



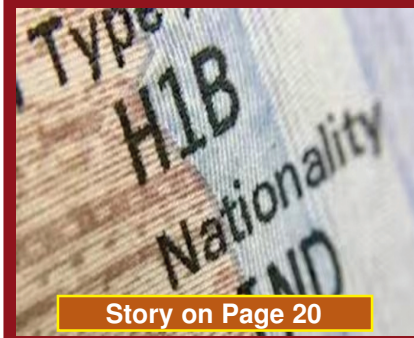
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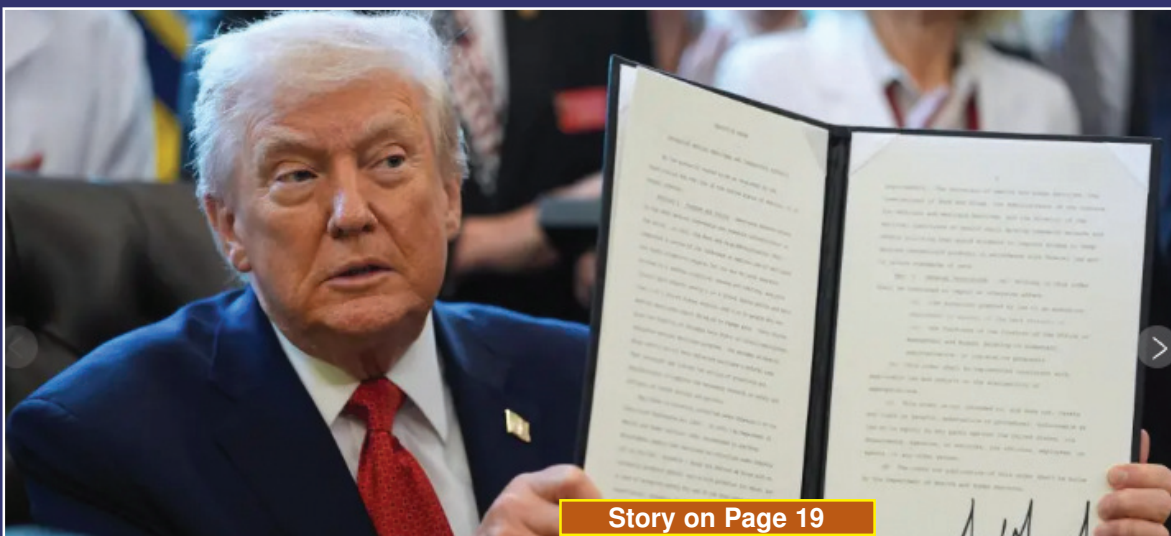
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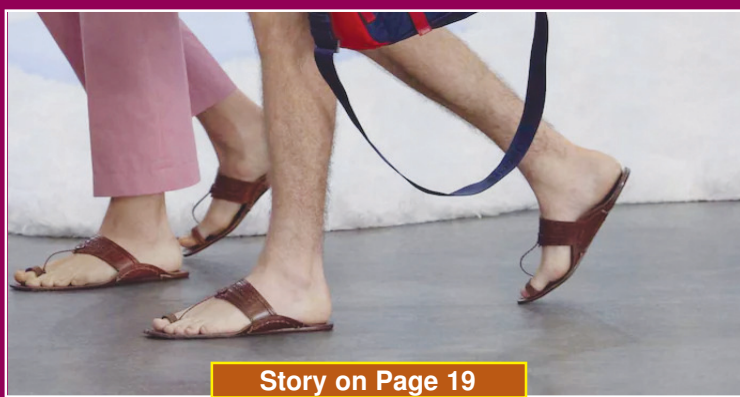
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Sydney Shooter Sajid Akram Was From Hyderabad; No Adverse Records Before His 1998 Departure: Police

According to Telangana Police, Sajid Akram had limited contact with his family in Hyderabad over the past 27 years. He visited India on six occasions after migrating to Australia

Sajid Akram, 50, who opened fire at a gathering during Jewish festival Hanukkah celebration at Sydney's Bondi beach, was from Hyderabad and had an Indian passport, the Telangana Police said in a press note. The police said they have "no adverse record against Akram during his stay in India prior to his departure in 1998". Akram and his son, Naveed, 24, opened fire at the gathering on Sunday, killing at least 16. While Akram was shot dead, Naveed is injured. The incident is being treated as a terrorist attack by the Australian Government. Reports indicate that they were inspired by ISIS ideology. Akram completed his B.Com degree in Hyderabad and migrated to Australia in



search of employment, approximately 27 years ago, in November 1998. He subsequently married Venera Grosso, a European origin woman before settle permanently in Australia, said the note. They have one son, Naveed and one daughter. Sajid Akram carries Indian passport as on date and his

son Naveed Akram and daughter were born in Australia and are Australian citizens. Visited India 6 times in 27 years As per information available from his relatives in India, "Akram had limited contact with his family in Hyderabad over the past 27 years. He visited India on six occasions after migrating to

Australia, primarily for family-related reasons such as property matters and visits to his elderly parents. It is understood that he did not travel to India even at the time of his father's demise," it said. "The family members have expressed no knowledge of his radical mindset or activities, nor of the circumstances that led to his radicalisation. The factors that led to the radicalisation of Sajid Akram and his son, Naveed appear to have no connection with India or any local influence in Telangana," it added. The Telangana Police said they remained committed to cooperating with central agencies and other counterparts, as and when required, and urged the public

and media to avoid speculation or attribution without verified facts.

'India has zero tolerance towards terrorism'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had strongly condemned the attack.

In a post on X, Prime Minister Modi said, "Strongly condemn the ghastly terrorist attack carried out today at Bondi Beach, Australia, targeting people celebrating the first day of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah." "We stand in solidarity with the people of Australia in this hour of grief...India has zero tolerance towards terrorism and supports the fight against all forms and manifestations of terrorism," he said.

Social Security Commissioner Frank J. Bisignano Visits National Federation of the Blind Headquarters: Commissioner Bisignano visited the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) to meet with NFB President Mark Riccobono.

