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The most expansive fighting in half a century

A New York Times report says

- The four-day military clash between India and Pakistan, shows "Clear damage" to Pakistan's facilities. The attacks were widespread, the damage was far more contained than claimed - "and appeared mostly inflicted by India on Pakistani facilities."
- As both sides used drones and missiles to test each other's air defenses and hit military facilities, they claimed to inflict severe damage.
- But satellite imagery indicates that while the attacks were widespread, the damage was far more contained than claimed — and appeared mostly inflicted by India on Pakistani facilities. In a new age of high-tech warfare, strikes by both sides appeared to be precisely targeted. India and Pakistan Talked Big, but Satellite Imagery Shows Limited Damage



Story on Page 23

Qatari Cybertrucks, Elite Camels and Trillion-Dollar Vows: Why Gulf Countries Went All Out for Trump's Visit

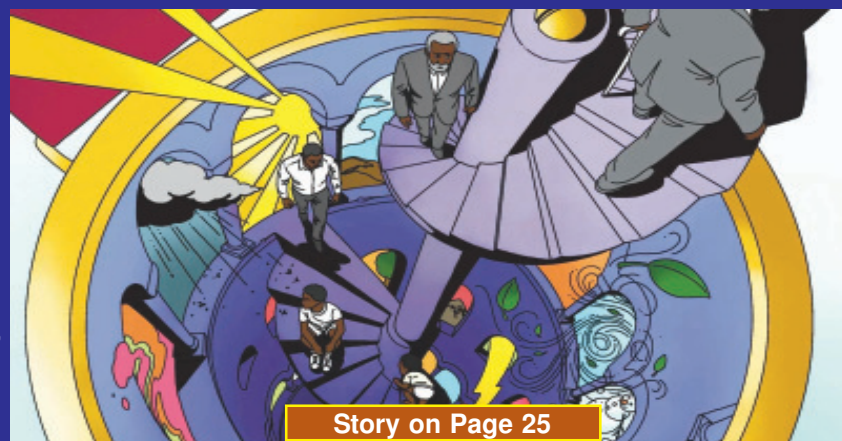


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Microsoft to layoff more than 6,000 employees, says it is for the company's success

Story on Page 25

You might live to be 100. Are you ready?



Story on Page 25



Bank Of America Analyst Gets 10-Year Jail In Saudi Arabia For Old Tweet

Story on Page 25

Indian film body calls for Turkey shooting ban over its pro-Pakistan stance

Turkish Firm Celebi, Working At Indian Airports, Loses Permit Over National Security Concerns



Story on Page 24

JJ Singh, a Virginia House of Delegates lawmaker helps Virginia colleges get \$55-million booster shot

A bill tabled by Indian-American lawmaker, JJ Singh, seeking to ease soaring tuition costs has now been approved in Virginia. The passage of the proposal has unlocked \$55 million for Virginia's public colleges and universities. Once a student at the University of Virginia himself, Singh called the relief a necessary move meant for families drowning in student debt.

(By our staff reporter)- A proposal by an Indian-American lawmaker, JJ Singh, to allocate \$55 million in tuition relief for students at Virginia's public colleges and universities has now been signed into a law. The move, through the state budget, would allocate money to ease the financial strain of higher education and mitigate growing student debt.

"I am proud that my proposal for \$55 million in university tuition relief was included in the final budget released earlier this week," JJ Singh wrote on X. "Now, more than ever, we need to invest in our next generation and ensure every Virginia student can achieve the American dream," he added.

JJ SINGH HIGHLIGHTS SOARING TUITION CRISIS IN US

"When I went to the University of Virginia, tuition, room, and board cost



just \$15,000 per year; now it's over \$40,000. The rise in tuition is an epidemic plaguing the entire

Commonwealth, and the country, for that matter, said. "Students and families can't afford it. For any parents who can

help, they have to choose whether to help their children or fund their own retirement," he concluded.

The \$55 million in tuition assistance will support Virginia's public universities and community colleges, aiming to ease student debt and improve access to higher education.

Singh has prioritised making higher education more affordable since assuming office.

A son of Indian immigrants, Singh made history as the first turbaned Sikh to serve in the US Peace Corps and previously held a role in the Barack Obama administration's Office of Management and Budget, according to reports. Democrat JJ Singh defeated Republican Ram Venkatachalam in the special election earlier this year in January for a Virginia House of Delegates seat.

Gaurav Jaisingh, a student of Bentley University dies after falling from Bahamas hotel balcony



(By our staff reporter)- A college trip to the Bahamas turned tragic for an Indian-origin US student, Gaurav Jaisingh, who died after falling from a hotel balcony in the island country just six days before his graduation. The 21-year-old was on an annual Bentley University senior class trip when he fell to his death. The incident took place on the night of May 11 at the Atlantis Paradise Island Resort and Casino, according to media reports.

Gaurav, originally from Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, US, was involved in Delta Sigma Pi fraternity and was also active in the South Asian Students Association at his school.

Bentley University's undergraduate commencement ceremony was

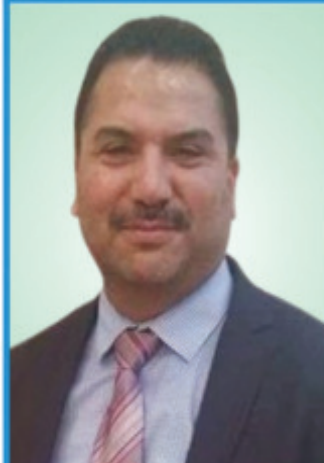
scheduled for Saturday. He studied finance with a minor in computer information systems at Bentley.

According to a report in The Daily Mail, for two decades, the school has offered the graduating class a five-day, four-night trip to the Bahamas during the week between finals and commencement. Bentley is a small private university located in Waltham, about 12 miles outside of Boston. The annual tuition fee is \$87,820 (approximately Rs 73 lakh).

HE FOUND UNRESPONSIVE AFTER BALCONY FALL: POLICE

The Royal Bahamas Police Force has confirmed that an American man fell from an upper-level balcony while he was inside his hotel room with several roommates.

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A Billion Dollar Tax Bill for the Indian diaspora?

US plan to tax remittances made by non-citizens

(By our staff reporter) New York- A new US bill named 'The One Big Beautiful Bill,' proposes 5% tax on remittances from non-US citizens. This impacts Indian H-1B, L-1, and green card holders sending money to India. The tax could cost the Indian diaspora billions of dollars annually. The House aims to pass the bill soon, potentially making it law by June-July. Experts advise early remittances to avoid the tax.

Bill contains a sting for the lakhs of Indians in the US, be they non-immigrant visa holders (like H-1B) or green card holders. Once this bill is enacted, anyone who is not a US citizen and who remits money outside the US will have to pay a remittance tax of 5%. Lately, the US has emerged as the largest source country for remittances into India attributed to both the size of the Indian diaspora and their income levels in America. According to India's Ministry of External Affairs there are nearly 45 lakh overseas Indians in the US (which includes nearly 32 lakh 'Persons of Indian origin'). According to a 'Remittance Survey' published by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in March, of the total remittances of US \$ 118.7 billion in fiscal 2023-24, nearly 28 percent were from the US, with the UAE coming in as the second leading source country. This translates to a whopping US \$ 32 billion in remittances from the



US. If this bill is enacted, even if we assume the remittance figure from the US to be constant, the Indian diaspora would end up paying US \$ 1.6 billion as

page document is a section on remittances, which calls for a 'tax equal to 5% of the amount of such transfer'. As no exemption threshold limit has been set, it would also impact transfers of small denominations. It adds that this shall not apply to any remittance-transfer where the remittance transfer provider is a 'qualified remittance transfer provider' and the sender is a 'verified US sender'. The latter is then defined to mean a citizen or national of the US. In other words, if an H-1B holder or an L-1 (who is in US on an intra company transfer) or even a green card holder remits money to his family (say parents) in India, or remits

money for the purpose of investments – say in Indian securities or real estate, the remittance will be subject to a 5% withholding by the transfer provider (say US bank). However, a tax credit could be available against the US taxes payable by such an individual. The House of Representatives aims to pass this bill in May itself and it will then move to the Senate. According to cross-border investment experts, this bill is likely to sail through and may be law by June-July. They are advising the Indian diaspora to try and remit larger funds in the coming weeks to escape the remittance tax.

US visa denied despite \$116k budget; One honest answer costs Delhi student his visa- Reddit analyses what went wrong

(By our staff reporter) A Delhi-based student's first attempt at securing a US F-1 student visa ended in rejection, prompting a flurry of reactions online as he sought answers on what may have gone wrong. The student was accepted into CUNY Baruch College for a Master's in Finance, and appeared for his visa interview at the US Consulate in New Delhi at 8:30 AM.

The student then took to Reddit to share how his interview went
VO: Hi
Me: Hi
VO: Pass your I20 and passport.
Me: Passed

VO: Going to City University of New York for masters?

Me: Yes

VO: How did you find out about this university?

Me: I was searching for colleges which accept 3-year undergraduate degrees in the US and that's when I came across Baruch. I also read a lot of good things about this college on platforms like LinkedIn."

The interview continued with questions about other universities he applied to, the University of Denver, Rochester, Babson, UMass Boston, Arizona, Stevens, and WPI, and his funding plan,

which included a Rs 50 lakh loan and Rs 50 lakh in family savings. Despite this, the visa was denied. "VO: How are you paying for this? Me: I have taken loan of 50 lakh and my father has savings of 50 lakhs

VO: Denied visa"

After sharing his experience online, the student asked, "Can someone please help me know why my visa got rejected?... Is there any point in reapplying?"

Many users responded with detailed feedback, pointing to red flags in the student's answers, especially when explaining why he chose CUNY Baruch.

"Your answer doesn't show commitment. It feels as if you searched up the universities you were accepted into in 10 minutes and decided your future career," wrote one user. Others suggested the list of universities applied to seemed mismatched. "Rochester and Babson are top schools, not really in the same league as CUNY. It makes more sense to show you applied to schools of similar rank," another noted. One user flagged the order in which the student described his funding, "Always start with your parent(s)' savings and then mention the loan.

In Saudi, Trump claims credit again for India-Pak ceasefire, proposes dinner idea

(By our staff reporter)- US President Donald Trump, who described himself as a peacemaker during an address in Saudi Arabia on Saturday, suggested that India and Pakistan should "have a nice dinner together" to help ease tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

Addressing US-Saudi Investment Forum, attended by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Tesla CEO Elon Musk, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Trump reiterated the claim that his administration had helped broker peace to avert a "potential nuclear war" between India and Pakistan, which he said could have killed millions. Trump added that New Delhi and Islamabad are "actually getting along" following US-led



peace talks involving Vice President JD Vance and Secretary Rubio.

"I think they're actually getting along. Maybe we can even get them together a little bit, Marco, where they go out and have a nice dinner together. Wouldn't

that be nice?," the US President, who is on a three-nation Middle East visit, asked. While India unequivocally rejected any third-party mediation and maintained that the ceasefire understanding with Pakistan was the result of direct discussions, President

Trump reiterated his claim of having played a mediating role. "Just days ago, my administration successfully brokered a historic ceasefire to stop the escalating violence between India and Pakistan, and I used trade to a large extent to do it. I said, fellas, come on. Let's make a deal. Let's do some trading," Trump said.

"Let's not trade nuclear missiles. Let's trade the things that you make so beautifully. And they both have very powerful leaders, very strong leaders, good leaders, smart leaders. And, it all stopped. Hopefully, it'll remain that way, but it all stopped," he added.

The US President also said that he was proud of Rubio, Vance and others involved in the peace talks, calling it a "great great job". "We've come a long way

and it could be, you know, millions of people could have died from that conflict that started off small and was getting bigger and bigger and bigger by the day," Trump added.

In a surprise development on May 10, President Trump announced that India and Pakistan had reached a 'ceasefire,' bringing an end to the heightened military activity that followed the April 22 Pahalgam attacks. Although both countries confirmed the development shortly after, New Delhi clarified that the talks were held directly at the military level. Trump had also offered to mediate between the neighbours on the Kashmir issue, but India firmly rejected the proposal, reiterating that the matter would be resolved bilaterally.

Congress slams BJP leader's 'vulgar, insulting' remarks on Col Sofiya Qureshi



RSS mentality has always been anti-women," he said, accusing the ruling party of previously targeting Himanshi Narwal, the widow of a naval officer, and the daughter of Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

Congress spokespersons and leaders took to social media to express outrage.

Pawan Khera called Vijay Shah's remarks "completely unpardonable" and asked whether the Prime Minister or BJP chief JP Nadda would act against him.

Congress MP Mohammad Jawed said the comment was "treasonous" and asked, "Will Prime Minister Modi take action or reward him like others before him?" Danish Ali, Renuka Chowdhury, and Shama Mohamed also condemned Vijay Shah's words, calling them "poisonous fanaticism", "obnoxious", and "an insult to the Indian Army". The Congress questioned whether Vijay Shah would be asked to resign or even promoted despite his remarks.

Reacting to the controversy, Vijay Shah said his words were being misinterpreted. "She (Qureshi) is a sister who has enhanced our prestige. It should not be seen in any other context. We respect her and will continue to do so," he clarified.

Meanwhile, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge called Shah's remarks "insulting, shameful and vulgar", and demanded his immediate dismissal. "The BJP-

to the clip, saying it was a direct insult to Col Qureshi, who was among the officials representing the armed forces during the briefing on the precision strikes against terrorists in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

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Creative naming can't alter reality: India rejects China's Arunachal renaming

In a strongly worded statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) firmly rejected China's latest attempt to rename several locations in Arunachal Pradesh.

(News Agency)- India firmly rejected China's latest attempt to rename several locations in Arunachal Pradesh, reiterating that the state remains an integral part of the country. This comes two days after China's Civil Aviation Ministry on May 11-12 released new names for 27 locations in Arunachal Pradesh in another attempt to assert claims over Indian territory.

In a strongly worded statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday, "We have noticed that China has persisted with its vain and preposterous attempts to name places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh." The MEA added, "Consistent with our principled position, we reject such attempts categorically. Creative naming will not alter the undeniable reality that Arunachal Pradesh was, is, and



will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India." The MEA's reaction comes after China's repetitive attempt to assert its claim on Arunachal Pradesh.

Earlier in April 2024, China had

released a fourth list of 30 new names of various places along the line of actual control (LAC) in India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh last year in 2024. This was not the first time China tried to rename places

inside Indian territory.

China released a list of so-called 'standardised' geographical names in Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing recognises as Zangnan, state-run Global Times reported. The 30 places

renamed by Beijing include 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass, 11 residential areas and a piece of land. Apart from the list of names, the Chinese ministry also shared detailed latitude and longitude and a high-resolution map of the areas.

In 2017, Beijing had released the initial list of 'standardised' names for six locations in Arunachal Pradesh. This was succeeded by a second list comprising 15 places in 2021, with another list featuring names for 11 additional places released in 2023.

Meanwhile, India has stayed firm in its rejection of China's attempt to claim territories in Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of the country and assigning 'invented' names does not alter this reality.

Husband's affair isn't abetment of suicide unless wife was tormented: Court



The Delhi High Court said an extramarital relationship was not a ground to implicate the husband for dowry death in the absence of a nexus between the alleged relationship and dowry demand.

unnatural death of his wife in her matrimonial home on March 18, 2024, within nearly five years of marriage.

"The prosecution relies on materials to suggest that the applicant was involved in an extramarital relationship with a woman. Certain videos and chat records have been cited in support. However, even assuming such a relationship existed, the law is settled that

in the absence of a nexus between the alleged relationship and dowry demand. The court, as a result, granted bail to a man, who was arrested in a case under Sections 498A (cruelty)/304-B (dowry death) aside from Section 306 (abetment of suicide) of IPC, following the

extramarital relationship cannot be a ground to implicate the accused under Section 304B IPC. The Court held that harassment or cruelty should be linked to dowry demands or sustained mental cruelty that occurred 'soon before the death'."

The man had been in custody since March 2024, and the court noted his continued incarceration would serve no purpose. The court further observed a chargesheet was filed after conclusion of investigation and the trial was not likely to conclude in near future.

There was no risk of tampering with evidence or fleeing from justice and it was well-established that the object of granting bail was neither

punitive nor preventative, it added.

The court directed his release on a personal bond of Rs 50,000 with two sureties of the like amount.

The woman's family alleged the husband had an affair with his colleague and when confronted, he physically abused her.

The man was further accused of regularly subjecting his wife to domestic violence and pressurising her to secure EMI payments from her family for a car he had purchased.

The court observed no such complaint was made by the woman or her family when she alive and therefore prima facie diluting the immediacy and plausibility of the dowry-related harassment claim.

(News Agency)- The Delhi High Court on Tuesday said a man's extramarital affair does not amount to cruelty or abetment of suicide unless shown it harassed or tormented the wife.

Justice Sanjeev Narula said an extramarital relationship was not a ground to implicate the husband for dowry death

in the absence of a nexus between the alleged relationship and dowry demand.

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The verdict went on, "An

Electoral Bonds, bulldozer justice among key verdicts by Chief Justice BR Gavai

BR Gavai is the first Chief Justice of India from the Buddhist community and only the second judge from the Scheduled Castes to hold the office.

(News Agency)- Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai was on Wednesday sworn in as the 52nd Chief Justice of India (CJI), becoming the first Buddhist and only the second judge from the Scheduled Castes to hold the office. His elevation is both historic and symbolic, representing the values of inclusivity and constitutional morality that the judiciary upholds.

India's 52nd Chief Justice, BR Gavai, has previously authored more than 200 judgments during his tenure as a Judge of the Supreme Court. He has also been part of several Constitution benches. As the incumbent Chief Justice with a declared objective of "upholding socioeconomic justice", he is also expected to take up several pending matters.

LANDMARK VERDICTS BY JUSTICE BR GAVAI:



BULLDOZER JUSTICE: In November 2024, a Division Bench of Justice BR Gavai and Justice KV Viswanathan condemned the "bulldozer actions" by various states and held that the properties/houses of the accused in any case, cannot be demolished only on the grounds that they are accused or convicted for a crime. The Court laid down stringent norms to curb these bulldozer actions.

