specific details of the case or its background, limiting his comments to affirming his conviction in their innocence. Recently, Mumbai Police issued a lookout circular (LOC) against the two in connection with the cheating case. The two are accused of diverting nearly Rs 60 crore from Best Deal TV for personal use in a loan-cum-investment deal. Mumbai-based businessman Deepak Kothari accused Shilpa Shetty and Raj Kundra of defrauding him by using the funds that were meant for business expansion between 2015 and 2023. The two had 87.6 per cent of Best Deal TV's shares.



# Actor Karishma Sharma jumps from moving local train, sustains injuries



Actor Karishma Sharma, injured after jumping from a moving train in Mumbai. She is currently hospitalised and under medical supervision, with the

incident highlighting commuter safety concerns. The incident occurred as she was travelling to Churchgate for a shoot. Sharma shared details of the incident on her Instagram story, informing followers of her hospitalisation and requesting

prayers for her recovery. According to Sharma, she decided to wear a saree for the journey and attempted to board the train at high speed. She stated that her friends could not get on the train, leading to fear and her decision to jump. As a result, she landed on her back and sustained injuries. The actor has described the episode as extremely painful. In her Instagram story, Sharma explained: "Yesterday, while going for a shoot at Churchgate, I decided to catch the train wearing a saree."

## Jolly LLB 3 trailer: Akshay Kumar-Arshad Warsi go big on their fight for justice

The makers of Jolly LLB 3 have released the final trailer starring Akshay Kumar and Arshad Warsi. The courtroom comedy-drama, directed by Subhash Kapoor, showcases the clash between the two Jollies, a socially relevant storyline, and a star-studded cast including Saurabh Shukla, Huma Qureshi, and Amrita Rao. The film hits theaters on September 19.

The makers of 'Jolly LLB 3' released a new trailer for the film on Wednesday. The Akshay Kumar and Arshad Warsi-led film had a promotional event in Meerut on September 10, where the trailer was unveiled to the audience. The video offers a better glimpse into the story, highlighting the major conflict between the two Jollies and the socially relevant narrative involving a politician and a farmer whose land is being taken. Directed and written by Subhash Kapoor, 'Jolly LLB 3' also features Saurabh Shukla as the iconic Judge Tripathi. Huma Qureshi and Amrita Rao appear in important roles in the film.

The courtroom drama aims to recreate the charm of the previous films in the franchise. The trailer further shows the two Jollies



handling the case according to their own standards of morality and ethics, seeking technical loopholes to win. It also hints at the epic clash over who is the real and more significant Jolly is in the legal world. "Coming back as Jolly Mishra has been a special journey for me.

What makes this film truly exciting is that it's not just about reviving a character, it's about putting him in the courtroom against another Jolly, played brilliantly by Arshad. The energy, humour, and the conflict between us made every scene unpredictable.

## Siddharth joins Freida Pinto for Netflix family drama Unaccustomed Earth

Actor Siddharth has joined the cast as the lead for the Netflix hour-long family drama 'Unaccustomed Earth'. He will be featuring opposite actor Freida Pinto in the new show created by John Wells and Madhuri Shekar. 'Unaccustomed Earth' is a culturally vibrant drama about a tight-knit Indian American community navigating love, desire, and belonging. It explores the lives of an elite and insular Indian American community of Cambridge, MA (Massachusetts). When a star-crossed romance between a devoted wife and her long-lost love comes to light, a scandalous affair is born, and new battle lines are drawn in this intensely interconnected immigrant community. Siddharth has a career spanning over two decades in multiple film industries, including Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi cinema. He has donned many hats as an actor, screenwriter,

singer and producer. As a polyglot speaking 7 languages, he made his debut with the Tamil film 'Boys' (2003). The actor later shot to fame with his grounded portrayal in the BAFTA-nominated patriotic-drama 'Rang De Basanti' (2007). The film was directed by Rakesh Omprakash Mehra and featured actors Aamir Khan, Alice Pattern, Sharman Joshi, Atul Kulkarni, Kunal Kapoor, Soha Ali Khan, R Madhavan and others in key roles. The 46-year-old was last seen in director Sri Ganesh's coming-of-age drama '3BHK' (2025). The film also featured actors R Sarathkumar, Devayani, Meetha Raghunath, Chaithra J Achar and others in pivotal characters. He will next be seen in actor Kamal Haasan's 'Indian 3'. Frieda made her acting debut with director Danny Boyle's Oscar-winning 'Slumdog Millionaire' (2008). She has acted in many American and British films and television productions.



