



The South Asian



INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community

Since March 2002



Glova Group

Your solutions
are one consultation
away...

- SEO
- Branding
- Campaigns
- Web Design
- AI Integrations

www.glovagroup.com

Vol. 24

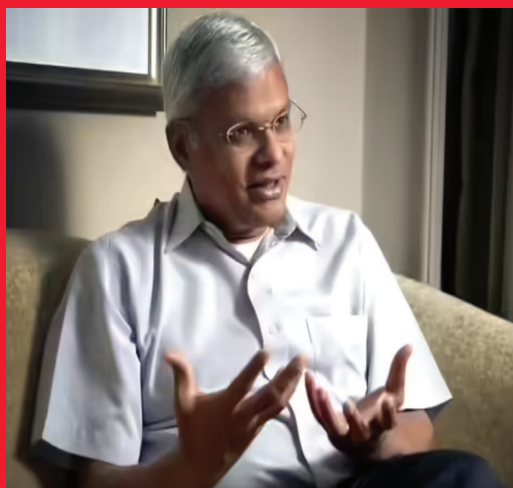
Issue 29

Friday 17 Oct to 23 Oct 2025

\$1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Who Is Ashley Tellis, Indian-American Expert Charged Over Top Secret Files



Story on Page 27

Inside India's Scariest Scam, And How To Stop It



Story on Page 24-25

- Digital scams are proliferating as India's elderly population embraces the internet.
- Scammers are highly effective, preying on the inherent vulnerabilities of seniors, such as respect for authority, fear of legal trouble, and loneliness.



Starship Hits the Bullseye: Lands in Indian Ocean and Crashes Exactly Where Musk Predicted

Story on Page 26

Mass Surrender: Naxal Commander and 60 Cadres Lay Down Arms in Maharashtra



Story on Page 26

Rs 60-crore cheating and fraud case

Why don't you turn approver against Raj Kundra,
High Court asks Shilpa Shetty



Story on Page 26



Vijay Mallya Abandons UK Bid to End Bankruptcy

Story on Page 26

THE UNISPHERE ILLUMINATED: QUEENS HOSTS ITS LARGEST DIWALI AND NAVARATRI CELEBRATION.



(By our staff reporter) QUEENS, NY. - On Sunday, from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., the Arts4all Foundation, elected officials, community organizations, and the community joined together for the Annual Diwali and Navaratri Festival and Parade at the historic World's Fair Unisphere, which is the largest Diwali celebration in Queens. The festival celebrates New York's diverse arts and culture, as well as supports the advancement of human rights, global peace, and harmony. Navaratri and Diwali are holidays that celebrate the light of knowledge removing all forms of ignorance and despair. Both holidays occur in the autumn season and start on the new moon day, one month apart from

each other. The holidays are connected with one another, as Navaratri is the nine-day holiday in which pure strength is victorious over mass injustice, tyranny, and darkness, and Diwali is the celebration of light and balance being restored to the universe. More than 7 million Americans observe the holidays of Diwali and Navaratri. In particular, New York City, one of the most diverse cities in the world, has people across different faiths, cultures, ethnicities, and social backgrounds celebrate Diwali and Navaratri. Arts4All Foundation hosts a public, free, and inclusive Navaratri and Diwali Festival and Parade Celebration at the iconic Unisphere annually to highlight the significance of the holidays in bringing people together for community progress, and advancing human rights, justice, peace, cultural exchange, and unity. The Arts4All Foundation provided over 1100 pure vegetarian-cooked meals, 1500 toys, 1000 balloons, 1000 gold chocolate coins, face painting, henna and sticker designs, rangoli artwork, yoga, books, and several different family-friendly games, including a fashion show and bubble dance party, a Diya light show aarti, and a Garba dance parade, all for free and for the public to enjoy. Mr. Navdeep Singh, the owner of Punjabi Dhaba in Richmond Hill, Queens, provided the meals. Thousands of New Yorkers from a variety of races, cultures,

ethnicities, religions, and class backgrounds attended the festival and parade. Dr. Sumita SenGupta, the founder of the Arts4All Foundation and organizer of the celebration, said, "From the iconic Diya lights, intricate rangoli art decorations, soulful bhajan music, decadent food, and vibrant Garba dances to the inspiring stories of light overcoming darkness, Diwali and Navaratri are holidays that ignite the spirit of community-connectedness, peace, and solidarity. We are honored to host in Queens, the "World's Borough," at the iconic Unisphere a free

and inclusive celebration that both showcases the rich artistry of the South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities and honors the timeless tradition of community service through giving over 1100 meals and 1500 toys out to underprivileged New Yorkers and attendees. We hope that our Navaratri and Diwali celebration will continue to inspire people from all backgrounds to be a light and positive force of good, creating a sense of communal belonging that spans generations in which people can continue to come together to make a positive impact in our community and world."





From Abhishek Mishra,
25 Lavender Drive,
Edison, New Jersey



How Lord Shiva strengthened New Jersey family's faith

Lakhs of pilgrims undertake the Amarnath Yatra every year to pray at the snow Shivaling in the sacred cave. Faith for one family in Edison, NJ, was strengthened by mysterious events unfolding in their home.

Abhishek Mishra, who has enjoyed a successful corporate career, shared with the press naturally formed (Swayambhu) images of Shiva appearing in their home without any human involvement. "Shankar Bhagwan has blessed us and we feel his divine presence all the time," he said.



Among the astonishing phenomena at the Mishra house on Lavender Drive was a Shivling that formed in ice during the winter, while a 50-foot image of Lord Shiva holding a trident appeared in the backyard snow. Inside, an image of Shiva with Nandi was seen on the bathroom tiles, and another meditative form of Shiva emerged from ice.

Many people have been eager to witness this remarkable event, calling it a spiritual wonder. Abhishek Mishra, an intuitive, tells all to believe in Divine Power, called by different names in various religions, adding that aligning with it will make our life happy, peaceful, and prosperous.

Abhishek Mishra can be reached at 732.690.0404 for more details.

Indian Green Card holder with brain tumour held in US, faces deportation

A 48-year-old Indian Green Card holder, who has lived in the US since 1994 and has been battling a brain tumour, has been held in US' ICE custody for over two months. Paramjit Singh's family has alleged he is being denied medical care in ICE custody and is facing deportation based on disputed charges.

(By our staff reporter) A 48-year-old Indian-origin Green Card holder, Paramjit Singh, has been in the custody of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for over two months after being detained at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport. Singh, who has lived in the United States since 1994, is reportedly battling a brain tumour and a heart condition. His family alleged that he is being denied proper medical care and that his scheduled tumour surgery has been delayed due to his detention. Singh was taken into custody on July 30 upon his return from India and was held at the airport for five days before being moved to a detention centre in Clay County, Indiana, according to a BBC report. ICE authorities have cited two past criminal cases to justify his detention, though Singh's family claims the charges are outdated or inaccurate. ICE officials have cited two past criminal cases to justify Singh's detention. The first is a 1999 incident in which Singh used a public phone without paying, for which he served 10



days in prison and paid a \$4,137.50 (approx Rs 3,44,000) fine. The second, according to Singh's family, is an alleged forgery conviction in Illinois from 2008. The family said this case does not exist. Immigration authorities, during a hearing in court, said that Singh was sentenced to one-and-a-half years for the first case, but served only 10 days. The family claimed that although Singh was granted a \$10,000 bond by an

immigration judge, the ICE has used the alleged 2008 forgery case to prevent his release. Kiran Virk, Singh's niece, told the BBC that the family hired a private investigator who found no criminal record for Singh matching his identity in Illinois.

"We believe immigration authorities are using outdated or incorrect information to justify his continued detention," Virk was quoted as saying by the British broadcaster. She added that Singh's second brain tumour surgery has been delayed due to his detention.

PARAMJIT SINGH

LAWYER PLANS TO CHALLENGE HIS DETENTION

Singh's lawyer, Louis Angeles, also expressed concerns over his health and said he plans to challenge the detention, calling it "unethical". "We are also taking legal steps to block him from being deported from the US," the BBC quoted the lawyer as saying. According to Virk, the family is struggling to stay in touch with Singh due to restricted phone access at the detention centre and his deteriorating health. Singh has lived in Indiana for decades and runs a business in Fort Wayne. His wife and two children are US citizens. The family said he regularly visits India and has never previously faced immigration issues. Singh's case is due to be heard on October 14. Singh's detention comes at a time when the Donald Trump-led US is cracking down on immigration, and is targeting undocumented immigrants.

American Punjabi Society Partners with ROTC for Youth Leadership Seminar



In a collaborative effort to promote youth leadership and civic engagement, Mohinder Singh Taneja, Senior Vice President of the American Punjabi Society (APS), recently met with Lt. Colonel Houn Lee, Department Chair of Military Science (ROTC). The two leaders planned an upcoming informational seminar designed for local youth. The seminar is scheduled for Sunday, November 9th, 2025. Details regarding the time, location, and registration for this key leadership development event will be announced soon.



Advertisement (Public Service Message)



fatherhood.gov

The Deepavali Legacy

AIA-NY's 38th Festival Achieves Historic Success on Long Island



(By our staff reporter) Babylon, NY: The Association of Indians in America, New York (AIA-NY) celebrated its 38th iconic Deepavali Festival at Overlook Beach here on October 11, marking a milestone as the first-ever festival of its kind on Long Island. An estimated 5,000 people enjoyed cultural performances, spiritual presentations, traditional Indian food, and community celebration throughout the day. A spectacular live fireworks display lit up Long Island's south shore, creating unforgettable memories. Amid fulsome compliments for staging a grand show and maneuvering the annual event's move from South Street Seaport in Manhattan, AIA-NY President Beena Kothari said, "This event was a dream come true... promoting culture, unity, and community engagement." Many lawmakers and dignitaries greeted the audience and congratulated AIA-NY and its President, Beena Kothari, for organizing a colorful extravaganza.



Another Haryana cop suicide and bombshell note add twist to IPS officer's suicide



had "hijacked the system by using caste politics" to shield himself from accountability. In the video, Sharma alleged that caste politics and corruption had deeply infected the department. "The day this other

officer was posted, he started doing caste politics and started getting rid of people. He appointed his own corrupt people. These corrupt people then started to look at files and started looking for

errors — clerical ones etc — and then called the respective officers, tortured them and extorted money. Women police officers were threatened with transfer and molested," he said.

PM Modi stays away from Trump's 'Sharm-naak' Gaza circus, Shehbaz stays staged

(News Agency) Prime Minister Narendra Modi did right to give The Donald's dystopian show at Egypt's grand Sharm el-Sheikh a miss on Monday. It felt like one of those old Comedy Central episodes, where Donald Trump was roasted by the likes of Snoop Dogg and Larry King. Unlike Comedy Central, he was the only one doing the roasting - a melee of leaders on stage and those seated across the conference room - at the signing of the Gaza peace deal. Sample this: while thanking countries - or rather, handing out his own approval ratings - Trump called out, "France! Thank you very much, Emmanuel. I would imagine Emmanuel standing behind me." He then turned back: "Emmanuel, where are you?" Leaders behind him pointed off the stage in unison, saying, "He's there." Trump turned his head and quipped, "I can't believe that you're taking a low-key approach today," sending the hall into laughter. One by one, he picked on

countries - some cursed by years of strife, others proud champions of free speech and liberty - as if reading straight from a Comedy Central script. Welcome to Trump's dystopian world. In other words, his 'Sharm-naak' circus at Sharm el-Sheikh. And his favourite clown was none other than Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In what looked clearly choreographed, Trump gave the stage to Shehbaz Sharif for five minutes. Predictably, Sharif played to Trump's tune, staying true to the script. He went on to call the US President a "man of peace," nominating him for the Nobel Peace Prize for preventing an apocalypse between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan during Operation Sindoor. Behind them, Italy's Giorgia Meloni looked on as she clapped, devoid of any expression. With the hall echoing with claps and cameras trained on her in the background, it seemed like she was performing more for the gallery than the moment.

(News Agency) In another shocking turn in the death case of senior IPS officer Y Puran Kumar, a Haryana cop posted with the Cyber Cell in Rohtak allegedly died by suicide on Tuesday, leaving behind a three-page note and a video message in which he accused the late IPS officer of corruption. The body of the Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI), Sandeep Kumar, was found near a tubewell on the Rohtak-Panipat road. Police have recovered a suicide note and are examining the video message the officer recorded before taking his life. In his note, the ASI made serious allegations against IPS officer Y Puran Kumar, who himself died by suicide on October 7 in Chandigarh. "Y Puran Kumar was a corrupt officer. There is a lot of evidence against him," the note stated. The ASI also wrote that he feared arrest in connection with the ongoing investigation and wanted to expose "the corrupt system" before dying. "I am sacrificing my life to demand an impartial probe. This corrupt family should not be spared," the note read. He further alleged that Kumar

Thane conversion case: High Court seeks police reply, allows US man to pursue bail

(News Agency) The Bombay High Court on Tuesday said it will require a formal reply from Thane police before deciding on allegations of illegal arrest brought forward by American businessman James Leonard Watson. Watson was taken into police custody on 3 October 2025 over claims of religious conversion. Meanwhile, the court noted that Watson could pursue his bail plea, which has been filed in the trial court. A bench comprising Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam A Ankhad issued notice to the Thane police, instructing them to respond to allegations that Watson was not informed of the grounds for his arrest when taken into custody. "The bail application filed on behalf of the petitioner is listed before the trial court. Let the bail application be decided on its own merits notwithstanding the pendency of this writ petition challenging the arrest of the petitioner as illegal," the bench said in its order. The court will further hear Watson's plea challenging the arrest on 11 November. According to the petition, Watson was taken into police custody around 11.30am on 3 October and brought to the Bhiwandi Taluka Police Station. However, the First Information Report (FIR) was lodged only at 12.27am on 4 October, and he was formally arrested at 2.01am the same day, being listed as Accused No 2. The plea claimed that Watson was not informed of the reasons for his arrest, nor was a copy of the FIR provided to him or his counsel until 6 October. Addressing this aspect, the court observed, "This might be something in your favour, but a reply is necessary," before issuing notice to the police.





Supervisor John Ferretti,
the Hempstead Town Board,
the Department of Community Affairs,
together with Indo-American Festivals Inc. New York,

Proudly Present the

10TH GRAND Dussehra Festival

Saturday, October 18, 2025
1:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.
(Rain Date October 18th)

Lido Beach Town Park
630 Lido Blvd, Lido Beach, NY

WATCH THE BURNING of the 25-FOOT-TALL RAVAN EFFIGY
Ram Leela, Cultural Program, Fashion Show, Arts and Craft Stalls, and Authentic Foods

For More Information, please call
Dr. Ravindra Goyal 516-967-5979 Ms. Suman Sharma 631-662-9228
Zahid Syed or Aman Thind at Town of Hempstead 516-812-3009

John Ferretti
Supervisor

Council Members
Dorothy L. Goosby • Dennis Dunne, Sr. • Thomas E. Muscarella
Melissa Miller • Laura A. Ryder • Christopher R. Schneider

Kate Murray
Town Clerk
Jeanine C. Driscoll
Receiver of Taxes

Rape survivor's father calls Mamata Banerjee 'mother-like' after Aurangzeb remark

The father of the Durgapur rape survivor publicly apologised to Mamata Banerjee and asked her to forgive him for anything wrong he said against her.

(News Agency) In a sharp turnaround just days after he blasted the security situation in West Bengal as "Aurangzeb's rule," the father of the Durgapur rape survivor has made a heartfelt appeal to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, describing her as a "mother-like figure." The father of the second-year MBBS student, who hails from Odisha, publicly asked the Chief Minister to "forgive me if I had said anything wrong against her." He also appealed to her for help, saying, "I will render countless obeisance at her feet. But I ask her to help my daughter get justice." His remarks on Wednesday came just two days after his strong criticism of the state's safety standards. Following the alleged rape of his daughter, he



had criticised Mamata Banerjee's earlier remark that "women should not venture out at night," declaring, "It seems Bengal is under the rule of Aurangzeb. I want to take my

daughter back to Odisha. Her life comes first, career later." "They could kill her here any moment. That's why we want to take her back to Odisha. Trust has been lost. We

don't want her to stay in Bengal," he had said. The woman's father now says he will take his daughter back home once she had asked, "How did she come out at 12.30 at night?" and asserted that "A girl shouldn't be allowed to come outside at night-time. They

also have to protect themselves. She went on to assure that no one will be excused, adding, "We have zero tolerance for such crimes." Meanwhile, on Tuesday, West Bengal Police arrested the survivor's classmate, Wasif Ali, who accompanied her on the night of the crime, naming him as the prime accused. Ali, who was named in the father's complaint, was arrested after being questioned for four days. The police have ruled out gang-rape. Sunil Kumar Chowdhury, Police Commissioner of the Asansol-Durgapur Police Commissionerate, stated that based on the survivor's statement and initial physical evidence, it has been established that only one person sexually assaulted the medical student. "As per the survivor's own account and supporting physical evidence, one person committed the rape," Chowdhury said. He added that the "presence of all six arrested accused has been established during the investigation." The survivor, in her account to the doctor, alleged a terrifying chase.

Quitting smoking was hard.
Screening for lung cancer is easy.



If you smoked, you may still be at risk, but early detection could save your life.

Get **SavedByTheScan.org**



Advertisement (Public Service Message)

High Court seeks data on manholes, protective grills from Maharashtra civic bodies

(News Agency) The Bombay High Court has directed all Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra to submit details regarding the total number of manholes in their jurisdiction and how many are equipped with protective grills. The order follows concerns raised by advocate Ruju Thakker, intervenor in a suo motu petition, regarding the tragic incident last month in Dombivli, Thane district, where a 13-year-old boy was swept into an uncovered, waterlogged manhole.



The bench of Justices Revati Mohite-Dere and Sandesh Patil also issued notices to the Kalyan and Dombivli Municipal Corporation, directing them to file affidavits in response to Thakker's plea. In the meantime, the court instructed that the incident be reported to a yet-to-be-formed municipal committee, which will assess accountability and determine any compensation to be awarded. Thakker

referenced a 2023 incident in which renowned gastroenterologist Dr Deepak Amrapurkar died in a similar accident. Following that tragedy, the High Court had directed all civic bodies to install protective grills to prevent fatalities if manhole covers

were removed. While the Mumbai civic authority had been proactive in implementing these safety measures, not all manholes had grills installed as of the last hearing. The court has directed Mumbai authorities to update it on the status. The next hearing in the suo motu petition and related interventions is scheduled for 21 November.

20 Killed As Moving Bus Bursts Into Flames In Rajasthan's Jaisalmer

(News Agency) At least 20 people were killed after a bus carrying 57 passengers caught fire near Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, police said. The moving bus suddenly burst into flames, trapping several passengers inside. The injured were rushed to Jawahar Hospital in Jaisalmer while those with severe burns were shifted by ambulance to Jodhpur for advanced treatment. Police have confirmed 20 fatalities, while several others remain in critical condition. An investigation has been launched to determine the cause of the fire. Eyewitnesses



said locals and passers-by rushed to the spot as the bus went up in flames, helping to pull out trapped passengers before rescue teams arrived. Fire engines and police were immediately alerted and relief operations began. The Jaisalmer district administration said it promptly launched rescue

and relief efforts after receiving information about the incident, working alongside emergency services to control the blaze and evacuate victims. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma visited the accident site in Jaisalmer to review the situation. He expressed gratitude to Army personnel and local residents for their swift response and assistance in the rescue operation. Bhajanlal Sharma was accompanied by Pokhran MLA Pratap Puri, MLA Sang Singh Bhati and senior district officials during his visit. "The incident of

the bus catching fire in Jaisalmer is extremely tragic. I express my heartfelt condolences to the citizens affected by this unfortunate accident," the Chief Minister said, adding that he had directed officials to ensure the best possible medical treatment for the injured and to provide full assistance to the victims' families. Governor Haribhau Bagade, former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, BJP state president Madan Rathore and several other leaders expressed deep sorrow over the tragedy.

President Murmu, PM Modi Express Grief

President Droupadi Murmu expressed grief, calling the incident "extremely painful." "The news of several deaths due to a bus fire in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, is deeply distressing. I express my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and wish the injured a speedy recovery," the President said in a statement. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "distressed by the loss of lives due to a mishap in Jaisalmer" and offered condolences to the affected families. "My thoughts are with the affected people and their families during this difficult time."

October 15: Who and what made news today? Here's a quick wrap before you hit the hay

(News Agency) Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban have agreed to a 48-hour ceasefire starting Wednesday evening, following days of cross-border air and ground fighting that left more than a dozen civilians dead and around 100 wounded along the volatile frontier. In sports, Ahmedabad, India, has been recommended as the proposed host city for the 2030 Commonwealth Games, marking the 100th anniversary of the event. The final decision will be made at the Commonwealth Sport General Assembly in Glasgow on 26 November 2025. In politics, the FBI

arrest of Indian-American strategist Ashley Tellis in the US has ignited a political dispute in India, with parties accusing each other over his alleged role in influencing both past and present governments. Here's a quick roundup of the day's most talked-about stories. Catch up before you turn in! 48-hour ceasefire after Pakistan airstrikes inside Afghanistan kill civilians Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban administration have agreed to a temporary 48-hour ceasefire beginning at 6 pm

(Pakistan Standard Time) on Wednesday, following days of intense air and ground fighting that



left more than a dozen civilians dead and around 100 wounded along the volatile frontier, as per the reports by Reuters. READ

HERE •The Executive Board of Commonwealth Sport has confirmed its recommendation of Ahmedabad, India, as the proposed host city for the 2030 Commonwealth Games. The 24th edition of the Commonwealth Games will mark the 100 years since the multi-sport spectacle was first held in Ontario. Ahmedabad will now be put forward to the full Commonwealth Sport membership, with a final decision to be made at the Commonwealth Sport General

Assembly in Glasgow on 26 November 2025, a statement from Commonwealth Sport said. READ HERE Why Ashley Tellis arrest by FBI has sparked political war in India The arrest of Ashley Tellis, an Indian-American geopolitical strategist, by the FBI in the US sparked off a political slugfest across seven seas in India. While some suggested that he worked with both the Congress-led UPA and the NDA, the BJP alleged that he was part of the "anti-India" force and "celebrated by the Opposition".