CREAMY LAYER AND SUB-CLASSIFICATION IN SC/STs: In the state of Punjab vs

Davinder Singh case, the verdict of 2024 a seven-judge Constitution Bench also comprising Justices DY Chandrachud, Vikram Nath, Bela M Trivedi, Pankaj Mithal, Manoj Misra, and Satish Chandra Sharma, by a 6-1 majority, held that subclassification of Scheduled Castes among reserved categories is permissible for granting separate quotas for more backwards within the SC categories.

Justice Gavai, in his separate

opinion, stated that nearly 75 years have elapsed from the day on which the Constitution was brought into effect.

"The State must evolve a policy for identifying the creamy layer even from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to exclude them from the benefit of affirmative action. In my view, only this and this alone can achieve the real equality as enshrined under the Constitution," he added.

This opinion, coming from a Dalit Judge, was widely discussed across the country, with both appreciation and criticism from SC/ST communities.

ELECTORAL BONDS: Justice Gavai was also part of the Constitution Bench that struck down the 2018 Electoral Bonds Scheme. In February 2024, the Court held that the scheme infringed upon the citizens' right to information and compromised transparency in

public funding.

The Court also directed that the sale of electoral bonds be stopped with immediate effect.

The State Bank of India was directed to submit details of the Electoral Bonds purchased from April 12, 2019 till the date of the verdict, to the Election Commission.

BAIL TO MANISH SISODIA: While granting interim bail to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia in 2024 in both the CBI and ED in connection with the Delhi Excise scam case, the Bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan raised concerns about the prolonged period of incarceration suffered by Sisodia.

In consideration of various earlier pronouncements, the Court emphasised that the right to a speedy trial is a fundamental right within the broad scope of Article 21 of the Constitution.

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President flags overreach, asks top court to clarify 14 points on Governor's powers

The newly sworn-in Chief Justice of India (CJI), BR Gavai, faces his first challenge in addressing the President's question on whether the Supreme Court can set a timeline for governors and the President, as observed by a two-judge bench in a landmark judgment in the Tamil Nadu Governor case.

(News Agency) - At a time when the gap between the judiciary and the executive is widening, Justice BR Gavai, who was sworn in as the country's top-ranking judicial officer on Wednesday, will face several pressing questions to begin with -- from setting a timeline for the Governor and President's assent to bills, to the use of the Supreme Court's extraordinary powers under Article 142 to deliver complete justice.

The newly sworn-in Chief Justice of India (CJI), BR Gavai, faces his first challenge in addressing the President's question on whether the Supreme Court can set a timeline for governors and the President, as observed by a two-judge bench in a landmark judgment in the Tamil Nadu Governor case.

The President has used the powers conferred under Article 143 of the Constitution to seek advice on the Supreme Court's decision in the landmark Tamil Nadu governor judgement, with President Droupadi Murmu asking the top court: How can



Supreme Court put a timeline when the Constitution does not?"

Chief Justice of India Gavai will now be required to set up a Constitution bench - comprising five or more judges -- to provide an opinion to the 14 questions posed by President Droupadi Murmu.

India Today TV has accessed the list of questions that were posed by President Murmu on Tuesday, day before Chief Justice of India Gavai took oath. Listed below are a few of the questions referred to the Supreme Court:

How can the Supreme Court substitute

the President /Governor's powers under the Constitution with its own powers under Article 142?

Are states misusing the "plenary power" of the Supreme Court against Center? How can a timeline be prescribed for the President and Governor?

How are the decisions of the Governor under article 200 justiciable?

Last month, the Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, questioned the Supreme Court's use of its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to set a deadline for both the President and the Governor, and cleared 10 bills passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly without the Executive's nod, calling it a case of "judicial overreach."

On April 12, the top court, in a first, ruled that the President must take a decision on the bills reserved by the Governor within three months. The bench observed that the powers of the President under Article 201 were subject to judicial review, thus setting the cat among the pigeons.

Bengaluru techie held for pro-Pakistan slogans after Operation Sindoor celebrations

(News Agency)- A 26-year-old techie was arrested by Whitefield police in Bengaluru for allegedly shouting pro-Pakistan slogans from the balcony of his PG accommodation. The



accused, identified as Shubhanshu Shukla from Chhattisgarh, was working in an IT company in the city. The incident took place around 12.30 am on May 9 in Prashanth Layout, when the nation was celebrating the success of 'Operation Sindoor'. According to police sources, residents of a nearby PG were alarmed by the slogans and

suspected a possible threat. A youth from a neighbouring PG recorded the incident on his phone and alerted police by dialling 112. Police said the video confirmed that Shukla had raised the slogans. Two individuals were initially taken into custody, but the investigation revealed Shukla was responsible. He was arrested and booked under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). He has been remanded to judicial custody. The motive behind the act is still being investigated.

In another incident, a man named Nawaz was arrested by Bengaluru police for posting a video on Instagram in which he called for a bomb attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's house. The video, which went viral during heightened India-Pakistan tensions, questioned why Pakistan hadn't bombed the Prime Minister's residence.

A background check revealed a pending Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) case against him in Tumakuru. The police have launched further investigations into the motive behind the post.

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India's Akashteer created hell for Pakistan: 3 Jaish terrorists killed in gunfight with security forces in J&K's Pulwama

Makers laud key air defence weapon



(News Agency)- Indian defence manufacturer Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has heaped praise on the indigenous Akashteer air defence system, which emerged as a crucial interceptor weapon during India's recent military conflict, and said it "created hell for Pakistan". The Akashteer Air Defence System successfully neutralised hundreds of Pakistani drones, missiles, micro UAVs and munitions and played a pivotal role in neutralising aerial threats in the aftermath of the May 7 Operation Sindoor. BEL lauded the AI-powered, fully-automated defence system and said it performed beyond user expectations. "The system performed beyond

users' expectations, providing robust Air Defence to India during the current conflict. Akashteer ensures a seamless and unified air situation picture accessible to the lowest operational units of Army AD, enhancing situational awareness across the force," BEL said in a tweet, adding, "Akashteer empowers units on the front lines, enabling dynamic engagement decisions and preventing friendly-fire incidents". In the recent military engagement, following Operation Sindoor precision strikes against terror hubs in Pakistan and POK, India's defence forces demonstrated remarkable efficiency and technological superiority.

Central to this success was the deployment of the Akashteer system, an advanced air defence command and control mechanism. ABOUT AKASHTEER, INDIA'S INDIGENOUS FORCE MULTIPLIER Designed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Akashteer is a next-generation air defence control and reporting system. The system integrates data from radars and sensors, and provides real-time situational awareness and enables swift responses to aerial threats. Through automated detection-and-response mechanisms, Akashteer helped neutralise hundreds of incoming threats with unmatched precision.



(News Agency)- Three unidentified Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists were killed in a gunfight with security forces early on Thursday in the Nadir village of Tral area in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district. The three terrorists were identified as Asif Ahmed Sheikh, Amir Nazir Wani and Yawar Ahmad Bhat, all residents of Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district. This is the second encounter in the union territory within 48 hours. This comes two days after security forces gunned down three Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists in an operation in the Keller area of Shopian district. Of the three terrorists killed on Tuesday, the two slain

terrorists were identified as Shahid Kuttay and Adnan Shafi, both residents of Shopian. Kuttay, who joined Lashkar in 2023, was involved in a shooting incident at the Danish resort on April 8 last year, in which two German tourists and one driver were injured. He was also involved in the killing of a BJP Sarpanch at Heerpora in Shopian in May last year, according to sources. Shafi, who joined the terror group in 2024, was involved in the killing of a non-local labourer at Wachi in Shopian, sources added. Three AK-47 rifles with other arms and ammunition were recovered from the terrorists killed in Shopian.

Sharad Pawar's party discusses merger with Ajit Pawar faction in key meet

(News Agency)- Amid speculation of a potential reunion between the two factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the Sharad Pawar-led group held a crucial state committee meeting at its Mumbai office on Wednesday. Led by state president Jayant Patil and party group leader Jitendra Awhad, the meeting saw participation from office bearers across all districts, signalling a unified front as the party navigates critical political developments. Sources privy to the discussions revealed to India Today that the meeting covered a range of strategic issues, with the buzz around a possible merger with the Ajit Pawar-led NCP faction looming large.



However, the party leadership made it clear that only Sharad Pawar, the party founder, will address matters related to the merger. The party said that no one else is authorised to speak on this issue, underscoring Pawar's central role in any potential negotiations. The meeting also focused on preparations for the upcoming

local body elections, a key battleground for the party to strengthen its grassroots presence. In a significant move, NCP (SP) decided to empower local party units with the authority to decide on alliances for these polls. There will be no absolute direction from the central leadership, sources said, indicating a decentralised

approach to coalition-building tailored to regional dynamics. Another critical agenda was the party's stance on a caste census, which has emerged as a potent political issue in Maharashtra. The NCP (SP) leadership emphasised its commitment to advocating for a comprehensive caste census, aligning with broader demands for social justice and equitable representation. The meeting also addressed the controversial Urban Naxal Bill, with discussions centering on formulating a robust strategy to counter its implications. The bill, which has sparked heated debates, is seen as a potential flashpoint in Maharashtra's political landscape, and NCP (SP) aims to position itself

strategically on this issue. While merger talks dominated the narrative, the meeting showcased NCP (SP)'s resolve to balance immediate electoral priorities with long-term ideological goals. By empowering local units, pushing for a caste census, and addressing contentious legislation, the party is signaling its intent to remain a formidable force in Maharashtra politics, regardless of the outcome of the reunion talks. As speculation continues, all eyes are on Sharad Pawar, whose next move could reshape the NCP's future and alter the state's political equations. For now, the party is keeping its cards close, focusing on unity and strategy as it prepares for the challenges ahead.

India's Operation Sindoor Against Terrorists In Pakistan Is All About Geopolitical Timing

Wars are not to be fought with hot heads. They are won with cold precision and planning, and timing is paramount.

India's first military response to the Pahalgam Islamic terror attack on April 22 in which non-Muslim tourists were screened and massacred came whistling through the night breeze in the shape of missiles in the wee hours of Wednesday. Nine terror camps in Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan's Punjab province have been pulverised.

Moot here is the timing.

The Indian counterstrikes come at a time of a Trump tariff-induced uncertainty and hectic global trade deals to tide over it. They come riding on India's frenetic diplomatic reach out to the major powers and also in its neighbourhood. And the reprisals, just two weeks after the Pahalgam attack, give the jolted Indian domestic audience immense confidence in its government.

Just a day before the missile strike on the Pakistani terror camps, New Delhi reportedly proposed Washington to charge zero-for-zero tariffs on steel, auto components and pharmaceuticals from the US. The reciprocal tariffs offer will hold up to a certain quantity of imports from the US beyond which imported industrial goods would attract regular duties. An India-US trade deal is expected to be closed by autumn this year, the Bloomberg report said quoting sources. With the current urgency even in the US to negotiate new deals like these, steps in trade will come packaged with the understanding that America will not meddle in India's right to protect its own safety and sovereignty. India's retaliation also comes hours after it inked a free trade agreement (FTA) with the United Kingdom. It comes as a statement of India's global intent to carry out trade at a time of rising regional tensions and a world drifting back toward trade barriers and tariff wars. The spectre of Trump-era protectionism makes the timing perfect. British automobiles, whiskies, and machinery will gain, while Indian exporters get better access to UK markets for garments, leather goods, jewellery, and food products. More importantly, the FTA binds India and the UK in a closer embrace and makes it difficult for one to work against the other's interests. The response of Russia, perhaps India's closest global ally, was initially confusing. Right after the April 22 attack, Russian foreign minister

Sergey Lavrov called both Indian external affairs minister S Jaishankar and Pakistani foreign minister Ishaq Dar and asked them to resolve disputes through political and diplomatic means. He brought up the 1972 Shimla Agreement and the 1999 Lahore Declaration as frameworks for engagement. Some in New Delhi viewed this approach as monkey-balancing and not Russia's traditional unequivocal support for India, especially given the barbarity of the Pahalgam attack. But Russia's top boss soon moved into damage control. President Vladimir Putin spoke to PM Narendra Modi on Monday, strongly condemning the Pahalgam attack and offering full support in punishing the perpetrators. The Kremlin's statement made no mention of mediation and aligned fully with India's counterterrorism stand. Putin also accepted PM Modi's invitation to visit India later this year. Perhaps the most interesting has been China's stance after the missile strikes. In a statement on Wednesday, it called on India and Pakistan to exercise maximum restraint. Trying to assuage its neighbourhood lackey, Pakistan, it said: "China finds India's military operation early this morning regrettable." But in the same breath, it said: "China opposes all forms of terrorism." "We are concerned about the ongoing situation. India and Pakistan are and will always be each other's neighbours. They are both China's neighbours as well. We urge both sides to act in the larger interest of peace and stability, remain calm, exercise restraint and refrain from taking actions that may further complicate the situation," read the Chinese foreign ministry statement, pulling China subtly and deftly out of a partisan commitment. India and China have been silently and gradually coming closer since the Galwan skirmish. Diplomatic back-channels have been extremely busy. China wants trade with India to partly offset the effect of Trump tariffs. It is unlikely to destabilise the region and sacrifice its self-interest at the altar of Pakistani adventurism. India has also sent a quiet but strong message to troublemakers in neighbouring Bangladesh that any misadventure by state or non-state actors may lead to outcomes it would like to imagine. Overall, Bharat has chosen the time for military reprisal wisely. Whether it snowballs into much bigger geopolitical changes in the region is to be seen.

By Abhijit Majumder

Trump's Middle East Jaunt: A Tightrope Walk with Implications for India and the World

Donald Trump's recent visit to the Middle East, encompassing Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the UAE, was a spectacle of pomp and circumstance, laden with symbolism and, inevitably, raising more questions than it answered. While the administration touted the trip as a success, solidifying alliances and promoting regional stability, a closer look reveals a complex and potentially destabilizing scenario, with particular implications for India and the global order.

The seemingly central objective of the trip was to further cement the burgeoning alliance against Iran. Trump's unwavering support for Saudi Arabia and Israel, both staunch opponents of the Islamic Republic, was on full display. The promise of enhanced military cooperation and the reaffirmation of security guarantees undoubtedly resonated well with these partners. However, the relentless focus on isolating Iran risks exacerbating existing tensions in the region and potentially triggering a dangerous escalation. For India, this heightened tension presents a significant challenge. India has historically maintained good relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia, balancing its energy needs with its security concerns. A deepening divide between the two regional powers forces India to navigate a more treacherous geopolitical landscape. India's investment in the Chabahar port, a vital trade route bypassing Pakistan and connecting India to Afghanistan and Central Asia, remains critically important. However, increased hostility towards Iran could jeopardize this project and potentially disrupt India's access to the region. Furthermore, Trump's pronouncements on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while seemingly

aiming for peace, offered little in terms of concrete solutions. His continued emphasis on Israel's right to defend itself, coupled with a somewhat ambiguous stance on the two-state solution, leaves the Palestinian issue simmering on the back burner, a persistent source of instability and resentment. This lack of progress weakens the prospects for a lasting peace and risks fueling further radicalization.

The economic implications of Trump's trip are also worth considering. The potential for increased arms sales to the region, while beneficial to American arms manufacturers, is undoubtedly a destabilizing factor. A region awash with sophisticated weaponry is more prone to conflict, and the consequences of such conflict can reverberate far beyond the Middle East. Moreover, the focus on building a unified front against Iran overshadows other pressing issues in the region, such as the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the fight against extremist groups like ISIS. While Trump rightly condemned terrorism, his approach risks alienating moderate voices within the Muslim world and potentially fueling further radicalization. In conclusion, while Trump's Middle East visit may have achieved some short-term gains in consolidating alliances, the long-term implications are far from certain. The relentless focus on isolating Iran, the lack of progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the potential for increased arms sales all contribute to a potentially volatile situation. For India, this translates into a more challenging geopolitical landscape, requiring careful diplomacy and a strategic balancing act to protect its interests.



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The Story Of '3 Brothers' And Why Azerbaijan Is Cheering For Pakistan

By Aditi Bhaduri

One has heard of friends with benefits. But in India's case, there are also antagonists with benefits. We are talking about Azerbaijan and Turkey - two countries whose role in the latest conflict between India and Pakistan has come into focus. While Turkey has been the centre of attention for the Turkish-made drones that Pakistan was found to be using, the Azerbaijan and the South Caucasian angle merits greater focus. According to data by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India was the third-largest destination for Azerbaijan's crude oil in 2023, accounting for 7.6% of its total crude oil export worth \$1.227 billion. "India's bilateral trade with Azerbaijan has increased substantially from around \$50 million in 2005 to \$1.435 billion in 2023, with India becoming Azerbaijan's seventh-largest trading partner. During the year, India's imports from Azerbaijan



were \$1.235 billion and exports were \$ 201 million," a bilateral brief states. Hence, based on these estimates, Azerbaijan stands to gain far more from its bilateral engagement with India than vice-versa. So, what explains Baku's antagonism since India began its Operation Sindoor? In Solidarity'

Curiously, a statement from the country's foreign affairs ministry condemned India's military strikes against Pakistan, conducted in response to the terrorist attack in Pahalgam on April 22. "We condemn the military attacks on the Islamic

Republic of Pakistan, which have resulted in the deaths and injuries of several civilians. In solidarity with the people of Pakistan, we extend our condolences to the families of the innocent victims and wish a speedy recovery to the injured." Not only did Azerbaijan express its support for Pakistan, but its state-monitored media has been spewing venom at India since the latter's military response. Here are a few samples: Vyugar Vyugarly, editor-in-chief of Idman TV, authored a piece for Caliber - a publication close to the country's defence ministry -

in which he presented a falsified, inaccurate history of the genesis of the Kashmir conflict. "Unsurprisingly, the fascist symbol of the Swastika could have been borrowed only from Indian culture," he wrote in the article. In the same article, he goes on to level allegations of 'water terrorism' being perpetrated by India, insinuating that India engineered the Pahalgam attacks as a pretext to do away with the Indus Waters Treaty. In another piece in the same publication, political analyst and head of the South Caucasus Research Center, Farhad Mammadov, said, "The fascist-leaning regime of Prime Minister Modi is consolidating power within the country, and for a rising power, war becomes a key element in its transition into the top tier of global states."