(By our staff reporter) New York (Baltimore, MD) — On Monday, December 8, 2025, Social Security Administration (SSA) Commissioner Frank J. Bisignano visited the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) headquarters to meet with NFB President Mark Riccobono and discuss the ways SSA can continue and strengthen its support of the blind community. Bisignano is the first SSA Commissioner to ever visit the NFB headquarters. "I am grateful for all the work NFB does to support, rehabilitate, and expand opportunities for the blind. With approximately 50 million American adults suffering from

vision loss or blindness, almost every family either is or knows someone closely impacted by vision loss, and my family is no exception. I will continue to advocate for the blind and explore new ways to improve SSA's services, including the return-to-work efforts for beneficiaries," said Commissioner Bisignano.

"We deeply appreciate Commissioner Bisignano's commitment to partnership with our organization to create meaningful opportunities to advance self-sufficiency and financial independence for all blind Americans. We value leaders like Commissioner

Bisignano who invest the time and effort to learn from our community by visiting our national headquarters, speaking at our national convention, and making actionable commitments to address our concerns," said NFB President Riccobono.

SSA provides employment support for blind Americans in addition to other programs for low-vision and blind Americans. SSA strives to make our services more accessible, including changes to my Social Security, our secure online gateway for customers that provides immediate electronic access to Social Security information and services.



Legislator Koslow Celebrates Mercy Mavericks' Flag Football Four-Peat

(By our staff reporter) New York—Nassau County Legislator Seth I. Koslow (D – Merrick) proudly congratulated the Mercy Mavericks, an all-girls flag football team that recently completed a four-peat in the HTB&G flag football league championships. The league, which has served Merrick, Bellmore, Wantagh, Seaford, Massapequa, Levittown and their neighboring communities for 22 years, enrolled its first all-girls flag football team in 2021 and the program has grown steadily from there. Among the

young athletes on the Mavericks squad is Legislator Koslow's daughter, Jaclyn, who has been on the team since its inception. "As a youth sports coach, I know firsthand how important these programs are for instilling the values of hard work, fair play, and cooperation in our young people – and HTB&G flag football exemplifies the benefits of such programs," Legislator Koslow said. "It is truly a pleasure to congratulate these outstanding young athletes on another impressive championship season!"



Krishna Gidwani sentenced for Multi-Million-Dollar Health Care Fraud Scheme

Gidwani, Raju Sharma, and other co-conspirators schemed to defraud Medicare.

(By our staff reporter) New York A Canton, Mass., man was sentenced today in federal court in Boston in connection with a scheme to defraud Medicare of over \$4 million by submitting claims for durable medical equipment (DME) that was medically unnecessary, not wanted by the Medicare beneficiaries and tainted by kickbacks. Krishna Gidwani, 55, was sentenced by U.S. Senior District Court Judge Patti B. Saris to 30 months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release. Gidwani was also ordered to pay more than \$3 million in restitution to Medicare. In August 2025, Gidwani pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud. Gidwani worked with Raju

Sharma, and other co-conspirators, to own and operate a DME company that paid telemarketing companies for DME orders for orthotics such as ankle, wrist, knee and back braces. Often, the Medicare beneficiaries did not need or want the braces the defendants shipped them and as further alleged, the doctors whose signatures appeared on these DME orders often did not treat these beneficiaries and did not prescribe the DME. This case is part of the



Department of Justice's 2025 National Health Care Fraud Takedown – a strategically coordinated, nationwide law enforcement action that resulted in criminal charges against 324 defendants for their alleged participation in health care fraud and illegal drug diversion schemes that involved the submission of over \$14.6 billion in intended loss and over 15 million pills of illegally diverted controlled substances. The

defendants allegedly defrauded programs entrusted for the care of the elderly and disabled to line their own pockets. The United States has seized over \$245 million in cash, luxury vehicles and other assets in connection with the takedown. United States Attorney Leah B. Foley; Ted E. Docks, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; and Roberto Coviello, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lauren A. Graber and Sarah B. Hoefle of the Criminal Division prosecuted the case.

Antonio Bonheur and Saul Alisme, of Massachusetts Charged with Large-Scale SNAP Benefits Trafficking

(By our staff reporter) New York Defendants allegedly trafficked nearly \$7 million worth of food stamp benefits and sold donated food product intended for the nonprofit Feed My Starving Children

Two men have been arrested and charged in an alleged scheme to fraudulently obtain millions of dollars' worth of Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits through small retail stores



they operated in Boston. Defendants' monthly SNAP redemptions allegedly ranged from \$100,000 - \$500,000 per month, outpacing full-service supermarkets. Defendants also allegedly sold donated food product intended for food-insecure children overseas.

Antonio Bonheur, 74, of Mattapan and Saul Alisme, 21, of Hyde Park, were each charged with one count of food

stamp fraud. The defendants were arrested this morning and will appear in federal court in Boston at 3:15 p.m. today.

Bonheur owned Jesula Variety Store and Alisme owned Saul Mache Mixe Store, both of which operated as small variety stores within a single street-facing storefront in the Mattapan neighborhood of Boston. Jesula Variety Store occupied about 150 square feet. Saul Mache Mixe Store occupied about 500 square feet.

According to the charging documents, despite their limited size, inventory and food offerings, both stores allegedly exhibited extraordinarily high SNAP redemption

volumes, far beyond what could reasonably be supported by legitimate food sales. Specifically, transaction data allegedly revealed that the stores had exceptionally large and anomalous average monthly SNAP redemption rates when compared to similarly situated businesses of the same size, type and location. It is alleged that the defendants' monthly SNAP redemptions for Jesula Variety Store regularly exceeded \$100,000 – with many months exceeding \$300,000 and, at times, \$500,000. By comparison, one full-service supermarket in the same area redeems approximately \$82,000 per month in SNAP benefits.

Additionally, transaction-level data showed that only approximately 10% of SNAP transactions were for amounts under \$40, while more than 70% of transactions exceeded \$95. Such transaction patterns are typically associated with large supermarkets, not small variety stores with limited food inventory.

During undercover operations conducted at both businesses over the course of the investigation, SNAP benefits were allegedly trafficked for cash on four occasions from Jesula Variety Store and on two occasions from Saul Mache Mixe Store. In each instance, the defendants themselves allegedly worked the cash registers and personally exchanged SNAP benefits for cash. Both stores were also allegedly observed selling liquor in exchange for SNAP benefits.