Keynote Speaker
SANDEEP KALRA
CEO, PERSISTENT SYSTEMS

GLOBAL GALA 2025





NOVEMBER 1, 2025
18:30 EDT

THE PARK HOTEL AT MEADOWLANDS
Two Meadowlands Plaza, East Rutherford, NJ 07073

VIP Pass - \$500	General Pass - \$250
☒ Access to PCC Global Gala	☒
☒ Opportunity to interact with business leaders	☒
☒ Entertainment and Dinner	☒
☒ Valet Parking included	☒
☒ VIP Seating	
☒ Photo opportunity with Mickey Singh	
☒ VIP Gift Hamper	
☒ Discounted Room Rate	
☒ Exclusive VIP hand band identifier	

For Sponsorship
Contact : manisha.singh@punjabichamber.com
newjersey@punjabichamber.com

LIGHTS. MUSIC. MAGIC.
WITH MICKEY SINGH

Rs 5 crore cash, cars, gold: Massive seizure from Punjab cop caught taking bribe

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Punjab DIG Harcharan Singh Bhullar after he was caught red-handed accepting a Rs 5 lakh bribe from a scrap dealer in Mohali.

(News Agency) In a massive seizure, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recovered cash of around Rs 5 crore, gold weighing 1.5 kg, several luxury cars, and other assets from Punjab DIG Harcharan Singh Bhullar, who was arrested for allegedly taking a bribe.

Bhullar, Deputy Inspector General of Police of Ropar range, was caught red-handed accepting Rs 5 lakh from a scrap dealer to settle and FIR and ensure no police action against his business. The complainant had been summoned to Bhullar's Mohali office for the first instalment when the CBI swooped in. A middleman, Kirshanu, linked to the DIG, was also arrested. Following the arrests, the CBI conducted searches at multiple locations connected to Bhullar in Punjab and Chandigarh, recovering documents related to over 15 properties, keys of two luxury cars (Mercedes and Audi), 22 luxury watches, several locker keys, 40 litres of imported liquor, and firearms including a double-barrel gun, a pistol, a revolver, and an airgun with ammunition.



The middleman was found with Rs 21 lakh in cash. Both accused are scheduled to be produced before the designated court today while searches and investigation continue.

The FIR against Bhullar, obtained by India Today TV, cited a written complaint from Akash Batta of Mandi Gobindgarh, alleging that Bhullar, through Kirshanu, demanded bribes and monthly payments ('sewa-paani') and threatened false

criminal cases if payments were not made. A recorded WhatsApp call on 11 October 2025 confirmed Bhullar instructing Kirshanu to collect Rs 8 lakh. To maintain the independence of the

operation, no Punjab police personnel were involved in the raids, CBI officials said.

After his arrest, the Punjab DIG was taken to Panchkula for questioning. The 2007-batch IPS officer took charge as Ropar Range DIG on November 27, 2024, after serving as Patiala Range DIG. He also served as joint director at the vigilance bureau, and senior Superintendent of Police in Jagraon, Mohali and Sangrur.

Known for keeping a low-profile, Bhullar played a key role in the 'Yudh Nasheyen Virudh' anti-drug campaign.

He is the son of former Punjab DGP Mehal Singh Bhullar. He also headed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that interrogated Akali leader Bikram Singh Majithia in connection with drug smuggling allegations.

Modi Praises Netanyahu and Trump for Gaza Peace Deal, Joins Global Leaders Welcoming Ceasefire Agreement

(News Agency) Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the successful implementation of the first phase of U.S. President Donald Trump's Gaza Peace Plan, calling the agreement a major step toward restoring stability and humanitarian

relief in the region. In a post on X, Modi said he welcomed the release of hostages and the expansion of aid to Gaza's civilians, reaffirming that "terrorism in any form or manifestation is unacceptable anywhere in the world." Israel's Prime Minister's Office confirmed the conversation, stating that Modi had personally called Netanyahu to convey his congratulations on the "agreement achieved for the release of all of the hostages." Modi's statement comes as world leaders across continents hailed the deal as a breakthrough after two years



of devastating conflict. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the development a "crucial step for global stability," noting that halting violence anywhere in the world "increases security for all." He expressed gratitude to Trump and the United States for their diplomatic leadership and urged continued international cooperation to ensure peace holds. French President Emmanuel Macron also celebrated the ceasefire, describing it as "great hope for hostages, for Palestinians in Gaza, and for the entire region."

In a message on X, Macron commended the mediation efforts of Trump, Qatar, Egypt, and Turkey and called for full compliance with the agreement, emphasizing that it should mark "the end of war and the beginning of a political solution based on the two-state framework." Macron added that France stands ready to participate in reconstruction efforts and will discuss next steps with international partners in Paris. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen echoed Macron's remarks, calling the peace agreement "a result of broad international collaboration" and praising the roles of both Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE

Start planning at ThisIsPretirement.org



Advertisement (Public Service Message)



Trump is using the government shutdown to do something no president has ever done

The United States government shutdown drags on, marking a pivotal moment in America's fiscal and constitutional history. President Donald Trump, the negotiator-in-chief, isn't blinking. He's swinging the axe at bloated, Democrat-run bureaucracies that have taken trillions from hardworking Americans for decades.

While Nancy Pelosi and her party claim "chaos" and Trump is turning crisis into clarity — freezing \$26 billion in blue-state pork, halting green-energy pet projects and directing departments to prepare reduction-in-force plans as part of a broader review of spending and accountability. Those plans are now in motion: the Office of Management and Budget confirmed that federal layoffs have begun, with cuts underway in Health, Homeland Security and Commerce. Washington calls it chaos. I call it a cleanup — a reckoning long overdue in the deep-state swamp. For the first time in modern history, a shutdown isn't about stalling — it's about a president reshaping Washington for the people.

Shutdowns of the past stand in stark contrast to today. Under President Bill Clinton in 1995 and 1996, Washington clashed over how to balance the budget and rein in spending. The government shut down twice for 26 days as parks closed, workers were furloughed and each side blamed the other. It ended with both sides blinking. They struck a compromise that preserved the exact bureaucracy they fought over, and Clinton walked away with higher approval ratings while the deep state remained intact. Even during Trump's 2018–2019 standoff — the longest in history at 35 days — Washington fell back into the same pattern. The fight over border funding and national security ended in another stalemate, yielding \$1.375 billion for 55 miles of fencing, barely funding the wall and no reform to the bloated machine.

For decades, Washington's playbook during shutdowns has been the same: panic, finger-pointing and a "compromise" that keeps the bureaucracy alive. Washington promoted the lie that when the money stops, the people lose. Trump 2.0 flips the script to show when the right programs are protected and waste is halted, we win. From day one, the administration withheld \$26 billion in earmarks for blue-state pet projects, windmills in California, green-energy programs and transit boondoggles in New York, while signaling layoffs in what Trump calls "Democrat agencies."

The administration also ordered federal agencies to prepare reduction-in-force plans, signaling that Trump is willing to fire bureaucrats who treat tax dollars as entitlements. No past president has dared to do that. The message is clear: you are neither entitled to nor guaranteed a job if

your mission isn't constitutional. He gave Democrats every opportunity to come to the table and keep the government working for the people. They refused and now those plans are being executed. "The RIFs have begun," OMB Director Russ Vought confirmed on X that layoffs are officially underway.

Trump has already shown he isn't afraid to act. Earlier this year, he dismissed inspectors general, ordered layoffs at ideological agencies like the National Endowment for the Humanities — which has poured taxpayer dollars into DEI vanity programs — and reduced staff at the EPA and NOAA long before the shutdown began.

Trump is executing a shutdown plan as an unprecedented audit — one no president has ever attempted. Legal scholars now debate the constitutionality of leveraging a funding lapse for structural reform. For the first time, a president is using a shutdown as a tool for permanent restructuring rather than a negotiation tactic, treating it as a wide-scale audit to align Washington's priorities with taxpayers rather than its own self-interest.

The constitutional implications are profound. Under the Impoundment Control Act of 1974, presidents may defer spending when it isn't necessary for the immediate execution of the law. Trump is using this authority to pause appropriations to ideological programs that are non-essential. Critics argue this is an unconstitutional "end run" around Congress's power of the purse. Yet the Constitution's Article II Take Care Clause vests the president with discretion to "faithfully execute" the laws responsibly — not rubber-stamp wasteful spending. Trump is posing the question: can the executive branch use a shutdown to impose fiscal restraint when Congress refuses to? And there is precedent — thin, but real — tilting in his favor. On September 26, 2025, the Supreme Court granted the administration a stay allowing Trump to withhold nearly \$4 billion in foreign aid pending appeal in *Department of State v. AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition*. The 6–3 order, with liberal justices dissenting, signaled a willingness to let the executive branch exercise broad discretion over deferred funds. While not a final ruling, it gives Trump clear constitutional footing — proof that his deferral strategy is grounded in precedent. Democrats call this shutdown coercion, but Trump is using Washington's dysfunction as a weapon for reform. If Republicans stand firm and refuse to blink, this will mark the beginning of a lean, accountable government that serves Americans rather than the swamp. America is ready for a reckoning. Trump is rebuilding government for the people who built this country.

By Mehek Cooke

Pakistan's Lal Masjid moment

Over the past few days Pakistan has cracked down on the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), a far-right Islamist group that was leading protest marches across Punjab province. The Pakistan military drove armoured personnel carriers through TLP protesters crowds as they marched towards Islamabad, shooting and killing dozens of people. Labbaik chief Saad Hussain Rizvi was shot and wounded while leading streets protests on October 14, his fate is uncertain. Internet blackouts have been imposed in Lahore, Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The violence unfolded even as Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif obsequiously fawned over President Donald Trump in Sharm-el-Sheikh as the Gaza peace plan was being initialled.

It is the closest Pakistan has come to China's crackdown on student protesters at the Tiananmen Square in 1989. The crackdown on the TLP marks what present military chief and de-facto ruler Field Marshal Asim Munir has called Pakistan's transition to 'a hard state'. Munir used an iron fist on the TLP where his predecessor General Bajwa used a velvet glove of diplomacy. Could the crackdown on the TLP become a Lal Masjid-like incident spreading across Pakistan?

In July 2007, Pakistani military dictator General Pervez Musharraf sent the military in to end a six-month standoff at Islamabad's red mosque. Pakistani forces stormed the mosque complex killing around 100 militants including two radical cleric leaders who had turned the mosque into a militant hub enforcing Sharia laws, attacking music shops and kidnapping Chinese workers.

Unofficial estimates point to the deaths of over 1,000 civilians in the military action. The incident triggered off a raging insurgency in North-Western Pakistan and led to the creation of the deadly Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the single biggest internal security threat to the state. A small localised standoff

triggered off Pakistan's bloodiest insurgency phase in which over 70,000 people have been killed so far. Pakistan has been here before. Every external adventure launched by its military dictators has resulted in internal chaos. Field Marshal Ayub Khan launched the 1965 war with India, and triggered domestic economic chaos which led to his exit. His protege General Yahya Khan launched a war with India in 1971 and lost half his country, East Pakistan. General Zia teamed up with the Western-led war in Afghanistan which seeded guns, drugs and radical Islam into his country. And finally, General Musharraf who overthrew the civilian government after his Kargil War adventure, put his country on the path to further ruin with the Lal Masjid attack.

In 2025, Field Marshal Munir has reaped the whirlwind for baiting India with the massacre of 26 Indian tourists in Pahalgam on May 20—the shattering of 11 Pakistani airbases, radar sites, the loss of several military jets and the deaths of nearly 100 Pakistani soldiers. Munir's position is far more precarious than of previous dictators. Pakistan's fragile economy is in the ICU, hooked on the ventilator-like support of a \$7 billion IMF loan. Munir has to contend with not just a hostile India along its eastern borders, but an angry Afghan Taliban which has killed and captured dozens of Pakistani soldiers along the 2,600 km long Durand Line. There are raging insurgencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a Bihar-sized Pakistani province along the Afghan border and in Baluchistan, a Pakistani province the size of Rajasthan. The Pakistan Army is the world's seventh largest, but it cannot simultaneously deploy along all fronts. Worse, the crackdown on the TLP unfolds in Pakistan's powerhouse province, Punjab. It is the core of the Pakistani state, its economic heart, political nerve centre and agricultural breadbasket.

By Sandeep Unnithan



ISSN No. 1554 06X

Editor in Chief

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Tel: 646 875 8495

Managing Editor:

Amaninder Singh Thind

Email: editor@thesouthasianinsider.com

Aruna Singh

Resident Editor (New Delhi)

Mailing Address:

NuWay Media Group Inc.

223 W, 38th Street, Suite 4

Manhattan, New York 10018

For General and Advertising Inquiries:

thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Publisher: NuWay Media Group Inc.

Disclaimer The South Asian Insider is a weekly newspaper published every week by The South Asian Insider. It's available in community & religious centers, ethnic grocery stores and also available by mail, email & online to subscribers. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers, authors and forum participants in The South Asian Insider do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editor. All advertisers advertising in The South Asian Insider assume responsibility for accuracy of their advertisements. The South Asian Insider and/or people associated with it are not responsible for any claims made by the advertisers and don't endorse any product or services advertised in The South Asian Insider. We strongly urge consulting your lawyer before buying/contracting/hiring through the ads published in the newspaper. We are in the business of selling space and claims made by the advertisers are not authenticated or confirmed by an independent source

Refugees Vs Infiltrators: Why HM Amit Shah's Stand Is India's Moral Obligation



In a recent address, Union Home Minister Amit Shah reignited one of India's most crucial national debates on who is a refugee and who is an infiltrator. By drawing attention to the persecution faced by Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, and Buddhists in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Shah has urged the nation to revisit its ethical and constitutional responsibilities in the post-Partition era. His argument is not political posturing but a necessary call to reclaim India's moral obligation and safeguard national interest.

To appreciate the depth of this argument, one must look back at the forgotten Nehru-Liaquat Pact of 1950. Signed in the aftermath of Partition's humanitarian crisis, the pact was a solemn promise between India and Pakistan to protect minorities on both sides. Those who chose to stay were to be guaranteed safety, dignity, and full rights. While India largely upheld that commitment, Pakistan and later Bangladesh systematically betrayed it. Over the decades, religious minorities in these countries, particularly Hindus and Sikhs, have faced relentless

persecution, conversions, temple desecrations, and state-sanctioned discrimination. Pakistan's Hindu population, which once stood at about 15 per cent in 1947, has plunged to less than 2 per cent today. In Bangladesh, the Hindu population dropped from 22 per cent in 1951 to barely 7.9 per cent by 2011.

It is against this backdrop that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), introduced by the Modi government, must be understood. Far from being exclusionary, the CAA is a humane correction of a historical injustice. It seeks to fast-track Indian citizenship for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians who fled religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan before 2014. These are not illegal migrants; they are refugees in the truest moral and historical sense. India, as a civilisational state rooted in compassion and pluralism, owes them protection.

In contrast, illegal infiltrators, largely economic migrants from Bangladesh and in some cases radical elements from Myanmar, enter

India without any claim of persecution. Their movement is driven not by fear but by opportunity, aided by porous borders and political patronage. For decades, certain political forces have encouraged and exploited this influx to consolidate vote banks, especially in border states. This cynical manipulation of migration has strained India's internal security, social cohesion, and demographic balance.

West Bengal and Jharkhand offer telling examples. In districts like Malda, Murshidabad, and North 24 Parganas, reports have documented demographic changes and rising influence of illegal settlers. In Jharkhand's Santhal Parganas, tribal communities have voiced concerns about land encroachment and the erosion of their cultural identity. The deliberate blurring of lines between genuine refugees and illegal infiltrators is not a coincidence; it has been politically engineered. This conflation serves short-term electoral interests at the cost of India's long-term stability and moral responsibility.

The demographic impact of

this infiltration is visible in national data. Census figures inform policy decisions on border security, resource planning, and social welfare while providing an empirical basis to defend India's demographic equilibrium.

At the core of Amit Shah's position lies a simple yet profound principle: compassion must coexist with responsibility. India has always offered refuge to those fleeing persecution, from Parsis escaping Persia to Jews fleeing Europe. But compassion cannot come at the cost of national security or social harmony. A nation must distinguish between those seeking safety and those defying its laws. By standing firm on identifying and rehabilitating genuine refugees while ensuring action against illegal infiltrators, the Modi government is not just advancing a political agenda. It is fulfilling a moral and historical duty. The distinction between refugee and infiltrator is not merely legal; it is ethical. It defines who we are as a nation — compassionate yet self-respecting, inclusive yet secure. India must now act with conviction and compassion.

Recognising the scale of this challenge, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced a National Demography Mission in his 2025 Independence Day address. This mission could be transformative, offering a scientific and data-driven understanding of India's demographic realities. If implemented with rigour, it can both separate natural demographic shifts from those driven by

By : Tuhin A Sinha

Why Hindu Americans Can't Do What Jew And Muslim Americans Can

When Shashi Tharoor raised a seemingly provocative question about the global Hindu community's inability to lobby for India the way Jews in the US advocate for Israel or Muslims campaign for Palestine, he tapped into a long-standing unease within sections of India's diaspora. His remarks, made at a public event, drew swift responses from several non-resident Indians (NRIs) and persons of Indian origin (PIOs) in America. They countered that India's decision-makers seldom consult them before taking major policy decisions—such as buying oil from Russia or voting at the United Nations—and that they are often treated merely as emotional extensions of the homeland rather than as stakeholders in policy outcomes.

At one level, the NRI lament is outlandish. No sovereign country consults its overseas citizens before making foreign or economic policy choices. Yet, Tharoor's pin prick touched a raw nerve because it revealed a deeper question about influence: Why have Hindu Americans, despite their wealth and education, not attained the political leverage that Jewish-Americans enjoy, or the ideological coherence that binds American Muslims on issues like Palestine?

This comparison is not new, but it is newly urgent. Indian-Americans have risen rapidly in visibility over the past two decades, producing senior officials, business leaders and even members of Congress. Still, their collective political voice remains fragmented. To understand why, it helps to explore how other diasporas—particularly Jewish-Americans—built power over generations. That contrast begins with history.

Jewish experience, American integration

Jewish migration to America began in waves through the 19th century, driven by persecution in Europe and the promise of religious freedom. It was not easy, as American Christians were no less swayed by the notion that Jews were the

'killers' of Jesus Christ. One thing that the older Americans perhaps did not throw at the Jews is envy. European Christians—as much as Asian Muslims—were jealous of Jews, seeing the Israelites become the first among the followers of the three Abrahamic faiths to become rich, thanks to the business of interest on money considered evil in Christianity and Islam but not in Judaism. There were enough rich men in the capitalist US to resent Jewish riches.

Yet, the early Jewish settlers faced hostility, discrimination and exclusion. If Europe saw Jews portrayed as villains, American cinema portrayed Jews (and Blacks) as villains too.

Examples from classic English literature

The Canterbury Tales (c 1400): In "The Prioress's Tale," Jewish characters are depicted in a classic antisemitic blood libel, accused of murdering a devout Christian child.

The Jew of Malta (1590s): Christopher Marlowe's play features Barabas, a greedy, treacherous, and murderous character, who helped define the "villain Jew" stereotype on the English stage.

The Merchant of Venice (c 1600): William Shakespeare's Shylock is the most famous example of this archetype. Though given a humanising monologue, he is characterised as a vengeful moneylender who demands a "pound of flesh" and is ultimately forced to convert to Christianity—a "happy ending" for the Christian characters.

Oliver Twist (1838): Charles Dickens's Fagin is a villainous "crafty old Jew" who runs a school for child pickpockets. Dickens initially referred to Fagin as "the Jew" over 250 times, reinforcing the association of criminality with his Jewish identity. After a Jewish reader criticised the portrayal, Dickens removed many of the references in later editions and created a positive Jewish character, Riah, in a later novel. Trilby (1894): George du Maurier's novel features Svengali, a manipulative Jewish

rogue and hypnotist who dominates a young woman. The character was so influential that his name entered the English language as a term for a sinister manipulator. When film emerged in the 20th century, many of these same stereotypes were transferred to the screen.

Antisemitic caricatures: The early 20th century saw the phenomenon of "Jewface," vaudeville acts that featured exaggerated Jewish stereotypes with props like putty noses and fake beards. Early cinema adapted many of these tropes.

Nazi propaganda: In the 1930s and 1940s, Nazi Germany weaponised these historical caricatures in its propaganda films to portray Jewish people as satanic, greedy, and inferior. A 1943 production of The Merchant of Venice in Vienna, for example, depicted Shylock as a demonic figure to support Nazi ideology.

Controversial adaptations: The 1948 film adaptation of Oliver Twist was denounced by Jewish groups in America for its antisemitic depiction of Fagin, leading to the film's postponement in the US.

The "Jewish American Princess" stereotype: Post-war Jewish male writers, and later cinema, popularised the "JAP" stereotype, portraying young, materialistic, and spoiled Jewish women.

That was until several rights movements in the 1960s forced the American racists to climb down their high horses.

Over time, the Jews in America organised themselves into tight-knit communities centred on synagogues, charities and cultural institutions. From the outset, Jewish immigrants recognised the necessity of solidarity to survive in a majority-Christian society. That solidarity evolved into political coordination.

By the early 20th century, Jewish newspapers, cultural organisations and philanthropic networks had formed a vast informal infrastructure for communal representation. After the horrors of the Holocaust, Jewish activism entered a new

phase: moral urgency fused with political strategy. Groups such as the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and later the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) refined lobbying into an art. They cultivated bipartisan connections, funded research centres and established think-tanks that shaped American opinion about Israel and anti-Semitism.

It took decades of sustained effort. Jewish leaders worked patiently to normalise pro-Israel positions within Washington's mainstream. When critics today call US Middle East policy "tilted" towards Israel, they overlook how that tilt emerged from generations of community-building, strategic philanthropy and civic participation. The result is not merely influence over foreign policy but a broad societal sympathy for Jewish concerns—a by-product of cultural immersion through education, arts and civil rights movements.

Muslim identity, shared faith The Muslim-American story is very different but equally instructive. Muslims in the US are far more ethnically diverse—comprising Arabs, South Asians, Africans and converts—yet they have gradually coalesced around faith-based advocacy. Their political influence is still evolving, but organisations such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) have given them a public voice.

The Palestinian issue provides a coherent moral and political framework to all Muslims in the US, transcending their respective nationalities, with their advocacy prioritising a global Muslim identity. This communal psychology contributes to their emotional unity. Not the case with the Hindu-American community! Predominantly Indian in origin, Hindus in the US represent a single country but lack an equivalent unifying ideology. Moreover, if

individually, Indians constitute no more than 1% of the American population—too small for lobbying—and Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, or Arabs are fewer than Indians, the Islamic collective makes up for the absence of a large number of migrants from one given country.

As a saving grace, Indian-Americans are hardly casteist and their separate denominations—like Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta, Smartha, etc—do not manifest in the US to the point where Hindu unity would become a tough ask. However, India's internal political polarisation often spills into the diaspora, dividing Indian-Americans between secular liberals and those aligned with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Indian-American paradox Indian-Americans are among the most prosperous ethnic groups in the United States, with high median incomes and remarkable educational attainment. Silicon Valley, academia and medicine are full of Indian success stories. Yet political power does not automatically follow economic success. Unlike Jewish or Muslim groups, Indian-Americans have not built long-term institutions for coordinated lobbying. The existing organisations—such as the US-India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) or the Hindu American Foundation (HAF)—operate in silos and often struggle for mainstream acceptance. There is also a generational factor. The first wave of Indian immigrants in the 1960s and 70s arrived under professional visas, focused on assimilation and career advancement. Political activism was rare. Their children, more culturally confident and socially integrated, are beginning to enter politics—figures such as Pramila Jayapal, Ro Khanna, and Vivek Ramaswamy illustrate this new visibility—but ideological divisions persist. Jayapal's left-leaning stance on India's human rights record often clashes with the nationalist sentiment of conservative Hindus.