The Azeri Version Of The Conflict

There is yet another gem from

the same site: "India, on the other hand, despite massive investments in its defence sector, found itself in an extremely uncomfortable, even humiliating position. The loss of combat aircraft, the blow to the prestige of its air force, and the failure of its proclaimed strategy to deter Pakistan have all cast serious doubt on New Delhi's entire defence planning framework for the years ahead." The Azerbaijan media has also been peddling fake news about the conflict over the past three days, parroting the official Pakistani version of the conflict, without even a mention of the official Indian version, if only for the sake of journalistic integrity. The version being driven by Azeri analysts and columnists is that India attacked civilian sites in Pakistan and, as a result, Pakistan responded to the provocation and aggression with its Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsoos.

What Quick (De)Escalation Between India-Pak Teaches Us About War And Peace

By Nishtha Gautam

From certitudes to canards, the war de-escalated quite fast. While it's never a bad thing for two nuclear-armed countries to cool their tempers down, the manner in which this has happened in the case of India and Pakistan has sown more seeds of conflict than it aimed to resolve.

Nothing is resolved.

What has come to the surface during the eighteen days of fear and foreboding, just like the mythological Samudra Manthan lasting for twelve days, is the elixir of unity and the poison of preposterousness. Both, however, were contained in the vessel of wantonness. Sample this: people cried for retribution when there was silence. When retribution was being carried out, people cried that it was too much. When retaliation to the same retribution was served, people got jittery with fear. Many who had previously advocated for war suddenly became peaceniks, creating a paradoxical parody of peaceniks turning into warmongers.



Confusion Reigns

Suddenly, nobody knew what they stood for anymore. The 'fog of war' confused everyone. If Pakistan has been waging war to 'liberate' Kashmir, why was it killing Kashmiris with relentless shelling across the Line of Control? If Indian Muslims were 'traitors', why were they out in full support of the armed forces? Why was the media in both India and Pakistan peddling outlandish information with zero evidence to back their respective claims? Whose side was the US on? Why did the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sanction another tranche

of loans to Pakistan in the middle of the conflict? What to make of China's official statements? And, finally, why did the President of the United States announce the ceasefire instead of either party embroiled in the conflict? We found unity in this confusion.

Despite the above confusion and more, one good outcome of this India-Pakistan conflict was the lifting of the theoretical 'fog of war' from the posturing of several ideas and ideologues. The primary one is that no deterrence works till an outmatching of the enemy happens at every stage of the so-called 'escalation ladder'. The rules of engagement

need to be redefined towards those very goals, rather than an endgame that may never even happen.

War Meets Blind Rage

Another thing that is becoming visible is that liberalism is contingent only on who or what is in question. Collaborationism will always trump ethics. Intellectual neutrality and evenhandedness, therefore, are nothing but hollow buzzwords. Less importantly, with the lifting fog, the idea that some chosen few are immune to the blind rage of the ill-informed public ought to be junked. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, once celebrated by all and sundry for his measured, calm and sensible speak, found himself at the receiving end of the Frankenstein's monster of social media trolling. It did not take a wanton people even a day to turn towards their own when engaging the 'other', the enemy, ceased to be an option.

As the world celebrates the birth anniversary of Gautam Buddha, the need for equanimity cannot be underscored enough. When

passions rule and reason takes a backseat, every Karma becomes a parody of itself. At the level of decision-making, equanimity enables the drawing of the most effective plans. Those who execute them need equanimity to accept losses and gains in the course of action. For the onlookers, equanimity is a gift that they can give to the previous two. In the India-Pakistan conflict, only the armed forces have been able to keep their equanimous posture intact. The wantonness of the public discourse has not been able to upend that.

What, Really, After War?

Wars come with a price that most people want somebody else to pay. A serving senior naval officer recently commented, "People get upset when their access to Netflix gets disrupted for a few hours. Do you think they can stomach the discipline that comes with a prolonged war?" A decisive war comes with an even bigger price tag. And even then, it's not the gift that will keep giving.

Are India-Pakistan Stuck In An 'Escalation Cycle' Now?



By Harsh V. Pant, Kartik Bommakanti

The terror attack that claimed the lives of 26 civilians in Jammu & Kashmir's Pahalgam, committed by The Resistance Front (TRF), an offshoot of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, was a failure of Indian deterrence against at least large-scale Pakistani terrorism. The last time India suffered a massive suicide terror attack was in February 2019, when 40 paramilitary soldiers were killed, and to which New Delhi had responded with an air strike against the Jaish-e-Mohammad camp in Balakot.

'Rationality of Irrationality'

India's decision to retaliate with multiple airstrikes across the Line of Control (LoC) in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and within Pakistan itself represents a significant shift in the choice and range of targets. By striking at least nine targets that are terror havens established by the Pakistani army, New Delhi has achieved its primary objectives as far as the immediate crisis is concerned, and has clearly signalled that it will not tolerate Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism. India's retaliation can be dubbed as the 'rationality of irrationality'. The Indian Air Force (IAF) strikes from stand-off ranges against Pakistani terror sites were a product of deep and real national outrage over the Gestapo-style killing of tourists in Pahalgam. It was borne out of an

"irrational" emotive reason to augment a rational requirement: deterrence against future Pakistani terrorism involving mass casualties. In most instances, deterrence based on rationality of irrationality would be irrational if the actual retaliation due to deterrence failure were actually executed, because of the cumulative or net loss that would ensue for the retaliating state, more than any real gain. But, 'Operation Sindoor', which India's response is called officially, defies this condition.

Pakistan made a futile bid to head off the possibility of an Indian response following its terror attack in Pahalgam by repeatedly warning of an imminent Indian attack. The idea, in the run-up to the May 7 Indian air attacks, was perhaps to catalyse international pressure on India not to react.

Why Pakistan Can't Back Down

Consequently, Pakistan is now unable to commit itself to restraint due in part to the magnitude and success of India's airstrikes. It has vowed instead to retaliate in order to establish deterrence against an Indian conventional assault. Intense cross-LoC artillery shelling by Pakistan has claimed several civilian lives and an unknown number of combatant lives. These attacks were followed by Pakistani drone strikes against cities in Indian Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, as well as in Rajasthan.

The cumulative losses incurred by India as a result of these attacks, coupled with the alleged downing of Indian fighter jets, created an opportunity to retrieve some tactical victory, giving Rawalpindi an opportunity to de-escalate. Yet, Pakistan's defence minister, Khawaja Asif, made it clear that since Pakistan faces an "existential threat", there was a real risk of escalation, which could even breach the nuclear threshold.

The nuclear threat may seem exaggerated, intended to ward off any further Indian conventional escalation, but in a crisis unfolding currently, the threat itself cannot be dismissed. India has, in any case, ventured to escalate with further retaliation against Pakistan's drone and missile assault of May 7 by partially neutralising Pakistani air defences in Lahore through limited drone strikes. This could have been the moment to de-escalate, but with Pakistan targeting civilians and opening up the entire spread of the border, it is unclear at this juncture what a mutual exit would look like.

Both Sides Are Inching Forward

Despite successful airstrikes in PoK and Pakistani Punjab, the Indian government has remained tight-lipped about reports that several jets were shot down by Pakistan Air Force (PAF) or Pakistan's air defence system. Unfortunately, Rawalpindi has not taken India's cues,

which is evident from the statement released by the Modi government immediately after the airstrikes. The statement had said that India's response was "non-escalatory" and that it would prefer to terminate hostilities. However, the subsequent rounds of retaliation and counter-retaliation have resulted in a greater commitment by both sides to climb up the escalation ladder.

Deterrence between India and Pakistan is fragile, but India's capacity to deter Pakistan's use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy will require more than kinetic strikes, as we have witnessed over the last two days and will continue to see in the near future. The cumulative pressure brought about by the immediate escalatory measures through kinetic action, as well as by long term measures such as the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), and, in due course, getting Pakistan back on to the black list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), might compel Pakistan to desist from sponsoring terrorism. But ultimately, it is the domestic political calculus of the Pakistani military that is at the heart of the problem. And, in the case of the present army chief of Pakistan and its civilian government - one of the weakest dispensations in recent times - it remains to be seen how far the deterrence calculus will operate.

Operation Sindoor: There's A Unique 'ISIS' History To Pakistan's Drones



By Kabir Taneja

With a delicate ceasefire in place between India and Pakistan even as Operation Sindoor remains active, the latest conflict between the two nuclear-armed states is very different from any previous contestation. The warfare was largely aerial this time, with conventional systems, such as tanks, not being part of the action on the frontlines. Instead, both countries utilised drones to target, surveil, and disrupt. More importantly, the use of cheap drones en masse by Pakistan brought the modern reality of grey-zone warfare to the world's most militarised geography.

In almost all active global theatres of conflict, from the Russia-Ukraine war to the American campaign against the Houthis in the Red Sea, drones have taken up significant capacity space for their utility, cost-effectiveness, lack of manpower losses, ability to challenge older air defences meant to target large aircraft, and overall nimbleness as a platform.

MQ-9s And 'DIY' Drones

In the world of counter-terrorism, drones had two main eras of prominence. The first was the US 'war on terror', which saw the popularisation of the MQ-9 'Reaper', whose shape and silhouette itself became a mark of death, destruction, and propaganda for terror groups. The second period - the more interesting and consequential one - saw the proliferation of crude, 'Do-It-Yourself' (DIY) drones built by ISIS (Islamic State, or 'Daesh' in Arabic) and institutionally incorporated into its forces.

The Reaper's legacy is based on the two main theatres of war from the past two decades: Iraq and Afghanistan. In both these battlefields, the Reaper reigned supreme largely due to the lack of any - or minimal - air defences to contend with. But fast forward to 2024-25, and the US has suffered multiple Reaper losses in Yemen against the Houthis as the Iran-backed militant group onboarded surface-to-air missiles into its military inventory.

Ingenuity Trumps Technology

On the contrary, much like the difference between a state and a non-state militant group, the drones developed by ISIS were based on ingenuity, not technological prowess. Their effectiveness was unmatched.

In the initial stages, these drones were made from scratch, using debris, wood, and small motors from other mechanical equipment, before the group moved on to modifying commercial quadcopters for carrying small and crude pipe bombs using basic pulley systems to drop them. These quadcopters were sourced commercially from around the world, including, in one case, New Delhi. Their initial success was based not on their ingenuity, but on the fact that their detractors were not prepared to respond to this brand of warfare from a terror group. The US military, with an active annual budget of over \$600 billion, active in Iraq at the time, was clueless. How ISIS Developed Its Unique Warfare

ISIS, in its initial years, benefited tremendously from the success of its heavy global propaganda. Hundreds

from across the world, including Europe and the United States, arrived largely in Syria and northern Iraq to join Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi's clan. A significant chunk of these cadres were well-educated and had earlier been engineers or tech professionals. In 2017, terrorists such as Abu Muadh Al Tunisi and Sajid Farooq Babar were killed in US airstrikes for their role in helping build the group's drone ecosystems. According to scholar Don Rassler, two Bangladeshi brothers were also instrumental in mobilising funds, drones, and components required to build ISIS's aerial repertoire. At least one of them was also a founding figurehead of Dawlatul Islam Bengal, an ISIS affiliate from Bangladesh involved in the Holey Artisan bakery attack in Dhaka in 2016, which killed 29 people. The success of ISIS's aerial fleet has been well acknowledged by the US military itself. "About five or six months ago, there was a day when the Iraqi effort nearly came to a screeching halt, where literally over 24 hours, there were 70 drones in the air. At one point, there were 12 'killer bees', if you will, right overhead and underneath our air superiority," explained General Raymond Thomas in 2017, the then head of the US Special Operations Command. He further added that with its modified drones, ISIS, for a time, enjoyed tactical air superiority in the air under conventional American air power.

Grey Zone Warfare

What ISIS started - and arguably perfected - almost a decade ago today shapes frontline mechanisms of state

militaries. After Operation Sindoor, Pakistan launched a gamut of drone capabilities against India for multiple reasons: to target installations, map out adversarial air defence systems, and damage frontline infrastructure at bases. India also utilised similar tactics, though at a smaller scale, as it banked on its technological and conventional superiority. However, even under conventional air superiority, grey-zone warfare can be equally intrusive. This is further underlined by the fact that even after agreeing to a very delicate ceasefire, Pakistani drones continue to create annoyance in Indian airspace. Grey-zone warfare also makes for an active industry within the international military-industrial complex. However, it is largely the middle powers that have been investing in it heavily - and thriving. Turkey, whose drones were used by Pakistan, and Israel, whose drones were used by India - and even Iran, whose drones are used by Russia - are a few states at the forefront of these systems. Small- and medium-sized countries, which cannot afford large-aircraft-led, expensive-to-run air forces and do not have adversaries sporting the same, are increasingly opting for drones as their frontline equipment. Turkey is a leader in this arena, with more than 20 of its companies having invested in such technologies. Of these, Baykar is the most successful one, with the likes of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and 25 other militaries being known operators of a variety of its products, including the popular Bayraktar TB-2 armed drone.

Why India Is Right Not To Play Into Pakistan's War Bait



By Harsh Pant

Following the brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam, India launched Operation Sindoor last week, which culminated in a ceasefire on Saturday. However, Pakistan did not refrain from its mischief, and even on Saturday evening, sporadic attacks continued, which were appropriately responded to by India. Broadly speaking, India's three-day military operation succeeded in achieving its objectives. Earlier too, India had taken several steps on the civilian front to cripple Pakistan. The pressure created by these efforts led Pakistan to plead with global powers, and with the intervention of the US and some Gulf nations, progress was made toward a ceasefire on Saturday.

Who Planned The Pahalgam Attack?

Through Operation Sindoor, India thwarted the intentions of Pakistan's jihadist General, Asim Munir. There is good reason to believe that the Pahalgam terror attack was entirely Munir's brainchild. Just days before the attack, he had delivered a venomous speech, talking about Hindu-Muslim division, the two-nation theory, and calling Kashmir the "jugular vein" of Pakistan. The growing peace and prosperity of the Kashmir Valley, gradually joining the mainstream, was becoming intolerable to Munir and the Pakistani army.

Given how the Modi government had responded to the Uri and Pulwama attacks, it was considered certain that

Pakistan would have to pay a heavy price for Pahalgam. In fact, Pakistan itself was uncertain, with speculations rife about when and how India would retaliate. Under Operation Sindoor, India destroyed nine terrorist camps deep inside Pakistan, putting an end to all speculation. The heavy blow dealt to Pakistan through the destruction of terrorists and their infrastructure triggered a response from India that Pakistan will not forget. This will further shake the already struggling Pakistani army, weaken Munir's position, and potentially crush his dreams of service extension. India's Measured Approach

After the horrific terrorist attack on its innocent civilians, India also altered its strategy. The weak state of Pakistan's civilian government is no secret, nor is the fact that the real reins of power lie with the army. With this in mind, India completely revised its Pakistan strategy. Steps included suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, imposing visa bans, halting trade, and restricting port access. These moves signalled clearly that Pakistan would be answered in the only language it understands. Precise military operations completed the job. First, terrorist camps and infrastructure were destroyed. In retaliation, Indian forces not only thwarted Pakistani drone and missile attacks but also inflicted such damage on Pakistan's military installations that the army found it hard to save face. In this series of actions, Indian strikes near Pakistani military

headquarters and airbases proved that India can accurately strike deep within Pakistan. India's response demonstrates that it will not hesitate to take any risk necessary to crush any operation against it. Previously, New Delhi had held back from strong responses to Pakistan on the grounds that India was a responsible nation and it was best to avoid entanglements. Under the Modi government, this approach has changed fundamentally.

Why A Ceasefire Was Important

India has consistently maintained that it does not seek war, and even in its retaliatory actions, it targeted only terrorist infrastructure. Initially, military installations were kept off-limits. But due to Pakistan's continued provocations, India had to revise its approach. During the conflict, Pakistan used its civilians as human shields, hoping to exploit Indian retaliation for its own propaganda. Still, India displayed utmost restraint. In contrast, Pakistan cowardly targeted civilians and their property from Samba to Jammu. India's comprehensive pressure eventually forced Pakistan to appeal to major powers for a ceasefire. Despite India's upper hand, some people within the country have expressed discontent over agreeing to a ceasefire, arguing that Pakistan should not have been spared this time. On the surface, such frustration is understandable, but a deeper analysis shows that such decisions are made by considering all broader aspects. India achieved its

intended goals through the operation - it inflicted significant damage on Pakistan and sent a strong message that any future terror attack would be treated as an act of war. Extending this conflict any further would not serve India's interests. India's growing stature in the world and its respected voice on global platforms are largely due to its rising economic power. With that strength, India has managed to push Pakistan to the margins of international relevance. Pakistan's goal is to drag India into a confrontation so that the world starts viewing them as equals again. But India today has far greater goals - economic development and self-reliance. An endless military confrontation would only distract from these priorities.

The US-China Dynamic

This India-Pakistan conflict can also be analysed through the lens of the US-China power balance. The American efforts toward the ceasefire should be viewed in the context that the US sees India not only as a strategic partner in the Indo-Pacific but also as a vital trade partner. Therefore, the US would not want India to waste its energy, resources, and time on Pakistan. Meanwhile, China appeared to support Pakistan. Not only did Pakistan use Chinese weapons, but China also backed it through public statements. Finally, those who are comparing this conflict to the 1971 war or to Russian or Israeli responses should understand that the South Asian context of today is vastly different.

Six Big - But Less Noticed - Takeaways From Operation Sindoor

By AVM Manmohan Bahadur (Retd)

The abrupt end to Operation Sindoor was a bolt from the blue - actually, like an 'out of syllabus' event. It is good that full-scale war was avoided, and one hopes ceasefire violations will die down. Even as the armed forces keep a wary eye on our borders, there are some takeaways that can be deduced as a hot debrief.

Flawless Choreography

First, the present tri-services system worked and the joint operational planning done between that fateful day of terrorist killings in Pahalgam on April 22 and the commencement of attacks on terrorist targets on May 7 delivered results. The intense engagements and the next three days till ceasefire commencement were also expertly choreographed by the Indian Air Force and the army through joint plans. Pakistani drone and missile attacks were relentless, intense and dense, and so were our responses in equal measure.

That almost all Pakistani projectiles (UAVs, missiles, armed and unarmed drones) were engaged successfully is a tribute to the Indian Air Force's (IAF) homegrown Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) that synthesises all military and civilian radars into one composite air situation picture. The threats from targets are prioritised electronically and by fighter controllers, and the most suitable weapon system that can engage them is authorised to take action.