Attorney General James and Bipartisan Coalition Urge Big Tech Companies to Address Dangerous AI Chatbot Features

NEW YORK – New York Attorney General Letitia James and a bipartisan coalition of 41 other attorneys general today sent a letter to Big Tech companies urging them to implement safeguards on artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots to protect children and vulnerable people. In a letter to 13 companies, including Meta, Microsoft, and OpenAI, the attorneys general cite examples of AI chatbots having inappropriate interactions with children and chatbot conversations leading to domestic violence incidents, hospitalizations, murders, and suicides. Attorney General James and the bipartisan coalition are calling on the companies to implement several

safeguards to protect children and vulnerable people, including posting clear warnings about harmful AI responses and notifying users if they were exposed to potentially harmful outputs. The bipartisan coalition also warns that many states have robust criminal laws that prohibit the dangerous kind of suggestions and conversations AI chatbots are providing users, and that developers may be held accountable under those laws. "I am

deeply concerned by reports of AI chatbots having dangerous and inappropriate conversations with children, seniors, and vulnerable people," said Attorney General James. "Big Tech companies must do more to stop their AI chatbots from exploiting children and encouraging harmful and sometimes deadly behaviors. I am joining a bipartisan coalition of attorneys general to demand that these companies prioritize user safety and add more safeguards to their AI tools."



India Signals Possible Trade Response as Mexico Imposes 50 Percent Tariffs on Key Imports

(By our staff reporter) India has indicated it may take appropriate steps to protect its exporters following Mexico's decision to impose steep new tariffs on a wide range of imported goods. The move comes after Mexico approved a 50 percent increase in duties on select products, a decision that Indian officials say was taken without adequate consultation and runs counter to established global trade norms. According to government officials in New Delhi, India is reserving its right to respond while continuing to pursue a diplomatic and

negotiated solution. The Department of Commerce has confirmed it is actively engaged with Mexico's Ministry of Economy to explore outcomes that align with international trade rules and maintain stability in bilateral economic relations, according to PTI. Officials said India had raised concerns with Mexico during the early stages of the proposed tariff legislation. A high level meeting has already taken place between Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal and Mexico's Vice Minister of Economy Luis Rosendo, with

further discussions expected in the coming weeks as both sides assess the implications of the



policy shift. The Indian government has emphasized

that unilateral increases in most favoured nation tariffs, introduced without prior dialogue, undermine predictability and transparency in the multilateral trading system. New Delhi has reiterated that such actions do not reflect the cooperative spirit that underpins its economic engagement with Mexico and other global partners. The tariffs are scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2026, and are intended to protect domestic industries in Mexico. The affected product categories include auto

parts, passenger vehicles, clothing, plastics, steel, household appliances, toys, textiles, furniture, footwear, leather goods, paper products, motorcycles, aluminium items, trailers, glass, soaps, perfumes, and cosmetics. Countries without a formal trade agreement with Mexico, including India, South Korea, China, Thailand, and Indonesia, are expected to feel the impact most sharply. • Indian officials have stressed that the country values its partnership with Mexico and remains open to working collaboratively toward a balanced trade environment that benefits businesses and consumers in both nations.

Trump and Modi Reconnect as U.S.–India Trade Talks Struggle Toward a Breakthrough

(News Agency) U.S. President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held another phone conversation as negotiators from both countries continue efforts to revive a long delayed trade agreement. According to Bloomberg, the call comes at a sensitive moment in bilateral relations, with talks ongoing but no clear resolution yet in sight despite months of negotiations.

Modi described the conversation as constructive and positive, noting that both leaders reviewed progress in U.S.–India relations and exchanged views on regional and global developments. Posting on X, Modi said the two countries would continue working together

to support global peace, stability, and prosperity. The discussion marked the fourth call between the leaders since Trump imposed 50 percent tariffs on Indian goods in August, a move that significantly strained trade ties. While diplomatic engagement has increased, trade negotiators remain divided on key issues. Bloomberg reported that discussions this week in New Delhi failed to produce a breakthrough, even as officials from both sides emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum. Indian officials said the leaders highlighted cooperation in critical technologies, defense, and security as priority areas alongside trade. U.S. Ambassador

to India Sergio Gora described the exchange as a strong conversation between close partners, though Modi notably avoided using language he had previously employed to describe Trump personally. An Indian government official told reporters that both sides acknowledged the need to push negotiations forward, particularly as Indian industries continue to feel the impact of U.S. tariffs. Geopolitical tensions have further complicated negotiations. Trump has pressured India to curb its purchases of Russian oil, arguing that the trade supports Russia's war in Ukraine. India has maintained that dialogue and diplomacy are the preferred path to ending the conflict, while continuing its economic and



security ties with Moscow. Modi recently hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin in New Delhi, underscoring India's strategic balancing act between global

powers. Relations have also been tested by Trump's repeated claims that he helped broker a ceasefire between India and Pakistan earlier this year.

Pak surrendered on Dec 16. So why does Bangladesh mark Independence Day in

(News Agency) On December 16, every year, India celebrates Vijay Diwas to commemorate the victory of the Indian Armed Forces that resulted in the surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers, and the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. However, across the border in Bangladesh, December 16 is not marked as the Independence Day, but as Victory Day. Bangladesh marks March 26 as its Independence Day. The day is celebrated around 10 months ahead of India's Vijay Diwas or Bangladesh's Victory Day. There is history and reason as to why

Bangladesh celebrates its Independence Day on March 26, and not on December 16, the day of the surrender of Pakistani forces that led to the creation of



the new nation in 1971. Indian forces launched military operations in East Pakistan in December 1971, which was part

of the Mukti Juddho (the War of Liberation) of Bangladesh. This is the story behind Bangladesh's Independence Day. But first, a bit about the road to Liberation.