By :
 Surajit Dasgupta

Why are Bangladesh's July Movement leaders talking of safe exit?



The joint statement issued after the London meeting between Muhammad Yunus, the head of the interim arrangement in Bangladesh, and BNP leader Tarique Rahman, declared that Bangladesh would hold a general election before the start of Ramzan fasting in the second week of February. Even now, the interim arrangement in place states the same thing regarding the election date.

There is a disagreement over the election method though.

Among the political parties close to the current interim arrangement, a dispute has arisen over the method for holding the election. Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, and other fundamentalist parties want the parliamentary election under a system of Proportional Representation (PR). By contrast, one of the country's major political parties, the BNP, insists that the election must be held in accordance with the Constitution. The immediate past opposition in Parliament, the Jatiya Party, agrees with the BNP's demand. Meanwhile, activities of the country's largest political party, the Awami League, are now banned by executive order, so there is no official position to be known from them. The interim arrangement's constitutional obligation Whatever the legal footing of the current interim arrangement, they have taken an oath before the President as advisers (equivalent to ministers or executives) under Bangladesh's Constitution. In that oath, they said, "That I will preserve, protect, and defend the

Constitution", which falls under Article 148 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The present interim arrangement is, therefore, oath-bound. They have no legal means—consistent with their oath—to go outside the Constitution in conducting a parliamentary election. For this reason, if this interim arrangement is to hold a parliamentary election, it must do so precisely as the Constitution stipulates.

Election under constitutional provisions

Clause (2) of Article 65 of Bangladesh's current Constitution states regarding parliamentary elections: "Parliament shall consist of three hundred members to be elected in accordance with law from single constituencies by direct election and, for so long as clause (3) is effective, the members provided for that clause; the members shall be designated as members of Parliament". (Clause (3) addresses the nominated women members of Parliament.) Since the present interim arrangement must conduct the election in accordance with the Constitution—and political parties must also participate in the election under the Constitution—there is no alternative but to hold the vote by direct ballot in single-member constituencies, as the Constitution provides. In this situation, the debate over PR versus the constitutionally existing method is being viewed as a tactic to delay the election.

The Upper House proposal and a new dispute

Particular Constitution-and

election-related commissions created by the current interim arrangement, along with parties close to the government, have introduced another controversy. They want to establish an Upper House of Parliament. Part I of the Constitution, under "The Republic", states: "Bangladesh

is Unitary to be known as the People's Republic of Bangladesh". Being a unitary country, there is no constitutional path to create an Upper House in its Parliament. One of Bangladesh's leading political and economic research organisations—still somewhat supportive of Muhammad Yunus (nearly one hundred percent when the interim setup came to being)—said at a discussion on October 9 that the needless debate over an Upper House must end.

Yet a key student representative of the July Movement, aligned with the interim arrangement—the same person who, while accompanying Yunus in New York, refused to shake hands with an older woman, a practice usually seen among Afghanistan's Taliban—insisted that they want an Upper House in Parliament. The

fundamentalist coalition's position and the role of the commissions Hardline fundamentalist organisations supporting Muhammad Yunus—namely, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, Hefazat-e-Islam, and the student leaders which appointed Yunus in the first place and later became the NCP—are advancing debates about the election that stray beyond the Constitution. Commissions set up by Yunus facilitate these debates and, in effect, enable them to gain traction. From time to time, they convene meetings with political parties and, through those forums, provide repeated opportunities to float and amplify such controversies. In reality, these disputes are constitutionally meaningless—little more than fodder for the media.

By Swadesh Roy

SMALL DONATIONS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE



help where it's needed most.

SupportDisasterRelief.org

Bihar's power map: The NDA's advantage and the Mahagathbandhan's openings



Who will win Bihar? We analysed the results of the past seven elections, both Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha, held after the 2008 delimitation and classified constituencies into five categories based on performance:

Very Strong: Won six or seven times

Strong: Won four or five times Moderate/Battleground: Won three times Difficult: Won only once or twice Weak: Never won The reasoning is simple. If a party wins an Assembly seat in Vidhan Sabha polls or leads in that segment in Lok Sabha polls, it is a strong seat. After all, outcomes are influenced by differing factors at the state and national levels. On this basis, BJP has 66 while JDU 48 "A & B" Category Seats. The two parties won 117 seats in 2020, nearly around this number. RJD and JDU both have 116 each "D" Category seats highlighting lack of state wide presence of these parties. Congress has 189 "E" category seats pointing out the fact that it should settle for around 55 seats in ticket distribution (243 - 189 = 54). The regional breakdown reveals distinct power bases. The Bharatiya Janata Party leads with 15 Very Strong seats in North Bihar. The Janata Dal (United) follows with 12. The Rashtriya Janata

Dal and the Indian National Congress have only two and one, respectively. In South Bihar, the JDU has five Very Strong seats and the BJP four. The saffron party dominates South Bihar with 31 Strong seats. The JDU has 18 and the RJD nine. Of the JD(U)'s 48 Very Strong and Strong seats, 62.5 per cent or 30 are in North Bihar. Similarly, the BJP has 46 of its 66 Very Strong-Strong seats (70 per cent) in the north. The RJD has 61 per cent of such seats in North Bihar. With the highest concentration of Very Strong-Strong seats for all major parties, North Bihar emerges as a critical region for determining Bihar's political trajectory. Control over this region effectively means control over the state, as it accounts for 140 of the 243 seats (58 per cent) in the Assembly.

NDA has an edge, but

The BJP and the JD(U), the major National Democratic Alliance parties, have 114 Very Strong and Strong seats. A 122-seat majority mark gives the NDA an edge. However, the 2024 general election results show that the BJP lost 30 per cent of such category seats at the national level. Going into the general elections, the BJP had 262 such seats. But it won only 184 of them, losing 78 seats to the Congress and other parties. It had 82 Battle-

ground seats, of which it won just 30 (37 per cent strike rate), meaning 63% were won by Congress and other parties. The Congress party also had similar strike rates in Very Strong and Strong seats (67 per cent) as well as Battleground (22 per cent) seats.

The decider

There are 125 Battleground seats in Bihar. The NDA has 101 such seats, out of which 53 seats were won by it in 2020 (including the Lok Janshakti Party, which fought separately but has since entered the NDA fold). The Mahagathbandhan needs to focus on these seats to improve its chances of winning while holding onto its Moderate seats. If the Mahagathbandhan holds onto 80 per cent of its 2020 tally of 110 (88 seats) and wins 63 per cent of the NDA's Battleground seats of NDA (33 seats), then it can win 121 seats and reach eerily close to the majority number of 122.

Can Mahagathbandhan turn the tables?

A VoteVibe survey shows more than 50 per cent of respondents would not vote for their MLA if they contest again. The Mahagathbandhan needs to execute a hyperlocal campaign focusing on the NDA's Battleground Seats, highlighting failures of incumbent MLAs, wooing disgruntled

EBC/SC voters with more tickets to their candidates, and propagating points of the EBC Nyay Patra, all the while consolidating gains made amongst Dalits in the 2024 general elections. It also needs to highlight that a vote for the Jan Suraaj Party is a vote for the NDA. So, electoral dominance is clearly

far from uniform in Bihar. While the BJP and the JD(U) have multiple strongholds, the large number of Difficult and Weak seats for all parties indicates a fluid electoral landscape where alliances, local factors, and campaign dynamics can significantly alter outcomes.

By Amitabh Tiwari



Advertisement (Public Service Message)

Smokey Bear is within us all.

For wildfire prevention tips, visit SmokeyBear.com

ad COUNCIL  

Indo-Afghanistan Ties: A New Era



The visit of Afghanistan's Foreign Minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, to New Delhi is more than just a routine diplomatic engagement — it's a bold reaffirmation of India-Afghanistan civilisational ties, enduring friendship, and strategic cooperation. At a time when regional tensions are running high, this visit sends a clear signal to Pakistan and China that India's partnership with Afghanistan is resilient, principled, and impervious to external pressures. During high-level discussions with External Affairs Minister, Dr S Jaishankar, both countries emphasised their firm commitment to peace, stability, and regional cooperation. India's support for Afghanistan is multifaceted, extending across healthcare, infrastructure, capacity-building, humanitarian aid, and education. From gifting twenty ambulances and establishing healthcare centres to offering scholarships for Afghan students, India is demonstrating that its engagement goes beyond diplomacy — it is an investment in human development, long-term stability, and people-to-people ties. Equally significant is the reaffirmation of sovereignty and security. Afghanistan's commitment that its territory will not be used against India is a rare display of trust in a region dominated by covert rivalries and proxy conflicts. This explicit pledge underscores a partnership rooted in mutual respect and shared security interests — an enduring partnership that stands firm against attempts to destabilise it. Muttaqi's engagements outside formal diplomacy — including interactions with scholars, visits to Darul Uloom Deoband, as well as cultural and business meetings — highlight the deep historical roots of India-Afghanistan ties. These connections are not transactional; they are interwoven with centuries of shared culture, literature, and trade — ties that survive political upheavals and external pressures. Economically, this visit signals an ambitious agenda. Afghan traders are set to meet Muttaqi in New Delhi to explore trade in sectors ranging from dry fruits and pharmaceuticals to infrastructure. Furthermore, India has been invited to invest in Afghanistan's vast mineral wealth — from copper and lithium to gold and marble. These initiatives underscore Afghanistan's intent to diversify its economic partnerships and reduce dependency on hostile neighbours. Coming amid strained Kabul-Islamabad relations and Pakistan's recent cross-border operation targeting alleged Taliban-linked camps, the timing of Muttaqi's visit adds a geopolitical dimension. The outreach to New Delhi comes as a deliberate assertion of Afghanistan's sovereignty and a strategic recalibration in favour of India. For Pakistan, it's a clear reminder that attempts to influence Afghan policy are no longer effective, and for China, it highlights that India remains a steadfast partner in regional stability. India's upgradation of its Technical Mission in Kabul to a full-fledged embassy further cements its long-term commitment to Afghanistan's development, sovereignty, and stability. In a region where trust is rare, India-Afghanistan relations exemplify resilience, mutual respect, and strategic foresight. The discussions also emphasised important issues like sovereignty, territorial integrity, and mutual security. Afghanistan's commitment to ensuring that its territory is contingent on external pressures nor susceptible to a clear and unequivocal regional coercion. Despite past invasions, wars, and political instability, the bond between New Delhi and Kabul has nurtured armed groups to endured — proving that regional partnerships rooted in trust, history, and mutual interest are far stronger than the ephemeral manoeuvres of adversaries. In an age where cooperation between India and Afghanistan is both rare and significant. Despite political turbulence, regional provocations, and past adversities, India-Afghanistan ties remain robust. It is a partnership that reinforces not only economic growth and regional stability but also to Afghanistan's sovereignty and growth. It is a message — India stands with that goes beyond words: India Afghanistan, shaping a future stands unwaveringly with of resilience, cooperation, and Afghanistan, nurturing a shared prosperity in South partnership that reinforces Asia. These ties are not merely stability, development, and peace in South Asia transactional; they are embedded in shared culture, India-Afghanistan ties, built on centuries of shared history, literature, religion, and mutual respect, and — from trade routes to unwavering support, are intellectual exchange — which sending a message louder no temporary political than any diplomatic statement: turbulence can sever. For China despite all odds, this and Pakistan, the implications relationship will endure — a are clear: India's resilient partnership, shaping with Afghanistan is neither the future of the region.

Shoe-strike at Constitution: Hate is in the air

Here is an intriguing question: what if the lawyer who threw the shoe at the Chief Justice of India in open court was not named Rakesh Kishore but Rahim Khan instead? Is it likely that he would not be let off scot-free but instead would face charges under the National Security Act, Public Safety Act (if he was a Kashmiri Muslim) or maybe even the Unlawful Prevention Activities Act? The aim here isn't to gaslight anyone but to turn the searchlight on a hateful and divisive ecosystem where coarse public opinion can influence the criminal justice process.

Let's understand the chronology here. Last month, Chief Justice BR Gavai dismissed a plea to reconstruct a damaged Lord Vishnu idol at a temple in Khajuraho. While deeming it a "publicity interest litigation," Justice Gavai remarked that instead of filing a petition, the petitioner should "go and ask the deity himself to do something. If you are saying that you are a strong devotee of Lord Vishnu, then you pray and do some meditation." The judge's seemingly mocking tone was wholly unnecessary, but remember these were only observations: the case was dismissed because the court ruled that this was a matter for the Archaeological Survey of India to adjudicate upon.

Unfortunately, the politically 'weaponised' armies on social media have little time to read reasoned court judgments. Justice Gavai's passing remarks on the Vishnu idol were enough to set off a hysterical response amongst right wing groups and individuals, many of them patronised by the regime at the Centre. The well-orchestrated outrage campaign forced the Chief Justice of India to clarify that he believes in all faiths, visits all sites of worship and trusts in 'true secularism'.

But the clarification was clearly not enough to satiate the permanently enraged Twitter mob fury. Instead, it only emboldened them further: memes, hashtags and YouTube videos continued to castigate Chief Justice Gavai.

In this surcharged environment, Rakesh Kishore, a 71-year-old advocate, chose to vent his anger by throwing a shoe at the Chief Justice. "Sanatan



Dharma ka apmaan, nahi sahega Hindustan (the abuse of Sanatan religion will not be tolerated in Hindustan)."

While Justice Gavai, with great dignity, chose not to pursue the matter further and refused to file a case, Kishore has been unrepentant, relishing his one week of fame by maintaining that "I will do it again!"

Rather than take suo motu action as would be the case with any ordinary citizen, the Delhi police has chosen a 'hands off' approach. Kishore, meanwhile, continues to speak with the impunity of someone who knows he can't be touched by the law even though he is clearly guilty of contempt of court. His cheerleaders, especially on social media, have lauded him instead of ostracising him.

Should any of this come as a surprise? The law minister, Arjun Meghwal, for example, was conspicuously silent when the attack took place. And it took eight hours after the incident for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to tweet that the shoe-throwing was a "reprehensible act which has angered every Indian."

While the PM's strong words are welcome, recall that in 2019, Mr Modi expressed similar anguish over remarks made by BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur glorifying Nathuram Godse, saying he would never be able to

forgive her fully.

Yet, no concrete action was taken against the saffron-robed MP who completed her full term in parliament without too much fuss. Pragya Thakur is, after all, cut from the same Hindutva cloth of the Sangh Parivar that has never fully distanced itself from the Godse cult.

Advocate Kishore is part of a similar belief system, someone who claims to be a staunch 'defender' of Sanatan Dharma. The difference is where Godse pulled the trigger to assassinate the Mahatma, Kishore chose a relatively milder weapon, a shoe, to convey his anger. In both instances, the intolerant mindset is undeniable: any perceived offence to 'hurt Hindu sentiments' is enough for a violent streak to instantly surface.

It is almost as if the self-anointed 'thekedaars' of religion or defenders of the faith are just waiting for an opportunity to have their moment in the sun. How different are these rabid Hindutvawaadis from the Islamists who screech 'Sar Tan Se Juda' when they claim to be similarly offended? In a republic of 'hurt sentiments' across communities, the 'normalisation' of violence is what is reprehensible, not just the shoe-throwing act per se.

There is another troubling

angle to this case. Justice Gavai is the second Dalit to hold the high constitutional post of Chief Justice. He comes from a political family rooted in neo-Buddhist thought and Ambedkarite values and whose father RS Gavai was a prominent figure in the Republican Party of India movement. Visit the Chief Justice of India's house, and Ambedkar portraits and memorabilia are omnipresent. In a sense, his ascent to the CJI's post marks the symbolic fulfilment of an Ambedkarite dream of a more equal opportunity society for traditionally oppressed castes.

Paradoxically, his family origins in the Dalit movement make Justice Gavai even more vulnerable to targeted attacks. When, for example, Justice Gavai passed a stern order on 'bulldozer justice' a year ago, while affirming that bulldozer demolitions were fundamentally anti-constitutional, he was once again the object of a vicious online campaign from right wing groups. Not surprising again, since it is Yogi Adityanath's muscular, unapologetic Hindutva government in Uttar Pradesh that has been at the vanguard of the demolition brigade.

Which is why the shoe attack must be seen for what it is: an attempt to establish 'Sanatan Dharma' supremacy within an

avowedly secular constitutional framework. The shoe thrown by Advocate Kishore was not just aimed at Justice Gavai, but it was meant to consciously intimidate and undermine a judicial system that is meant to be rational, just and non-discriminatory. Advocate Kishore's act was not that of an unstable mind, but a calculated move designed to make a political statement in full public gaze. He does not represent a lunatic fringe as might have been the case a few years ago but is now emblematic of a majoritarian worldview that seeks to replace a constitutional system based on equal citizenship with a Hindu Rashtra where the rule of the numerically largest community will prevail over the rule of law. Which is also why it is so dangerous and indefensible. In a multi-religious society, law must be kept above faith. And any act of violence and coercion must be condemned by one and all.

Post-script: Since the column started with an intriguing question, let me end it with another one directed at those who seek to rationalize the violent shoe-throwing act as one of 'courage': Would Indian Muslims be justified tomorrow to display similar anger towards the judges who delivered the contentious Ayodhya judgment? Surely not.

By Rajdeep Sardesai

The 'Real' Message To Trump And Pak In Taliban Minister's India Visit

In what is being billed as a landmark visit, Taliban acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi began a week-long trip to India yesterday. This is the first ministerial-level engagement between India and the Taliban since the group's return to power in August 2021 and follows a temporary travel exemption granted by the UN Security Council's Taliban Sanctions Committee on September 30, lifting Muttaqi's long-standing travel ban.

Upon arrival, Muttaqi was welcomed by India's Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal, who said New Delhi looked forward to "engaging discussions on bilateral and regional matters". Muttaqi has been holding meetings with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, and will also visit the Taj Mahal, Darul Uloom Deoband, and Afghan community representatives during his stay.

A Massive Shift In India's Approach

India had been amongst the last countries in the region to open channels of communication with the Taliban, when it was imminent that the US would withdraw from the country. But before that, it had been amongst the most consistent supporters of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, committing \$3 billion to the war-torn country's reconstruction and capacity-building of the Afghan people.

India has not yet formally recognised the Taliban regime, and even ministerial interactions have been minimal. Till now, the first and only interaction has been when Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar held a telephone call with Muttaqi in the wake of Operation Sindoor. This visit, thus, heralds a massive, even if cautious diplomatic shift in India's approach to the regime.

The Message From Moscow

Muttaqi's Delhi sojourn follows a visit to Moscow, where he led a delegation for the first time and participated in the Moscow Format of talks on Afghanistan. The Indian Ambassador to Russia, Vinay Kumar, participated in the consultation along with representatives of Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and, of course, Afghanistan. A joint statement was released at the end of the talks, where parties reaffirmed their unwavering support for the establishment of Afghanistan as an independent, united and peaceful state, and for strengthening counter-terrorism cooperation at both bilateral and multilateral levels "so that Afghan soil is not used as a threat to the security of the neighboring countries and beyond".

The statement made two key points. One was the aim to develop "regional economic projects with Afghan participation

and ... the active integration of Afghanistan into the system of regional connectivity." The other was calling "unacceptable" the "attempts by countries to deploy their military infrastructure in Afghanistan and neighboring states, since this does not serve the interests of regional peace and stability".

The first points to the intent and determination of the participants of the talks - all in Afghanistan's neighborhood - to continue building ties with and integrate Taliban-ruled Afghanistan in the regional economic, connectivity, and security framework. The second, on the other hand, was a thinly veiled reference to US President Donald Trump's demand to have the Taliban hand over the strategic Bagram air base to America. The Taliban leadership had refused to do so, and the joint statement from the Moscow Format talks reflects the opposition of all of Taliban's neighbours and regional countries to American or any other extra-regional presence in Afghanistan.

The Thorny Bagram Question

The Bagram issue may be far more complicated. Sources say that continuing with US military bases in Afghanistan is linked to the secret annexures of the 2020 Doha Accords that the first Trump administration signed with the Taliban, which, in turn, facilitated their return to Afghanistan. Muttaqi was a key interlocutor in these talks.

However, now, the Taliban leadership is hamstrung by the opposition of their other members and loyalists to a renewed US presence in the country, as well as that of its regional partners, on whom it is now dependent for trade, humanitarian aid, and, most importantly, the legitimisation of their regime.

Internal fissures in the Taliban also play a role, with divisions between the Quetta Shura and the Kandahar Shura, the pro-Pakistan and anti-Pakistan leaders within the Kandahar Shura, and so forth, starkly visible. Last night's bombing of Kabul by the Pakistan air force demonstrates just this.

A Break From The Past

What is important, nevertheless, is that India also joined in this statement, expressing its intent to deal with the Taliban, and, more importantly, conveying its opposition to renewed US presence in Afghanistan. This heralds India's alignment with the regional process and approach to the Taliban. It also indicates a shift in its Afghan policy from the days of the Islamic Republic, when New Delhi had aligned its interests with those of the US and NATO. Of course, this alignment had been imperative back then - think of the Taliban's close links at the time with the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the brutal

hijacking of Indian aircraft IC 814, or the indiscriminate targeting of Indian personnel and workers in Afghanistan, or the Taliban's sheltering of Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda.

Now, however, in a startling demonstration that change is the only constant in this fickle world of ours, Muttaqi in his speech in Moscow has warned that terrorist organisations, such as Daesh, were setting up training and operational bases in neighbouring countries, which posed a growing regional threat.

Everything Has Changed

In fact, the singular risk of the emergence of Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISIS-KP), which has wreaked death and devastation not just in Afghanistan but also in Iran and Russia - not to mention the dangers it poses to China and other Central Asian countries on the region - has been a major reason why countries from Russia to China, Iran to Uzbekistan have come around to recognising the Taliban as the de-facto rulers of Afghanistan. That's not all: the Taliban itself has been battling the very forces it had once aligned itself with. In Moscow, Muttaqi announced that Afghanistan faced threats from Daesh. In the four years it has been in power in Kabul, it has managed to take over much of the country, including the Panjshir Valley, which had been the stronghold of the opposition National Resistance. But no neighbouring country has been faced with any terror emanating from Afghanistan.