A Largely Aerial Affair

Second, the four days of engagement was majorly, if not wholly, a kinetic affair through the medium of air. The engagements took place in a dense air defence environment where both sides were operating in a contested airspace, unlike the uncontested environment that the western air forces faced in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, or the Israelis in their operations in Gaza and Lebanon. It is but natural that losses would occur, but it is the nature of conflict that the force on the offensive would incur some damage; one is sure that those would be analysed critically by the IAF. From photographic evidence now available, India's UAV and missile strikes were very effective, and the fact that 11 of Pakistan's frontline airbases spread along the length and breadth of the country were addressed is testimony to the IAF's operational reach and the effectiveness of its weapons.

However, innumerable commentaries have been written about the depleting IAF squadron strength, and given that our borders will remain active, the potency of the IAF's bite needs careful monitoring. Weapon systems, encrypted communications and combat enablers like Airborne Warning and Control Systems, aerial flight refuellers and modern cutting-edge weapons need immediate attention.



In the final analysis, it must be remembered that this was another example where air power effectiveness enabled the flow of political and diplomatic negotiations towards peace.

Hat-Tip To Indigenous Capabilities

Third, though the S-400 Surface to Air Missile (SAM) system hogged media limelight, it was the indigenous radars, SAM and Counter Unmanned Aerial Systems that formed the backbone of our ground-based air defence, highlighting the value of indigenous armament; the fact these were a combination of DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) and private sector products is indeed heartening. The wide availability of drones and anti-drone systems could also be a result of the emergency powers given to the Vice Chiefs and Commanders-in-Chief of regional commands.

Institutional ingenuity in the form of an IAF-designed short-range anti-aircraft system, the Surface to Air Missile for Assured Retaliation (SAMAR), came in very handy. SAMAR has refurbished life-expired Russian R73 and R27 air-to-air missiles - which would normally have been junked - used in the surface-to-air missile role. This is a pointer that we have smart minds within our own organisations that need encouragement. Here, an appreciation of the wonderful work done by the tireless Army air defence gunners (who operated legacy equipment like L-70 anti-aircraft guns) and BSF troopers (with their anti-UAV systems) would only be apt.

The Need For An Honest Assessment

Fourth, to a layman who had access only to news from the media, the civil-military-diplomatic machinery appeared to have clicked well. An honest assessment needs to be undertaken, on whether this measured up to the events leading to the ceasefire deal and the assurances obtained before accepting the formulation of the ceasefire. The answer would lie in the response to a single question: would there be a necessity to go for kinetic action every time a terrorist action takes place? The Prime Minister has hinted at this in his address to the nation, and Pakistan

bilateral settlement of mutual concerns, a position reiterated by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson on May 13. So, why is there an insistence by the US leadership on being the architects of the ceasefire? The statement of US Secretary Marco Rubio, about India having agreed to "...discuss all issues at a neutral venue", along with President Donald Trump reclaiming ownership of the ceasefire and lauding Rubio in public in Saudi Arabia (after the MEA clarification), is intriguing.

A Key Question

And finally, but very importantly, one needs clarity as to whether the Chief of Defence Staff system, which was put to test for the first time, worked as advertised. Who was planning missions and prosecuting the 'war'? Was it the integrated defence staff, or were the Commanders-in-Chief of the Army and Air Force regional command headquarters synergising action? Even though the expanse of the engagements was limited to the aerial domain, the answer to this question would be an invaluable input for the ongoing revision of our higher defence organisation structure (read theatisation). A better experience than a wartime crucible would be impossible to find again.

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What Is Your 'War Quotient'?

A Quiz By Derek O'Brien

By Derek O'Brien

What Is Your 'WQ', or War Quotient? Take this quiz to find out.

1. The operation conducted by the Indian Air Force (IAF) during the 1999 Kargil War was given the codename Operation Safed Sagar. What was the codename for the operation conducted by the Indian Army?

2. Which former President of India was responsible for the development and operationalisation of the Agni and Prithvi missiles when he was the Chief Executive of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme?

3. Which film, directed by JP Dutta, released in 1997, depicted the Battle of Longewala, fought in Rajasthan's Thar Desert in 1971?

4. Which infantry regiment has a regimental insignia featuring a tiger, revered as the mount of the Goddess Durga, and has the war cry: 'Jawala Mata Ki Jai'?

5. In 1990, in which state did the Indian Army launch Operation Bajrang and then Operation Rhino, to tackle insurgency?

6. In 2005, the Bombay High Court ordered HMV to indicate a lump sum payable to the Army Welfare Fund from the royalty proceeds of which song?

7. What was the name of the accord signed between India and Pakistan on January 10, 1966 in present-day Uzbekistan, mediated by Soviet Premier Aleksey Kosygin?

8. Cope India Exercise is a series of international exercises between the Indian Air Force and the air force of which other country?

9. After which incident was Sagar Prahari Bal, a unit of the Indian Navy, created as part of coastal security?

10. Sashastra Seema Bal is responsible for guarding India's borders with two countries. One is Nepal, name the other.

11. The Indian Air Force conducts a competition named 'Mehtar Baba Competition'. What is this competition for?

12. In 2021, PepsiCo launched limited-edition cans featuring which slogan that was immortalised by Captain Vikram Batra.

13. In 1988, India launched Operation Cactus to prevent a coup d'état in which country? Your options: a) Philippines b) Maldives c) Sri Lanka d) Mauritius

14. Many decades ago, which iconic husband-wife duo formed the Ajanta Arts Cultural Troupe and toured border



areas to inspire our Armed Forces?

15. Which gallantry award has a medal made of bronze, one and three-eighths inches in diameter, and on the obverse features four replicas of 'Indra's Vajra' with the State Emblem?

16. Which regiment came into existence under the British East India Company in 1815, following the 1814-16 Anglo-Nepal war?

17. After which legendary officer is the fourth track on the 'Martial Music Of The Indian Army Vol. 1' album named? The legend also features in Salman Rushdie's book Midnight's Children.

18. Which division of the Indian Armed Forces has the motto 'Sam no Varunah', meaning 'Be auspicious unto us, Oh Varunah'?

19. Which film, released in 1983, starring Amitabh Bachchan and Zeenat Aman, is about freedom fighters trying to liberate Goa from the Portuguese?

20. Creek _____ is the first commando unit of the Border Security Force (BSF) formed after the Indo-Pak War of 1965. Fill in the blank. Your options: a) Dolphins b) Alligators c) Otters d) Crocodiles

Answers

1. Operation Vijay
2. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam
3. Border
4. The Dogra Regiment
5. Assam

6. Ae Mere Watan ke Logon, sung by Lata Mangeshkar

7. Tashkent Declaration

8. United States of America

9. 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks

10. Bhutan

11. To build swarm drones

12. Yeh Dil Maange More

13. Maldives

14. Sunil Dutt and Nargis

15. Param Vir Chakra

16. Gorkha regiment

17. Sam Manekshaw

18. Indian Navy

19. Pukar

20. Crocodiles

Scores

16-20: You can conduct a quiz for the Armed Forces

10-16: Bravo for your high WQ

6-10: Solid performance at the quiz battlefield

3-5: Creditable performance. But you can still earn some more stripes

0-2: Maybe IPL is your forte

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Trump The Showman Is Not Enough For West Asia Anymore

By Syed Zubair Ahmed

President Donald Trump swayed stiffly but gamely side to side, a ceremonial sword in hand, surrounded by robed Saudi men dancing, chanting and clashing blades. His red tie flapped in the desert breeze, his expression caught somewhere between bemused tourist and self-declared dealmaker-in-chief. It was less cultural embrace, more diplomatic pantomime - a lavish welcome ahead of a state dinner where, as always in Trumpworld, optics mattered just as much as outcomes.

Trump's first foreign trip as US president in May 2017 kicked off in Saudi Arabia with theatrical fanfare and transactional diplomacy. The headline was a \$110 billion arms deal, but the subtext was more strategic - signalling a decisive US shift back to Riyadh after President Barack Obama's brief flirtation with Tehran.

The visit cemented Trump's personal chemistry with the then-rising Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, or 'MBS', as he is more casually known. But beneath the extravagant pageantry, there were doubts: was all this symbolism being mistaken for substance? Could a foreign policy run on photo-ops deliver sustainable influence?

Visit at a time of crisis of credibility

Donald Trump's first official foreign trip in his second term takes him back to Saudi Arabia, with stops in the UAE and Qatar (May 13-16). The timing is striking:



his return to the Gulf comes amid what could generously be called a crisis of credibility.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt cast the trip as a sequel to the "golden age" of US-West Asia ties ushered in during Trump's first term. Speaking to reporters, she said the visit would "re-emphasise" his vision of a region driven by commerce, cultural exchange and shared prosperity - not extremism or endless conflict. The goal, she added, was to revive an era of "stability, opportunity and mutual respect". It's typical Trump: the world teetering on the edge, with him as the only man who can pull it back.

But this time, he re-enters the desert at a far more turbulent moment - on a planet less trusting of him and in a region that at times gives the impression that it has

moved on.

Trump's 100+ days in office but West Asia remains volatile

Let's start with Ukraine. Remember his bold campaign claim that he would end the Russia-Ukraine war in a single day? Well, we are over 100 days into his second term, and there's no ceasefire, no peace plan and certainly no deal. Instead, the war grinds on, bloodier and more entrenched than ever.

Meanwhile, Trump's economic instincts - once sold as a populist firewall against foreign competitors - have often wobbled. His promised tariff barrage against China turned into a revolving door of indecision. After months of chest-thumping, Trump blinked - though his administration believes China blinked first.

Good news, however, is that in the quiet

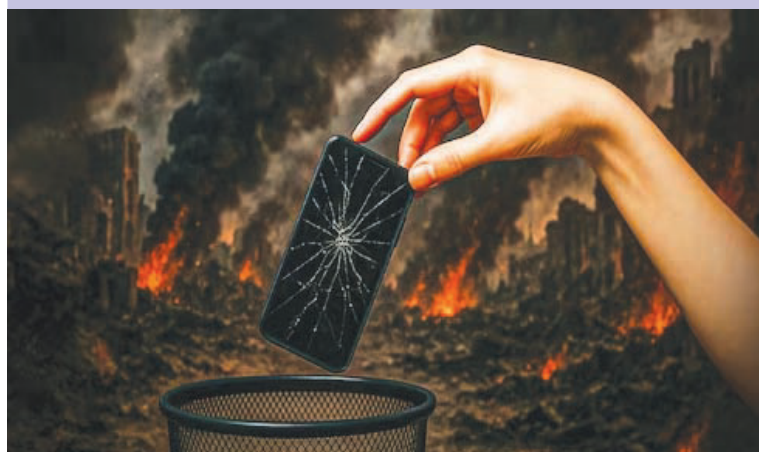
of the Swiss Alps, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and China's trade envoy, Vice Premier He Lifeng, have concluded a significant breakthrough -- a joint agreement to ease the escalating trade war that has rattled global markets for months.

President Trump hailed the outcome, this time the rhetoric is backed by concrete measures. A 90-day pause on new tariffs will take effect from May 14 (Wednesday). The US will slash tariffs on Chinese goods from 145% to 30%, while China will cut duties on American products from 125% to just 10%.

The deal also establishes a formal mechanism for continued dialogue, with Bessent and He Lifeng leading future negotiations. Talks may alternate between the US and China, signalling a commitment to sustained engagement. The joint statement underscores the mutual recognition of the stakes: both countries acknowledge the critical role their trade relationship plays not just bilaterally, but for the stability of the global economy. The tone is one of cautious cooperation -- rooted in mutual respect, strategic calculation and the recognition that economic confrontation benefits neither side.

Now, let's look at the West Asia flashpoints. Israel, still reeling from the horrors of October 7, has called up hundreds of thousands of reservists for another ground operation in Gaza. Many hostages are still not home.

In the time of war, may God give us the sense to stay ignorant



By Javed Anwer

Some wars are just. All of them are terrible. They are also part of humanity, have always been and will always be. Yet, there is one thing they don't need to be -- insufferable.

To sharpen an old adage: if information is power, then ignorance must be considered peace. Once, and who among us has not harboured such foolish

thoughts when young, I used to consider ignorance a glitch. But over the years, and more so in the explosion of information in the last two decades, I have come around to realise that ignorance is not a glitch. It is a feature, a gift that evolution gave to the human brain.

At a time when India and Pakistan are involved in a conflict, which looks likely to be heading towards

a full-fledged war, I hope most of us - and by most of us I mean we who are living in our comfortable cities hundreds of miles away from the border - would choose to stay ignorant for as long as we can, for as long as the war doesn't drag us into it. This, I feel, will make life easier for everyone, including people who would be fighting to keep us safe.

Wars, even the just wars, which this one would be for us if we end up fighting it, are terrible. They are terrible for everyone involved. But they are also a reality, something that Will Durant noted in his sweeping lessons from the history of mankind. "War is one constant of history, and has not diminished with civilisation or democracy," he once wrote. George Orwell, who fought in Spain in 1937 because he "had promised himself to kill one Fascist", explained wars like

a writer would. "The truth is very simple," he wrote in reminiscence, years after he had picked up the gun in Spain. "To survive, you often have to fight, and to fight, you have to dirty yourself. War is evil, and it is often the lesser evil." In other words, humans have always fought. Often unjustly, but also on occasions with a just cause. Every time we have fought, it has been terrible, sometimes necessary, but still terrible. Only in recent decades has war started becoming insufferable. There has always been the fog of war, but, in a manner of speaking, it is only in recent years that this fog has started to cloud our collective minds in a way that many would call neurosis. This neurosis, too, is the result of social media. A full war between India and Pakistan, if at all it starts this time, is still a few days away. But look around

on X, aka Twitter, and the rest of the social media, and you will think that the world is ending. There is doom and gloom, there is misinformation and propaganda of all kinds. There is a collective frenzy, on both sides of the border, that would give the sanest and calmest people sleepless nights and anxiety-ridden days. In times of conflict, it is quite natural that there would be a sense of uneasiness, all around us as well as within our minds. Yet, it is this sense of uneasiness that social media has aggravated in the last few days. In Homage to Catalonia, Orwell didn't hate the actual war as much as he hated the chatter. "One of the most horrible features of war is that all the propaganda, all the screaming and lies and hatred, comes invariably from people who are not fighting," he wrote.

Internet can't be regulated like TV. Look at how UK, Australia are doing it

By Varun Ramdas

Late last month, a Supreme Court bench led by incoming Chief Justice BR Gavai asked the Union government to "consider appropriate legislation" to curb obscene content on digital streaming platforms and social media. The petition before the Court felt familiar: Web series are polluting our morals, and social media is degrading our public square.

Digital creators and social media companies are increasingly scrutinised, shadow-banned, or dragged to court for their content. Courts have evolved principles to guide the interpretation of reasonable restrictions on speech on the grounds of decency and morality. In 2014, the apex court held in *Aveek Sarkar* that a naked photograph of Boris Becker with his fiancée in a magazine was not obscene because it would not incite lustful thoughts in the average person in contemporary society. Yet, in 2025, we find that every other movie or social media post hurts morality and decency.

Platform asymmetry

At the heart of the debate is a long-standing demand to transpose TV-style regulation to digital, owing to a perceived uneven playing field. At the recently concluded World Audio-Visual and



Entertainment Summit, the chairperson of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India also said there is a regulatory imbalance between traditional TV and digital services.

Yet the central government did not simply extend TV-style content strictures to digital when it framed rules for streaming apps in 2021, because the two media operate under fundamentally different conditions. In India, TV viewing is typically a household activity, whereas individuals consume social media and streaming content privately on their phones. Everyone receives the same pre-

packaged broadcast content from TV, while digital users select material from personalised feeds. Consequently, standards for obscenity and decency on TV are stricter, as they must account for a wide, unsupervised audience. Digital services, by contrast, offer tools such as age gating and parental controls that minimise the risk of unintended exposure to inappropriate content. Most countries recognise these inherent differences in public versus private consumption and the technological controls that mediate audiences' exposure, and therefore adopt separate

regulatory standards.

Drawing the right line

State enforcement should reflect varying degrees of harm that stem from speech, just as content standards vary according to intended purpose and form factor. Legal scholar Evelyn Douek advocates a shift from absolutism and blanket prohibitions to calibrated, proportionate obligations that match the gravity of the risk posed by such content. Global best practice shows how.

The United Kingdom's Online Safety Act, now in force, obliges services to assess and mitigate "priority illegal content" — terrorism, child-sexual-abuse imagery, violent threats — and provides the media regulator, Ofcom, with the power to impose fines of up to £18 million and, as a last resort, to block non-compliant sites. Australia's Online Safety Act empowers the eSafety Commissioner to issue removal notices for child-abuse, non-consensual nudity, or extremist material, and also to levy hefty penalties. Canada's proposed Bill C-63 would create a Digital Safety Commission with a regulatory remit extending to sexual exploitation of children, non-consensual intimate images, self-harm content, hate, and extremism.

India-Pakistan Showdown Has Exposed A New Reality: 'DIY' Wars

By Tara Kartha

So the US is back in action, with a mediation offer India didn't ask for. You heard Vice-President JD Vance, the tough negotiator with a much-touted Indian connection, saying the US had "no business" in the India-Pakistan war. That's a sea change from the past, when the White House would summon the Pakistanis to Washington and give them a dressing down. In fact, the Pope's funeral got more coverage than a war that had multiple actors in the shadows. But no one is interested. Hardly surprising, given that conflicts, wars, and casualties in their thousands are now part of everyday life. Think Gaza, Ukraine, Yemen, Myanmar, and yes, Pakistan itself.

There are new actors backing old agendas this time. In sum, Operation Sindoor's backdrop is vastly different from anything India and Pakistan have been involved in in the past. Our future strategies need to take that into account. The Two Tracks To The US Position It's curious. On April 24, US President Donald Trump strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Pahalgam to say that the US stood with India. On May 8, the State Department did the same. But the tone changed after India launched

strikes against Pakistan, with the President calling it a 'shame'; the state spokesperson said that Secretary Rubio had spoken to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and had condoled the 'loss of civilian lives'. In short, there was no recognition thereafter of a terrorist role.