HOW PAKISTANI EXCESSES TRIGGERED BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR

Despite being more populous and economically productive, East Pakistan, then a province of Pakistan, was treated as a second-class region. It faced the imposition of Urdu, limited representation in the Pakistani Parliament and the armed forces, chronic underinvestment, and the

syphoning of its resources to West Pakistan. Tensions peaked after the 1970 elections, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League won a clear majority in the national polls. This victory entitled Rahman to form the government in Islamabad. Unwilling to accept the mandate, military dictator Yahya Khan launched Operation Searchlight to crush dissent in East Pakistan. Backed by Razakars and militia groups, the Pakistani Army carried out a brutal crackdown on Awami League leaders, Bengali intellectuals, Hindu religious minorities, and the Mukti Bahini. The violence

killed hundreds of thousands and triggered a massive refugee crisis, with around 10 million fleeing to India. On March 25, 1971, Pakistani forces began Operation Searchlight, with troops and tanks fanning out across Dhaka, massacring students and intellectuals in Dhaka University, attacking civilians across Dhaka, and crushing any resistance put up by local police and units of the East Bengal Rifles. In response, on March 26, 1971, just after midnight, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman sent a message to his people about Pakistani atrocities in Dhaka, and declared the

Messi event fiasco: Bengal Sports Minister quits, Mamata Banerjee to take charge

(News Agency) West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday accepted Sports Minister Aroop Biswas's resignation following the controversy over the mismanagement of football star Lionel Messi's recent event, a senior TMC leader said. Biswas, who had requested to be relieved of his sports portfolio, will remain a cabinet minister, continuing to oversee the power department. Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that the Chief Minister has decided to retain direct charge of the Sports and Youth Welfare Department for the time

being. Earlier on Tuesday, Biswas had submitted his resignation after the government ordered an investigation into the chaotic events during Lionel Messi's GOAT Tour event at Kolkata's Salt Lake Stadium. In a handwritten letter to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Biswas, who has faced much of the criticism for the chaos, said he was stepping down to ensure a "free and fair investigation" into the incident. His resignation has been accepted by West Bengal's Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The resignation of Biswas, one of the most trusted aides of Mamata and a powerful

figure in the TMC, shows that the ruling party was leaving nothing to chance months ahead of the crucial assembly elections. According to sources, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday pulled up senior officials during a closed-door review meeting of the Gangasagar Mela at the state secretariat, Nabanna. Sources said the Chief Minister asked Aroop Biswas whether he was prepared to take responsibility, remarking that he could step down if he was unable to do so. During the same meeting, Banerjee also questioned Rajeev Kumar, the



Director General of Police of West Bengal. Sources further indicated that the Chief Minister cautioned the officials against damaging the state's image, telling them not to "ruin the name of our state in front of everyone."

Insult to Mahatma Gandhi's ideals: Rahul Gandhi jabs Centre over MGNREGA overhaul

(News Agency) In a long post on X, Rahul Gandhi alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a "deep dislike" for two things - the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and the rights of the poor. In a long post on X, Rahul Gandhi alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a "deep dislike" for two things - the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and the rights of the poor. "MGNREGA is the living embodiment of Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj. It has been a lifeline for millions of rural Indians and proved to be a crucial economic safety net during the Covid-19 pandemic," the



Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha said. He claimed that the NDA government was "systematically" trying to weaken the MGNREGA, saying that PM Modi had been "unsettled" by the rural employment guarantee scheme. "Yet, this scheme

has always unsettled PM Modi. For the past ten years, his government has systematically tried to weaken it. Today, he is determined to erase MGNREGA altogether," he said. "Now, Modi ji wants to transform MGNREGA into a tool of centralised control -

budgets, schemes, and rules will be dictated by the Centre, the states will be forced to bear 40 per cent of the costs, and once funds run out, or during harvest season, workers will be denied employment for months," he said. Rahul Gandhi said the Opposition will protest against the "anti-people Bill" from roads to Parliament.

"This new bill is a direct insult to the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. After destroying the future of India's youth through massive unemployment, the Modi Government is now targeting the secure livelihood of poor rural families. From sadak to

sansad, we will oppose this anti-people bill," he said. The Centre plans to replace MGNREGA with the new 'Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission Gramin' (VB-G RAM G) bill. The proposed scheme promises 125 days of wage employment with a 60:40 Centre-State funding split, and will repeal the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005, if the Bill is passed. The NREGA was enacted by the then United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2005, and NREGA was later renamed as MGNREGA with effect from October 2, 2009.

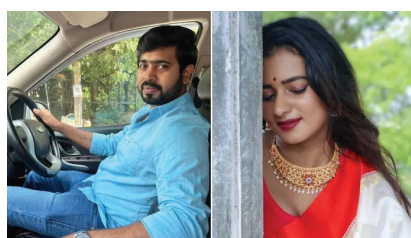
Kannada producer kidnaps actor-wife to demand custody of 1-year-old daughter

A film producer was accused of kidnapping his estranged wife, a Kannada actor, to force her family to hand over their one-year-old daughter. A case was registered in Bengaluru and an investigation was underway.

(News Agency) A film producer allegedly kidnapped his estranged wife, a Kannada actor and the mother of his one-year-old daughter, to force her family to hand over the child. The accused, Harshavardhan, owner of Vardhan Enterprises, was named in a complaint by the actor's family. According to the complaint, the accused, Harshavardhan, owner of Vardhan Enterprises and a resident of Hassan district, married actress Chaitra R in 2023 with the

consent of both families. About seven to eight months ago, the two reportedly began living separately following domestic disputes, with Harshavardhan staying in Hassan and Chaitra moving to a rented house on Magadi Road in Bengaluru. The complainant stated that Chaitra continued working as a television serial artist and film actress. On December 7, 2025, she informed family members that she was travelling to Mysuru for a shooting

assignment. The complaint alleged that the shooting was a pretext arranged by



Harshavardhan through his friend Kaushik, who also paid Chaitra an advance of Rs 20,000. As per the

FIR, Chaitra was allegedly called to the Mysuru Road Metro Station in Bengaluru around 8 am on December 7, where Harshavardhan, Kaushik and another person forced her into a car and abducted her, taking her via NICE Road and Bidadi. The information was conveyed to the family through a person known to Chaitra. Later that evening, Harshavardhan allegedly called Chaitra's mother and threatened that Chaitra would be

released safely only if the child was brought to him. A similar message was allegedly conveyed to another relative, asking that the child be brought to Arsikere in exchange for Chaitra's release. The complainant said Chaitra's phone was switched off when the family tried contacting her. She added that there was a delay in lodging the complaint as she was in Tiptur at the time and returned to Bengaluru before approaching the police.

Minnesota's fraud scheme is exposed. Now Trump has golden moment to strike

President Trump should investigate COVID-era fraud that bilked taxpayers under both Minnesota's Gov Tim Walz and California's Gov Gavin Newsom. George Washington Plunkitt was born into poverty in 1842 but rose through the ranks of the Democratic Party machine of New York, the famed "Tammany Hall," to become a state representative and a state senator. He also became quite wealthy along the way.