Pakistan Being Pakistan

The only country that has been at odds with it is Pakistan, but this is a result of the latter's own feckless policy of creating and nurturing terror groups, as well as its own indiscriminate bombing of Afghanistan's bordering provinces last December. This also proves that while the Taliban may have been created by Pakistan, it is no longer under the latter's control and is independent in its policies and activities, something that India welcomes.

Almost all regional countries and powers have extended the Taliban recognition. Russia became the first country this year to recognise them as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. Taliban envoys are also present in many other countries like China and Kazakhstan, with whom this author had the opportunity to meet and interact. Other countries like Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, the UAE, Turkey, and, of course, Qatar and Pakistan, have been engaging with the Taliban for even longer. Three main pillars undergird this recognition: regional security, as discussed above, trade and connectivity, and geopolitics. A 'New' Taliban? This Taliban is also not the Taliban of the past. Since taking over

Afghanistan, they have made numerous overtures to the international community, including India, promising good neighbourly relations as well as security. The Taliban has on many occasions pledged against permitting Afghan territory to be used as launchpads for attacks on other states, something that has held true. It is also seeking investors and trade partners to develop its economy, without which its rule would be unstable. The freeze by the UN on some \$9 billion Afghan foreign reserves has added to its woes. Next, Afghanistan is a resource-rich country, whose geostrategic location at the heart of Asia makes it a natural roundabout connecting South and Central Asia. The trade routes through the Af-Pak region are the shortest ones for countries of both South and Central Asia for accessing each other's goods and markets, while Afghanistan reaps major transit dividends. In the same vein, India's Chabahar Port was intended for accessing not just Afghanistan but also, through it, the markets and resources of Central Asia.

India Is Playing It Safe

Finally, from a geopolitical point of view, neutralising any threats from Afghanistan is important for India as it faces renewed hostility from Pakistan and trade hostility from the US, which is now realigning itself with Islamabad. Moreover, there are fresh intelligence reports that the ISIS-KP is aligning itself with Pakistan-based terror groups, such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). For Russia, China and Iran, locked in conflict with the West, it is important to align geopolitically with Afghanistan to preempt it from again becoming a base for Western powers.

India is now following a regional approach. It is protecting its strategic interests in the region while hedging against any threats. For, in spite of extending recognition to the Taliban and the latter walking the talk on preventing terror threats emanating from its territory, grey areas persist. One of them pertains to the internal rifts and rivalries that plague the organisation, and which can spill across its borders. Next are the Taliban's domestic policies towards sections of its own population - in particular women, girls, and minorities, which have brought it much global infamy. India has always followed a non-prescriptive policy regarding every country. Still, practising democracy and the rule of law at home while turning a blind eye to a medieval regime goes against India's own values. By building bridges with the Taliban and continuing its humanitarian aid and capacity-building for the Afghan people, India can, as it has always done, encourage the regime to rethink many of its domestic policies.

By Aditi Bhaduri

Visits Aside, Will UK Ever Apologise To India?

Years ago, a British journalist friend confessed something that revealed how the ghosts of the empire still linger quietly in British minds. He was travelling to Delhi to discuss a partnership with an Indian broadcaster. At Heathrow, the airline staff asked for his Indian visa. "Why would I need a visa for India?" he asked, genuinely puzzled. When told that he could not board without one, he laughed awkwardly and returned home. Later, after travelling to India on a valid visa, he confessed to me upon his return to London that he took India for granted, as if it was still an extension of Britain. He was a nice bloke and loved India. But, in a condescending way, while he rolled a cigarette between his lips, he said, "I suppose we Brits still think of India as our playground." I was shocked to hear that but kept a straight face and teased him: "You have finally learned that the Raj expired decades ago." He admitted how reflexive those old assumptions were. That quiet entitlement, that ease of habit, had become almost instinctive. Some attitudes die not with age, but with awareness. And admittedly, awareness takes time.

That conversation comes to mind now because every so often Britain reminds us that its imperial instincts are still alive, only dressed in modern sensibilities. Just as Prime Minister Keir Starmer landed in India last week, hoping to renew a relationship built on trade and shared values, a senior Tory MP, Robert Jenrick, dragged the tone back to the Raj era. Referring to Handsworth, a largely South Asian area of Birmingham, he described it as "a slum" and said that during his 90-minute visit, "I didn't see another white face."

Those words were telling. They revealed a discomfort that runs deeper than prejudice. It was the voice of the empire speaking in a modern tongue. At times, I hear such voices in social interactions, casual conversations and serious debates even now.

India-UK relations are today passing through a phase of warmth and contradiction. Prime Minister Modi's visit to London in July to conclude the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), followed by PM Keir Starmer's visit with the largest-ever business delegation to India, has brought visible optimism to a relationship once burdened by its past. "India and the UK are natural partners," PM Modi said in Mumbai. "Our relationship is built on the shared values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law."

He added, "India's dynamism and the United Kingdom's expertise together create a unique synergy." His words reflected confidence and generosity, but also a subtle reminder that India stands tall now, no longer the junior partner of



the past.

Curse Of The Colonial Past

Yet, beneath the warm smiles and measured speeches, there lingers a familiar unease: can this new partnership truly be one of equals when so many in Britain still speak the language of cultural superiority?

Jenrick's remark exposed that unease. Handsworth is no slum. It is a mosaic of ambition and memory: sari shops and spice stores, gurdwaras and mosques, small businesses and cafés, all echoing the story of people who built lives from scratch. These are the very families whose labour helped rebuild post-war Britain, who drove its buses, staffed its hospitals, taught in its schools and kept its factories alive. Yet to Jenrick, it was alien ground, not English enough, not white enough.

Isn't it ironic that as Britain courts modern India with open arms, parts of its political class still recoil at the sight of brown faces thriving in its own cities.

Jenrick's words were not a careless slip. They reflected an enduring mental map of an empire that still divides the world into "civilised" and "other". His discomfort at seeing no white faces in a British street echoes the old anxiety that Britain is losing its cultural control, even as it preaches global inclusivity.

And yet, this is the same Britain that today needs India more than ever. The United Kingdom's economy is slowing, its manufacturing base hollowed out, its global influence diminished, particularly after Brexit. India, by contrast, is growing steadily, confidently, and with purpose. It is now among the world's top five economies, a technological powerhouse, a manufacturing hub and a democratic counterweight to China's rise. The truth, quietly accepted in London's corridors of power, is that Britain needs India far more than India needs Britain. But habit and history make it hard to say aloud.

Will Britain Ever Apologise?

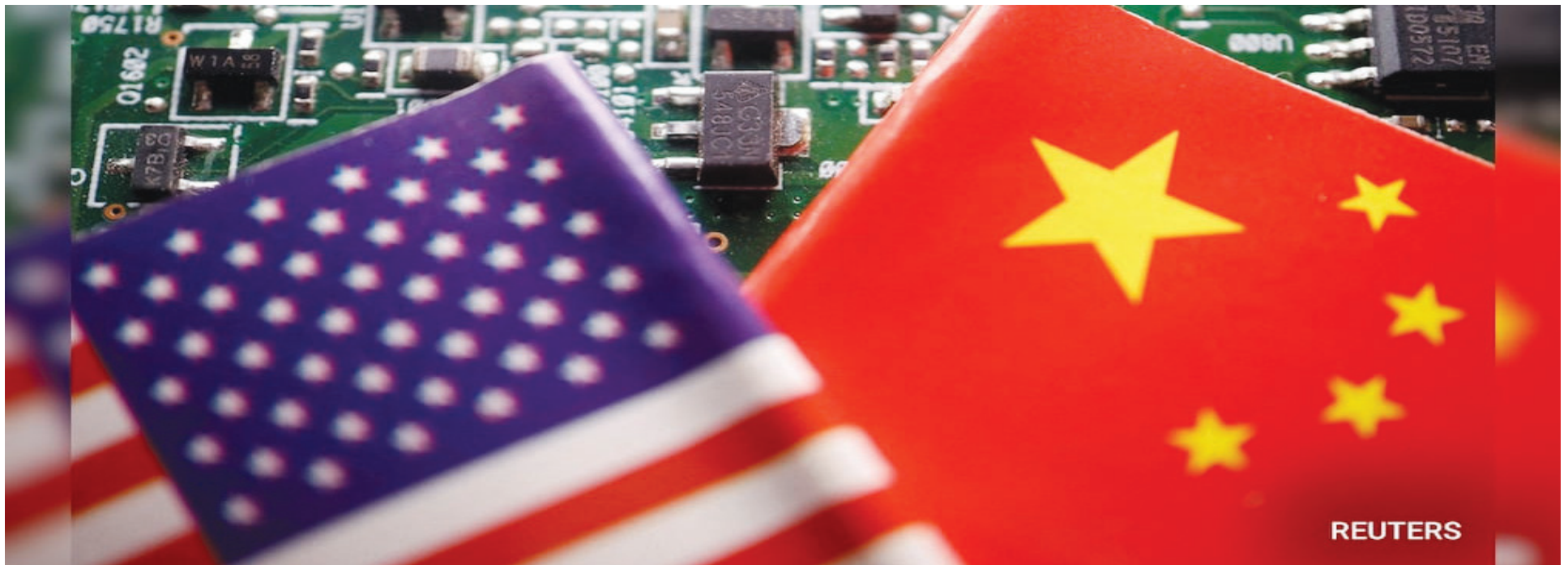
As the two prime ministers toast their shared vision, one question still lingers, will Britain ever truly confront its colonial past? Will it ever apologise for the wrongs of the empire, for Jallianwala Bagh, for the engineered famines, for the systematic draining of wealth that impoverished generations? Each time an Indian leader visits Britain, the question

resurfaces: will London ever say sorry? Each time, it sidesteps, offering instead the language of "regret", as if the empire were an unfortunate misunderstanding rather than a deliberate exercise of domination. In many Indians' view, a formal apology would not be an act of humiliation; it would be one of fairness, of correcting the wrongs of history. It would recognise in no uncertain terms that the prosperity of one nation was built upon the suffering of another. It leaps to the eye that when a modern democracy admits its moral failures, it grows in stature, not weakness. An apology from Britain would not erase the past, but it would dignify the present. It would tell the world that Britain is ready to engage with India not as an heir to the empire but as an equal partner in a new century. Today, the tables of power have turned, haven't they? Consider this: India has what Britain once commanded - youth, scale, energy and the confidence of a nation whose time has come. Britain has what India still values: influence, networks and access to Washington's ear. The Free Trade Agreement will open vast opportunities. Tariffs will fall, markets will open and mobility will increase.

By Syed Zubair Ahmed


 An advertisement featuring a close-up of a cannabis leaf. Overlaid on the leaf is a white rectangular box containing the text "THIS IS AN AD THAT SAYS YOU SHOULDN'T DRIVE HIGH" in bold, black, sans-serif capital letters. The word "AD" is in green. At the bottom left of the box, there is a small logo for "ad COUNCIL" and another for "NHTSA" (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration). On the left side of the leaf, there is vertical text that reads "Advertisement (Public Service Message)".

US-China Trade War Has Turned Into A Full-Blown Siege, And India Is Stuck



Ahead of a planned Trump-Xi meeting in South Korea in late October, Beijing announced sweeping export controls on rare-earth elements, magnets, and high-energy battery materials. It also imposed tighter licensing on dozens of processing, refining, and mining technologies and materials. It was not policy but power politics in chemical form.

President Trump retaliated with threats of 100% tariffs and new curbs on software exports, casting doubt on whether the summit would proceed. Beijing insisted the impact would be "extremely limited", claiming its measures served "national security", meaning supplies for defence industries would be rejected. Analysts in China admitted, however, that they were also a response to Washington's expanded export controls on Chinese chipmakers and higher port fees on China-built vessels.

This is no longer a trade war. It is a supply-chain siege, waged one element at a time. The United States weaponises semiconductors, Beijing weaponises minerals. And in the crossfire, the rest of the world is caught.

Where India Hurts Most

India's exposure is uncomfortably high. Nearly 90% of our rare-earth and magnet imports come from China, about 53,700 tonnes in 2024-2025 alone. This is a core vulnerability.

From electric vehicles (EVs) and auto electronics to wind power turbines and aerospace, every magnet we import is a reminder that supply chains have become the new borders of power. Domestic production remains nascent. When Beijing slows approvals, production lines from Pune to Coimbatore will feel the tremors.

Just as the 1970s oil embargo revealed global energy vulnerabilities, the mineral chokehold of the mid-2020s is

exposing material dependencies.

What Changed Last Week

China expanded its control list and extended its licensing regime beyond its borders. Even goods made abroad with Chinese inputs can now be held up, mirroring the U.S. practice of regulating foreign items built with American technology.

Beijing calls these licences, not bans, but each one is a permission slip for the modern economy. Approvals for civilian use are promised, yet queues are long and denials selective. In effect, the licence has become the new weapon, and compliance the new coercion.

The ripple effects came almost immediately. In Europe, the Dutch government moved on Sunday to seize control of the Chinese-owned chipmaker Nexperia, citing threats to technological sovereignty and the safeguarding of crucial knowledge. The timing, just days after Beijing's export curbs, shows how minerals and microchips now share the same fault line in the global contest for economic security.

India's Early Responses

New Delhi has begun to move. The government is advancing a National Critical Minerals Stockpile to secure a year's worth of strategic reserves, including neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium, and terbium, metals essential for EV motors and wind turbines.

A production-linked incentive scheme to boost domestic manufacturing is being drafted to seed India's first commercial magnet plants. Pilot lines may appear by early 2026, though real volumes will take longer. The Indian Rare Earths Limited has been asked to curb exports and prioritise domestic users.

To reduce exposure, some auto suppliers are testing magnet-free motors such as switched-reluctance and induc-

tion designs, which are alternative motor designs that use no rare-earth materials. These are sensible beginnings, but the clock is ticking. India's challenge is not discovering minerals, it is developing the discipline to turn dust into design.

The Dependency Trap

India holds the world's fifth-largest rare earth reserves, about 6.9 million tonnes. But we are almost entirely import-dependent for refined magnets and alloys. Even where countries hold ore, refining often happens in China. The bottleneck is not geology but technology.

Even if India mines ore tomorrow, it could not plug into the chain without mastering downstream complexity. Beijing has over decades gained high-purity separation and magnet-making expertise.

Foreign subsidiaries in China must now seek export permission, and Chinese engineers aiding overseas partners can be penalised. China no longer sells minerals. It sells access, and access comes with allegiance.

A Playbook for India

India cannot contest these measures legally, as they fall under national-security exemptions. It can, however, outgrow them strategically. Minerals may be finite. Ingenuity is not.

India's path forward has three clear stages: stability, strength, and solidarity.

First, stability. Build 12 to 18 months of buffer stock for critical elements. Use bonded warehouses and staggered purchase orders across multiple Chinese suppliers while parallel-sourcing from Japan, Korea, and the European Union.

Second, strength. Mining is geology. Refining is technology. India must invest in separation plants, sintered and bonded magnet lines, and recycling systems. Public-private partnerships anchored by EV and defence demand can create

8,000 tonnes of capacity by 2028, including mandating end-of-life recycling to meet 15% of needs.

Third, solidarity. Activate the 14-nation Minerals Security Partnership that includes India, Japan, the US, and the EU, to pool investment, share standards, and create emergency swap lines, the mineral equivalent of strategic oil reserves.

From Scarcity to Sovereignty

If the oil crisis of 1991 forced India to reform its economy, the mineral shock of 2025 must drive us to rebuild our industrial foundations. A national mission on rare-earth processing, backed by the same ambition that built our nuclear and space programmes, can turn vulnerability into strength. Just as India defied odds to launch its space efforts, it must now mine the future beneath its feet, turning ore into opportunity. The goal is not autarky but autonomy to ensure Indian factories run on Indian confidence, not Chinese approvals.

A Future Written in Elements

Beijing's export controls, timed before diplomacy, reveal insecurity more than strength. By weaponising minerals, China has reminded the world why diversification is destiny. What Beijing sees as leverage, others see as a warning that control over elements cannot translate into control over economies. For India, the message is unmistakable. Build capacity before crisis. The same elements that today expose our dependence can tomorrow anchor our independence. Nations that master materials master modernity. The rest wait for licences. China has weaponised the elements, yet India can shape them into the substance of its sovereignty. Where others see leverage, India must see possibility. From elemental dust, a sovereign future, too, can be cast.

By Syed Akbaruddin

Trump's Gaza Plan: Ushering "Peace for Our Time" In West Asia?

The long-elusive ceasefire is only the opening overture of a fiendishly complicated serial act. Seasoned observers of the region advise taking it with a ladleful of salt.

President Trump's sudden announcement on October 9 about Hamas and Israel having both "signed on the First Phase of his Peace Plan for Gaza" might have prompted many Indians to call out de ja vous - reminding them of a similar Trumpian claim five months ago, taking credit for stopping the four-day-old India-Pakistan air war. The two claims have similarities, but also fundamental differences. These were both premature and prompted by ulterior motives, viz., a full-throated and self-serving quest for the Nobel Peace Prize, which ironically still eluded him. The differences between the two cases, however, are quite stark and require some analysis.

It's Just That Complicated

Firstly, while taking credit for stopping the India-Pakistan air war might be a Trumpian "Truthful Hyperbole" and confined to largely calling up the two capitals over a relatively short span, the Gaza cessation needed a protracted engagement with the two belligerents. It did not help that Washington had proscribed one of them, Hamas, as a non-state actor deemed a terrorist outfit, while its proximity to the other, Israel, was widely disapproved, particularly by the Arab-Islamic Ummah.

Secondly, as compared to the relatively simple act of persuading the two South Asian leaderships to de-escalate, the Gaza bid was quite complex, involving a group of mediators, as Washington needed to cobble an elaborate, sequentially arranged, multi-phase Peace Plan.

Not So Easy, Not So Soon

Thirdly, while Trump's proverbially short transactional attention conveniently moved on to the sub-continent once the ceasefire was achieved, the Gaza ceasefire is a sticky can of worms. The long-elusive ceasefire is only the opening overture of a fiendishly complicated serial act. To begin with, it requires sustained follow-up through multi-layered minefields, involving meeting the humanitarian needs and resettlement of over 2 million Gazans, living amidst millions of tons of debris that the UN estimated might take a decade for clearance.

Fourthly, the US and other stakeholders would then have to wade through a veritable obstacle course, which Trump's 20-point programme has charmingly glossed over. For instance, persuading Hamas and associated militias, in power for nearly two decades and having survived through two years of an all-out Israeli onslaught, to agree to disappear both militarily and politically. The initial post-



ceasefire developments belie that intention. Further, creating a Hamas-proof political and security state structure from scratch would require patience and perseverance, particularly if Hamas resists it. Further, a universally acceptable pathway to a viable Palestinian State would meander through comprehensive reforms to the Palestine Authority (PA). Morphing the PA into an entity perfect at governance and yet subservient enough to be acceptable to Israel and the settlers is a contradiction in terms and a prescription for instability.

Account For The 'Other' Actors

Once all these mutually contradictory pre-requisites are met, the White House's long-term ambition of extending the Abraham Accords to Saudi Arabia and other prominent Arab and Islamic countries could be realised. Only then can Trump's breezy claim of "Strong, Durable, and Everlasting Peace" in the region at hand become a fait accompli. But the scenario presupposes that in the meantime, the rejectionists led by Iran and motley fundamentalists such as ISIS and al-Qaeda would lie low. That is a highly unlikely prospect. No wonder seasoned observers of the volatile region, while acknowledging the tactical gains of the typical sleight of hand by Trump, may advise taking it with a ladleful of salt.

The Text Itself

A careful parsing of the 20-point Trump Plan, revealed on September 27 after close consultations with the Israeli Prime Minister and eight Arab and Islamic leaders, makes for interesting reading. It is carefully scripted - to avoid various red lines such as a "two-state solution", "the past UN resolutions and role of its agencies", "Gaza Riviera", "Palestinian territorial integrity", "genocide and war crimes", "Israeli settlements", etc. At the

same time, it includes the various essential buzz words insisted upon by various stakeholders: such as Israeli sine quo non "immediate release of all hostages", creating Gaza as a "deradicalised terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbours", Israeli "security perimeter presence", "No role for Hamas and other factions", etc. For Hamas, there are references to "amnesty", "non-occupation and non-annexation of Gaza", "full restoration of aid", "redeveloped for the benefit of the people of Gaza", "No one will be forced to leave Gaza", and the US-led dialogue between Israel and Palestinians. To entice Saudi Arabia and other fence-sitting Arab-Islamic countries, specific mention has been made of "pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood, which we recognise as the aspiration of the Palestinian people", "PA reforms", "transitional governance of a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee", "inter-faith dialogue" to promote tolerance and peaceful co-existence". Finally, for the personal aggrandisement of the occupant of the White House, the plan talks of a "Board of Peace headed and chaired by President Donald J. Trump" and "Trump economic development plan to rebuild and energise Gaza". Conspicuous by their absence in the text are any roles for the "international community" (excluding the Western Europeans, Russians, Chinese and the UN at large), the "Arab League", the "OIC", etc. This uncompromisingly ensured that Washington remains the only arbiter of this process - apparently, Trump's regional stakes are too high to accept other meddlers. The only global aspect included is the International Stabilisation Force (ISF), which would do the dirty work of ensuring the return to peace and normalcy in Gaza after two years of volatility. Interestingly, the US

has announced an initial contribution of 200 military personnel to the ISF, with the caveat that they would not serve in Gaza. While the Chinese have remained taciturn about the evolving Trump Plan, Moscow has voiced reserved support.

The Art Of The Deal - No, Really

Even though the contents of the 20-point plan were quite elastic and custom-tailored, the tactics deployed in pursuing its acceptance were straight out of the four-decade-old, ghost-written Trumpian classic, *The Art of the Deal*. It leveraged the dynamics of his symbiotic relationships with both Netanyahu and the Gulf Arab leaders, alternately coordinating, refining, and even cajoling them. Selective White House leaks and the use of his regional envoy Steve Witkoff and his son-in-law Jared Kushner were deployed to keep his interlocutors off balance and portray the White House as being tough on Israel. Frequent, starkly worded, one-liner public ultimatums were issued to Hamas to intimidate and create an aura of omnipotency. Pressure was also mounted on Hamas through its traditional supporters such as Qatar and Turkey. As the short-term results showed, the ends justified the means, but we would have to wait for the dust to settle to have the full silhouette of this narrow-based Trump Tower still being built.

War prevention and war cessation is a messy and risky business, not given to lofty claims. Most wars eventually end in a political settlement. However, sometimes, the converse is also true. On his return from Munich on September 30, 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain told his countrymen that the "Munich Agreement" giving Sudetenland to Nazi Germany and the bilateral Naval Agreement signed alongside would ensure "peace for our time", recommending them to "go home and sleep quietly in your beds". Within 11 months began the Second World War, the most destructive carnage humanity has ever witnessed. We still remember President George W Bush II claiming the "Mission Accomplished" in 2003 in Iraq - only to be followed over a decade of bloodletting. Consequently, even as we mark the release of hostages and prisoners today, it's too early to tell whether history will etch the Trumpian October 12 claim "The War is Over" and his assertion "I think it's (the region) going to normalise" next to the other two instances of make-believe and braggadocio.