On May 9, Vance made his remarks, that "We [the US] are not going to get involved in the middle of a war that's fundamentally none of our business and has nothing to do with America's ability to counter it". Also, on May 9, Rubio, now the most powerful member of the executive with an additional post of US National Security Advisor, called Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister, Ishaq Dar, a day after he had spoken with India's Foreign Secretary, S. Jaishankar. The read-out of that conversation indicates identical terse messages, quite different from the tone of another read-out just a day before that, which "reaffirmed the United States' commitment to work with India in the fight against terrorism". Now, the latest read-out of the "ceasefire" - which India calls a ceasing of firing and military action - congratulates both India and Pakistan and puts both countries on the same page.



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Balochistan Trends On Social Media As Activists Declare Independence From Pakistan, Back India

(News Agency)- 'Republic of Balochistan' was trending on social media platform X on Wednesday, days after Baloch leaders, including activist Mir Yar Baloch, declared Balochistan's independence from Pakistan.

Social media users shared an independent map of Balochistan, along with videos of people waving the Balochistan flag. In an X post on May 9, Mir Yar Baloch wrote, "A possible announcement soon should be done as the collapse of the terrorist Pakistan is near. We have claimed our independence and we request India to allow Balochistan's official office, and embassy in Delhi." He also urged support from the United Nations to recognise it and call a meeting of the UN members.

"We also ask the United Nations to recognise the independence of the Democratic Republic of Balochistan and call a meeting of all UN members to lend your support for recognition. There must be a release of billions of funds for currency, and passport printing.

A day later, Mir Yar Baloch shared photos of locals standing with banners depicting India and Baloch friendship, and wrote,



"The people of the Democratic Republic of Balochistan come to show their full support to the people of Bharat. China is helping Pakistan, but Balochistan and its people are the government of Bharat."

"Dear Narendra Modi ji you are not alone, you have the backing of 60 million Baloch patriots," his X post read.

In the recent, Baloch, in an X post, wrote, "Breaking News: 14 May 2025

Balochistan fully supports the India decision of asking Pakistan to vacate PoK. The international community must urge Pakistan to immediately leave PoK to avoid another humiliation of surrender on its 93000 army personnel in Dhaka."

"India is capable of defeating Pakistan army and if Pakistan didn't pay any heed then the only Pakistani greedy army generals must be held responsible for bloodshed because Islamabad is using

PoK people as human shields," he wrote. The development comes amid the heightened tensions between India and Pakistan in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed the lives of 26 innocent tourists on April 22.

In retaliation, India launched 'Operation Sindoor' and destroyed multiple terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK).

Day after PM Modi's airbase visit, Shehbaz Sharif's similar move in Pakistan

(News Agency)- 'A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Punjab's Adampur airbase after days of military standoff between India and Pakistan, his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif went to Sialkot's Pasrur Cantonment on Wednesday to meet officers and soldiers involved in the confrontation.

Pasrur Cantonment, Sialkot, is located some 130 kms from Lahore, the capital of Punjab province. During India's Operation Sindoor, radar sites at Pasrur and Sialkot aviation base were targeted using precision munitions, causing massive damage. During his visit to the Pasrur Cantonment in Sialkot, Sharif met with officers and soldiers who participated in the operation during the ongoing confrontation, according to the PM House. He also addressed the officers and soldiers at Pasrur Cantonment.

In the coming days, Sharif will also visit airbases and naval bases to meet officers and personnel of the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy, the PM House said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister



Khawaja Asif, Army Chief General Asim Munir, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu, Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal and Attaullah Tarar, Corps Commander Sialkot, and senior civil and military leadership accompanied Sharif on this visit.

The visit came after the Indian armed forces launched Operation Sindoor

on the intervening nights of May 6 and 7, targeting nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK), killing over 100 terrorists. The operation was initiated to avenge the killings of 26 people, mostly tourists, in the Pahalgam terror attack.

Pakistan then escalated the situation,

attempting to attack several Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10, triggering blackouts and air sirens in several cities, including Jammu and Amritsar. The confrontation raised fears of a full-blown war between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

The Indian armed forces launched a fierce counter-attack on several Pakistani military installations, including Rafiqui, Murid, Chaklala, Rahim Yar Khan, Sukkur and Chunian.

On May 10, US President Donald Trump announced a 'ceasefire' between India and Pakistan. However, India rejected this claim and said any matters between New Delhi and Islamabad would be addressed bilaterally.

In his first address to the nation after Operation Sindoor on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sternly warned Pakistan that India will not succumb to nuclear blackmail and sent a clear message to the world - terror and trade, terror and talks cannot go together. He also said that talks with Pakistan would only be held on the issue of terrorism and the returning of POK to India.

After China, Bangladesh's Yunus Mentions India's Northeast States In Talks With Nepal

Nobel laureate and Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus proposed a comprehensive economic integration plan encompassing Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and the seven northeastern states of India. During a meeting with the Deputy Speaker of Nepal's House of Representatives, who is currently visiting Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus underscored the potential of cross-border collaboration in sectors like hydropower, healthcare, and transportation infrastructure.

Stressing on the necessity of deeper regional ties through shared energy and infrastructure projects, he said, "There should be an integrated economic plan for Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and the Seven Sisters." The discussion focused on the enhancement of hydropower cooperation between Bangladesh and Nepal as both sides acknowledged the



significance of the recent Bangladesh-Nepal-India Tripartite Power Sales Agreement, which facilitates the import of 40MW of Nepalese hydropower to Bangladesh via the Indian grid.

Beyond energy, Muhammad Yunus also highlighted Bangladesh's commitment to regional healthcare

accessibility, noting that a forthcoming 1,000-bed hospital in Rangpur would welcome patients from Nepal and Bhutan, promoting "regional health security and shared prosperity."

"Our upcoming 1,000-bed hospital in Rangpur will be open to patients from Nepal and Bhutan as well. We believe in regional health security and shared prosperity," he said.

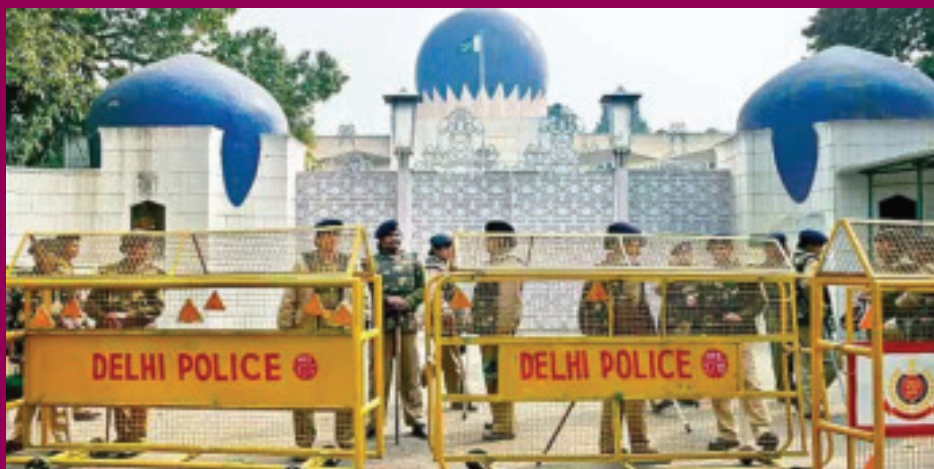
Muhammad Yunus' Earlier Comments On India And Seven Sisters

During an earlier visit to China,

Muhammad Yunus made a direct pitch to Beijing as he sought to position Bangladesh as your key regional partner for production, logistics and trade.

"Seven states of eastern India — the seven sisters — they are landlocked. They have no way to reach out to the ocean. We are the only guardian of the ocean," he said, inviting deeper Chinese economic engagement through Bangladesh. "Build things, produce things, market things. Nepal has hydropower, Bhutan has hydropower, we can bring to our purpose. You can produce in Bangladesh and sell in China," he told officials. At the time, economist and member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, Sanjeev Sanyal, questioned the logic behind invoking India's internal geography in an economic pitch to China. He wrote on X (formerly Twitter), "Interesting that Yunus is making a public appeal to the Chinese on the basis that 7 states in India are landlocked. China is welcome to invest in Bangladesh, but what exactly is the significance of 7 Indian states being landlocked?"

India expels Pak High Commission staffer over activities outside official role



India on Tuesday expelled an official working at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi for indulging in activities outside his office and asked him to leave the country within 24 hours, a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. A formal demarche conveying the decision was issued to the Charge d'Affaires of the Pakistan High Commission. However, the identity of the official and details of the alleged misconduct were not disclosed by the government. "The Government of India has declared a Pakistani official, working at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, persona non grata for indulging in activities not in keeping with his official status in India. The official has been asked to leave India within 24 hours. Charge d' Affaires, Pakistan High Commission, was issued a demarche to this effect today," the MEA statement read.

The move comes amid the heightened conflicts between India and Pakistan after New Delhi conducted Operation Sindoor to destroy nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir (POK) in response to the deadly April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 people, mostly tourists. On April 23, India announced a series of diplomatic offensives, including the scaling down of Pakistan's High Commission in New Delhi from the earlier strength of 55 to 30. Additionally, all Pakistani Defence, Naval, and Air advisors were also expelled. They were given one week to leave the country. Indian counterparts were also withdrawn from Islamabad. Other diplomatic actions taken by India included the suspension of the six-decade-old World Bank-brokered Indus Waters Treaty until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism.

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Turkey helped Pak attack India, sent 350+ drones, military operatives

Two Turkish military operatives were killed as part of Operation Sindoor, which reveals that Turkey not only helped Pakistan in its war against India with over 350 drones, but also with operators, sources told India Today TV.



(News Agency) - Two Turkish military operatives were killed as part of Operation Sindoor, which reveals that Turkey not only helped Pakistan in its war against India with over 350 drones, but also with operators, sources told India Today TV.

According to sources, Turkish advisors helped Pakistani Army officials coordinate drone attacks on India after Operation Sindoor.

Pakistan has reportedly used Bayraktar TB2 and YIHA drones against India. The drones are believed to be used for target designation, and potentially kamikaze strikes, especially to threaten forward Indian positions or supply convoys.

Turkey's strategic defence ties with Pakistan have grown at an alarming rate in recent years. The Turkish government has not only supplied critical military hardware but has also conducted

training for Pakistan's army.

In fact, the 'Boycott Turkey' movement gained momentum due to Ankara's growing proximity to Islamabad, which, in turn, harmed Indian interests -- as seen in the recently concluded conflict between South Asian neighbours.

Experts believe that the expansion of Indian exports to Turkey following Covid-19 has helped Turkey ramp up its defence production.

Major goods exported to Turkey -- including aluminium, auto components, aircraft, telecom instruments, and electrical machinery and equipment -- are behind its ramped-up drone production.

On the intervening nights of May 7 and 8, the Pakistan Army used around 300–400 drones to target Indian military infrastructure along the northern and western borders.

"Forensic investigation of the wreckage of the drones is being done. Initial reports suggest that they are Turkish Asisguard Songar drones," Colonel Sofiya Qureshi said in a press briefing

on Operation Sindoor.

"The Indian armed forces shot down many of these drones using kinetic and non-kinetic means. The possible purpose of such large-scale aerial intrusions was to test air defence systems and collect intelligence," Colonel Qureshi added.

INDIA BLOCKS TURKISH BROADCASTER X ACCOUNT

India on Wednesday blocked access to Turkish news outlet TRT on microblogging platform X over Ankara's military support to Islamabad in its recently-concluded four-day conflict with Delhi. In a press briefing on Operation Sindoor, the Army said that Pakistan had used Turkish-made drones to target military infrastructure in 36 locations from Leh to Sir Creek.

Earlier in the day, India blocked the social media accounts of state-run Chinese media outlets -- Xinhua and Global Times -- for spreading misinformation and Pakistani propaganda, despite repeated warnings from the Indian Embassy in China.

China's Global Times, Xinhua blocked in India for spreading Pak propaganda

India on Wednesday banned Chinese state-run handles of Xinhua News Agency and Global Times on microblogging site X over the spreading of Pakistani propaganda and unverified information amid simmering tensions between Delhi and Islamabad.

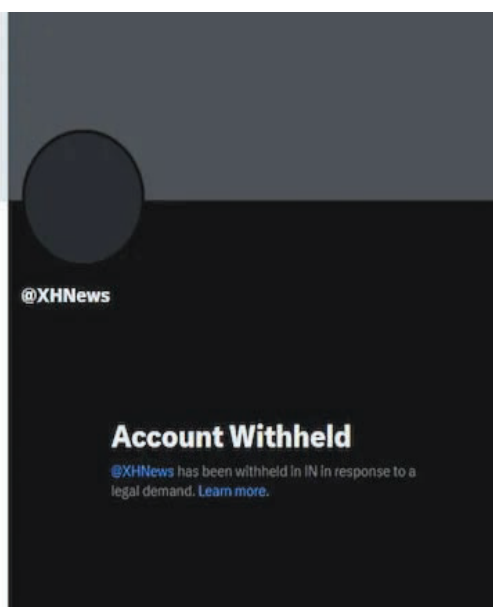
(News Agency) - India on Wednesday banned Chinese state-run handles of Xinhua News Agency and Global Times on microblogging site X over the spreading of Pakistani propaganda and unverified information amid simmering tensions between Delhi and Islamabad.

This development comes days after the Indian Embassy in China warned local media outlets against posting unverified facts and peddling misinformation on social media.

Last week, India urged the Global Times to "verify facts" moments after it reported that Islamabad had allegedly downed three fighter jets in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor, while citing Pakistani military sources. Both Xinhua and Global Times are mouthpieces of the Chinese Communist Party.



"When media outlets share such information without verifying sources, it reflects a serious lapse in responsibility and journalistic ethics,"



the embassy had tweeted back then. In a follow-up post, the Embassy further accused "pro-Pakistan handles" of "spreading baseless claims in the

context of #OperationSindoor, attempting to mislead the public."

The Embassy's tweets came after Pakistani accounts claimed that a Rafale jet was shot down near Bahawalpur. Soon after, the unverified claims went viral. The PIB Fact Check team called the images misleading, stating that the images used in the viral posts were from a 2021 MiG-21 crash in Punjab's Moga district.

Flagging the viral image, PIB posted, "Propaganda Alert! Beware of old images shared by pro-Pakistan handles in the present context! An #old image showing a crashed aircraft is being circulated with the claim that Pakistan recently shot down an Indian Rafale jet near Bahawalpur during the ongoing #OperationSindoor."

Trump's embrace of Syria and its jihadist-turned-president could shake up the Middle East

(News Agency) - US President Donald Trump on Wednesday had tea with a former jihadist who until recently had a \$10 million US bounty on his head.

Interim Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa, once known by his militant nom de guerre Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, met Trump in Riyadh six months after leading a swift campaign that toppled the half-a-century-old Assad regime, ejecting Iran-backed armed groups and declaring himself leader of the country.

Al Sharaa was placed on the US Specially Designated Global Terrorist list in 2013 for heading al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, known as Al Nusra Front, and allegedly orchestrating suicide bombings across Syria. The Saudi-born former jihadist had spent years fighting US forces in Iraq before moving to Syria to lead an armed Islamist rebellion that ousted the brutal dictator Bashar al-Assad.



The meeting, described by Syria as "historic," was the first between a US and Syrian president in 25 years, taking place during Trump Middle East tour, the first set of state visits of his second term.

Both leaders were seen smiling in photos released by the White House and the Saudi foreign ministry. The Syrian foreign ministry said Trump committed to "standing by Syria at this critical juncture."

A day earlier, Trump announced

the removal of decades-old sanctions on Syria, a move that prompted a 40-second-long applause from the audience, including a standing ovation from the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

"Oh, what I do for the Crown Prince," Trump told the room on Tuesday, crediting the de facto Saudi leader for leading the effort to lift what the president called "brutal and crippling" sanctions. Syria has been designated by the US as

a State Sponsor of Terrorism since December 1979.

Syria's economy has been crippled for years by Western sanctions. Among the harshest is the US' 2019 Caesar Act, which imposed wide-ranging sanctions that restricted individuals, companies or governments from economic activities assisting Assad's war effort. The act rendered the entire economy untouchable. According to the World Bank, the country's economy shrank by more than half between 2010 and 2020.

As of 2022, poverty was affecting 69% of Syria's population, according to the World Bank. Extreme poverty affected more than one in four Syrians in 2022, the bank said, adding that this number likely deteriorated after a devastating earthquake in February 2023. Gulf states have been keen to invest in Syria and prop up its economy but have been wary

of violating US sanctions.

Trump's move is likely to remove such barriers, making way for potentially billions of dollars in investments.

During the meeting, Trump proposed that Sharaa take a series of measures, including normalization with Israel, expelling foreign and Palestinian "terrorists," and helping the US to prevent the resurgence of ISIS, according to the White House.

Bringing Syria in from the cold gives a lifeline to the country's fledgling regime and its president, who pledged in an interview with CNN last year that Syria's armed opposition ultimately plans to form a government defined by institutions and a "council chosen by the people." But it also presents an opportunity for Gulf Arab states and Turkey, which also pushed for sanctions to be lifted, to expand their influence in Syria and profit from it after decades of being left out of the country.

Gabbard fires two senior intelligence officials focused on assessing threats to US



(News Agency) - the acting chair, and his Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard has fired the top two career officials leading the National Intelligence Council, the senior most analytical group in the intelligence community whose job it is to understand and assess the biggest threats facing the United States.

Gabbard fired Mike Collins, the acting chair, and his deputy, Maria Langan-Riekhof, on Tuesday, a spokesman confirmed to CNN. The dismissals come as Gabbard has vowed to root out what she has described as politicization of the intelligence community, and launched a war on leaks to the media that critics say is

hollowing out the intelligence community of needed expertise from experienced professionals.

Jonathan Panikoff, a former intelligence official who served on the NIC and has worked with both people, said Collins is "an unbelievable professional who's served selflessly for 30 years and is a real China expert," and Langan-Riekhof "is not just a strategic thinker but an unbelievably gifted analyst."

"The Director is working alongside President Trump to end the weaponization and politicization of the Intelligence Community," the Office of the Director of National Intelligence spokesman said in a statement.

CNN has reached out to Collins and Langan-Riekhof through an intermediary because their contact information was not

immediately available.

The dismissals come shortly after the ODNI — which Gabbard leads — released a declassified assessment from the NIC about the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua that undercut the Trump administration's key argument for invoking the Alien Enemies Act to speed up deportations, the key provisions of which had already leaked to the media and which Gabbard has said is under investigation.