Plunkitt always defended his machine and its methods — and the money they made him. Plunkitt would gladly defend the practices of Tammany, rebutting charges of corruption with the standard reply that "nobody thinks of drawin' the distinction between honest graft and dishonest graft. There's all the difference in the world between the two." Plunkitt's brazenness lives on in the modern-day machines of the left, found in the deep-blue jurisdictions of the country. With the focus on the bilking of Minnesota taxpayers by the Somali community of the Twin Cities (many citizens, many not), voters across the country are still in shock as the story has unfolded since 2022. The lights shone on the Gopher State should get much brighter now, and after that, I have a follow-up that will make the swamp of the Twin Cities seem like a puddle.

The Minnesota story has been hiding in plain sight, with superb reporters from one of the original blogs of more than 20 years ago, Powerline, poring over the scandal for years. Powerline's founders John Hinderaker and Scott Johnson, and more recently their colleague Bill Glahn, have continued to dig and report, dig and report, dig and report on the "Somali connection." In recent weeks, the story caught fire with the help of reporting by Ryan Thorpe and Christopher Rufo of the Manhattan Institute's City Journal and by Fox News.

That "Minnesota is drowning in fraud," as Thorpe and Rufo put it, has now become a national story. Pray that it is the first of many. "There's an honest graft, and I'm an example of how it works," Boss Plunkitt would say. "I might sum up the whole thing by sayin': I saw my opportunities and I took 'em.

" Turns out the defendants, the indicted and the convicted in the Gopher State saw their opportunities as well, and they put Tammany to shame when it came to scale and speed. The conmen of Minnesota bilked the state out of vast piles of cash through a variety of plays, the most infamous of which is, for the moment, "Feeding Our Future." It took truly extraordinary efforts by Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and the state's attorney general, Keith Ellison, to turn their eyes the other way to allow that scam and soon others to flourish.

The possessed girl in "The Exorcist" had nothing on Walz and Ellison when it came to turning their heads. We have former Attorney General Eric Holder and

former White House Counsel Dana Remus to thank for elevating the massive fraud ring run primarily out of the Somali American and Somali community in the Twin Cities to the nation's attention. • Why? Because that pair made Walz much more than an obscure governor of a deep-blue state.

That duo was primarily responsible for "vetting" the 2024 Democratic nominee for vice president as one of Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris' potential running mates. The dynamic duo of Holder and Remus either wholly missed the massive cons run on Walz's watch or judged them not significant enough to derail his candidacy. •During "Brat Summer," the legacy media abandoned its past practices and joined in the effort to push the worst pair of candidates to the finish since Alf Landon and Frank Knox got blown out by FDR in the 1936 referendum on Roosevelt's New Deal. Holder blessed Walz, and Holder's fans in the Manhattan-Beltway corridor followed suit.

Media elites blessed Holder's judgment in turn. Big mistake. Now Walz is part of the national Democratic Party's brand and refuses to go away, choosing to concentrate his efforts on running for a third term as governor next year — and apparently hoping he might be the party's standard-bearer in 2028. Instead, "Feeding Our Future" broke out of the Minnesota news ghetto and onto the national stage.

"Run Tim Run" should be the GOP's chant, alongside "Run Gavin Run," because just like Walz, California Gov. Gavin Newsom has some industrial-level explaining to do. No, I'm not referring to the California governor's French Laundry debacle. And no, not the devastating fires that tore through L.A. in January. Not even his indicted former chief of staff. No, the exact parallel to Walz's woe is the Newsom administration's handling of COVID-era relief for the unemployed — a statewide con run by political cons. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program (PUA), like the Lost Wages Assistance plan, was devised and funded by Congress to keep alive Americans left unemployed or with their businesses shuttered by COVID lockdowns.

Like standard unemployment programs, these COVID-era programs were primarily run through state unemployment insurance offices and other state agencies. The COVID lockdowns were unprecedented, and the public health "authorities" responsible for advising and administering them should never be taken seriously again. Many of those bureaucrats, drunk on new authority, stepped forward when elected officials sought guidance on what to do about the mysterious and deadly disease imported from China.

Editorial (Courtesy Fox News By Hugh Hewitt)

New York's Lack of AI Intelligence

Hochul can save the state—and U.S.—from stifling regulation. Politicians too often pass laws without thinking through the consequences. A case in point is a bill on New York Gov. Kathy Hochul's desk that would retard artificial intelligence in the name of protecting public safety. She would do her country a service by vetoing the blunder. The capabilities of AI models are advancing fast and raising alarms—and not without cause. Anthropic said in May that its latest Claude model is capable of "extreme actions" if it believes its "self-preservation" is threatened. The model tried to blackmail AI engineers when told it would be shut down.

Anthropic last month also disclosed that suspected Chinese hackers sought to use its tool for a cyber attack. Russian government-backed hackers likewise used a Google model to develop malware. This is dangerous, but technologies that promise large benefits often entail risks from misuse.

Seat belts and air bags reduce damage from car accidents, but safety mandates and testing won't prevent drunk driving or a terrorist from ramming a car into a crowd. The same principle applies to AI. Legislators in Albany nonetheless want to make AI developers liable for harm that results from manipulation or misuse of their models by others.

Their bill would bar AI developers from releasing models that "create an unreasonable risk of critical harm." Developers would also have to implement and disclose safeguards to prevent such harm.

These regulations would apply to models that cost more than \$100 million to develop, which means the

most widely used large-language models. One problem is the bill doesn't define "unreasonable" risk. State officials will surely have a more expansive interpretation than developers. But developers won't know it until state officials dun them.

Mitigating against "critical harm"—defined as "the death or serious injury" of more than 100 people or more than \$1 billion in economic damage—might not seem like a heavy lift. But developers of open-source models like Meta's can't control how their models will be tweaked or used. They would be legally responsible for misuse nonetheless.

Open-source models can facilitate innovation by those who don't have the wherewithal to develop their own models—for instance, small businesses and academic researchers. The New York legislation could put open-source models out of business because of the enormous legal risks and penalties for developers from downstream misuse.

The New York bill is similar to California legislation that Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed last year and that Rep. Nancy Pelosi opposed. Even these progressive Democrats realize that burdensome regulations and liability would stifle innovation. That's what has happened in Europe. Slowing AI may be the goal of some Luddites in Albany.

Whether and how to regulate AI deserves debate in Congress. New York's bill would stifle this debate by setting rules that could affect 49 other states. Instead of regulating technology they don't understand, how about lawmakers in Albany keep the streets safe?