Canada Seeks To Ease China, India Tensions As Trump Digs In



(News Agency) Canada is pushing to strengthen ties with China and India, even as it remains in precarious trade talks with a US administration that has escalated its tariff war with Beijing.

Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand is travelling to New Delhi, Mumbai, Singapore and Hangzhou, China this week to meet with her counterparts and lay the groundwork for boosting trade and investment. Her task is hard and extremely delicate: Canada's disputes with Asia's two most populous countries are serious, and any steps to ease tensions with China will need to be taken carefully to avoid triggering a reprisal from US President Donald Trump. But Anand argues Canada is taking the same approach with every country - putting the interests of its workers and businesses first. It's a clear shift under Prime

Minister Mark Carney, who has prioritised the economy above all else, scrapping many of the tenets of Justin Trudeau's foreign policy. "It goes back to being a sovereign country," Anand said in an interview with Bloomberg News, when asked how Canada can balance its relationships with China and the US. Trump threatened an additional 100 per cent tariff on Chinese products on Friday, causing equity markets to dive, though on Sunday the president signalled openness to a truce. "Having a stable relationship with a major global economic player is of exceeding importance in this geopolitical environment," Anand added.

"Canada is going to approach the relationship with China guided by one principle - acting in the best interest of Canadians." Under Trudeau, Canada joined the Biden administration in erecting a tariff wall against Chinese electric vehicles, steel and aluminium, and Carney has maintained that policy. Carney's negotiators are trying to strike a deal with the US that would offer some relief from Trump's steel and aluminium tariffs, and a major part of their pitch is that a fortified North American supply chain in those industries is essential to countering China.

France Unveils New Government Led By Same PM Amid Political Crisis

(News Agency) France's President Emmanuel Macron unveiled a new government on Sunday, after marathon talks to cobble together a cabinet and prevent the country from slipping deeper into a political crisis. The lineup, a mix of old and new faces, is Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu's second attempt at bringing together a team to overcome months of deadlock and pass a much-needed austerity budget through a deeply divided parliament. "A mission-driven government has been appointed to provide France with a budget before the end of the year," Lecornu wrote on X on Sunday. The new team must present a 2026 draft budget before a Tuesday deadline, giving parliament the constitutionally required 70 days to scrutinise the plan before year's end. But it faces a tough fight for its survival after the legislative chamber toppled Lecornu's two predecessors over cost-cutting measures, and with many disgruntled at his reappointment.

According to the cabinet lineup published by the president's office, Jean-Noel Barrot remained as foreign minister. Outgoing labour minister Catherine Vautrin took on the defence portfolio. Roland Lescure, a Macron loyalist, is in charge of the economy, with next year's budget as a top priority.

Old and new

France has been mired in political crisis ever since Macron last year called snap polls,

intending to consolidate his power but ending up instead with a hung parliament and gains for the far right. After being named prime minister in early September, Lecornu presented his first cabinet last Sunday, but resigned a day later after the lineup was criticised for not having enough new faces. Macron reinstated Lecornu late Friday, triggering outrage and vows from opponents to oust his cabinet at the first chance. Lecornu, a former defence minister and Macron loyalist who has described himself as a "warrior monk", said last week the government should include technocrats but no-one with any ambitions to run for president at the end of Macron's term in 2027. In the new cabinet announced Sunday, Paris police chief Laurent Nunez took over the interior ministry, replacing Bruno Retailleau whose right-wing Republicans party said it would not be part of Lecornu's government. Monique Barbut, the former France director of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), was to head the ministry of environmental transition.

Gerald Darmanin, a hardliner who has pushed for high-security prisons, stayed on as justice minister.

And Rachida Dati, a scandal-ridden culture minister who is set to stand trial on corruption charges next year, also retained her post.

'Bill-by-bill'

The French president, who is facing the worst domestic crisis



since the 2017 start of his presidency, has yet to address the public since Lecornu's first government fell.

He was scheduled to head to Egypt on Monday to support a

Gaza ceasefire deal brokered by the United States -- a trip that could delay the presentation of the draft budget. The premier has pledged to work with all mainstream political

movements. But he is under pressure from parties across the political spectrum, including the leftist Socialists, a swing group, who have threatened to topple his government unless he backs away from a 2023 pension reform that increased the retirement age from 62 to 64. The right-wing Republicans, once a key political ally, said this weekend they would only cooperate on a "bill-by-bill" basis. The far-right National Rally, the largest party in parliament with ambitions to win power in 2027, has vowed to vote out any new Lecornu government.

Trump, Putin to meet in Budapest to end 'inglorious' Russia-Ukraine war

(News Agency) US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that he will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Budapest to work toward ending what he described as the "inglorious" war in Ukraine. The announcement followed a phone call that Trump described as "very productive."

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said Putin congratulated him and the United States on achieving "peace in the Middle East," calling it an accomplishment "dreamed of for centuries." "I actually believe that the success in the Middle East will help in our negotiation in attaining an end to the war with Russia/Ukraine," Trump added. Trump also noted that Putin expressed appreciation for First Lady Melania Trump's humanitarian work with children and said it would continue. "We also spent a great deal of time talking about trade between Russia and the United States when the war with Ukraine is over," Trump wrote. Trump said both sides had agreed to convene high-level advisors next week

to prepare the groundwork for the talks, with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio leading the American delegation. The meeting between Trump and Putin, he said, would take place in Budapest, Hungary — seen as a neutral venue with close ties to both Washington and Moscow.

Meanwhile, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov confirmed that the call took place at Russia's initiative. He said Putin warned Trump that any US decision to supply Tomahawk cruise missiles to Ukraine could harm the peace process and damage bilateral relations. Ushakov added that the Budapest summit would be preceded by a call between Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, once the groundwork is complete.

Trump is scheduled to meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House on Friday to discuss his conversation with Putin and other related matters, including US military aid and ongoing diplomatic coordination between the two nations.

Venezuela Shuts Norway Embassy After Maria Corina Machado Wins Nobel

(News Agency) President Nicolas Maduro will shut Venezuela's embassy in Norway after opposition leader Maria Corina Machado was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, rebuffing Oslo's move to recognise her fight for democracy in the South American nation. Venezuela ordered its embassy in Norway's capital closed as a result of an internal "reorganisation" of its diplomatic missions, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement posted on Instagram. Venezuela will also close its embassy in Australia in accordance with the country's "geopolitical principles" of "peace and integration." Norway has been a key mediator

in talks between Maduro and Venezuela's opposition. Maduro's decision comes on the heels of Machado's 2025 peace prize award on Friday and the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign in the Caribbean to hold him accountable as leader of a drug cartel.

The prize is awarded by an independent committee appointed by Norway's parliament, which is not related to the Executive's foreign affairs policy. Norway's government brokered on-and-off talks between Maduro and the country's opposition between 2019 and 2024, leading to the failed

Barbados Agreement. Caracas's decision on the embassy closing seems to signal an end to its communication options with Oslo for the foreseeable future. Since the failed agreements, which Maduro consistently dismissed before holding a 2024 presidential vote that was widely condemned as fraudulent by international observers, the international isolation of Maduro's government has deepened.

While Venezuela requested a resolution in the United Nation's Security Council to defend its sovereignty, neighboring nations have not acted unanimously in defense of Maduro, but rather with caution. Brazil and Colombia



criticised the US actions, while Venezuela's Instagram posting also announced the opening of representations in Zimbabwe and Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago endorsed the US deployment. In addition to the closures in Burkina Fasso, "to strengthen Norway and Australia, ties with the Global South."

Amazon Fires Employee Who Protested Company's Ties to Israel

(News Agency) Amazon.com Inc. has terminated an employee who protested the e-commerce giant's ties to the Israeli government. Ahmed Shahrour, a 29-year-old Palestinian engineer, was fired on Monday for violations of company policy, including statements intended to "threaten, intimidate, coerce or interfere with" senior leaders and colleagues, according to an email seen by Bloomberg. Shahrour, who worked for the retailer's Whole Foods Market unit, was suspended last month after he posted a series of messages to corporate Slack chat rooms criticizing Amazon's connections to Israel. He subsequently protested and handed out fliers at Amazon's Seattle headquarters campus. "We don't tolerate discrimination, harassment, or threatening behavior or language of any kind in our workplace, and when any conduct of that nature is reported, we investigate it and take appropriate action based on our findings," Amazon spokesperson

Brad Glasser said in an emailed statement. Amazon, along with Alphabet Inc.'s Google, provides cloud-computing services to Israeli government and military entities, under an umbrella contract called Project Nimbus. Both companies have been targets of protests by critics of Israel's conduct during its war in Gaza, which killed thousands before a ceasefire took effect on Monday. "Amazon is not a neutral observer," Shahrour said in a note to his colleagues last month. "We are active participants." Shahrour was also among a group of seven current and former tech workers who occupied Microsoft President Brad Smith's office in August as part of weeks of protest targeting that company for its sales to Israel. Shahrour and his fellow protesters were arrested and released. After an investigation spurred by news reports in the Guardian and other outlets, Microsoft subsequently disabled the use of some of its software by an Israeli military unit.



Madagascar military seizes power as Gen Z protests force President to flee

(News Agency) the president's flight and the Madagascar's military on Tuesday announced it had assumed control of the Indian Ocean island nation after President Andry Rajoelina fled abroad, capping weeks of anti-government protests and deepening one of the country's gravest political crises in years. Colonel Michael Randrianirina, a commander in the elite CAPSAT unit, declared on national radio that the army had "taken the power" following

the president's flight and the National Assembly's vote to impeach him. Randrianirina, who led a mutiny of soldiers siding with demonstrators, said the armed forces were dissolving all institutions except the lower house of parliament, which minutes earlier had voted to remove Rajoelina. He said a council made up of military and gendarmerie officers would now take charge and quickly appoint a prime minister to form a civilian government.

POWER STRUGGLE DEEPENS CRISIS

The dramatic takeover came after Rajoelina, 51, attempted to dissolve the National Assembly by decree in a last-ditch bid to block impeachment proceedings. But his move backfired as large sections of the army and security forces defected, refusing to act against protesters and throwing their support behind the mutinying soldiers. Hours later, the president fled Madagascar

aboard a French military aircraft, as a per a report by Reuters. An opposition official and a foreign diplomat confirmed he had left the country on Sunday, while the presidency insisted he had only moved to a "safe place" because of threats to his life. In a video message broadcast on social media Monday night, Rajoelina said he would not resign and that "the constitution should be respected," calling the rebellion "an attempt to seize power

illegally and by force." His office earlier dismissed the Assembly's impeachment vote as "null and void," saying the session was unconstitutional.

GEN Z PROTESTS TOPPLE GOVERNMENT

The upheaval followed nearly three weeks of youth-led protests that began on September 25 over erratic water and electricity supplies but quickly grew into a nationwide movement accusing the government of corruption, mismanagement, and indifference to poverty.

Shehbaz Sharif glorifies Trump, credits him for halting India-Pakistan war

Shehbaz Sharif praised Donald Trump at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit, backing his claim of mediating peace between nuclear powers India and Pakistan. Sharif called Trump "a man of peace" and endorsed him for the Nobel Peace Prize.

(News Agency) Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday endorsed US President Donald Trump's claim of mediating peace between India and Pakistan, saying the American leader "prevented a possible nuclear conflict" between the two countries. Speaking at the Gaza Peace Summit, Sharif called Trump as "a man of peace" and backed his Nobel Peace Prize claim. The unexpected exchange unfolded when Trump, in the middle of his address, invited Sharif to speak before world leaders gathered in Sharm El-Sheikh to discuss Gaza's post-war future. "Do you want to say something?" Trump asked, urging the Pakistani leader to "say what you said to me the other day." He also praised Sharif and his "favourite field marshal" Pakistan army

chief Gen Asim Munir. Sharif spoke for about five minutes, praising Trump for his relentless diplomatic efforts to prevent wars and bring peace to conflict-hit regions.

PRAISE FOR TRUMP'S PEACE EFFORTS

"Today is one of the greatest days in contemporary history because peace has been achieved after untiring efforts led by President Trump, who is genuinely a man of peace," Sharif said before world leaders in Egypt. He added that Trump had "worked tirelessly throughout this month to make this world a place to live with peace and prosperity." The Pakistani leader, visibly moved, went on to formally nominate Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize. "Pakistan has nominated President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize



for his extraordinary efforts to first stop the war between India and Pakistan and then achieve a ceasefire, along with his very wonderful team," he said. Sharif reaffirmed his admiration, calling Trump "the most genuine and the most wonderful candidate" for the honour.

'STOPPED SEVEN, NOW EIGHT WARS'

Sharif's endorsement came

just hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's parliament also put Trump's name forward for the Nobel, citing his role in mediating peace agreements in the Middle East and averting military escalations. In his speech, Sharif credited Trump with preventing nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan. "Had it not been for this

gentleman, who knows -- India and Pakistan are both nuclear powers -- had he not intervened with his wonderful team during those four days, the war could've escalated to a level where no one would have lived to tell what happened," he said. Sharif added that Trump's peace-making role extended to the Middle East, crediting him and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi for their mediation. "Mr President, your valuable contribution along with President Sisi, I think history will remember in golden words," he said. Earlier, Trump praised PM Modi saying, "India is a great country with a very good friend of mine at the top. And he's done a fantastic job. I think that Pakistan and India are going to live very nicely together."

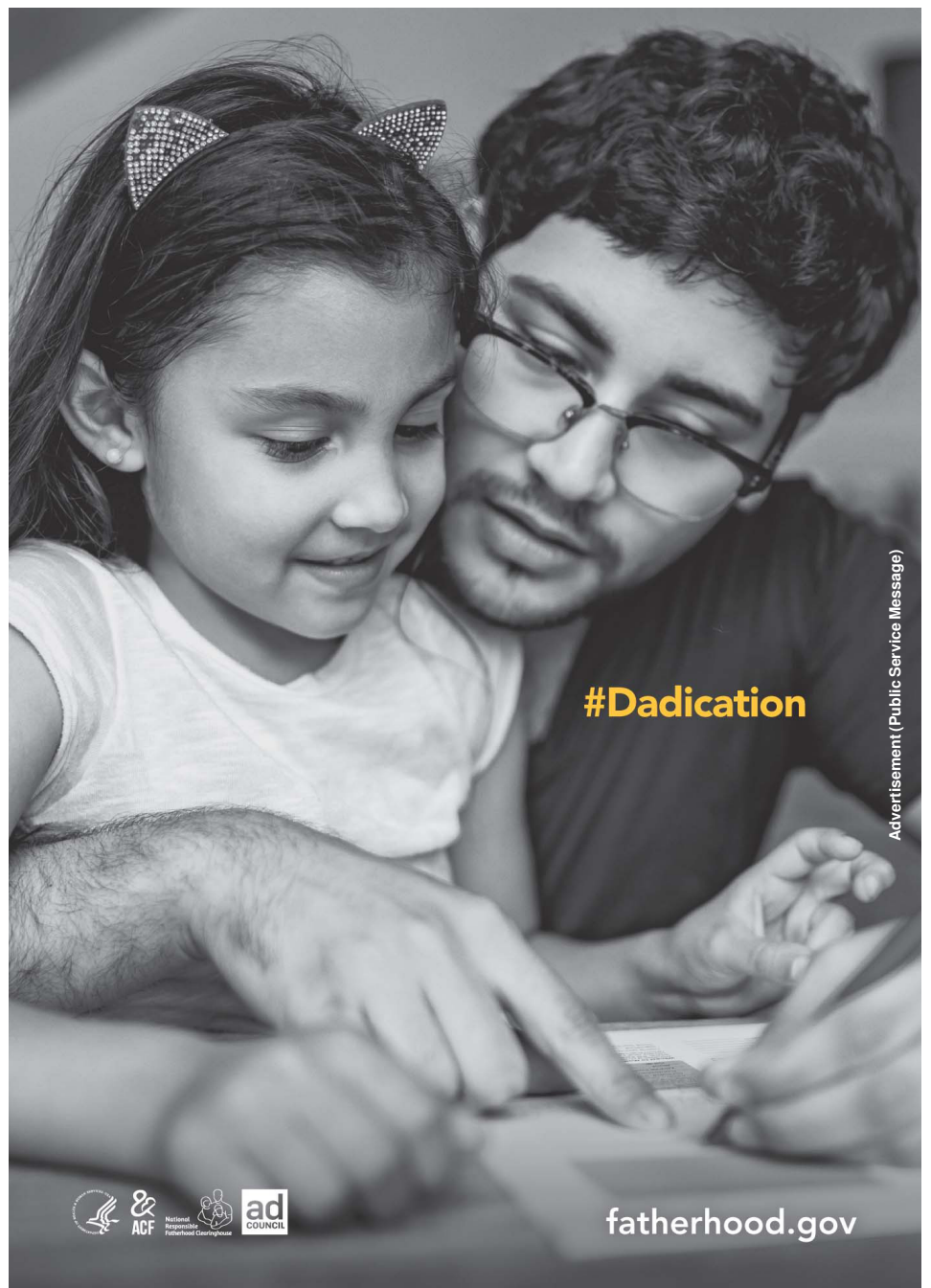


AMERICA'S DEADLIEST SHOOTINGS ARE ONES WE DON'T TALK ABOUT

On any given day in America, too many of our mothers, brothers, partners, and friends are taken from us by gun suicide. But tomorrow's deaths could be prevented. Take the next step to store all your guns more securely: locked, unloaded, and away from ammo.



EndFamilyFire.org



#Dadication

Advertisement (Public Service Message)



fatherhood.gov

Inside India's Scariest Scam, And How To Stop It

On a hot and humid August morning last year, Biren Yadav was alone at his home in Gurugram, when his phone rang. The call was from a woman claiming to represent the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India. The caller seemed to know everything about Yadav, a 77-year-old former Indian Air Force officer. She read out his address, national ID and tax account number - all correctly. "One of your phones is transmitting antinational messages," said the caller. "Unless the cyberpolice clears your name, we have to freeze all your numbers." That was the beginning of Yadav's "digital arrest," an elaborate scam that preys on India's affluent.

This is no small-time hustle. One ex-banker says he was conned out of 230 million rupees (\$2.6 million) in August, and government data puts the collective toll at 25.8 billion rupees (\$290 million) since 2022. But if global trends are anything to go by, that figure, which tracks 242,000 known cases, likely dramatically underestimates the problem.

A survey last year by the Global Anti-Scam Alliance, a nonprofit based in The Hague, found that only 28 per cent of financial-scam victims report the crime to law enforcement, while 1 in 5 don't even try to get their money back. No wonder: Those who try seldom succeed. Outside of the US, UK, Canada and Australia, recovery rates are dismal. In India, those who lose small sums are often told by the police not to bother registering their complaints; after a laborious judicial process, they'd be lucky to see a few cents on the dollar. Some are so shaken by the ordeal, or so embarrassed by their own gullibility, that they choose to hide their losses from their own families.

The damage caused by the rise of the digital-arrest con - which has found fertile ground amid the country's soaring youth unemployment, endemic corruption and glaring wealth inequality - runs deep and wide. For victims, it goes beyond the financial, with the trauma of the experience leaving painful scars. Banks, where criminals control fraudulent accounts that play a key role in draining victims' savings, are on notice; they'll have to kiss cheap liquidity goodbye if the scam leads the middle class to lose trust in the

financial system. Many of the syndicates that orchestrate these grifts are run from outside India, which risks turning the whole situation into a national-security headache. And as factors like artificial intelligence and an influx of cryptocurrencies enter the picture, an already dire situation could quickly get worse. Yadav knew none of this when he picked up the phone. His first assumption was that

their accounts. Digital arrests, by contrast, deliver the knockout punch right at the beginning - by making vulnerable individuals feel the mighty boot of law enforcement on their chest. The criminals don't ask for bribes; they insist on proof of innocence. Victims suffer from extreme fear and psychological shock, and they seek relief by voluntarily handing over huge sums to

Vaswani says Asia is in the midst of a "scamdemic," and Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar are its ground zero. Indeed, in Yadav's case, the police eventually traced his scammer's number back to Cambodia. India offers rich pickings for this variety of online con. A digital juggernaut is rolling through the world's fifth-largest economy.

But without sufficient

sensitive personal information would be deeply problematic. Tax officials, for instance, have been given sweeping powers to snoop into people's emails, chats and social media. Opposition politicians, student leaders and civil-society activists are being held, often for months or even years without trial, on corruption, money-laundering, sedition or terror charges brought by the same investigating agencies whose names are used by criminals to intimidate victims of digital arrests. Between the fear of Big Brother and the ubiquity of online misinformation, even educated, successful individuals have stopped trusting their own better judgment about what to believe.

In the case of Usha Goswami, a retired marine biotechnologist living in Goa, that confusion helped enable a brutal four-day digital arrest in June. When scammers first showed Goswami a copy of her Aadhaar card, she says she was skeptical, thinking, "Anybody can fake it." But when they said her bank accounts were being used by human traffickers to launder money and the police were on their way to arrest her, she got scared. To prove that her funds were clean, her handlers insisted she transfer the cash to "government-approved accounts" for verification. The 80-year-old scientist ended up losing 9.7 million rupees (\$109,000), according to the police report she later filed. By the time Goswami and her Singapore-based daughter got a court order to start recovering the funds, Yes Bank Ltd., the receiving institution, had released a big chunk of the money to another claimant. Most of Usha's savings were gone - possibly for good.

Follow The Money

Yadav, who was now several hours into his digital arrest, agreed to an interrogation over Skype with a man who identified himself as a junior officer of the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Indian equivalent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. (Skype was a popular staging area for this ripoff until Microsoft Corp. retired the service in May; Goswami's digital arrest took place on WhatsApp.) Yadav would now meet the "senior officer" who would decide his fate. The actor who played that role sat at a large desk, in full uniform, India's national emblem displayed on the wall behind him. People kept entering the room with files as he barked orders. Of Yadav, he asked his junior: "Why haven't you



his personal data must have been compromised; someone had used his credentials to register a number that wasn't his. He agreed to let the caller transfer the call to the cyberpolice to sort out the misunderstanding. Here's where the story took a more sinister turn: Yadav was passed to another official-sounding voice, who informed him that the government believed he belonged to a 246-person cabal working in cahoots with Naresh Goyal, the founder of what was once India's largest private airline. With Goyal out on bail in a bank-fraud case, his coconspirators were being rounded up, the "police officer" said. Yadav's only option, he said, was to plead his innocence to the Central Bureau of Investigation over a video call - or face arrest for hiding 300 million rupees (\$3.4 million) of Goyal's alleged loot in his accounts. The Rise Of A 'Scamdemic' According to GASA, scams are a \$1 trillion-a-year global industry. Shopping fraud, where people are made to pay for stuff they never receive, is the most common.