Gabbard, when asked about the assessment, blasted the media for "twisting and manipulating intelligence assessments to undermine the president's agenda to keep the American people safe."

It's not clear whether the two episodes are linked in any way — but Gabbard's crackdown on unauthorized disclosures to the media has

been a key pillar of her broad efforts to do what she has described as depoliticizing the intelligence community.

Gabbard recently told conservative podcaster Megyn Kelly that there are 11 internal investigations into unauthorized disclosures to the media and said that she has referred three cases to the Department of Justice for potential prosecution.

"Really what is happening when they do that is they're undermining our democracy because what they're doing... is saying, 'I'm doing what's best for the country and I know what's better for the country than the majority of the American people who chose this duly elected president,'" Gabbard told Kelly. "The only way we bring about accountability is by doing the work of conducting these investigations."

Trump's egg price fiction has suddenly become reality

(News Agency) -For months, President Donald Trump has falsely claimed that egg prices are tumbling. It wasn't true then, but it's true now.

Egg prices fell 12.7% last month, the biggest monthly decline since 1984, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Tuesday. And they could continue to fall this month, too: The USDA reported last week that a dozen large white-shell eggs now cost \$3.30 on average, down a whopping 69 cents from a week before. It's a remarkable reversal after egg prices surged in each of the past five months – and 17 of the past 19 months – because of a deadly avian flu epidemic that necessitated the mass culling of egg-laying hens.

"Maybe the worst of EggGate has passed," Tyler Schipper, associate professor in economics and data analysis at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, told CNN.

Nevertheless, egg prices remain significantly higher now than before the latest bird flu outbreak, and they cost 49.3% more last month than they did a year earlier. Eggs are still more expensive than when Trump took office, according to the BLS. Egg prices this



past Easter, which typically rise in the run-up to the holiday, were the highest for any Easter on record, the USDA reported.

Well before last month's decline, Trump had been touting falling egg prices as a sign that his administration's plan to lower prices for consumers has been working. In February, the USDA announced an initiative to lower egg prices, including increased biosecurity on egg-laying farms, aid to farmers who have lost flocks and temporary lifting of restrictions on egg imports.

Despite Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins' far more conservative estimate that egg prices would normalize in the summer, Trump last month said, "as you know, the cost of eggs has come down like 93, 94% since we took office." Those percentage declines Trump stated are not close to accurate – but we now know that consumer egg prices were, indeed, falling sharply when Trump made those remarks (the Consumer Price Index data wasn't out yet to confirm or deny Trump's claims). It appears as though Trump may have

been talking about wholesale prices, which had been tumbling throughout March before normalizing in recent weeks. Nevertheless, wholesale prices fell by half – not close to the 90%+ figures Trump was citing.

Wholesale prices are the costs distributors pay to farmers or middlemen. Consumer prices are what customers pay at grocery stores. Those costs typically make their way through the supply chain at a slower pace, because grocery stores may decide to keep prices at a certain price, even when wholesale prices change, to try to recoup lost profits from prior weeks, according to Kevin Bergquist, sector manager at Wells Fargo Agri-Food Institute.

The USDA says consumer prices finally fell as demand for eggs decreased and avian flu cases have fallen. Many groceries, including large chains like Costco, had limited customers' purchases because of egg shortages. So Trump's claim that consumer egg prices are down is finally true – even if the timing of his claim and the wild percentages he threw around were grossly inaccurate.

Relatives of El Chapo enter US as part of 'negotiation,' Mexico's security secretary says

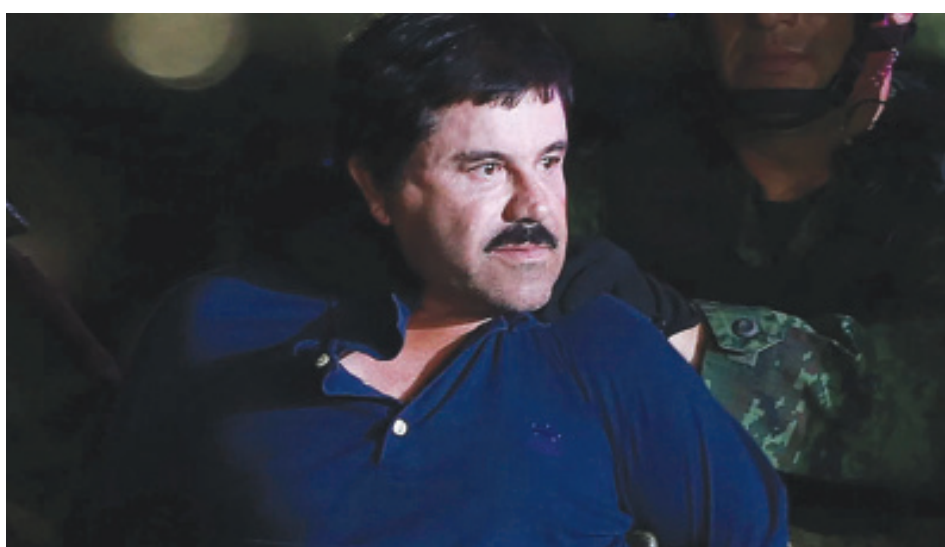
(News Agency) Several family members of Mexican drug trafficker Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán have entered the United States as part of negotiations in a case against one of his sons, Mexico's Security Secretary Omar García Harfuch told the Mexican network Radio Fórmula on Tuesday.

El Chapo's son Ovidio Guzmán López is facing drug trafficking charges in the US over his alleged role in the Sinaloa Cartel, which his father co-founded. Ovidio was extradited to the US in September 2023, several months after Mexican authorities arrested him in a large-scale operation that resulted in at least 29 deaths.

Days after his extradition, he pleaded not guilty to the drug trafficking charges in a US court. But last week, he reached an agreement to change his plea, according to a court document reviewed by CNN. The document did not specify details of the agreement.

"It's clear that with his family going to the United States, it's connected to this negotiation or plea deal opportunity provided by the (US) Department of Justice itself," García Harfuch told Radio Fórmula.

Several Mexican media outlets reported



Tuesday that 17 of Ovidio's relatives had crossed the border into the United States. CNN has requested more information from the Mexican Ministry of Security and Citizen Protection, as well as the US Department of Justice. García Harfuch added that the relatives who left the country were not wanted by Mexican authorities.

Los Chapitos'

Ovidio is one of four sons of El Chapo who have been charged in the US with various crimes over their alleged roles in the Sinaloa Cartel.

Collectively known as "Los Chapitos,"

the brothers are thought to have been brought into the cartel as teenagers to learn the ins and outs of the organization, according to the think tank InSight Crime. Their roles became more prominent around the mid-2010s, roughly when their father was captured and extradited to the United States.

Another son of El Chapo, Joaquín Guzmán López, is also in US custody. He was arrested in July 2024 when he flew into the United States on a private plane from Mexico alongside Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, a co-founder of the

cartel who the brothers had been at odds with.

Joaquín had allegedly organized his arrest and that of El Mayo by luring him on the flight to examine a piece of land he thought was in Mexico, an official familiar with the operation had told CNN at the time. Instead, the plane landed in El Paso, Texas, where federal agents arrested them.

Mexico Secretary of Security Rosa Icela Rodríguez said in August that Joaquín had reached an agreement with his brother Ovidio "so that they would go to the United States to surrender."

However, an attorney for Ovidio told CNN that Rodríguez's claim was "a complete and utter fabrication." An attorney for El Mayo said he "neither surrendered nor negotiated any terms with the US government" and described the flight to the US as a violent kidnapping.

Two other sons of El Chapo, Ivan Archivaldo and Jesus Alfredo Guzmán Salazar, are still at large. The US has accused them of leading large-scale drug trafficking operations for the cartel and has issued \$10 million bounties for information leading to each of their arrests.



The most expansive fighting in half a century

(By Our Staff Report) - India appears to have had a "clear edge" in targeting Pakistan's military facilities and airfields during the recent four-day confrontation, the New York Times reported, citing satellite images. High-resolution satellite imagery, from before and after the strikes, shows "clear damage" to Pakistan's facilities by Indian attacks, according to the report.

"The four-day military clash between India and Pakistan was the most expansive fighting in half a century between the two nuclear-armed countries. As both sides used drones and missiles to test each other's air defences and hit military facilities, they claimed to inflict severe damage," the report said. It added that satellite imagery indicates that while the attacks were widespread, the damage was far more contained than claimed - "and appeared mostly inflicted by India on Pakistani facilities." In the new age of high-tech warfare, the report said that strikes by both sides, verified by the imagery, appeared to be precisely targeted. "Where India appears to have had a clear edge is in its targeting of Pakistan's military facilities and airfields, as the latter stretch

of fighting shifted from symbolic strikes and shows of force to attacks on each other's defence capabilities," the report said. At Bholari air base, located less than 100 miles from the Pakistani port city of Karachi, India's defence officials said they had struck an aircraft hangar with a precision attack. "The visuals showed clear damage to what looks like a hangar," the NYT report said. Further, the Nur Khan air base, within a roughly 15-mile range of both the Pakistani Army's headquarters and the office of the country's prime minister and a short distance from the unit that oversees and protects Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, was "perhaps the most sensitive military target that India struck." The Indian military said it had particularly targeted the runways and other facilities at some of Pakistan's key air bases and "satellite images showed the damage", the report said, noting that on May 10, Pakistan issued a notice for the Rahim Yar Khan air base saying that the runway was not operational. At Sargodha air base, in Punjab Province in Pakistan, the Indian military said it had used precision weapons to strike two sections of the runway. "Satellite images of the sites

Pakistan claimed to have hit are limited, and so far do not clearly show damage caused by Pakistani strikes even at bases where there was corroborating evidence of some military action."

On the Pakistani officials' claim that their forces had "destroyed" India's Udhampur air base, the NYT report said "an image from May 12 does not appear to show damage."

India carried out precision strikes under 'Operation Sindoor' on terror infrastructure early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10. The Indian armed forces launched a fierce counter-attack on several Pakistani military installations, including Rafiqui, Murid, Chaklala, Rahim Yar Khan, Sukkur and Chunian. Radar sites at Pasrur and Sialkot aviation base were also targeted using precision munitions, causing massive damage. India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.



This Donald Trump Meeting Just Reshaped Geopolitics In The Middle East

Donald Trump, who is on a whirlwind visit to the Middle East, has scripted history when he met Syria's interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa in Saudi Arabia today. Of all his meetings and interactions, this meeting by President Trump was arguably the most significant and has reshaped the geopolitical landscape in central and west Asia.

WHY HEADS TURNED GLOBALLY

The first reason why heads turned when President Trump met President al-Sharaa is because of the latter's questionable background. Till very recently Ahmad al-Sharaa was known by his nom de guerre Abu Mohammad al-Jawlani (also spelt al-Golani or al-Joulani) - a UN-proscribed and US-designated terrorist.

Over the last two decades Al-Jawlani held key positions in global terror organisations like Al Qaeda and ISIS. According to the United Nations Security Council's 'ISIS and Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee', in July 2013, Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani was declared a global terrorist for "participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, or perpetrating acts of terror".

FROM GLOBAL TERRORIST TO SYRIA'S PRESIDENT

According to the UN Security Council sanctions committee, he was also held guilty for "supplying, selling or transferring arms" as well as "recruiting for" Al Qaeda and ISIS. He coordinated directly with then Al Qaeda chief Aiman al-Zawahiri and later with then ISIS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (who also went by the name Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali Al-Badri Al-Samarrai).

In 2011, the year of the uprising in Syria

against the Russia and Iran-backed Assad regime, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi instructed Al-Jawlani to establish a front for the Al Qaeda in Iraq and Syria by developing a local presence.

In 2012, Al-Jawlani founded the Al-Nusrah Front (also known as Jabhat al-Nusrah), officially known as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham - a UN-designated terrorist group which officially became Al Qaeda's offshoot in Syria. By now, the uprising in Syria, which began in 2011 with peaceful protests, had turned into a revolution, with mass protests against the Ba'athist dictatorship of then President Bashar al-Assad.

TARGETING RUSSIA AND IRAN-BACKED ASSAD REGIME

In 2017, the Jabhat Fatah al-Sham rebranded itself as the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham or HTS. Its principal objective was to overthrow the Assad regime led by Bashar al-Assad and establish an Islamic Caliphate.

Over the years, the revolution in Syria turned into an armed conflict, before escalating into a full-blown civil war, slowly gaining ground across the country. In November 2024, in a sudden and massive offensive, spearheaded by Al-Jawlani's HTS, the Assad regime rapidly lost major ground, including its stronghold cities.

On December 8, 2024, Bashar al-Assad fled to Russia and the Assad regime collapsed after 53 years of ruling the country with an iron fist. Moscow could not come to Bashar Assad's rescue in Syria because most of Russia's military was committed on the Ukrainian front. HTS chief Al-Jawlani declared victory, and was appointed interim President of

Syria in January. He then officially assumed his current name Ahmad al-Sharaa.

US MAKES INROADS IN SYRIA

The second reason why Donald Trump's meeting with Ahmad al-Sharaa raised eyebrows was because the US President announced that he is lifting all sanctions imposed on Syria, which have been in place since 1979. According to the US Department of State, sanctions were imposed on Syria and the Assad regime in 1979 after the country was designated "a State Sponsor of Terrorism" for providing "political and military support to various terrorist groups". "The regime continued to provide weapons and political support to Hezbollah (Hizballah) and continued to allow Iran to rearm and finance the terrorist organisation," it said in a 2019 update.

THE ROLE OF SAUDI ARABIA AND CROWN PRINCE MBS

The third reason that gained global attention was that it was Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who suggested and arranged the meeting between President Trump and President al-Sharaa. After the meeting, Donald Trump acknowledged that the Saudi royal played a crucial role in the decisions made today.

Besides all sanctions being lifted, Donald Trump's meeting, followed by a statement by the White House makes it clear that the United States has recognised and legitimised the new regime in Syria. President Trump said, "Syria deserves a chance at peace under al-Sharaa" as the two heads of states met. A closed-door meeting then commenced, during which, President

Trump encouraged President Al-Sharaa to do a great job for the Syrian people. The US President also urged his Syrian counterpart to sign onto the Abraham Accords with Israel, and expel all foreign terrorists from Syria.

THE TURKEY EQUATION AND BACKING FROM THE GULF

The fourth reason why the meeting assumed significance for Asia, was because Turkey's President Erdogan joined Donald Trump and Syria's al-Sharaa over a phone call during their meeting. Several Gulf nations have also put their weight behind Syria's new regime, viewing it as a possible counterweight to Iran, with Tehran-backed Assad now confined to the history books.

ISRAEL'S CAUTION TO THE US

Israel isn't pleased with US' recognition of Ahmad al-Sharaa as Syrian President. Tel Aviv has cautioned Washington against giving legitimacy to the new government due to its terror background. But with sanctions being lifted and today's historic meeting, a new era has begun in the Middle East (Gulf) and West Asia. Ahmad al-Sharaa's meteoric rise from a UN-designated global terrorist to Syria's new President - now with formal ties with America - is perhaps the most astonishing turnarounds in geopolitical history. Syria's Foreign Ministry has hailed Donald Trump's announcement today as a "pivotal turning point" in the country's journey. A statement released by their foreign office said, "The removal of these sanctions offers a vital opportunity for Syria to pursue stability, self-sufficiency and meaningful national reconstruction, led by and for the Syrian people."

Indian film body calls for Turkey shooting ban over its pro-Pakistan stance

After Turkey and Azerbaijan issued statements in support of Pakistan, Indian film bodies have also appealed to the industry against visiting and shooting there. This came amid an attack at Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam and India's Operation Sindoor.

The Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) issued a statement on Wednesday, May 14, urging all Indian film producers to reconsider choosing Turkey as a shooting destination in light of its growing support towards Pakistan on matters that deeply concern India's national

interests.

"FWICE has always stood firm in its belief that 'Nation Comes First.' In view of recent developments and Turkey's consistent positioning in support of Pakistan, which has raised concerns regarding national integrity and security, we believe it is not in the best interests of the Indian film industry to invest or collaborate in any form that could indirectly support or benefit such a nation. Turkey's stance has been observed not just diplomatically but also in various international forums, where it has taken positions contrary to India's

sovereign interests. As an industry deeply rooted in Indian soil and culture, we cannot remain indifferent to actions that undermine our nation's dignity or security," the statement read.

It further stated that the film fraternity needs to stand in solidarity with the nation and boycott Turkey as a location for film shoots until such time that the country revisits its diplomatic stance and aligns with principles of mutual respect and non-interference.

Filmmaker Prem Raj Soni, who has worked on an Indo-Turkish project, also spoke to India Today,

sharing how the decision is a welcome move, given the stance the countries have taken. "I think it's pretty justifiable what has happened recently. We as a country should stand with such decisions, and I really believe that it is the right step." Soni added that while there was no subsidy involved, filmmakers picked Turkey because of the beautiful locations it provided. He shared that India has done a lot for the country, and it's unfortunate that the same has not been reciprocated. The filmmaker also added that there are a number of countries that have a friendly

relationship with India, where one can shoot. Talking about his Indo-Turkish music video, Prem Soni said, "I do have a longstanding relationship with Turkish artists. With that project, I got involved because it involved an Indian citizen, on whose book it was based. At that point, the relationship between the countries was beautiful, and we wanted to take it forward. It's heartbreaking at a time like this, when there's a fear of war, one shouldn't aggravate the issue. As a citizen of India, understanding what has happened, it's detrimental that we don't shoot there."

Turkish Firm Celebi, Working At Indian Airports, Loses Permit Over National Security Concerns

Aviation watchdog BCAS on Thursday revoked the permit of Çelebi Ground Handling India Pvt Ltd - operating under the umbrella of Türkiye's Çelebi Aviation Holding at major Indian airports - "in the interest of national security" with immediate effect. This comes after Türkiye backed Pakistan and condemned India's recent strikes on terror camps in that country and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)

under Operation Sindoor. Pakistan also used Turkish drones on a large scale in the conflict. According to top government sources, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) found certain lapses in the handling of aviation services by Celebi. They said its security clearance was removed due to geographical risks, as civil aviation is a sensitive sector with a number of operations and Türkiye provided weapons to the

"enemy country" (Pakistan). A notification issued with the approval of the director general of the BCAS stated that Celebi's security clearance, which was originally granted on November 21, 2022, has been revoked with immediate effect in the interest of national security. "In the exercise of power conferred upon DG, BCAS, the security clearance in r/o Celebi Airport

Services India Pvt. Ltd is hereby revoked with immediate effect in the interest of National Security," the notification said. The aviation service company operates at nine airports, including New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport. It provides ground handling and cargo services across major Indian airports in Mumbai, Cochin, Kannur, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Goa, Ahmedabad and Chennai.