## Ajay Devgn, Arshad Warsi wrap shoot, film to hit theatres on Eid 2026



Actor Ajay Devgn wrapped up the shoot of 'Dhamaal 4' in Mumbai recently. The announcement about the film's release was also made in a unique style. The official posters of the film's ensemble were released in an Instagram post shared by Devgn Films and T-Series. Each actor's had a quirky caption to it. Apart from Devgn, actors Arshad Warsi, Riteish Deshmukh, Jaaved Jaaferi, Ravi Kishan, Sanjay Mishra, Upendra Limaye, Esha Gupta, Sanjeeda Shaikh and Anjali Dinesh Anand featured in the posters. Actors Sharad Kelkar and Vijay Patkar missing in the posters also play pivotal roles in the laugh riot. Apart from being shot in Mumbai, the movie also had an extensive first schedule in Malshej Ghat. The

characters in the upcoming comedy-drama are being projected as the 'Masters of Mischief and Laughter' by the production house. Similar to its prequels, the movie is expected to have a blend of drama, action and chaos, creating a roller-coaster ride, as per reports. The first instalment, released in 2007, was well-received by audiences. It featured Riteish Deshmukh, Arshad Warsi, Javed Jaffrey, Ashish Chaudhary and Sanjay Dutt in pivotal roles. It's sequel, 'Double Dhamaal' (2011) had the same cast with Kangana Ranaut and Mallika Sherawat joining as new characters. 'Total Dhamaal', however, also starred Ajay alongside Anil Kapoor and Madhuri Dixit in pivotal roles apart from Esha Gupta and Boman Irani.

## Bollywood Romcom Param Sundari Faces Backlash Over Kerala Stereotypes

A new Bollywood release, Param Sundari, starring Siddharth Malhotra and Janhvi Kapoor, has sparked debate over how India's Hindi film industry depicts non-Hindi speaking regions. The romcom tells the story of a Delhi man falling in love with Sundari, a woman from Kerala, as they navigate cultural clashes before finding common ground.

While cross-cultural romances are a familiar Bollywood theme, many viewers have criticized the film's stereotypical portrayal of Kerala. Sundari, played by Kapoor, is shown with jasmine in her hair, casually climbing coconut trees, and even communicating with elephants — all tropes often exaggerated



in depictions of the southern point of ridicule after the trailer was released. The film also leans heavily on familiar tourist imagery: backwaters, coconut groves, toddy shops, elephants, and Onam celebrations. Critics say the narrative glosses over nuance

and instead reduces Kerala to caricature. Reviewers have called the film a "tourism ad" disguised as cinema, filled with coconut gags and exoticized visuals. Not everyone sees the inauthenticity as a problem. Some viewers argue that a degree of artistic liberty is acceptable for entertainment. But others, including critic Sowmya Rajendran, dismissed the film as "generic, exhausting and offensive," accusing it of hiding clichés behind colorful backdrops and music that plays up Kerala's supposed "foreignness." The debate reflects a larger shift in India's film landscape. With streaming platforms boosting the reach of regional cinema, audiences now expect more authentic storytelling.



## Baaghi 4 vs Bengal Files box office Day 2: Tiger Shroff's action hits high gear

drawn to historical narratives and political drama. Industry experts will be watching closely to see how both films fare in the weeks ahead. Despite its modest numbers, 'The Bengal Files' stands out for its attempt to educate viewers about lesser-

known historical events. As 'Baaghi 4' continues to draw crowds with its adrenaline-fuelled sequences, analysts believe the performance gap between the two films could widen.