Another well-known technique is known as pig butchering, where marks are lured by small financial gains before the perpetrators whack them with a big blow that drains

their tormentors, all via proper banking channels.

While the police may help the odd industrial tycoon recover their funds, more often the authorities come up empty. Law enforcement typically responds to digital arrests by going after the owners of the accounts where the victim transferred their savings - though by that time, the con artists have either withdrawn the cash or moved it. These accounts are mostly mules, meaning they're either owned by individuals or companies who had no idea their identities have been hijacked, or - less innocently - by people who've lent their accounts to criminals in exchange for payment or favors. The police have found WhatsApp and Telegram groups in which corrupt bank officers hawk mule accounts to cybercriminals for hefty commissions. The actual perpetrators operate in shadowy networks - a diffuse approach that makes them difficult to pin down and smash, especially when they're controlled from overseas.

According to an investigation by news site Scroll, thousands of young Indians have been trafficked to Cambodia, where they're held in captivity and forced to extort people. My colleague Karishma

guardrails for data privacy, it's a transformation that comes with some collateral damage. Every month, Indians authenticate billions of transactions using their unique digital ID, known as Aadhaar, the Hindi word for "foundation." That's created a colossal repository of personal data - including biometrics - that authorities claim is fully secure. Reality suggests otherwise. In October 2023, US cybersecurity firm Resecurity showed that the personal information of 815 million Indians was being sold on the dark web. That data was traced to a hack of the Indian Council of Medical Research, a government organization. The government said there was "evidence of leakage," but no information had been stolen. The police arrested four people. Such loosely guarded databases are tempting treasure troves to multitudes of unemployed, tech-savvy youth. With a Chinese-style manufacturing revolution yet to occur and AI now threatening white-collar jobs, India offers them very few pathways to a middle-class life, let alone an Instagrammable lifestyle. For some, digital crime is the answer. But even without hackers in the mix, the government's own use of

Inside India's Scariest Scam, And How To Stop It

arrested this man yet?" He knew all about the septuagenarian's savings, down to the last rupee.

"He was shouting at me and at one stage even threatened to seize my children's property. That's when I lost it," Yadav recounts. That day and the next, the handler assigned to Yadav instructed him to visit four different banks, transferring his life savings to what he described as government-approved accounts for "inspection." In each case, the pensioner received banking instructions on a WhatsApp audio call in plain view of the tellers. In hindsight, this part rankles Yadav: "Have our banks failed so badly, or were they a party to it?" Ultimately, Yadav lost 15.95 million rupees (\$180,000). Nobody at the branches, where he was a familiar customer, had asked him a single question about why he was paying a penalty for premature withdrawal of his time deposits, he says, or writing out transfer orders to the likes of "Leopard Race Private Limited." The idea that bank officials can be party to such scams isn't paranoia. Samudrala Venkateswarlu, a former director of Sreenivasa Padmavathi Cooperative Urban Bank, is currently in judicial custody in connection with the digital arrest of an advertising executive - who also happens to be Yadav's neighbor. Nearly 85 per cent of the 58.5 million rupees (\$659,000) extorted from the ad executive eventually ended up in 11 fraudulent accounts at this small, Hyderabad-based bank. Two of these accounts, belonging to a carpenter and a tailor, have been named in a number of other cybercrime complaints, while several other account holders are untraceable - their addresses with the bank are fake. Venkateswarlu, whom the police accuse of opening and operating at least some of these accounts, was denied bail for a third time in September, even though he told a Gurugram magistrate that the allegations against him are false. In one of the bail proceedings, Venkateswarlu named the cooperative bank's chairman, P. Srinivas Kumar, as a suspect. Kumar, who has denied any involvement, told me that he wouldn't comment because the matter is under judicial consideration. The advertising executive, who asked not to be named due to safety and

professional concerns, has now gone to India's Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, accusing some of India's largest lenders of deficient service. HDFC Bank Ltd., which transferred the funds out of the executive's accounts, has told the commission in writing that the victim is shifting the blame for their own negligence. ICICI Bank Ltd., which received the money, says it doesn't have any obligation to someone who isn't a customer; the Kerala-based Federal Bank Ltd., whose money-transfer network was used by the cooperative lender at the heart of the scam, has yet to reply to the commission. None have answered my questions.

If cops are struggling to understand how to respond to the racket, bankers are callous about their role in preventing it. Lenders sometimes allow transfers to take place even after the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal issues an injunction; they often refuse to reverse fraudulent transactions under court orders. The lack of quick action leaves criminals with ample time to withdraw the stolen funds and take them overseas as crypto.

Then there's the glut of mule accounts. As part of the current government's financial inclusion drive, some 550 million new bank accounts have been created over the past decade. And despite banks' insistence that they follow the Reserve Bank of India's guidelines for authenticating new customers, it's clear that a significant number are used for fraud. Theft has also become easier as banking has sped up - not just retail payments via smartphones, but even high-value transfers that settle in real time, 24/7. No doubt that's greased the wheels of genuine commerce. But when money moves instantaneously, it's lost just as quickly.

In Yadav's case, HDFC Bank is contesting a court order for the return of the 3.8 million rupees (\$43,000) it managed to secure before scammers could move it elsewhere. Not all of the money belongs to the air-force veteran, it argues. As part of legal proceedings, the bank has shared the entire history of the account in which Yadav's money landed. It appears from the 104-page statement and other supporting documents that he wasn't the only one who succumbed to fraud that fateful

day last August. The suspicious account, which held the equivalent of \$6 on the morning of the scam, received more than 37 million rupees (\$417,000) in a single day. By evening, most of the funds had vanished. I asked the bank why its surveillance system didn't catch the telltale signs of fraud sooner. Neither HDFC nor the Reserve Bank of India, the country's banking regulator, has answered my questions.

Yadav did finally manage to get some of his stolen funds returned. Ironically, that's the moment his bank actually stepped in, freezing the balance in his pension account when it identified the influx of tainted funds. Nearly one year later, it has yet to be unlocked.

Breaking The Spell

Digital arrests must be defeated along the same two axes on which they succeed: psychology and technology.

When most people face a sudden threat, their natural fight-or-flight response gets triggered. When they are subjected to a digital arrest, they either challenge the criminals before they can lay a trap (fight) - or they just switch off their phones to escape the hostile environment (flight). But there's a third stress response that often gets ignored: The motor system hits the brakes and we stall. Digital arrests succeed when that deer-in-the-headlights syndrome kicks in and refuses to go away. The advertising executive from Gurugram, whose intimidation campaign lasted five days, says their rational brain just froze up.

Even a small intervention that takes power back from the amygdala, the brain's threat-detection center, and gives it back to the prefrontal cortex, the reasoning faculty, can help greatly. For instance, India's telecom regulator could insist that all communication services carry a warning that pops up on the kinds of long calls required for digital arrests: "Your call has lasted more than an hour. Be careful. No law-enforcement activity takes place on our platform."

Banks could use similar alerts - in fact, some are already starting to. Recently, while trying to add a new recipient via online banking, a message box popped up, cautioning me about digital arrests. Late last year, Prime

Minister Narendra Modi even played a clip of the hoax in his monthly radio broadcast to build public awareness. These are good initiatives, but they won't be enough.

That's because the actual money transfers are taking place offline, in physical branches. Why? Banks typically set a cooling-off period for online payments to a newly added account. There is no such constraint on transfers done at a branch. Plus, many customers feel safe in their local branches; the employees there are known faces. The economy will pay a price if financial institutions don't take immediate steps to maintain this trust, says Venkatanarayanan Anand, a Bengaluru-based internet security researcher. Having seen many instances of digital arrests while doing consulting work for state agencies, Anand has moved his own savings to money market funds, held outside the banking system. "I have advised my parents to do the same," he tells me.

Goswami, the retired marine biotechnologist, has already lost her faith in banks: "I now worry even about the safety of my documents in their fixed-deposit boxes," she says. For the middle class to retain confidence in regular deposit-taking institutions, lenders need to start investing in technology designed to fight scams. It should be possible to analyze CCTV footage from across their branches using AI and machine learning. Marrying that data with suspicious account activity, banks ought to be able to spot zombie customers in a scammer's grip. Far-fetched? Not really. State Bank of India, the country's largest deposit-taking institution, is planning to install AI-enabled cameras across more than 22,000 of its branches to detect unusual behavior. No other bank has such an extensive network to monitor; none has the SBI's retail heft to set industrywide standards.

India's banking regulator should also look to how other nations are tackling financial crime. Last year, Singapore created shared-responsibility guidelines for scam transactions. Payment providers are now required to

block anyone who tries to drain more than 50 per cent of a customer's account balance in a 24-hour period. Telecommunications services have to use anti-scam filters to block suspicious words in bulk messages. Companies that don't comply have to compensate customers in full. Similar laws are coming up in other markets, too. In Hong Kong, banks that aren't doing enough to help customers identify and prevent scams may soon be on the hook. Since October of last year, UK banks have been required to reimburse up to Euro 85,000 (\$114,000) to customers tricked into sending money to a fraudster's account. The onus is on the bank to prove that the customer wasn't careful, not the other way around.

There's no reason laws and regulations in India shouldn't offer similar protection to victims of fraud. Banking can be slow - like it used to be when intercity checks across the vast, continent-sized geography took days to clear. Or it can be fast, like in today's digital India. But its cornerstones must be trust and free will. It's very much the job of bank CEOs to make sure they earn the former - and ensure customers are exercising the latter. More immediately, banks must provide victims with a better recovery rate so more are encouraged to come forward. After a year of running from pillar to post, Yadav has managed to retrieve 10 per cent of what was stolen from him. He's reluctantly written off the 60 per cent that scammers converted to cash or crypto - or passed along to their accomplices. What really embitters him is the 30 per cent locked up in various banks, which he can't touch despite court orders. Yadav's digital arrest may be over, but with so much of his money still in custody, he's finding it hard to feel free.

(Andy Mukherjee is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering industrial companies and financial services. He previously was a columnist for Reuters Breakingviews. He has also worked for the Straits Times, ET NOW and Bloomberg News.) Disclaimer: These are the personal opinions of the author.

Starship aces Indian Ocean landing, crashes exactly where Elon Musk wanted it

SpaceX's Starship successfully completed its 11th test flight, achieving a dramatic water landing in the Indian Ocean, precisely where CEO Elon Musk predicted it would splash down. The mission marks the final flight for the "Version 2" Starship prototype, as SpaceX wraps up a year of significant advancements and prepares for the next generation of its reusable launch vehicles. The spacecraft intentionally crashed

into the Indian Ocean. Picture-Perfect Indian Ocean Landing The massive stainless-steel rocket lifted off from SpaceX's Starbase facility in South Texas, soaring through the sky powered by 33 Raptor engines. After stage separation, the Super Heavy booster performed a partially successful descent attempt before crashing into the Gulf of Mexico. Meanwhile, the upper-stage Starship continued its journey across the globe,

executing complex flight maneuvers before descending flawlessly into the Indian Ocean roughly 66 minutes after liftoff, exactly as planned by SpaceX engineers. The splashdown site, chosen off the coast of Australia, was deliberately selected for safety and telemetry reasons. The precision of the landing shows SpaceX's growing mastery in guidance and control systems, marking a major step toward future missions that will

return Starship directly to the launch site for a vertical "catch" by the company's signature "Mechazilla" tower.

ENGINEERING TRIUMPH AND FUTURE PLANS

During reentry, Starship underwent a bold test of durability, with SpaceX intentionally removing heat shield tiles to expose certain areas of the spacecraft to higher-than-normal stress. The vehicle also performed a dynamic banking maneuver to simulate future orbital

reentries guided toward Starbase. Engineers confirmed the flight achieved all primary objectives, collecting valuable data on heat protection performance, trajectory correction, and landing precision. Musk hailed the result as a "huge step forward" for Starship's development. The company will now shift its focus to the next-generation "Version 3" vehicles, designed for full orbital recovery and Mars-readiness.

Naxal leader Malloujula Venugopal Rao surrenders with 60 cadres in Maharashtra

The Naxal movement in India suffered a significant blow as senior CPI (Maoist) leader Mallajolu Venugopal Rao, also known by aliases Bhupati, Abhay, and Sonu, laid down arms along with 60 other cadres. Sources say Venugopal Rao will formally surrender before Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday in Gadchiroli.

HIGH-PROFILE LEADER WITH LONG CRIMINAL

RECORD

Venugopal Rao, aged 70, has been a member of the Politburo, the highest decision-making body of the banned outfit CPI (Maoist), and was in charge of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee in Gadchiroli. He also led the Central Military Commission for the outfit, operating from Abujhmad, a dense forest region along the Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh border considered a Naxal stronghold.

Security forces believe Venugopal Rao masterminded several high-profile attacks, including the 2010 Dantewada attack on CRPF personnel, which claimed the lives of 76 jawans. He faces multiple charges including murder, attempt to murder, attacks on security forces, and arson, with bounties exceeding Rs 7 crore across Maharashtra, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh.

FAMILY LEGACY AND

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Venugopal Rao, a commerce graduate from Pedappali in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, is the younger brother of Mallajolu Koteswar Rao alias Kishenji, a senior Naxal leader killed in an encounter with security forces in 2010. His wife, Tarakka, had surrendered to Gadchiroli police in 2018.

MAJOR SUCCESS FOR SECURITY FORCES

Officials from Gadchiroli

police described the surrender as a major victory for security forces and a significant step towards eliminating Naxal influence, aligning with Union Home Minister Amit Shah's earlier statement that Naxalism would be completely eradicated by 2026. The formal surrender of Venugopal Rao and his cadres is expected to bolster counter-insurgency efforts and signal a weakening of the Naxal network in central and eastern India.

Why don't you turn approver against Raj Kundra, High Court asks Shilpa Shetty

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday suggested that actor Shilpa Shetty could consider a prosecution witness against her husband, British businessman Raj Kundra, in the Rs 60-crore cheating and fraud case. The remark was made by a bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhkar and Justice Gautam A. Ankhad while hearing Shetty's plea to temporarily suspend a Look-Out Circular (LOC) issued against her so that she could travel to Los Angeles for a professional engagement. Shetty's lawyers, Advocates Niranjan Mundargi and Keral Mehta, told the court that she had been invited by popular YouTuber MrBeast to participate in an event and had already received her travel tickets. They clarified that she only intended to travel from October 22 to 27, and that her son would accompany her, while her mother and daughter would remain in Mumbai with Kundra. "Only Applicant No. 2 (Shetty)

wishes to travel for 5 days... she has no other case against her. She is in the entertainment business and has a shoot in Los Angeles," Mundargi said. However, lawyers for the complainant, Yusuf Iqbal and Zain Shroff, opposed the plea, pointing out that Shetty had earlier sought permission to travel to Colombo for leisure on the same dates, and was now describing the trip as a work-related one. The court questioned why there was

no formal work agreement to support her claim of a professional trip. In response, Mundargi explained that no agreement could be signed until Shetty obtained travel permission from the court. "Why don't you become an approver against Accused No. 1?" Chief Justice Chandrashekhkar quipped, referring to Kundra. In criminal cases, an approver is an accused person who agrees to

testify against other accused individuals in exchange for a possible pardon or lighter sentence. Mundargi responded humorously, "Tomorrow the newspapers will carry this communication like last occasion." To this, the Chief Justice replied, "So be it." The court has now kept Shetty's travel plea pending and will hear the matter again on Thursday, October 16. Mundargi

emphasised that Shetty has cooperated fully with the investigation and that there is no direct accusation against her except for her being a director in one of Kundra's firms and having received some funds from him. The Rs 60-crore cheating case involves allegations that Raj Kundra and his associates duped investors through fraudulent business dealings. The investigation is ongoing.

Vijay Mallya discontinues bankruptcy annulment application in UK ahead of hearing

Vijay Mallya, wanted in India to face trial on fraud and money laundering charges, has discontinued an application to annul a UK bankruptcy order ahead of a planned hearing in London on Monday. It means the "Trustee in Bankruptcy" can continue to pursue assets to help a consortium of banks led by the State Bank of India (SBI) realise the repayment of an estimated judgment debt of

around 1.05 billion pounds owed by the 69-year-old's now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines. A High Court hearing to set the directions for the annulment application to be heard was vacated after Mallya's legal team filed a notice of discontinuance last week. "Vijay Mallya's Trustee in Bankruptcy will be able to continue with their work in investigating and realising assets falling within his bankruptcy estate

without any hindrance that this application might have caused them," UK law firm TLT LLP, representing the banks, said in a statement. It follows High Court Judge Anthony Mann's ruling in favour of the banks back in April to uphold the bankruptcy order dating back over four years. "The bottom line in relation to this is that the bankruptcy order stands," Justice Mann had concluded. Mallya,

meanwhile, was pursuing a separate annulment application through his lawyers, Zaiwalla & Co against the 2021 bankruptcy order on the basis that the banks' debt had already been recovered in India. It is believed to have been discontinued as an Indian writ petition, compelling banks to provide information as to the recoveries made by them, has not progressed.

Who Is Ashley Tellis, Indian-American Expert Charged Over Top Secret Files

Ashley Tellis, 64, is listed in an FBI court affidavit as an unpaid adviser to the State Department and a Pentagon contractor.

Ashley J Tellis, a well-known US scholar on India who advised successive US administrations, has been arrested and charged with unlawfully retaining classified information and allegedly meeting Chinese officials. The US Justice Department has accused Tellis -- who served on the National Security Council of former Republican President George W Bush -- of printing out classified documents and storing more than 1,000 pages of highly sensitive government records in filing cabinets and trash bags at his home. Ashley Tellis, 64, is listed in an FBI court affidavit as an unpaid adviser to the State Department and a Pentagon contractor. Charges Against Ashley Tellis According to an FBI affidavit, in September and October this year, Tellis was seen entering the Defence and State Department buildings and was observed accessing and

printing classified documents, including about military aircraft capabilities, and leaving by car with a leather briefcase or bag. The affidavit, sworn by FBI Special Agent Jeffrey Scott, details a meticulous surveillance operation that began after Tellis, late in the evening of September 25, was seen entering the Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) at the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment (ONA) in Alexandria, Virginia. Video footage captured Tellis "printing multiple classified documents", including one marked top secret, and later concealing them within notepads. "Tellis was observed... placing documents, including one classified at the TOP SECRET level, in and amongst his notepads, then straightening them so they aligned with the pages," the affidavit noted. "He then placed the notepads containing the documents into

his leather briefcase and left the facility."

On September 25, 2025, the affidavit said, Tellis accessed the Department of State's "Classnet" system, used for classified communications. Logs showed he opened and re-saved a 1,288-page US Air Force document, renaming it deceptively as "Econ Reform". He then printed sections of the file in multiple batches. "Tellis clicked on the printer selection drop-down menu and selected a printer located at HST. At approximately 8:26 pm, Tellis pressed the print button," the affidavit said. He later deleted the file from the computer system. Over the following weeks, investigators tracked his movements, culminating in an operation on October 10, 2025, when Tellis was once again observed entering the ONA SCIF carrying the same leather briefcase. Surveillance showed him reading what agents

identified as previously printed TOP SECRET documents, which he again slipped into his notepads before leaving. The following day, FBI agents executed a court-approved search warrant at his Vienna, Virginia, home. What they found was staggering. "Over a thousand pages of paper documents with classification markings at the TOP SECRET and/or SECRET levels", stored in locked cabinets, on his desk, and even in "three large black trash bags in an unfinished basement storage room."

Meeting With Chinese Officials And Arrest

It said Tellis met with People's Republic of China (PRC) government officials multiple times at a restaurant in the Washington suburb of Fairfax, Virginia, over the years. At one dinner on September 15, Tellis entered with a manila envelope but did not appear to leave with

it, and on two occasions, the Chinese officials presented him a gift bag, the affidavit said. Prosecutors said that due to his employment with the State Department and Pentagon, Tellis possessed a Top Secret security clearance with access to Sensitive Compartmented Information. A search of his home in Vienna, Virginia, on Saturday, October 11, uncovered over a thousand pages of classified documents with top secret and secret markings. The State Department said that Tellis was arrested on Saturday after searches at his home-- the same day the affidavit said he was due to fly to Rome. Officials declined to comment further due to the ongoing investigation. What Happens If Tellis Is Convicted? The FBI's affidavit concludes that there is "probable cause" to believe Tellis wilfully retained classified defence information in violation of federal law.

The Beginning

MAD MEN
OF
NU WAY ADVERTISING

About the Author



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

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

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



The Beginning

MAD MEN OF NU WAY ADVERTISING

Sharanjit Thind Singh

The Beginning

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

Sharanjit Thind Singh

MAD MEN
OF
NU WAY ADVERTISING



De De Pyaar De 2 Trailer: R Madhavan Adds New Twist To Ajay Devgn And Rakul Preet Singh's Romance

After the success of *Raid 2* and the lukewarm reception to *Son of Sardaar 2*, Ajay Devgn returns to the romantic comedy space with *De De Pyaar De 2*. The trailer for the film, which continues the story from the 2019 hit, hints at another rollercoaster of emotions, age-gap humour, and family drama.

What's Happening

The sequel picks up right where *De De Pyaar De* left off, with Devgn's character Aashish still navigating the complications of dating a woman half his age. This time, he is determined to win over the family of his much younger girlfriend, Ayesha, played by Rakul Preet Singh.

The trailer opens with Aashish meeting Ayesha's parents, portrayed by R



Madhavan and Gautami Kapoor, who appear open-minded at first. However, their progressive attitude quickly evaporates when they realise that Aashish is almost as old as Ayesha's father.

Adding to the chaos is Meezaan Jafri, introduced as a suitor chosen by Ayesha's parents in an attempt to divert her from Aashish. What follows is a series of comic and emotional moments as

Aashish struggles to prove that age is merely a number when it comes to love. The film also sees Jaaved Jaaferi return as Aashish's loyal friend, providing humour and perspective along the way.

The first *De De Pyaar De*, released in 2019, explored the unconventional romance between Aashish, a 50-year-old businessman, and Ayesha, a 26-year-old woman. It dealt with societal judgements and family approval, culminating in a reconciliation between Aashish and his estranged family, including his ex-wife Manju (played by Tabu).

While Tabu will not return for the sequel, *De De Pyaar De 2* continues the story with fresh faces and dynamics. The film is directed by Anshul Sharma, taking over from Akiv Ali, while Luv Ranjan, known for *Pyaar Ka PUNCHAMA* and *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweetie*, has once again penned the story. *De De Pyaar De 2* is all set to hit the big screens on November 14. Read the full story here.