'TRULY AN INDIAN ENTERPRISE'

There are reports circulating on social media that Çelebi Aviation is partly owned by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's daughter, Sümeyye Bayraktar. She is married to Selçuk Bayraktar, the founder of Baykar, which is reportedly the same company that manufactures Turkish military drones supplied globally, including to Pakistan.

Microsoft to layoff more than 6,000 employees, says it is for the company's success

Microsoft has announced that it is cutting 3 per cent of its workforce, which is more than 6,000 of its employees. While job cuts have become fairly common across tech companies over the past two years, this round is particularly significant for Microsoft. It's the company's biggest reduction in headcount since early 2023, when it laid off 10,000 employees in one of its most dramatic shake-ups to date. The company reportedly told The Verge that the layoffs are a way to make "organisational changes necessary to best position the company for success in a dynamic marketplace".

Here is everything that is happening at Microsoft, in 5 quick points.

Trimming down while scaling up

So why is Microsoft laying off thousands of employees while also expanding rapidly in areas like artificial intelligence

(AI)? The answer lies in what many companies call strategic realignment. According to a statement from the company, the layoffs are part of "organisational changes necessary to best position the company for success in a dynamic marketplace," says the company. In simpler terms, Microsoft is trying to reshape itself for the future, one that is increasingly defined by AI and cloud computing. But building that future doesn't come cheap.

The company is investing tens of billions of dollars into data centres and infrastructure to support its growing AI tools and services. Reports suggest that Microsoft's capital spending this year alone could touch a staggering \$80 billion, a large part of which is earmarked for AI-related expansion. These investments are essential to remain competitive with the likes of

Google, Amazon, and Meta, but they come with a trade-off: higher operating costs and tighter profit margins.

Why the layoffs now?

One big change internally is Microsoft's attempt to "flatten" its corporate structure. During a recent earnings call, Microsoft chief financial officer Amy Hood hinted at cutting down on management layers, suggesting the company is looking for more direct and nimble decision-making. While the details of which teams are being impacted haven't been made public, reports suggest that employees across various levels and departments, including LinkedIn and Microsoft's international offices, are affected.

Performance cuts at Microsoft

In addition, the company had already begun performance-based job cuts earlier this year. But this new round is

much broader and unrelated to performance. It's more about making Microsoft leaner and more focused on its core priorities.

Not just about software any more

Although Microsoft is still best known for its software and Windows operating system, its business has evolved massively. Today, Microsoft is a cloud-first, AI-obsessed tech powerhouse. Its cloud division, Azure, continues to grow, but even there, profit margins are beginning to shrink. In the most recent financial quarter, Microsoft Cloud's profit margins dropped from 72 per cent to 69 per cent year-over-year, a sign that even high-performing divisions aren't immune to cost pressures.

And there is a possibility that the company is trying to make up for the enormous cost of AI expansion by reducing headcount.

You might live to be 100. Are you ready?

thel Caterham, at the age of 115 years, is said to be the oldest person alive. She offers the sage life advice to "say yes to every opportunity because you never know what it will lead to. Have a positive mental attitude and have everything in moderation." When she was born in 1909, the average life expectancy of a British female was 52 years – becoming a centenarian was a remote prospect.

Today, according to the United Nations, centenarians are the fastest growing age group. By 1950, there were an estimated 14,000 whilst today there are nearly 750,000, projected to reach nearly 4 million by 2054. Medical advances, increases in the standard of living and improvements in public health have transformed the human condition. The American Academy of Actuaries estimates that one in six Americans born today will live to be 100. That is about the same as in the UK, where the Office for National Statistics suggests that the majority of babies can expect to live into their early 90s. Does the prospect of living that long excite you, or is it a source of dread? Do you look forward to decades of extra time or does living to 100 sound more like a threat? Plainly, there are reasons why we worry about living for so long. What's the point of living beyond 80 if your savings have run out, the care homes are full, and you end up feeling lonely, bored and irrelevant?

For most of human history, such fears were irrelevant. Only a minority could expect to become old. Now, with global life expectancy exceeding 70 years, it is a majority. Just as we debate adapting and adjusting to AI and the climate crisis, we

need similar conversations regarding our newly extended length of life. Having got the majority to live to be old, we now have to focus on changing how we age to make life not just longer but healthier, productive and engaged for longer. Few things are as important for us individually and collectively. Today, there is too large a gap between average lifespan and healthspan. The number of years we are likely to live has increased more than the number of years we are likely to remain healthy. Reducing this gap

is critical for seizing the advantages of longer lives. The good news is that there is much you can do. About 80% of how we age is driven by our behaviours and environment. It may sound tiresomely familiar, but there's no substitute for eating and sleeping. Luckily though, we don't have to rely solely on self-discipline. Ageing well is becoming an industry, and we can expect support from technological and scientific progress and shifts in government policy. Currently it is the extreme longevity-inspired lifestyles of billionaires that grab

the headlines, along with a long wake of over-promoted but under-tested supplements and treatments. But your own future is more likely to be impacted by broad-based shifts in our health system. Currently these systems focus on intervening when a disease becomes so noticeable that it adversely affects your health. When it comes to ageing-related illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or dementia, that is a recipe for keeping us alive but not necessarily healthier for longer.

Bank Of America Analyst Gets 10-Year Jail In Saudi Arabia For Old Tweet: Entire Case Explained

A British senior business analyst and father of four, formerly with Bank of America, has been sentenced to 10 years in a Saudi prison over a single 2018 tweet. Ahmed al-Doush, 41, received the harsh penalty after Saudi authorities deemed a now-deleted post from his 37-follower X account a national security threat, The Times of London reported. The Saudi government also made an unverified claim that Ahmed al-Doush was in contact with a Saudi critic in exile.

His family stated he never posted about Saudi Arabia but occasionally shared comments on Sudan's political situation, which they believe led to his arrest, according to the outlet.

Ahmed al-Doush's Arrest

On August 31, 2024, Ahmed al-Doush was arrested at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh while preparing to return to the UK with his wife and three children. At his request, his family, including his then-pregnant wife, returned to the UK without him, as he was detained at the airport. He was later imprisoned in a maximum-security facility, enduring 33 days in solitary confinement, where he remains after being charged on Monday.

His family had no contact with him until November, when he first appeared in court and was allowed a consular visit.

His lawyers argue that his rights to due process and a fair trial were violated through solitary confinement, extended detention without charges, and interrogations without legal representation.

"The fact that it is still unclear what tweet forms the basis of the charge, even after conviction and even to the UK government, further demonstrates the fair trial violations. The information known indicates that the charges against him, the proceedings and his treatment are contrary to international law and human rights standards," UK-based lawyer Haydee Dijkstal told the outlet.

Mr Dijkstal added that Saudi prison officials instructed him not to discuss the hearings or his prison conditions with his family, per the report.

Ahmed al-Doush's Wife's Plea

Nour, the wife of Ahmed al-Doush, has urged the UK government to take action to secure her husband's release. She has urged the government to increase diplomatic efforts to secure his release, highlighting the strain his detention has placed on their family. "He missed the birth of our fourth child and our tenth wedding anniversary. How many more family milestones will he have to miss before the [UK government agencies] sit up and take action?", his wife Nour al-Doush told The Times Of London.

India test fires Bhargavastra: How it goes into hard kill mode

(News Agency) Days after India thwarted Pakistani drone swarm attacks following Operation Sindoor, India has successfully test-fired its indigenous Bhargavastra counter-swarm drone system.

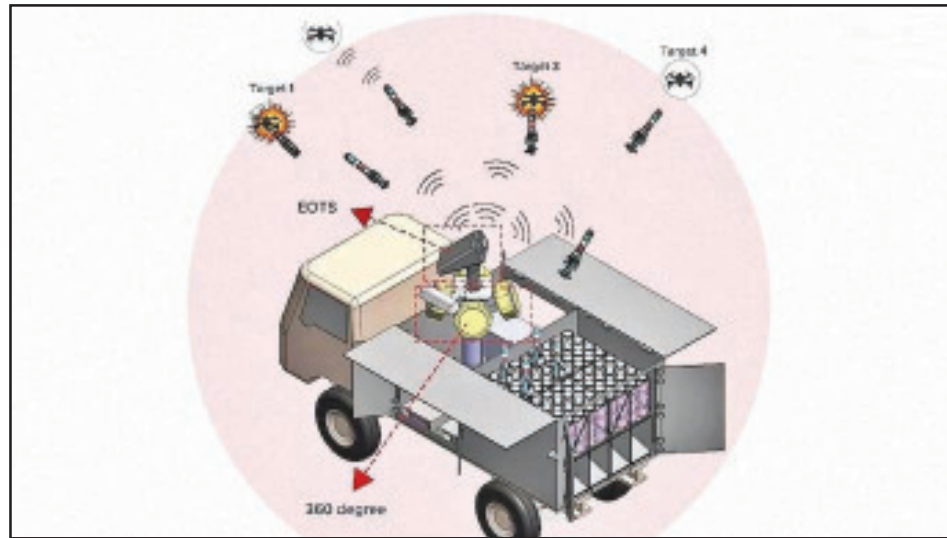
The test, conducted at the Seaward Firing Range in Gopalpur, Odisha, showcased Bhargavastra's ability to detect, lock onto, and neutralise multiple drones simultaneously—a critical need amid rising drone threats.

Developed by Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited (SDAL), Bhargavastra is a low-cost, modular system designed for rapid deployment across diverse terrains, including high-altitude regions above 5,000 metres.

The system operates in “hard kill” mode, directly destroying hostile drones rather than merely jamming or disabling them.

HOW BHARGAVASTRA WORKS

Bhargavastra employs a multi-layered defence mechanism:



Detection: The system integrates radar, electro-optical, and infrared sensors capable of spotting small aerial threats from 6 to 10 km away. Its advanced Command-and-Control Centre uses C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence) technology to provide real-time situational awareness and threat assess-

ment.

Lock and Target: Once a drone or swarm is detected, the system's sensors track and identify the targets. Operators can then select individual drones or entire swarms for engagement, with the system automatically calculating the optimal firing solution.

Neutralisation (Hit): Bhargavastra's

first layer launches unguided micro rockets, creating a lethal radius of 20 metres and neutralising drone swarms at distances up to 2.5 km.

For precision targeting, a second layer relies on guided micro-missiles, ensuring pinpoint accuracy against specific threats. During the recent trials, the system successfully fired both single and salvo rocket modes, achieving all mission objectives. Bhargavastra's modular design allows for the integration of additional “soft kill” options, such as jamming and spoofing, providing a comprehensive shield against a wide range of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) threats. Its indigenous, cost-effective architecture and compatibility with network-centric warfare systems make it a unique solution globally.

The successful test shows India's growing capability to counter sophisticated aerial threats, offering the armed forces a robust tool to safeguard sensitive zones and critical infrastructure.

Nothing Phone 3 to get a big price hike, CEO Carl Pei reveals price range



(News Agency) The Nothing Phone 3 is likely coming soon as the company's CEO Carl Pei has revealed the price details of the next Nothing phone. He hasn't revealed the exact price range for every region but hinted at how much the Nothing Phone 2's successor will cost. People who have been waiting for the Nothing Phone 3 to arrive might be sad to know that it won't be available at an affordable price as Pei suggested that the device will receive a big price hike.

This isn't surprising because Nothing's co-founder Akis Evangelidis has revealed on X that Nothing Phone 3 will be the company's first true flagship phone. The statement itself confirms that the device will hold a very high price tag. In a video published by a YouTube channel called Android, Pei confirmed that the Nothing Phone 3

will launch at “around EUR 800.” This is around \$1,063 in the US and Rs 90,500 in India after conversion.

Now, Nothing isn't expected to launch the Phone 3 at this price in India and there are several reasons for it. Firstly, the prices of European markets are anyway a bit higher, so the device is expected to cost lower in India. Also, the Nothing Phone 2 was announced in India with a starting price tag of Rs 44,999. So, the company can't just increase the price of the phone by Rs 45,500 in India because this would be a very big price hike. Yes, Nothing has been working on the Nothing Phone 3 for 2 years and the company has repeatedly said that it is taking time to build phone to give users good AI features and an overall powerful experience. But, we expect the device to compete with flagship phones like Pixel 9a or iPhone

Meta working on making Ray-Ban AI glasses smarter, extended Live AI and Face Detect coming



(News Agency) Meta appears to have some big ambitions for its next generation of smart glasses, which it has created in collaboration with Ray-Ban. The company reportedly wants to make its AI glasses more intelligent with features like face detection and allow more time for Live AI. According to a report by The Information, the company is working on two pairs of smart glasses, internally codenamed Aperol and Bellini, which will offer hands-free AI assistants and more smart features.

According to the report, Meta is working on to release its next generation of smart glasses in 2026 and for that, the company is discussing software called “super-sensing” vision. The new software would allow the AI smart glasses to scan and read the surroundings for better assistance. The upcoming glasses are also said to offer extended hours of Live AI functionality, which is currently available for just 30 minutes. The feature allows users to

interact with Meta AI in real-time interaction with voice commands.

The report suggests that the future aim for Meta's AI glasses is to allow the wearable to observe, understand, and even remember a user's environment—functioning almost like a visual memory aid. This functionality could include features like identifying familiar objects such as house keys, your car, or even the faces of people nearby. With anticipated features like facial recognition, the AI could potentially identify individuals and display their names based on previously stored information. While the idea of a camera-powered memory assistant looks promising and futuristic, it also revives old concerns around privacy and surveillance. Reports suggest that Meta's internal discussions include whether to keep the standard camera indicator—currently a blinking LED—active when facial recognition is in use.

Traders' body seeks travel ban on Turkey and Azerbaijan for openly backing Pakistan

Following their backing of Pakistan, major travel companies have already suspended all travel packages to Turkey and Azerbaijan. Travel booking platform EaseMyTrip has advised its customers to avoid visiting these countries unless absolutely necessary.

(News Agency) The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has called on Indian traders and citizens to boycott travel to Turkey and Azerbaijan. This move is in protest against the countries' support for Pakistan during the current tensions between India and Pakistan. CAIT, which has already led a successful campaign to boycott Chinese products, now aims to extend this initiative to Turkey and Azerbaijan. They plan to work closely with travel and tour operators to intensify this boycott. A final decision on whether to suspend trade with these countries will be made at a national conference of trade leaders, scheduled for May 16 in New Delhi. Praveen Khandelwal, CAIT Secretary General and Member of Parliament for Chandni Chowk, explained that a travel boycott could



significantly harm the economies of Turkey and Azerbaijan, particularly their tourism sectors. According to 2024 figures, Turkey welcomed around 62.2 million foreign tourists, including 300,000 from India, contributing to \$61.1 billion in tourism revenue. Indian tourists alone spent about \$291.6 million. A boycott by Indian tourists could lead to a direct financial loss of this amount. Khandelwal also

highlighted the importance of the Indian tourist market for Azerbaijan, which received about 2.6 million tourists in 2024, with roughly 250,000 from India. These visitors contributed around \$308.6 million. He pointed out that a decline in Indian tourists could cause a noticeable slowdown in sectors like leisure, weddings, and entertainment. The call for a boycott is not just about economics; it's a political

message, emphasising that India's strength should not be underestimated. CAIT believes this action could prompt Turkey and Azerbaijan to reconsider their stance towards India. Local businesses in these countries, such as hotels and tour operators, could also face financial strain due to reduced tourism. As a response to the countries' support for Pakistan, major travel companies have

already suspended all travel packages to Turkey and Azerbaijan. Travel booking platform EaseMyTrip has advised its customers to avoid visiting these countries unless absolutely necessary. In addition, Indian travel brand Go Homestays has ended its partnership with Turkish Airlines, accusing the airline of supporting a nation unfriendly towards India. They stated that they would no longer offer Turkish Airlines flights in their international packages. It must be noted that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed solidarity with Pakistan following India's Operation Sindoor, which targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Similarly, Azerbaijan condemned India's military actions, calling for a diplomatic resolution.

Why RBI is reviewing EV wallets after BluSmart collapse



(News Agency) The Reserve Bank of India is closely examining digital wallets used by electric-vehicle platforms, following the abrupt collapse of BluSmart, which left thousands of users unable to access funds stored in its app wallet, reported Bloomberg News. According to people familiar with the matter, the central bank has initiated informal discussions with EV charging point operators and other app-based service providers to assess potential consumer risks tied to such platforms. The trigger

was the financial distress faced by users who had loaded money into BluSmart's so-called closed-loop wallet—a payment mechanism that allows transactions only within the app's own ecosystem. Unlike open-system wallets regulated under RBI's purview, closed-loop wallets currently operate in a grey area, with limited oversight. This lack of direct regulation makes them especially vulnerable when a platform goes bust. In BluSmart's case, users were informed last month that it

could take up to 90 days to recover their prepaid balances. The delay, coupled with the company's broader financial troubles and alleged fraud, has put a spotlight on the growing but loosely regulated use of such wallets within India's digital services landscape—particularly in the EV space. Sources told Bloomberg that the RBI is now considering a set of policy options. Among them: mandatory escrow accounts to ringfence consumer funds, and possibly extending elements of the existing Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPI) framework to larger closed-loop wallets. These measures would be similar to those already in place for payment aggregators. No formal stance has been announced yet. However, a move toward tighter rules could reshape how app-based businesses handle customer funds, especially in sectors where prepaid models are central to user engagement.

India proposes retaliatory tariffs on select US goods over steel duties: Report



(News Agency) India has informed the World Trade Organisation (WTO) of its proposal to impose retaliatory tariffs on select US-made goods, aiming to counter Washington's continued levies on Indian steel and aluminium exports, reported news agency Reuters. In a notice dated Monday, India said the move would take the form of suspending concessions and increasing import duties on specific American products. "The proposed suspension of concessions or other obligations takes the form of an increase in tariffs on selected products originating in the United States,"

the statement noted. The development comes in response to what India described as "safeguard measures" by the US government—actions that, according to New Delhi, impact roughly \$7.6 billion worth of Indian exports to the American market. US President Donald Trump, who reimposed sweeping global tariffs after returning to office this year, has continued the protectionist approach he adopted during his first term in 2018, when similar duties on steel and aluminium were introduced under the guise of national security.