Directed by A Harsha, the film's bold narrative is reflected in

its 'A' certification from the Central Board of Film Certification. Tiger Shroff returns as Ronnie with an even more intense avatar, joined by Sonam Bajwa and Harnaaz Sandhu, while Sanjay Dutt plays the antagonist.

## Salman Khan to shoot Battle of Galwan climax scenes in first schedule

Salman Khan is gearing up for one of the most crucial shooting schedules of his highly awaited film, 'Battle of Galwan'. The team is set to film the climax sequences in Leh and Ladakh over the next 2-3 weeks. According to industry sources, the production is prioritising these pivotal scenes to avoid disruption caused by the region's erratic weather conditions. "Galwan's climax is among the most important parts of the film, both visually and emotionally. Given Leh and Ladakh's unpredictable weather, the makers want to ensure the quality of these sequences is not compromised. That is why they are planning to complete as much as possible during this schedule itself," a source informed. Directed by Apoorva Lakhia, 'Battle of Galwan' is touted as one of Salman Khan's most ambitious projects in recent years. The film is based on the 2020 clash between Indian and Chinese forces in the Galwan valley. The Ladakh schedule, particularly the grand climax, is expected to involve high-octane action set pieces, mounted on an international scale. With vast landscapes, shifting terrains, and the complexities of shooting at high

altitude, the production is leaving no stone unturned to get the authenticity right.



Meanwhile, Salman is also balancing his commitments to Bigg Boss 19, where he continues to serve as the show's iconic host.

The recent box office face-off between Tiger Shroff's 'Baaghi 4' and Vivek Agnihotri's 'The Bengal Files' has thrown up a striking contrast in their performances. Produced by Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, 'Baaghi 4' has grabbed attention for its high-octane action scenes. In contrast, 'The Bengal Files' revolves around the 1946 Calcutta Killings and the Noakhali Riots.

On its second day, 'Baaghi 4' collected Rs 9 crore, taking its total to Rs 21 crore, while 'The Bengal Files' earned Rs 2.04 crore, pushing its cumulative figure to Rs 4 crore. The stark difference in their box office collections reflects shifting audience preferences. While 'Baaghi 4' has resonated with fans of action-packed cinema, 'The Bengal Files' appeals to viewers

## Dabangg Director Abhinav Kashyap Slams Salman Khan, Calls Him "Ill-Mannered and

Filmmaker Abhinav Kashyap, who directed Salman Khan in the blockbuster Dabangg (2010), has launched a scathing attack on the superstar and his family. In an interview with Screen, Kashyap accused Salman of being uninterested in acting for decades, describing him as a "gunda" (goon) and "badtameez" (ill-mannered). According to Kashyap, Salman's involvement in films is minimal. "He is never engaged. For the last 25 years, he has not been interested in acting. He just does a favour by turning up to work. His focus is on celebrity power, not performance. I realized only during Dabangg that he is a ganda insaan (a bad person)," Kashyap alleged. The director also targeted Salman's influential



family, accusing them of dominating the industry and

punishing those who refuse to fall in line. "He is the father of the star

system in Bollywood. His family has controlled the industry for 50

years. They are vindictive people. If you don't agree with them, they come after you," Kashyap claimed. Dabangg, which was produced by Arbaaz Khan and Malaika Arora, became one of Salman's biggest hits and launched Sonakshi Sinha's career. The franchise went on to spawn two sequels, with Arbaaz Khan directing Dabangg 2 (2012) and Prabhu Deva helming Dabangg 3 (2019). After Dabangg, Kashyap directed Besharam (2013) starring Ranbir Kapoor, though it failed to replicate his earlier success. He has also worked as an actor and directed television serials like Darr and Siddhant. Salman Khan, meanwhile, continues to headline major projects, most recently AR Murugadoss' Sikandar.

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