(Courtesy WSJ Editorial Board)



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India's multi alignment: The quiet architecture of a confident republic

Managed with foresight, even the India-Russia-USA triangle could evolve into a *trikona shakti* of stability in global affairs, where dialogue prevails over coercion, realism tempers rivalry, and peace becomes a shared horizon. This idea reflects a simple truth. India is trying to stabilise a world that others have fractured.



The world still tries to understand India through binaries that no longer exist. It imagines that Delhi must choose between Washington and Moscow, that strategic autonomy is an outdated relic, and that stability in global politics requires alignment rather than agency. But India's statecraft today is shaped by a deeper intuition. Power is not confirmed by the camps you join. It is confirmed by the choices you retain. What stands out in India's diplomacy is a confidence unburdened by insecurity. It rests on long memories of who stood by India in moments when choices were difficult and options were few, and on new aspirations shaped by a young population that sees the world not as a battle of rigid blocs but as a space of opportunity. This is a generation that values American innovation and Russian resilience in the same breath. For them, partnership is functional and not ideological. That sensibility is slowly becoming the grammar of Indian foreign policy. India's relationship with Russia remains anchored in a trust that cannot be improvised. Critical technologies, from nuclear submarines to missile systems, were shared with India when few others were willing to invest in its strategic capacity. These were not transactional exchanges but enduring commitments. Such ties survive because they were forged in moments of vulnerability and not convenience. At the same time, India's engagement with the United States has expanded into one of the most consequential relationships of this century. Technology cooperation, defence manufacturing, clean energy investment, supply chain resilience and the dynamism of the Indian diaspora all give this partnership a depth that neither side can ignore. But this engagement is anchored not in dependency but in shared ambition. It is a joint attempt to shape the economic and technological frameworks that will define the future. This is why India's multi-alignment is not a hedge but a strategic assertion. It recognises that Washington and Moscow serve different dimensions of India's rise. India sees no contradiction in maintaining depth with Russia while expanding opportunity with the United States. In fact, managed with foresight, even the India-Russia-USA triangle could evolve into a *trikona shakti* of stability in global affairs, where dialogue prevails over coercion, realism tempers rivalry, and peace becomes a shared horizon. This idea reflects a simple truth. India is trying to stabilise a world that others have fractured. India's economic diplomacy reflects the same self-belief. When the United States signalled fresh tariffs on Indian rice and accused India of dumping, the expectation was that India would retreat. It did not. It pointed out that what is labelled dumping is, in reality, the competitiveness of India's agricultural sector. Rising productivity, wider market integration and resilient supply chains have enabled India to become a trusted supplier of food and allied commodities to 179 countries. India resisted tariff pressure not out of defiance but out of clarity. Partnerships cannot be sustainable if they require the abandonment of legitimate national interests. What unsettles some observers is how comfortably India navigates these relationships. It can deepen defence cooperation with Russia without inheriting its anxieties. It can strengthen strategic and technological ties with the United States without being confined by its expectations. It can trade robustly with both even when they confront each other. These are not contradictions. They reveal a maturing state capable of working with complexity rather than reducing itself to ideological reflexes. Underlying this diplomacy is a civilisational instinct for balance. India does not equate partnership with obedience. It seeks stability and not dominance. It stands by old friends without being trapped by them, and embraces new partners without surrendering autonomy. India's multi alignment, therefore, is not the diplomacy of hesitation. It is the diplomacy of self-belief. It recognises that the world's fractures need not dictate India's boundaries, and that principled autonomy backed by economic resilience can produce more order than coercive alliances. In defending its agricultural strength, resisting tariff pressure, and sustaining multiple strategic partnerships, India is sending a larger message. It is no longer defined by the choices others want it to make. It is defined by the choices it now has the power to make for itself. **(The article is written by Malika Pandey who is a public policy professional with years of experience working across key ministries of the Government of India. Views expressed are personal.)**

Why Big Tech Has Committed Almost \$80 Billion To India In Two Months

In the 2000s, the Indian economy grew at spectacular rates. Those were heady years, as the growth rate accelerated on the back of a steady flow

pledges within weeks. And this is on top of India's already strong post-pandemic annual FDI inflow of more than \$80 billion. Not long ago, we struggled

at least for 20-30 years.

The government's move may be overdue, but it arrives at a decisive moment. A national sovereign AI frame-

work is slated to roll out in February. The outline is clear. Public datasets, compute grids, domestic model building, Indian language AI, sector-specific guidelines, safety checks and incentives to build indigenous AI capability. It will be India's attempt to ensure that intelligence, like data, becomes a strategic public resource. The new policy will formalise what the world is already sensing. India intends to build AI, not just consume it.

2026, and access to a sovereign cloud that allows sensitive Indian data to stay within the country. Google's AI hub brings compute muscle India has never had before. Intel's partnership with Tata means India finally has a credible foothold in the semiconductor ecosystem, something it has tried to build for decades. These investments create jobs, supply chains and training pipelines. They nurture startups. They reduce dependency on imported cloud and AI models. They amplify domestic innovation.

But do pledges always become reality, one might ask. Not always. Land approvals can drag. Water supply for data centres can become complicated. Power distribution can slow timelines. Local politics can intervene. Even the best laid plans can wobble. Some pledges will take longer. Some will shrink. Some will be renegotiated. But the direction is clear. Data centres and cloud regions are not easily shifted once planned. Talent ecosystems take years to build, and once they form, companies do not walk away casually. The Indian market has become too large and central to the future of AI for global firms to ignore or abandon.

India Needs To Match The Momentum

The opportunity is coming. The question is what India must do next. Policies alone are not enough. India needs reliable power grids, fast-track clearances, transparent data governance rules, predictable taxation, seamless inter-ministerial coordination and long-term planning for energy and water. India is growing fast and cannot afford the delay culture if it wants to become an AI superpower.

Educational institutions face an equally urgent challenge. Many engineering colleges still teach curricula built for the early 2000s. Some elite institutions have upgraded, but the majority lag behind the industry's pace. Experts emphasise India needs AI labs across campuses. It needs machine learning courses integrated with practical cloud exposure, partnerships with global cloud providers, updated syllabi for chip design, cybersecurity, robotics and human AI collaboration. India now has the confidence of the world's biggest tech firms at a time when other large markets are slowing or turning inward. This is India's sunshine moment. And the world is watching because the stakes are enormous.