The psychological toll of a war-like situation on common man

(News Agency) As India launched Operation Sindoor, a targeted military response against terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir following the Pahalgam terror attack on tourists, the reverberations weren't confined to diplomatic corridors alone. They impacted civilian lives too - there was uncertainty, psychological stress and fear for many. Several airports were shut, flights cancelled, and tension swept across borders as India launched counter-strikes after Pakistan's missile and drone tracks. For many of us, it's a rare moment when war feels imminent, with the threat of escalation growing by the hour. In such a scenario, what do you think is the mental state of the



civilians? The psychological toll on civilians India Today spoke to people across age groups to better understand what they think of the current situation and if they feel anxious about the future course. Delhi resident Namrata Singh, 60, fears retaliation or a war that could affect her family and her well-being. "There's a constant fear of things escalating,

and the constant updates from the borders don't help either. It is just overwhelming, to say the least. We were even planning to stock up on food and other necessities, given how things are looking." Living under the constant threat of "a war" can have profound psychological effects. The uncertainty and fear associated with potential

escalations can lead to heightened anxiety, sleep disturbances, and a pervasive sense of insecurity among civilians. Children, in particular, absorb the emotional temperature of their surroundings. When adults around them are on edge, they notice. They may not have the words for it, but it manifests in their behaviour: tantrums, bedwetting, withdrawal, or a sudden fear of sleeping alone. Psychologists warn that early exposure to fear and violence can shape a child's developing brain, leaving emotional scars that may linger into adulthood. Sandhya Sharma, psychologist at Dharamshila Narayana Hospital in Delhi, notes, "Children absorb the emotional

atmosphere around them. Even if they don't fully understand the situation, they sense the anxiety and fear, which can manifest in various behavioural changes."

The fear of the unknown

Manjari Shah, 29, is a teacher in one of Delhi's most reputed schools. She says, "It's definitely a moment of celebration for us. However, I'm constantly stressed about how far this might go. Since I live away from home, there's always this worry about my parents' well-being. If something like 'a war' breaks out, I keep fearing whether I'll be able to make it back to them. These worries about something untoward may happen might be absolutely baseless, but I won't deny that they cross my mind often."

Obsessed with probiotics? You might be missing the whole prebiotic plot



(News Agency) Yogurt, kimchi, kombucha, kefir – you know what they have in common? Most of you will get the answer right: they're brimming with probiotics, the so-called gut-friendly bacteria that have become the poster child of modern wellness.

The narrative around probiotics (or let's say, the marketing) is so strong that now, it has become several brands' go-to excuse for you to get their products in your hands. Even social media has cemented them as a daily essential for better digestion, glowing skin, immunity, and beyond. But amid the hullabaloo around probiotics and their importance in keeping our gut condition pristine, are we missing the real plot?

Probiotics vs prebiotics

"Probiotics are live microorganisms that can offer health benefits, but only when consumed in adequate amounts," says Dietician Vidhi Chawla, founder of FISICO Diet and Aesthetic Clinic. "They're essentially good bacteria that can help balance your gut microbiome—found in fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, and sauerkraut." But here's the catch: simply introducing these bacteria into your system doesn't guarantee they'll survive the journey through your stomach's acidic environment. That's where prebiotics come in, the often-forgotten fibre-rich fuel that your existing gut bacteria need to thrive. "Think of them as fertiliser," says Chawla. "They're non-digestible fibres that pass through the upper digestive tract intact and get fermented in the colon, feeding the good bacteria already living in your gut."

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Day 1 of Cannes 2025, and celebs are already snubbing the new dress code

Ahead of the Cannes Film Festival opening, the organising committee announced new dress code rules for 'decency' purposes, but many celebrities unabashedly ignored them.



(News Agency) The very opening day of the 78th Cannes Film Festival saw several attendees flouting the newly announced dress code, which prohibited them from embracing naked dressing and turning up in voluminous ensembles.

The Day 1 red carpet of the international film festival was replete with the excessive sartorial drama it is known for.

Celebrities like Heidi Klum and Chinese actor Wan QianHui unabashedly ditched the new rules as they posed on the prestigious red carpet at the French Riviera in flamboyant outfits.

Ahead of the Cannes Film Festival opening, its organising committee announced a few new dress code guidelines for 'decency' purposes.

"For decency reasons, nudity is

prohibited on the red carpet, as well as in any other area of the Festival. Voluminous outfits, in particular those with a large train, that hinder the proper flow of traffic of guests and complicate seating in the theatre are not permitted," the updated guidelines read.

The new dress code affected many, including American actress and model Halle Berry, who had to change her outfit at

the last minute because of the new rules.

"I had an amazing dress by Gupta (presumably Gaurav Gupta) to wear tonight, and I cannot wear it because the train's too big," Berry, who is a festival jury member this year, said at a news conference.

However, not many cared about the rules. Heidi Klum was one among them. She turned up wearing a maximalist floral Elie

Saab gown that was in direct violation of the festival's new dress code.

The ethereal ensemble featured a long train. Chinese actor and influencer Wan QianHui also ignored the new dress code. She wore an all-white strapless gown with a billowing, cloudlike and tiered voluminous skirt. Actress Eva Longoria too turned up clad in a strapless metallic gown with a long black train.

Asim Munir has won, Pakistanis have lost, again

(News Agency) The latest India-Pakistan conflagration ended in a ceasefire and Donald Trump ran away with the trophy, leaving the contestants confused. The curtains have fallen, the smoke has cleared, and the scorecards are in. India has delivered a knockout in a clear win, reasserting its dominance and resetting the deterrence.

But Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif declared "he won" before the marks were fully counted. The streets from Peshawar to Chichawatni erupted in celebrations, blissfully unaware that their airfields now resemble Swiss cheese and their military sites have been given a rather aggressive facelift by Indian strikes. Who needs facts when you have a PR machine that could make Bollywood blush? On this side, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Adampur Airbase to debunk Pakistan's much-touted claim of reducing it to rubble. Modi's photo-op was the diplomatic equivalent of a mic drop.

There are no winners or losers



in 21st-Century wars, only parties left with more damage or less. This four-day war had a winner: Asim Munir.

While Pakistan's military licked its wounds, Munir has spun this debacle into a personal coronation. The man who recently stood on a stage, invoking the two-nation theory and vowing to "crush the enemy, inshallah," has delivered not victory, but something far more valuable: relevance.

THE ARMY'S REVENGE

Two years ago, on May 9, 2023, the unthinkable had happened. Supporters of the jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan turned against the army. They rioted with such ferocity that

they desecrated military symbols and stormed the homes of top officers. For the first time, the Army, once revered as the nation's saviour, was the villain in the public's eyes.

General Asim Munir is his predecessor General Bajwa's revenge on Pakistan and Imran Khan. The Bajwa doctrine was a shift from Pakistan's rigid "bleed India with thousand cuts" as he realised Pakistan was reduced in stature after every skirmish with India. He wanted a moratorium till Pakistan was economically strong enough to stand on its own feet. But Khan, the most popular, and Bajwa, the most powerful, fell out and, on his way out, Bajwa installed

Asim Munir in his seat. As the saying goes, the Pakistani Army has never won a war and never lost an election. True to form, Munir's Army orchestrated a compromised election, banned Khan's party, and installed Shahbaz Sharif as Prime Minister. The people grumbled, but the Army marched on.

Munir, addressing a meeting of overseas Pakistanis, suggested that he had a surprise for India and the Hindus. The Pahalgam terrorist attack in Kashmir followed. No direct link. Yet all intelligence suggests somebody in the ISI, Pakistan's subversive spy agency, greenlit the operation.

The gruesome massacre of 26 tourists set the stage for this latest flare-up. India vowed retaliation and launched pinpointed strikes on terrorist hideouts in Pakistan, carefully avoiding civilian and military targets. Pakistan promised escalation and tried to attack India's military installations and cities with drone swarms and missiles. Nearly all of them were thwarted. India followed up with a devastating

pummeling of Pakistan's military assets, so bad that the US stepped in and brokered a pause. FROM VILLAIN TO DARLING

Munir has turned this military drubbing into a public relations coup. The Pakistani Army, battered and bruised, is once again the nation's darling. The same public that was burning effigies of generals two years ago is now rallying behind Munir, including Imran Khan's supporters.

War is the great unifier, and Munir has played it like a virtuoso. The propaganda about shooting down Indian jets, however dubious, has worked wonders domestically. With a media firmly under control and a chorus of paid "foreign analysts" singing his praises, Munir has convinced the masses that Pakistan emerged victorious, and it's all thanks to his steely leadership. The sins of the past -- rigging elections, jailing Khan, strangling democracy -- have been washed away in the blood of soldiers killed in action.

Pakistan Feels The Heat, Urges India To Resume Indus Waters Treaty Amid Mounting Pressure: Sources

By Payal Mehta

Even as Pakistan feels the heat of India's diplomatic and economic measures, one decision has hurt the country the most – the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

Fearing a water crisis, Pakistan has now reached out to India. "Syed Ali Murtaza, Secretary of Pakistan's Ministry of Water Resources, wrote a letter to the Secretary of India's Ministry of Jal Shakti a few days ago. In the letter, an appeal was made to reconsider the decision of putting the IWT in abeyance," an official source told CNN-News18. The treaty was put in abeyance based on a decision of the cabinet committee on security (CCS) on April 23, a day after the Pahalgam terror attack which killed 26. "We will not give them a single drop of water, come what may," Jal Shakti minister CR Patil had told News18 after the CCS took the decision. India had also announced that it will stop



sharing flood warnings with Pakistan.

India has considered all options, which include taking long-, mid- and short-term measures on the water flow, which will now remain restricted, said sources. For the past two weeks, water has been released to Pakistan on multiple occasions, they said.

'ATTACK ON OUR ECONOMY': WHAT PAKISTAN SAID

"We have responded to the

Indian letters by conveying that the treaty remains fully in force and is binding on the parties. There is no provision in the treaty to hold it in abeyance. The Indus Waters Treaty has been successful water sharing arrangement between the two neighbouring countries. The treaty has withstood tests of wars and standoffs..." said Pakistan in the letter, according to sources.

"Holding in abeyance of Indus water treaty is unilateral and

illegal...Pakistan is an agrarian economy. Millions of people are dependent on the water being regulated by this treaty. The Indian decision is equivalent to an attack on the people of Pakistan and its economy," it added.

As per the 1960 treaty, India got around 30% of the total water carried by the Indus River System located in India, while Pakistan got the remaining 70%.

CENTRE'S KEY MEETING THIS WEEK

In response to the Pahalgam attack, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in airstrikes. After a conflict for four days, a ceasefire was announced on May 10. The Indian government, however, maintained that the IWT will remain in abeyance.

With the IWT suspended, the Modi government is expected to take major steps toward

completing the stalled hydroelectric projects. A key meeting is likely to be held this week with Home Minister Amit Shah, along with Water Resources Minister Patil, Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and senior officials from all related ministries. Since the suspension of the IWT, two meetings have already taken place between Shah, Patil, and top officials of the ministry.

PROJECTS THAT CAN GO ON IN FULL FORCE

India, meanwhile, aims to accelerate the stalled hydroelectric projects in Jammu and Kashmir. Under the IWT, India had to give six months' notice to Pakistan before starting any new project. With the suspension, this is no longer necessary, and data sharing will also cease. It is now possible to initiate new projects on the Chenab and Jhelum rivers and to revive Wular Lake.

Sitaare Zameen Par trailer: Aamir Khan's film is a slam dunk of emotions



SITAARE aur unki journey. Watch #SitaareZameenPar #SabkaApnaApnaNormal, 20th June Only In Theatres. Trailer Out Now (sic). "The film that carries the tagline "Sabka Apna Apna Normal", which champions inclusivity and aims to resonate deeply with audiences. Besides Aamir and Genelia, Sitaare Zameen Par introduces a team of debutants: Aroush Datta, Gopi Krishna Varma, Samvit Desai, Vedant Sharma, Ayush Bhansali, Ashish Pendse, Rishi Shahani, Rishabh Jain, Naman Mishra, and Simran Mangeshkar. Directed by RS Prasanna, popular for his film Shubh Mangal Saavdhan, Sitaare Zameen Par has been made under the banner of Aamir Khan Productions. The songs are composed by Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy and the lyrics are penned by Amitabh Bhattacharya. Sitaare Zameen Par is set to release in theatres on June 20, 2025.

(News Agency) The much-awaited trailer of Aamir Khan's 'Sitaare Zameen Par', a spiritual sequel to the 2007 film Taare Zameen Par, was released on May 13. 18 years

after the original film, Sitaare Zameen Par promises another heartwarming and joyful story, with a few new twists.

In the three-minute trailer, Aamir Khan plays a basketball coach

to a team of specially-abled children, setting the stage for an inspiring and entertaining narrative laced with emotion and humour. Genelia Deshmukh stars as his love interest in the

drama.

Sharing the trailer on social media, the official Instagram handle of Aamir's production channel captioned, "1 Tingu Basketball Coach, 10 Toofani

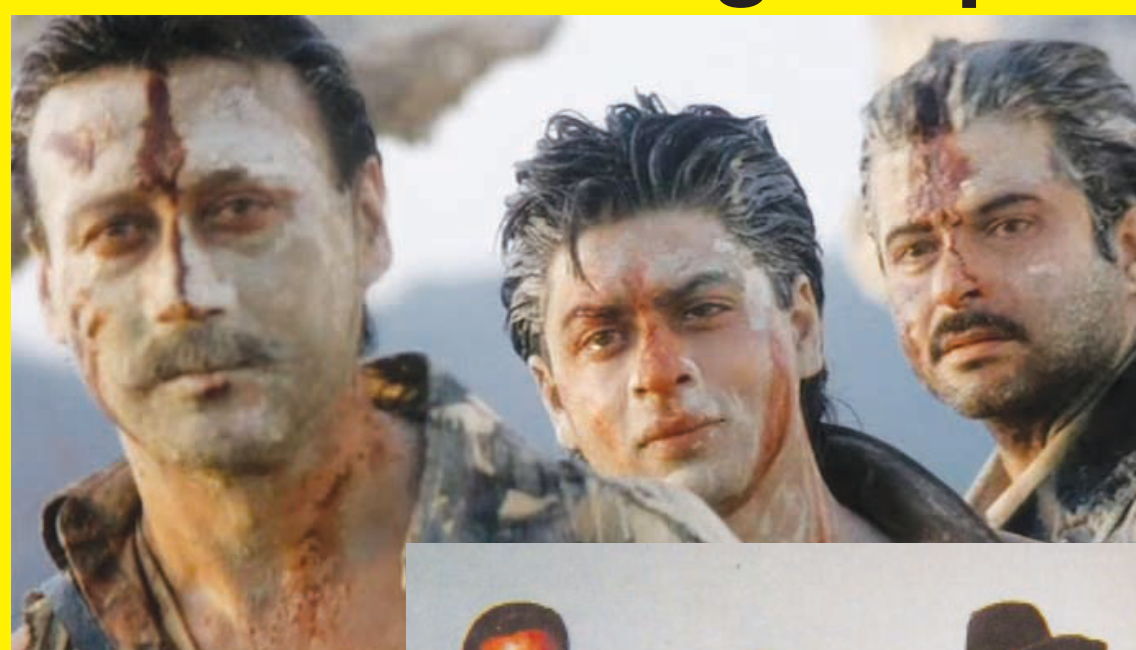
Ram Lakhan duo Jackie Shroff and Anil Kapoor to reunite for SRK's King: Report

(News Agency) The iconic 'Ram Lakhan' duo, Jackie Shroff and Anil Kapoor, are set to reunite on the big screen in Shah Rukh Khan's highly anticipated action thriller, 'King'. The film, which is scheduled to begin filming on May 20, marks the first collaboration of the legendary trio, Shah Rukh, Shroff, and Kapoor, since their 1995 blockbuster 'Trimurti'.

While details of Jackie Shroff's role remain under wraps, his addition to the cast has added to the excitement around the film. Anil Kapoor has been confirmed to play Shah Rukh's handler and mentor, guiding his character through a gritty, high-stakes narrative. The film, headlined by Shah Rukh Khan, will see him in a never-before-seen avatar. "Siddharth Anand narrated the basic world of King to Jackie Shroff along with his character arc, and the actor took no time to come on board the film. Jackie is

all excited to embark on this action-packed journey with Shah Rukh Khan and the team. Jackie feels that Shah Rukh Khan is the most accomplished and large-hearted producer of Indian Cinema, and is looking forward to be on the sets on King," a source told Pinkvilla. "King has one of the largest ensembles for a feature film in modern times, as every character has been cast to perfection with actors who fit the bill to the T. Apart from this ensemble, King will also feature some more actors to play relatively small but important roles in the film," the source added.

Directed by filmmaker Siddharth Anand, 'King' will feature a star-studded ensemble including Deepika Padukone, Abhishek Bachchan, Suhana Khan, Arshad Warsi, and Abhay Verma. The makers of the film are aiming for a 100-day shoot schedule across multiple locations, starting in Mumbai before



heading to Europe for a major international leg. Set for a theatrical release between October and December 2026, the film will have an exciting collaboration between Sachin-Jigar, who will compose the songs, and Anirudh Ravichander, who will handle the background score.



Tom Cruise returns to Cannes with Mission Impossible team



(News Agency) Tom Cruise's 'Mission: Impossible-The Final Reckoning' storms into the Cannes Film Festival on Wednesday, riding a wave of intense anticipation and buzz. Pom Klementieff, Angela Bassett, Tom Cruise, Hayley Atwell, and Hannah Waddingham pose for photographers during the photo call at the film festival. Tom Cruise posed like the movie star he is during the photocall, with director, screenwriter and producer Christopher McQuarrie for company during a photocall for Mission: Impossible-The Final Reckoning. The director is scheduled for an onstage interview, but with no press conference arranged for the film, Cruise and the team avoided facing any questions from the media. The Final Reckoning, which launched in Tokyo last week, opens in North American theaters on May 23 and will release in India on May 17.