Blake Lively's 1.75 Million Dollar Deal For It Ends With Us Included Private Jet And Luxury Perks



become increasingly common for A-list actors, particularly those attached to high-profile literary adaptations like *It Ends With Us*, which is based on Colleen

Hoover's best-selling novel. The draft also detailed potential rewards for award recognition. Blake Lively was set to receive USD 100,000 (Rs

88 lakh) for an Oscar nomination and USD 200,000 (Rs 1.7 crore) for a win, with only the higher amount payable in case of victory.

Meghan Markle Invited Herself To Balenciaga's Paris Show, Designer Sets Record Straight

A recent revelation from Balenciaga designer Pierpaolo Piccioli has sparked buzz across fashion and royal circles alike. In a candid interview with *The Cut*, Pierpaolo disclosed that Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, had invited herself to the event, saying she'd "love to come to the show." The designer described her attendance as a "beautiful" and rare surprise. "Meghan and I met some years ago, and we've been texting ever since. She reached out and said she'd love to come to the show. There was no strategy or big orchestration," he said. "I didn't tell anyone she was coming because I wanted it to stay a surprise. In fashion, real surprises are rare, and this one was beautiful," he added.



Notably, Meghan Markle a stylish impression in a stunned fashionistas with her surprise appearance at Balenciaga's Paris Fashion Week show on October 4. The Duchess of Sussex, 44, made

Blake Lively was reportedly offered a major payday to lead *It Ends With Us*, with details from a draft contract revealing a multi-million-dollar compensation package and a series of lucrative bonus clauses. According to *Us Weekly*, the draft version of the contract (though never finalised) outlined a fixed salary close to USD 2 million (approximately Rs 17 crore), alongside a profit-sharing arrangement and several high-value performance incentives.

What's Happening

The proposed deal not only included the base fee but also a 10 per cent share of the film's gross proceeds. As per *Us Weekly*, Blake Lively would have earned additional bonuses tied to box office milestones. The draft reportedly promised a USD 250,000 (Rs 2.2 crore) payout if the film's revenue exceeded three times its production cost, with larger rewards for surpassing higher targets.

Such bonus structures have

WeWork India slips 5% in debut trade amid valuation, governance concerns

Corporate governance firm InGovern warned investors of WeWork India's fragile financials, negative cash flow, high lease liabilities, and the absence of fresh capital infusion.

Shares of WeWork India fell as much as 5.2% on Friday, valuing the flexible workspace operator at Rs 82.32 billion (\$927.3 million), as investors stayed wary of its steep valuation and governance risks. The stock last traded at Rs 634.4, below its offer price of Rs 648. The listing comes at a busy time for India's primary market. On Thursday, LG Electronics India was bid 54.02 times, becoming the most subscribed billion-dollar IPO in nearly two decades, while Tata Capital's IPO drew bids worth \$1.24 billion and was subscribed 1.95 times. WeWork India, which licenses its brand from its now-bankrupt

US namesake WeWork Global, raised about \$213.7 million and its IPO was subscribed 1.15 times, driven largely by institutional bids. Beyond a crowded IPO market, WeWork India faces deeper challenges – from corporate governance concerns to questions over its ability to sustain operations and fund expansion amid slowing demand and rising competition from leaner, profitable rivals. Corporate governance firm InGovern warned investors of WeWork India's fragile financials, negative cash flow, high lease liabilities, and the absence of fresh capital infusion. WeWork India did not

immediately respond to a request for comment. The company operates flexible offices across eight major Indian cities, competing with peers such as Smartworks Coworking Spaces, which has gained 35% since its July debut, and IndiQube Spaces, which fell 15% after listing but has since recovered to trade 4% higher. Smartworks has a market capitalisation of 68.9 billion rupees, while IndiQube is valued at 47.6 billion, according to exchange data. WeWork India's weak debut comes amid a historic year for India IPOs. More than 240 large and mid-sized firms raised \$10.5 billion in the



first nine months of 2025, largest IPO market, according to LSEG data.

Crypto crash wipes out \$19 billion after Trump's 100% China tariffs spark sell-off

The cryptocurrency market suffered a historic crash after US President Donald Trump announced 100% tariffs on China and new export controls on software.

The cryptocurrency market suffered historic losses on Saturday, with over \$19 billion wiped out in what data tracker Coinglass described as "the largest liquidation event in crypto history," after US President Donald Trump announced 100% tariffs on China and new export controls on software. Two major cryptocurrencies, Bitcoin and Ethereum, crashed as investors reacted to fears over a renewed trade war, with many moving funds into stablecoins or safer assets, according to The Independent.

BITCOIN AND ETHEREUM PLUNGE

Trump's announcement, made via X (formerly Twitter), triggered a decline of more than 12% in Bitcoin alone, which had touched a record high of over \$125,000 earlier in the week, the Bloomberg reported. By Saturday morning in London, Bitcoin was trading below \$113,000. Ethereum followed a similar path, suffering record liquidations as traders rushed to exit

positions. Coinglass reported that more than 1.6 million traders were liquidated in the last 24 hours, with over \$7 billion of positions sold in less than one hour on Friday. The tracker noted that total losses could be significantly higher, as exchanges like Binance report only one liquidation per second.

BINANCE OUTAGE ADDS TO CHAOS

As markets reeled from Trump's tariff escalation, Binance, the world's largest crypto exchange, faced widespread outrage after users reported frozen accounts, failed stop-loss orders, and flash crashes that sent some altcoins briefly to near zero. Coins such as Enjin (ENJ) and Cosmos (ATOM) briefly showed prices crashing to \$0.0000 and \$0.001, respectively, before rebounding.

Binance cited "heavy market activity" for the disruption, assuring users that "funds are SAFU," but critics alleged the outage amplified the crash and allowed the



exchange to profit during the liquidation wave. Similar technical issues were reported on Coinbase and Robinhood.

MARKET EXPERTS WARN OF CONTAGION

Brian Strugats, head trader at Multicoins Capital, said the focus is now on "counterparty exposure and whether this triggers broader market contagion," with some estimates putting total liquidations above \$30 billion. Caroline Mauron, co-founder of Orbit Markets, warned that the next major support for Bitcoin is \$100,000. "A drop below this would signal the end of the

past three-year bull cycle," she was quoted as saying, with Deribit data showing the highest concentration of Bitcoin put options at \$110,000 and \$100,000 levels.

BROADER FINANCIAL IMPACT

The escalating US-China trade tensions rattled not only cryptocurrencies but also stocks, oil, and commodities, while boosting demand for safer assets like Treasuries and gold.

Ravi Doshi, co-head of markets at prime broker FalconX, said his firm saw "outsized demand for downside

protection" during the day, reflecting widespread uncertainty. David Jeong, CEO of algorithmic trading platform Tread.fi, called the event a "black swan," noting that leveraged perpetual futures, which allow trading around the clock, amplified losses for many large traders and institutions.

Vincent Liu, chief investment officer at Kronos Research, added, "The rout was sparked by US-China tariff fears but fuelled by institutional over-leverage. This highlights crypto's sensitivity to macroeconomic developments."

Trump Has a Different Plan to Oust Maduro This Time Around

The first time President Donald Trump tried to push Nicolas Maduro out of power, he wasn't coy about it. He accused the Venezuelan dictator of stealing an election, stripped U.S. recognition from Maduro's government, imposed sanctions on Caracas and rallied other countries to pressure Maduro to quit. In his second term, Trump is targeting Maduro differently, and his message is, uncharacteristically for Trump, less direct. Even though Trump continues to say Maduro is an illegitimate leader, he has said "we're not talking about" regime change in Caracas. Instead, he's emphasizing the long-standing accusations that the strongman is a drug lord and a dangerous criminal. The plan, people familiar with the situation tell me, is to force Maduro out as part of Trump's ongoing fight against drug cartels. The effort has included labeling such groups as terrorist organizations, carrying out military strikes against alleged drug-carrying boats from Venezuela, raising the U.S. bounty on Maduro's head to \$50 million and cutting off diplomatic talks with Caracas. The campaign may not formally be

about regime change, but if the pressure from the anti-cartel moves happens to topple Maduro, well, the president and his team will be delighted. While Trump admires many of the world's autocrats, he has long appeared to genuinely dislike Maduro. The South American has socialist roots, not far-right tendencies the way Trump favorites such as Hungary's Viktor Orban and Russia's Vladimir Putin do. And — I've heard this from multiple U.S. officials over the years — Trump is truly aghast at how Maduro savaged the economy of a once-vibrant Venezuela. "Would everyone like Maduro to go? Yes," a Trump administration official said of the U.S. president and his aides. "We're going to put a tremendous amount of pressure on him. He's weak. It's quite possible that he'll fall from this pressure alone without us having to do anything" more direct. But is Trump willing to eventually "do anything"? Send an invasion force to Venezuela or launch a missile with Maduro's name on it, maybe? Trump's team doesn't seem to be ruling anything out. Trump has many plans available to him, including ones calling for

airstrikes against drug targets on Venezuelan soil, but he has issued no order to directly take out Maduro, the official said. Still, one person familiar with the discussions suggested that if Maduro is considered a drug lord and a terrorist, he could become a fair target. "Don't we go after indicted narco traffickers and terrorists all the time?" the person said. I granted both people anonymity to talk about sensitive internal deliberations. The White House didn't respond to a request for comment. I'm not sure if there's some special term for this approach. Regime change on the side? Whatever you call it, it may prove harder to pull off than the steps Trump has taken so far. The U.S. has tried an array of pressure campaigns against authoritarians in the past. Some have gone heavy on economic sanctions (Iran, Cuba). Some have armed rebels (Afghanistan).

Some have used the U.S. military in ways that technically were not about ousting a regime (Libya) — or were (Iraq). These efforts can weaken autocrats and sometimes hasten their fall. But they also can take many years, and it's often not clear



whether U.S. pressure or another factor forced them out. The U.S. takedown of Manuel Noriega, the military ruler of Panama and troublesome longtime CIA asset, provides an interesting comparison to the face-off with Maduro. The U.S. imposed sanctions on Panama in the 1980s, indicted Noriega on drug trafficking charges and refused to diplomatically engage the puppet regime he oversaw. But Noriega didn't lose power until the U.S. invaded Panama with more than 20,000 troops in late 1989 and detained him. The invasion was spurred in part by Noriega forces' attacks on Americans in Panama as well as concerns about control over the Panama Canal, but then-

President George H.W. Bush made sure to mention the drug charges in explaining his decisions. Venezuela is a bigger, more complicated country, making the Trump team's approach even more unpredictable. Maduro has survived for a long time with the support of the country's security forces, even if there is strong evidence that the country's citizens keep voting against him. I believe Trump is willing to escalate his anti-cartel campaign, but I'm not convinced he'd ever send a full-on invasion force to topple Maduro. That's partly because it could trigger alarm bells in the MAGA base, which has a strong isolationist streak.

How India Lost The Sea - And Why It's Fighting To Win It Back

In April 2025, India made a long overdue correction to its maritime calculus. An official notification revised the country's coastline length to 11,098 kms - a 48% increase from the 1970s figure of 7,516 kms. This granular update reflects a broader overhaul of India's maritime strategy as it positions itself to become a future-ready maritime power. India already supplies 12% of the world's seafarers, and enjoys a strategic location, yet its core capacities remain modest. India holds only 1.2% of global shipping capacity (by tonnage), and fewer than that fly under an Indian flag. Domestic shipbuilding is negligible with just a 0.07% market share. Indian ports handle just about 2.5% of global container moves. The net effect is that 80% of India's sea freight expenditure is on foreign shipping lines, with shipping

related expenses second only to the oil import bill. But things are starting to change. The passage of five maritime related bills this



year by the Modi government, with four in the previous session of parliament, point to the scale of transformation. These replace several outdated British-era laws that no longer matched contemporary needs. For example, the Indian Bills of

Lading Act, 1856, which dates back more than 168 years, will be replaced by the Bills of Lading Bill, 2024. It reduces litigation

risks, streamlines business processes, and provides legal clarity to stakeholders. The Merchant Shipping Bill, 2025, and the Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025, modernise India's maritime law, recognising Indian-controlled tonnage, mandating compulsory

insurance, strengthening seafarer welfare, and bringing transparency to port charges. They also seek to reduce compliance and boost investment, and bring India's maritime regulations in line with global norms.

Efforts have also been made to push for a complete digitalisation of the shipping eco-system to connect ports with real-time data and analytics, cut turnaround times, and end logistical fragmentation. The Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024 thus, includes creating a public National Database of Coastal Shipping to improve coordination. Institutional frameworks are also being put in place to leverage these reforms. Under the Indian Ports Bill, 2025, a new Centre-State coordination council has been created for integrated planning across transport

modes. This is in addition to the existing Sagarmala initiative, wherein 279 port-connectivity projects (rail, road, pipelines etc.) have already been identified. However, the entire maritime ecosystem is seeing rapid reform. The newly commissioned Vizhinjam International Seaport presents an excellent representation of what India can do to change the odds. Capable of handling ultra-large vessel handling and equipped with an AI-powered traffic system, it is India's first deepwater port & transshipment hub. It will help capture international traffic currently routed through other countries, and large container-ships, popularly referred to as motherships, now need not take expensive detours elsewhere. Over time, that means lower per-box costs, fewer days lost, and better reliability for exporters.

From Bhagat Singh, Che Guevara to Nepal Gen Z, why youths rebel

"When the Emergency was imposed, I was 23. JP's (Jayaprakash Narayan) call for sampoorana kranti (total revolution) had reached Banaras Hindu University (BHU) by late 1974. I was then a student leader in BHU, which was far more politically active than it is today. My name was on the police list of key student leaders. If caught, I would have faced indefinite detention," recalls Anirudh Narayan Singh, now 72. One night in 1975, after a student rally, word spread that police were raiding hostels. "To escape, I scaled BHU's boundary wall, sprinted a kilometre to the Lanka bus stop, and boarded a packed bus to Bihar," Singh told India Today Digital. "For months, I hid in Bhabhua at my maternal uncle's home. I would sleep in the grain-storage attic. I also grew a beard to avoid recognition," said the chairman of a Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth-affiliated college in Varanasi. Singh was, however, arrested nearly one-and-a-half years later when he came to Varanasi for a student union meeting. Asked if he would have taken the risks had he been a bit older, say in his 30s or 40s, Singh laughed and said, "Probably not". Once associated with the Samajwadi Party, Singh said the firebrand spirit of his youth had now calmed down. Politics still interests him, but only as an observer. Age plays a crucial role, believes another "former revolutionary", Kallan Yadav, who lives in Patna's Rukunpura area. Like BHU's Singh, Yadav was also a part of the JP Movement. Once a firebrand leader at Muzaffarpur's BR Ambedkar Bihar University who carried a katta (country-made handgun) for self-defence, Singh, said he was now "merely an observer". When asked if he would have protested outside his 20s, Yadav, a retired chemistry teacher, said, "Though I believe once a revolutionary is always a revolutionary, I think age and my marital status might have grounded me even back then." Generally, it is youth that fuels such audacious acts such as street protests against the authorities. And today, a demographic, or rather a generation, is in the spotlight. The Gen Z, often deemed laid-back and frivolous, have seemingly claimed their spot as revolutionaries. Less than a week ago, Nepal's Gen Z toppled the regime in the country. The trigger was a social media ban, but corruption and nepotism were big issues and terms like nepo kids and nepo babies had been



trending in the run-up to the protests on September 8. They forced the government of KP Sharma Oli to overturn the ban, and then got him to resign from the PM's post. Gen Z's captured Instagram Reels and TikToks amid the chaos of a burning Parliament in the backdrop, smoke billowing from it, even as gunfire and arson rocked the streets of Kathmandu. It may be an odd comparison, but there is a link between the likes of Anirudh Narayan Singh, Kallan Yadav, and the Gen Zers of Nepal. The demographic. The causes were different. So were their means of dissent. But it's their age that links them. Youths are more idealistic and hardwired to challenge the norm.

Sociologist Chandra Shekhar said that people in their teens and 20s are exploring their identities and beliefs, and this makes them more willing to challenge authority. Mumbai-based psychiatrist Dr Zirak Marker explains that, because of the way the brain is still developing, adolescents are prone to risk-taking and emotional impulsivity.

IT'S THE AGE TO PROTEST AND GEN Z IS JUST A NEW TAG

Youths, often, have an urge to question and push back the norms. Many a time, the fight isn't about a cause, but about resisting control and finding their own identity. Protests across the world have pointed towards this pattern, the latest instance being the one led by the Gen Zers in Nepal.

The Gen Zers, born between 1997 and 2012, are today between 13 and 28 years old. After their "debut" revolution in Nepal, much of the conversation around them has been about how "unserious" they are. Social media has been mocking them for making Instagram Reels even amid real chaos.

Because they were born into technology, scrolling and swiping almost as soon as they learned to walk, older generations often reduce their personalities to their social media accounts.

Millennials (born between

1981-1996), Gen X (1965-1980) and Baby Boomers (1946-1964), often find themselves scandalised by Gen Zers' immersion in apps and phones. The idea of political engagement by this generation is almost jarring to them.

But a closer look at Gen Z's obsession with social media and fads reveals that it is hardly a new phenomenon.

Millennials were shaped by personal computers. Gen X by cable TV. Boomers, perhaps by the transistor. Each generation was shaped by the tools of its time. For Gen Z, it's all of it together.

But what has remained constant is a behavioural pattern. It is almost always the youth, typically those between 17 and 25, who are the first to take to the streets, whether for their rights or a humanitarian cause.

Gen Z is only a tag and the latest generation to claim the protest space.

In Nepal, they chose an interim Prime Minister on Discord, streamed their protests online, and made Instagram Reels and promoted hashtags as they protested. Their symbol of dissent—the Jolly Roger of Straw Hat Pirates from One Piece, the world's most popular manga series—may be unusual for the older folks, but the fight is real. Fundamentally, Gen Z has only done what the previous generations did, but recorded it on TikTok to rile up 'WhatsApp Uncles'.

BHAGAT SINGH TO CHE GUEVARA, REVOLUTIONARIES WHO WOULD BE GEN Z IF BORN LATER

Leaving aside a few, most revolutionaries, leaders, and protesters have been young.

Vladimir Lenin was active in the revolutionary circles by the age of 22.

Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara was just 23 when his motorcycle journey across Latin America changed his views and set him on the path of revolution. If he were older, his 500 cc Norton might have been swapped for a

caravan on a transcontinental tour, likely ending at a Cuban sandwich outlet, with perhaps a call from home to pick up groceries.

Even Nelson Mandela, Nobel laureate and face of apartheid activism, joined the African National Congress at 24.

In India, Bhagat Singh and his comrade Sukhdev were just 23 when they were martyred, and Rajguru was 22. They all turned revolutionaries in their late teens, around the age of 17-18, when they aligned with the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in the late 1920s.

By today's standards, a Gen Zer would consider all of them in their "tweens" (early twenties).

From Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989 to Dhaka in 2024, it's been students or young adults who have been at the forefront in shaping history.

WHY ARE THE YOUNG SO QUICK TO PROTEST?

The youths are quick to take to the streets and raise the banner of revolution for a slew of reasons. There is a lot of idealism in them at a young age. There is intense energy, mixed with raw recklessness, along with a will to challenge authority.

Today, in the age of information, they are driven by a combination of social influences too. But biological factors also play a role.

"The youth are naturally more idealistic and less controlled by the compromises that often come with age," said Chandra Shekhar, former professor of sociology at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). "They are at a stage in life where they are exploring their identities and beliefs, and this makes them more willing to challenge authority," he told India Today Digital.

Shekhar added, "Today, the youths' sense of fairness and justice is more immediate because of social media."

Social connectivity is another factor. "Today's youth, particularly Gen Z, are the most connected generation ever. They are also the most aware

generation, maybe not politically, but in general. The connectivity accelerates both awareness and mobilisation. This wasn't possible in our times," said Shekhar.

But why is it that people become more risk-averse as they move to their 30s and 40s?

"Young people often occupy transitional social positions. It means they are either students or early-career workers. Hence, they have more to gain and less to lose," said the sociologist.

"At that age, you're not tied down by mortgages or dependents. The goal of bringing a change in society also feels very much attainable," he explained.

Throwing light on developing nations, he said, "In nations like Nepal or Bangladesh, where resources are scarce, protests also become a legitimate outlet to attain them."

HOW THE BRAIN FUNCTIONS IN THE GEN Z

The way a person thinks, reacts to situations, and perceives the world shifts dramatically between youth and older age. This generational divide, often framed as "maturity", was evident in the experiences of Anirudh Narayan Singh and Kallan Yadav. Both, once fiery protesters during the JP Movement, somewhat agreed that they might not have joined the protests had they been older, despite their deep belief in the cause.

When asked about today's generation, both Singh and Yadav echoed the view that the youth today appeared more radical, yet also lost. Dr Zirak Marker, a child, adolescent and family psychiatrist, explained this, saying, "Today's youth, particularly Gen Z, exhibit extreme impulsivity, low frustration and tolerance, and a high need for instant gratification—traits biologically rooted in the underdeveloped frontal cortex, which doesn't fully mature until around age 25." He explained that earlier, maturity was believed to arrive by 18, but modern research shows it's more complex. "This synaptic pruning and myelination process (brain development process) makes adolescents prone to risk-taking, poor decision-making, and emotional impulsivity, explaining why we see such impulses in a particular age group." Drawing parallels with history, Marker noted, "These brain developments have always influenced youth activism. Twenty-five years ago, we didn't have the detailed fMRI insights, but the biology was the same."

By Anand Singh

Why even Superman can't kiss in India, the land of Kama Sutra

Mumbai-based couple Sakshi Mishra and Zoheb Hasan Shaikh did in Paris what they wouldn't do anywhere in India—they kissed in public. With the Eiffel Tower as the backdrop and couples openly kissing all around, it didn't feel weird at all. "It came to us naturally, probably because of the setting and the society in France," Mishra recalled of the 2023 trip. "In fact, it was liberating, being in a place where kissing is not a spectacle," she said. Across India, in cities, towns, and villages, there are spots where couples canoodle. But the intimacy comes with prying eyes. When in public, lovers don't steal a kiss. They snatch it. In haste. Kissing—something as instinctive as a handshake in much of the West—doesn't come naturally to Indians. And there's history to it. Forget human beings, even Superman can't kiss in India. The Censor Board in July snipped kissing scenes, including a 33-second smooch, from the latest Superman film because they were "overly sensual". But is it really a contradiction? That India—the land of Kama Sutra, of the gorgeous Khajuraho rock carvings, and with the sensuous Ajanta, Ellora and Konark Sun Temple—frowns upon intimacy, or even kissing in public? Vedic texts, as early as 1,500 BCE, mention people "touching" with their mouths. But in modern India, moral police is everywhere. Except for some boroughs in big cities, kissing in public is close to a taboo in India. Not just the moral police, even the real police can cause problems for lip-locking couples. Though kissing in public is not outright illegal, couples can still be booked under "obscenity" charges. That Sakshi and Zoheb felt it natural to kiss in Paris and not even at Bandra Bandstand shows that society plays a big role in shaping this hesitation. The kiss crisis is visible among the youth. They see it as normal because of the Western content they consume but find no Indian cultural context. A look at Google Search trends in India shows queries like 'how to kiss', 'how to kiss a girl', 'kiss video', among other kissing technique-related queries. So, did India, the land of the Kama Sutra, and amorous Yakshas and Yakshinis, suffer from a cultural amnesia or does intimacy and



romance for Indians go beyond the lip-lock? If India has adopted various cultural traits, why did kissing in public remain a taboo?