By Syed Zubair Ahmed



of foreign direct investment (FDI). From Mumbai to Bengaluru (it was still Bangalore then), there was genuine excitement. India was truly shining. Towards the fag end of the decade, annual FDI touched nearly \$40 billion.

At the time, \$40 billion was truly something. Most of that investment went into traditional sectors such as telecom, metals, automobiles, energy and old-world manufacturing. In those years, India had no digital rails, a nascent startup ecosystem and no public cloud strategy.

A similar excitement is in the air today. After the doom and gloom of the Covid-19 years, India's economic engine has slipped back into fifth gear. Investor confidence in the India story has been fully restored. Compared to the world of the 2000s, the picture today is dramatically different. India is now part of the global high-tech chain: semiconductors, AI, cloud, data centres, electronics. The shift is seismic.

Best Of Times?

In this backdrop, Big Tech has entered India with confidence and deep pockets. Since October, they have been lining up at India's doorstep with cheque books open. Amazon has promised \$35 billion. Microsoft has committed \$17.5 billion. Google is building a \$15 billion AI data hub. Intel has tied up with Tata to anchor India's semiconductor ambitions. After adding a few other players, India has attracted more than \$80 billion in fresh tech

to attract foreign capital. The sudden surge today feels almost electric. So what has changed?

A lot of businessmen and investors here are wondering what has changed in India, why the world's richest tech companies are betting so aggressively on a market that, they insist, still wrestles with paperwork, state-level delays and regulatory bottlenecks. They ask why Big Tech would take this risk when the US under President Trump is nudging them to invest at home. It is not very difficult to answer these questions. Consider this: India offers what no other democracy can. A digital universe of at least a billion people. The world's second-largest pool of tech talent. A market where cloud consumption is growing faster than almost anywhere else. A state that has made AI infrastructure, semiconductor production and packaging and public digital platforms the spine of its next economic phase.

AI models devour data. They need millions of testers. They need languages - India offers at least 22, along with accents and behavioural patterns. They need engineers who can train, tune and monitor them. India has all four in abundance. That is why India beckons Big Tech.

But there is a deeper story under the headline numbers. These tech giants are not simply building data centres. They are embedding themselves into India's long-term economic story,

work is slated to roll out in February. The outline is clear. Public datasets, compute grids, domestic model building, Indian language AI, sector-specific guidelines, safety checks and incentives to build indigenous AI capability. It will be India's attempt to ensure that intelligence, like data, becomes a strategic public resource. The new policy will formalise what the world is already sensing. India intends to build AI, not just consume it.

The Largest Applied AI Market

Where does India stand in the AI world right now? Not at the top. But it is breaking into inner circles. The US and China dominate foundational model-building, but India has the talent to power the global industry. It has training data worth more than 22 major languages. It has UPI, Aadhaar, DigiLocker and ONDC. It has one of the world's cheapest compute-to-labour cost ratios. It has the world's largest youth workforce. What India lacks in semiconductor fabrication and frontier model labs, it makes up for in scale and human capital. With the right policy push, India can become the world's largest applied AI market.

The latest tech pledges go far beyond symbolic interest. Amazon's \$35 billion plan will expand India's cloud backbone and build new AI infrastructure. Microsoft's over \$17 billion commitment includes a hyperscale cloud region in Hyderabad, going live in

Dhurandhar proves India can handle the truth without burning a bus

The masses, which were always handled by the kid gloves of the intellectual elite, quarantined from the harsh past lest they revolt, have suddenly started accessing history beyond their textbooks.



At 1330 hours, on a pleasant Bombay afternoon, a car exploded in the basement of the Bombay Stock Exchange, rocking the 28-storey building and killing 50 people. Just 30 minutes later, another bomb went off at Corporation Bank. More casualties. Within the next two hours, 12 blasts ripped through Mumbai, killing 257. A strategic choice of time, on a Friday afternoon. The then chief minister found this out pretty quickly, and so he invented the 13th blast, purportedly in an area of the other community.

“To prevent communal riots,” he said.

He was dutifully lauded by the Srikrishna Commission for quick thinking and avoiding a flare-up. The minister added this to his CV in the achievements column and boasted about it

years later on a news channel. This wasn't the first time. The holes in the secular fabric of the country were always patched by honourable lies. Truth was increasingly seen as propaganda. Most intellectuals in the post-independence era grew up with the same muscle memory.

“We cannot afford to tell them the truth. What if they burn a bus?”

The first generation, the ones who drafted our academic curriculum, were at least self-aware of the deceit, but the second generation, the kids of the NCERT, missed the self-awareness part. They grew up, learnt fine arts and valourised Aurangzeb and the likes in their movies, TV serials and various art forms.

Some of them went on to

become movie critics, the ones who find the subject matter of the movie Dhurandhar to be propaganda. Anything which invokes any adrenaline rush, any feeling of being historically wronged, any iota of revenge, the muscle memory rejects it as propaganda.

The chief grouse is: this movie is a paeon to the incumbent government, an ode to the idea of a post-2014 new India, effectively helping them in their political agenda. Several instances, where the characters talk of a prophecy, that a time will come when they will be able to hit back.

A haloed 2014.

Credit where due, we have hit back. You cannot deny the merit point to this dispensation, and they have encashed that intent at the polling booth. A political

party does what it has always done.

It's natural for someone to grab the available constituency the moment the trance is broken. The masses, which were always handled by the kid gloves of the intellectual elite, quarantined from the harsh past lest they revolt, suddenly started accessing history beyond their textbooks.

The issue was — even though there was enough subject matter, the uncomfortable truths, like the remains of a temple peeping out of Gyanwapi, there weren't enough competent people to take it to the masses. All the talented, good kids were products of the academic curriculum, born with the same muscle memory. Truth = Propaganda.

But then the outliers like Vivek Agnihotri made the hitherto “politically incorrect” stuff like The Kashmir Files, which was commercially successful despite being chiselled by a blunt instrument. The ensuing economics, the free market, has created enough demand, which is being fulfilled by technically competent and well-financed guys like Aditya Dhar. This success will lead to more attrition from the talented-kids-of-the-NCERT brigade to attempt retelling history. And not tell honourable lies. Our secular fabric is a product of our civilisational values, and it predates any person or document.

We can handle the truth without burning a bus. Thanks.