ANCIENT INDIANS KISSERS, AND ALEXANDER'S ARMY

Anthropologist Vaughn Bryant noted that as early as 1,500 BCE, Vedic texts mention people "touching" with their mouths. There are references to lip-kissing in the Mahabharata too. After Alexander's military expedition to India in 326 BCE, his generals are believed to have carried the practice of kissing back to their homelands. The Kama Sutra, written between 1st and 6th century CE, went further, detailing erotic kisses and techniques. However, scholar Ruth Vanita, in her research on gender and sexuality, emphasised that the Kama Sutra described these acts—kissing, biting, scratching, smacking—only in private. "There is absolutely no indication that these acts were meant to be done in public," Vanita told India Today Digital. Kissing continued to appear in literature and art. In Kalidasa's Abhijnanashakuntalam (4th–5th century CE), kisses featured in romantic scenes. Later, lyric poetry such as the Amarusataka and Sringara Satakam make the gesture more vivid. By the 12th century, Jayadeva's Gitagovinda blended sensuality and devotion, depicting Radha and Krishna kissing. Temple sculptures from the 8th to 13th centuries occasionally show couples kissing, but such

depictions were rare. Most maithuna figures (erotic sculptures or carvings)—such as Shiva and Parvati, Radha and Krishna, among others—are shown embracing rather than kissing. Kissing existed in ancient India, but never in the public domain.

KISSING IN MEDIAEVAL INDIA: EROTIC MUGHAL MINIATURE PAINTINGS

In mediaeval India, too, the depiction of kissing suggests that it was a private affair. For elites, it was often a subject of curiosity, who explored it through paintings. Among Bhakti and Sufi saints, devotion, not intimacy, took centre stage. Among Mughal elites, miniature paintings provide glimpses of lovers depicted in gardens or private chambers. Kisses were absent though. "Explicitly sexual miniature paintings were mostly commissioned and paid for by royalty, nobility, and the rich, for their private collections. And in them too, the couples kissing or having sex are shown doing so either alone or with their personal attendants. I have never seen any depicted as occurring in a public place," Vanita told India Today Digital.

THE BRITISH RAJ BROUGHT VICTORIAN PRUDISHNESS TO INDIA

When the British arrived in India, our relationship with kissing became more complex, as they introduced puritan morality. While restraint had long been a cultural tradition, Victorian ideals of modesty further reinforced it.

"It is tempting to blame colonialism for everything," said

Vanita, adding, "But in the case of kissing, there was always restraint. The best indicator is that kissing never became part of Indian wedding ceremonies, unlike in Europe, where it descends from Roman and Christian traditions."

Still, the colonial gaze layered shame onto Indian expressions of intimacy.

"Earlier, family and sex were connected primarily to reproduction rather than intimacy. Affection in heterosocial contexts was rarely visible, and colonial morality only intensified the silence around desire," Monika Mehta, scholar of media and sexuality, told India Today Digital.

The effect of Victorian prudishness is reflected in Indian cinema. That prudishness and the Indian film ecosystem's desire for family-watchable movies kept the kiss even off the big screen.

That is why the near four-minute kissing scene in Karma (1933) between Devika Rani and Himanshu Rai is still cited as a record. That Devika and Himanshu were off-screen couples made the on-screen act easier and legit.

THE EVOLUTION OF KISSING IN POP-CULTURE IN INDIA

By the 1950s, kisses had nearly disappeared from screens. Making love, or even a peck, was suggested through flowers brushing or curtains swaying, but never an actual kiss. One of the reasons was that Indian filmmakers wanted

entire families to come to the cinema hall to make movies a commercial success.

This shying away from kisses in Indian cinema continued till the 1980s.

"Indian cinema does a fantastic job of suggesting erotic intensity through glances, songs, or speech, just as earlier poetry and drama did. Suggestion can be far more erotic than explicitness," explained Vanita.

But by the 1990s, kisses slowly began edging their way back. Mukul S Anand's Hum didn't feature one outright, but its chartbuster 'Jumma Chumma De De' revived the very language of the 'chumma' (kiss).

Soon after, the mid-90s delivered a turning point. The passionate kiss between Aamir Khan and Karisma Kapoor in Raja Hindustani was much talked about.

The 2000s marked a new phase. Emraan Hashmi rose to fame with the tag of Bollywood's "serial kisser". Be it with Mallika Sherawat, Udit Goswami, Tanushree Dutta, Kangana Ranaut, or Jacqueline Fernandez, over his career, Hashmi has kissed at least 25 co-stars. By the mid-2000s, other stars too embraced on-screen intimacy. Aishwarya Rai and Hrithik Roshan's intense kiss in Dhoom 2 made headlines. But a breakthrough moment for Indian cinema came in 2008, which changed the perspective of sexuality overall: the first male-on-male kiss, shared by Abhishek Bachchan and John Abraham in Karan Johar's Dostana.

In the 2010s, numerous films started featuring intense kissing scenes, and with the rise of OTT platforms, it is no longer limited to just kisses.

IS THERE A KISSING CRISIS IN INDIA?

However, in July, India prevented Superman from kissing Lois Lane. The Censor Board's move baffled many, who pointed out how violence, especially against women, routinely slips past censors, but a harmless kiss isn't permitted. "One thing most Indians can relate to is the awkwardness when an intimate scene appears on-screen. Often, a child or parent tries to look away or leave," said Sudarshan Tripathi, professor of sociology at Banaras Hindu University (BHU).

By Priyanjali Narayan

'The Democrats Still May Not Understand What They're Dealing With'

How did Silicon Valley leaders go from heaping praise on Barack Obama to going all in on Donald Trump? To hear characters like venture capital firm a16z's Marc Andreessen tell it, much of their current support for Trump has to do with a Joe Biden administration that attempted to throttle tech innovation. In December, Andreessen said in a podcast that he and other tech figures had meetings with Biden officials that were "absolutely horrifying ... we came out basically deciding that we had to endorse Trump." But according to Jacob Silverman, author of the newly released book *Gilded Rage: Elon Musk and the Radicalization of Silicon Valley*, the tech industry flourished under Biden as well, benefitting in particular from increased cooperation with the defense sector. Rather, characters like Musk, Andreessen, Peter Thiel and David Sacks found common ground with Trump on many cultural issues, and realized that if they asked nicely, he would deliver them exactly what they wanted from the federal government. "I would argue the tech industry was doing very well under Biden ... What they probably didn't like were these mild acts of enforcement," Silverman told *POLITICO Magazine*, referring to clashes over crypto and AI. "[But under Trump], they are getting pretty much everything they want. ... I think [the alliance] is deeply reflective of the culture and politics and attitudes among the tech leadership itself." In an interview about how the tech-Trump alliance came to be, Silverman also discussed Musk's potential involvement in the midterms, why the tech elite is worried about internal dissent and how democracy-skeptical Silicon Valley figures are trying to wall themselves off from American society. This interview has been edited for length and clarity. In 2016, that meeting was a bit of a surprise. Tech leaders coming into the open, giving their blessing, to some extent, to Trump. Certainly, I think a lot of people recognized a degree of expediency on the part of tech billionaires, thinking "Okay, we



have to deal with the new ruling party." Also, as I described in the book, I thought that that meeting was pretty important because of the role of Peter Thiel as basically the kingmaker and the one deciding who was in attendance. It was a real validation of his early and pretty much unwavering bet on Trump. I think now what's different is it's a full embrace, and it's kind of an unembarrassed one. Among senior leadership in tech, there's kind of an exhaustion with woke politics and social justice issues. They don't want to have to have opinions on those kinds of things anymore. And there is, I think, somewhat a sense of relief that they could go back to just being craven capitalists and businessmen again.

What you see more now is a lot of talk about cooperation and mutual benefit for the country, the government and industry and basically everyone helping to Make America Great Again and make money along the way. There's very little moral or political valence to the kinds of discussions or comments that you hear from tech leaders now. And again, I think there's almost a sense of relief. If you're Mark Zuckerberg, who Trump has threatened to send to prison before, or if you're the CEO of Alphabet, which the government has been trying to break up, some of this is about personal interests and survival, but I think it's also deeply reflective of the culture and politics and attitudes among the tech leadership itself.

In the early Silicon Valley history of the 50s and 60s, a lot of advancements in tech were the result of either investment or

contracting agreements between Silicon Valley and the defense industry or the Defense Department. And then the DoD and DARPA helped give us the internet. But there was also this long period where tech saw itself as one of the inheritors of what was left of the counterculture, and that certainly has faded away to a great degree.

At first you had this revolving door between the tech industry and the defense industry that really increased in speed under Obama. And this is also a period where a lot of the War on Terror practices, including mass surveillance under the George W. Bush administration, became more institutionalized and codified under the law.

So, there's been a general coming together of these two power centers where there's a lot of mutual profit and mutual interests. Of course, the government wants the data that the tech industry is collecting as a matter of doing business, and they want the products that tech is creating. And what you increasingly hear within the tech industry is that a reluctance to work for the state because you're a libertarian or a "cyberpunk," or a reluctance to make weapons, has gone away. In some cases, there's an outright enthusiasm for working in the defense industry. And this is where you get defense tech and companies like Palantir and Anduril, or even individual personalities like Palmer Luckey at Anduril. At least part of this new generation is very excited to make stuff for the state — it's kind of more like a "Call of Duty" type attitude, where they grew up on this War on Terror media. And instead of feeling conflicted about it, they got business ideas.

And it's also not just the defense tech startups. The big tech companies have also dispensed with a lot of their reluctance about being involved in military intelligence matters, and they pretty much all are going in that direction.

I realize that might seem a little bit surprising to people, but I would argue that the tech industry was doing very well under Biden. Yes, there were some new challenges, especially in the form of the Federal Trade Commission and its chair at the time, Lina Khan. I would argue that the hatred of Biden actually gets at some of the irrationality and the reactionary character of these tech bubbles. I don't know if they understood how good they had it. More specifically, you could say, hey, Eric Schmidt's drone company is operating in Ukraine. Anduril is certainly operating in Ukraine. Anywhere the Biden administration was on the national security front lines, tech companies were often involved.

The things that they saw as threats to themselves, I would argue, were rather overrated. Marc Andreessen said that his red line was this proposal to tax unrealized capital gains, which really would only affect billionaires and maybe a few very rich millionaires, and was something that was never even actually implemented. Andreessen also said that he went to a meeting at the White House and the Biden administration just wanted to destroy AI. Granted, I wasn't at that meeting, but that doesn't seem like a very accurate assessment of the Biden administration's AI policy. So on the one hand, I would say they did have certain areas of friction with the Biden administration, and maybe some areas that actually would have effects on their bottom line.

But overall, this struck me as an industry that was still in full bloom, doing very well and finding new revenue streams with the government under the Biden administration. What they probably didn't like were these mild acts of enforcement and the fact that interest rates still weren't where they wanted them to be.

Yeah. A simple way to put it is that this is a group of people used to getting everything that they wanted, and they weren't getting everything that they wanted, and that became intolerable. And I think that's something we heard directly from them sometimes.

I would imagine so. But there's always room for discontent. One thing I think is worth noting is that even someone like Musk, who's had this kind of psychodrama with Trump, hasn't experienced major financial consequences or legal consequences from his up and down relationship with the president. In fact, he's gotten multiple contracts for X-AI/Grok recently. So yes, if some of these electric vehicle subsidies go away, that would hurt a lot. But overall, I think he is doing rather well, and certainly other people around him are doing quite well.

I think he may be involved in the 2026 midterms, but I wouldn't expect him to take as much of a lead as he did in 2024, certainly in a place like Pennsylvania, where he was practically running operations. At the same time, I think something like a midterm election cycle suits Musk. He has a lot of political interests now, but maybe doesn't have the attention span and the commitment for a long political effort. I don't see him finally establishing this "America Party" or turning that into anything, but he could drop into some races and give a lot of money to Republican Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie or others who appeal to him.

I think also you'll continue to see his presence in foreign elections — he likes to beam into rallies with far-right leader Tommy Robinson in Britain or the far-right party AfD in Germany and tell them their country's at stake. The other factor, though, which is really pulling on Musk, is he runs five or six companies. Some of them are facing hard times, especially Tesla. The government still needs SpaceX, but Tesla sales overseas are really doing badly and suffering from his political interventions. I think he will probably have to focus on Tesla and his other companies for now, at least.

By **CALDER MCHUGH**

Lucky with H-1B, unlucky with Trump

Anisha Gupta, a senior manager in one of the Big Four consulting firms, got an H-1B visa after trying for 12 years. But within months, Trump happened and her plans went haywire. Like many who chased the elusive American work visa for decades and finally got lucky, she is now scared of going to the US.

The IT auditor, who got the H-1B visa in November 2024 and has a job offer too, has put her American Dream on hold for now. The sentiment in the US changed all of a sudden as Donald Trump took the oath of office as President in January 2025. Since then, Trump's MAGA support base has built pressure on him to deliver on his campaign promises of cracking down on immigration and hiring of foreign talent. After threats, companies have gone slow in hiring foreign talent, and the overall anti-immigrant sentiment is scaring off Indians who were earlier excited about working in the US. While Anisha shared her name, two other people who were lucky with H-1B but unlucky with Trump spoke to India Today Digital on the condition that their real names not be revealed. Like Anisha, Shailendra too got an H-1B visa after trying for over a decade. The techie now has a visa, but the job that was offered by the US-based company has been withdrawn because the pressure now is to "hire American". Ankur, who is in his early 30s, also got lucky with an H-1B visa last November. His employer, a top IT services company, planned to shift him to the US. But now, those plans have been put on the back burner. The H-1B visa has long been the backbone of America's IT and IT-enabled services (ITES) industry, with Indians forming the largest beneficiary group. Nearly three-fourths of all H-1B visas go to Indian professionals, who power Silicon Valley and global tech giants in the US. Their skills make them indispensable for the American tech industry. Getting an H-1B visa is, however, a matter of chance. The lottery system was resorted to because the number of applicants far outstrip the visas available. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) received eligible registrations from 4.42 lakh people in the FY 2025 H-1B cap season. Of them, only 1.14 lakh got the visa, which is a success rate of 26%, according to Fragomen, a leading global immigration services firm.

Despite getting the much-coveted H-1B visa and a job, which are more often than not seen as the first steps towards American citizenship, Indians are scared and in two minds about pursuing their American Dream at this moment. These even include people who have invested lakhs of rupees in the H-1B visa by engaging consultancies. All the H-1B visa holders India Today Digital spoke to were wary of moving to the US due to the uncertainty created by Trump's stringent laws and rhetoric, coupled with his tough stance against India. There is a suspicion that the Trump administration is trying to target India's IT services industry after imposing 50% tariffs on Indian exports.

SCARED OF GOING TO US NOW, SAYS H-1B VISA HOLDER

The H-1B is a non-resident work visa but a gateway to the Green Card, and ultimately US citizenship. H-1B visa holders can extend their stay in the US beyond the six-year limit through one crucial step—the I-140 petition. Anisha had been trying for an H-1B since 2013, soon after she graduated from an engineering college. "I am scared of going to the US now. One can't be sure of the stability there amid the huge anti-immigrant sentiment," she told India Today Digital. Anisha has moved jobs four times, all MNCs, where there were chances of getting the H-1B. However, as she chased the H-1B, life kept moving. Today, she is married with a one-and-a-half-year-old son. She has an elderly mother to take care of too. Landing the H-1B visa in November 2024 was a bittersweet feeling for her. Now, with a family to care for, she feels moving to the US is uncertain under Trump, as she risks being sent back. Instead, she is seeking a remote role on the US client project she's been assigned.

DREAMT OF LIFE IN CHICAGO, BUT STAYING BACK IN MUMBAI

Anisha went on a short work trip to the US in 2017. She visited her consulting firm's offices in Chicago, New York, and Dover. "I thought I would eventually settle down in the US. All the projects I worked on were for US-based clients, and even my consulting firm is from the US, so I knew that at some point I would get an H-1B visa. As I rose through the ranks, I saw a significant number of team leads

being sent to the US," she said. "Generally, people who get the H-1B spend anywhere between 5-15 years in the US, save up enough, and come back. Most of them try to get into the Green

Card queue. But under Trump, things are not the same anymore," she said. The IT auditor is more content with her life in Mumbai, which she says offers almost the same standard of living as the US, though there are "lifestyle refinements" that only the US can offer. "Working as a senior manager in a top tier firm in Mumbai, though good enough, is not comparable to being in New York or Chicago," she said.



DESPITE H-1Bs, IT COMPANY NOT SENDING INDIANS TO US

Ankur, a Noida-based techie working at a US-based IT consultancy, struck the H-1B gold in his very first attempt. However, the call to move to the US never came. His company—one of the country's largest IT employers with over 2.5 lakh employees in India—chose not to relocate him, as priority is being given to American workers. There are thousands of Indians like Ankur who, though not as excited as before, are waiting for that call from their companies to relocate to the US. "I do have a family now, but the company will cover all my relocation costs. Even if I'm reassigned to a project in India after a few months or years, they will also pay for my return. But it's been 10 months, and the call hasn't come yet," said Ankur, who married recently.

DESPITE H-1Bs, IT COMPANY NOT SENDING INDIANS TO US

Well-placed sources told India Today that some H-1B visa holders, despite having a job in the US, have been sent back by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from the airport when they were returning from India. The reasoning given: if someone had been in India for over a year without it affecting their work, then their employer was

not truly dependent on them. A Reddit user shared that his H-1B visa was cancelled because he had stayed in India for over 60 days. However, he later deleted the

screenshot attached with the post, possibly fearing disclosure of his identity. Ankur narrated the case of a senior colleague who had lived in the US for over a decade but was sent back when he returned from India, where he had stayed for a year due to a family emergency. "The whole family had to relocate to India after that, disrupting their lives," he said.

SOME INDIANS STRANDED AFTER INVESTING LAKHS FOR H-1B VISA

Shailendra, another Noida-based tech professional, received approval for an H-1B petition in November 2024 through a US employer facilitated by a consultancy in India. Ten months on, he remains uncertain about his prospects in the US due to delays and immigration uncertainties.

Shailendra had engaged a Delhi-based consultancy that assists professionals in connecting with US employers willing to sponsor H-1B visas. The consultancy charged him Rs 7 lakh for their services, with Rs 3.5 lakh promised as a refund once he began working in the US. There was also the money spent on air travel and stays for last-minute visa interviews. "After the visa was approved, I faced delays in securing a start date due to administrative processing and employer hesitancy amid stricter H-1B policies. Till February, I applied for backup options, contacting over 250 employers. Finally, the consultancy connected me with another US employer willing to transfer my H-1B

petition, but I'm still waiting for a confirmed start date," he said.

Shailendra said after Trump returned to power, the United States ICE has gained greater authority to block the entry of even those holding H-1B visas, even as priority is being given to American workers.

He still nurtures the dream of working in the US, but believes that this might not be the best time to shift there.

TRUMP'S H-1B CRACKDOWN: BOTH INDIA, US PAYING THE PRICE

The fears aren't unfounded. Anti-immigrant slurs and rhetoric are widespread on social media, revealing the tensions on the ground.

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis called the H-1B a "scam".

DeSantis alleged companies trained Americans alongside H-1B workers, only to fire the former and hire cheaper Indian labour. Lutnick proposed overhauling the H-1B visa system altogether.

That the sentiments towards foreign talent have changed is also visible from how official processes are being conducted.

A Reddit user posted earlier this month that the H-1B and H-4 visa interview process had become more stringent now.

He shared his interview experience from Chennai in September, saying that despite having already renewed his H-1B four times, his petition was flagged for additional verification. Others at the consulate reportedly faced similar checks, indicating tighter scrutiny even for previously approved applicants.

While the US restrictions and crackdowns might lead to the belief that Indians are losing out, it is ultimately America that stands to pay the price if Indians are kept out. India's greatest export to the US is not goods, but people—its engineers, coders, and students—who power Silicon Valley and drive the ITES boom. The H-1B once stood for talent and persistence. Today, it's just a stamp on the passport that invites scrutiny. It helped build the US on the basis of skills and open competition, which is being destroyed by Trump. That Indians are wary of going to the US despite valid visas and jobs is testimony to that destruction.

By Anand Singh

Fearless Voice of the Community

The South Asian Insider

23 Glorious Years, Always a Step Ahead



The South Asian

INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community Since March 2002

[f](#)
[i](#)
[v](#)
[t](#)
[w](#)

Glova Group
Your solutions are one consultation away...

- SEO
- Branding
- Campaigns
- Web Design
- AI Integrations

www.glovagroup.com

Vol. 24 Issue 28 Friday 10 Oct to 16 Oct 2025 \$1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Venezuela's Maria Machado dedicates Nobel Prize to Trump

Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado who won the Nobel Peace Prize 2025 and ended Donald Trump's dream of winning the prize, praised the US President for supporting the Venezuelans working to establish democracy and end President Nicolas Maduro's dictatorship.



Story on Page 25

British and Indian prime ministers promote trade deal during visit by Starmer



Story on Page 24

The American Dream turned nightmare, Gujaratis in Peril in US Motel Business?

Story on Page 2

Big Crackdown Coming: India To Audit All Cough Syrup Makers

Story on Page 24

The Road from Patna to Pennsylvania Avenue: How Bihar's Verdict Will Shape Modi's Hand in US Trade Talks



Story on Page 10

Brazilian influencer's death after 'fox eyes' surgery exposes beauty culture's dark side



Story on Page 26

As Afghan Taliban Minister Begins 1st India Visit, Delhi Has A Flag Dilemma



Story on Page 27

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Uncompromised and Unbiased

A Festival of Lights and Prosperity

As the soft glow of Diya lamps illuminates homes and hearts around the world, we wish you a truly radiant and joyous Diwali.

May this Festival of Lights dispel the darkness of the past and usher in a year filled with prosperity, peace, and boundless joy. Just as the lights symbolize the triumph of good over evil, may your endeavors be met with success, and your lives be rich with health and happiness. We hope your celebrations are filled with the sweet taste of Mithai, the vibrant bursts of light, and the warmth of close-knit family and friends.



Happy Diwali