By Abhishek Asthana

A City Without Water Is A Harbinger Of A Thirsty Planet



The history of our cities has been written in water.

In Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Indus valley, the first urban settlements were built around irrigated farmland. Flooded terrace fields for rice, corn and quinoa accompanied the spread of civilization in East Asia and the Americas. Without water, the megacities that will define the 21st century would wither and perish.

That's looking like a risk factor in an increasing number of locations. Cape Town and Chennai in recent years endured punishing droughts that left them on the brink of crisis. Similar conditions afflicted the upwardly-mobile Indian cities of Bengaluru and Hyderabad last year. Now Tehran (biggest of all, with about 15 million people) is facing the same emergency.

Residents of Iran's capital are having their taps turned off for hours at a time to ration usage, amid a five-year drought and rainfall that's been running at 96 per cent below average levels. The city may have to be evacuated

altogether if a current dry spell doesn't break soon, President Masoud Pezeshkian said last month. That underlines a grim fact of modern life: Even relatively affluent and sophisticated cities might be just a few dry years away from "day zero" — the point where life-giving water supplies run out.

Tehran's desperate situation has its origins in the same mania for food and energy security that's causing many nations to raise trade and regulatory barriers to clean power right now. A commitment to food self-sufficiency following the 1979 Iranian revolution — spurning imports of nutritional energy in favor of home-grown wheat and rice — has drained aquifers and reservoirs to feed thirsty crops. More than 90% of water goes to agriculture, leaving precious little left over for the needs of urbanites.

That might be excusable given the widespread sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy for decades, but it's been accompanied by wasteful usage, too. Per-

capita water resources are greater than in Germany, India or South Korea, so should be sufficient to supply most of Iran's needs, if they were well managed. That's not what's happened. Flood irrigation, an ancient practice that wastes immense amounts of H₂O through evaporation when compared to drip irrigation that uses pipes, is still the predominant method of watering fields.

Tariffs and subsidies mean trade with more productive countries is fragile. China and India are the biggest producers of grain, and also major participants in the barter-style oil trade that gets around international sanctions on Tehran. China, however, barely exports food to Iran, while India's basmati farmers have to contend with occasional import bans imposed whenever the Iranian government wants to prop up its local growers.

Comments from energy minister Abbas Aliabadi earlier this month supporting the import of "virtual water" — thirsty crops that should be produced in countries with

more abundant rainfall — are a rare official admission that the drive to self-sufficiency is failing, and more food is going to need to come in from overseas.

This crisis is a sign of a planet whose cycles are increasingly slipping out of balance. While a shortage of water is crippling Iran, on the other side of the Indian Ocean an excess from monsoonal rains has caused \$20 billion of flood damages from Sri Lanka to Vietnam. Both situations would have been unlikely without the effects of climate change. Whereas Iran can now expect a drought like that of 2025 every 10 years, in a pre-warming world it would have happened as rarely as once a century. As the world's sixth-biggest emitter and one of the largest exporters of oil, it bears much of the responsibility for the warming now making Tehran unlivable.

It's not alone. Many of the countries hit by the recent Asian floods could find their current conditions flipping to Tehran-style droughts in future. In a 2020 study of 12

megacities in developing countries at risk of water shortages, the city ranks relatively low. To meet a basic standard of health and hygiene, Lagos, Jakarta, Mumbai, and Kolkata all need at least 50% more water per person than their systems are capable of supplying. Tehran's deficit is a relatively modest 29%.

Evacuation isn't the solution. Like pollution-choked Delhi and the sinking metropolis of Jakarta, Tehran has reached a scale where it will become impossible to move it to another location, regardless of the wishes of businesses or government officials. Better options are available. Reduce the barriers to food imports, to lessen the strain on local fields.

Use Iran's vast reserves of oil and gas to churn out hoses and pipes, to ensure the water it does have isn't lost to evaporation. Most of all, use that barter trade with China to switch to renewable energy. Iran's future will only be truly secure when it starts cutting its own carbon footprint.

Is Stability Replacing Freedom As The New Political Promise?



Across both democracies and non-democracies, a quiet shift is occurring in the language of politics. Leaders no longer primarily speak of liberty, rights, or dissent. Instead, they promise order, efficiency, predictability, and stability. This subtle yet significant change signals a reordering of political priorities, where freedom is no longer the central promise of governance but a negotiable cost.

The question worth asking, therefore, is not whether citizens still value freedom, but whether states are increasingly marketing stability as a substitute for it.

The New Political Bargain

Throughout much of the twentieth century, political legitimacy—especially in democracies—was based on the expansion of rights. Governments justified their authority by widening participation, tolerating dissent, and protecting civil liberties. Today, the justification is different.

The modern state presents itself as a manager of complexity. It offers security in a world of uncertainty, administrative efficiency instead of deliberation, and rapid decision-making over procedural debate. Stability is framed not merely as desirable but as essential. This new bargain is persuasive because it addresses genuine anxieties: economic volatility, technological disruption, migration, pandemics, and geopolitical instability. Citizens exhausted by crisis are more receptive to promises of control than ideals of freedom. The

danger lies in how easily this bargain normalises reduced scrutiny and constrained dissent.

Why Stability Has Become Politically Attractive

Stability is easier to communicate than freedom. It is measurable, visible, and produces short-term results. Freedom, by contrast, is untidy. It tolerates disagreement, slows decision-making, and produces noise. In an age of permanent crisis, governments find it easier to argue that deliberation is a luxury and dissent a risk. Administrative competence replaces democratic accountability as the benchmark of success.

Technology accelerates this shift. Data-driven governance, predictive policing, surveillance infrastructure, and algorithmic decision-making all promise order without argument. The state appears efficient precisely because it becomes less answerable. What emerges is not overt authoritarianism, but something more ambiguous: a governance model that functions well while listening less.

The Global Pattern

This trend is not confined to any one ideology or region. Across continents, democratically elected governments invoke stability to justify restrictions on protest, media scrutiny, and institutional checks. Authoritarian regimes, meanwhile, present efficiency as proof of legitimacy. Even liberal democracies increasingly defend extraordinary powers as permanent necessities.

The language differs, but the logic is consistent: freedom is portrayed as conditional,

stability as foundational. What unites these systems is not repression, but the quiet narrowing of acceptable political contestation. The Institutional Cost When stability becomes the primary promise, institutions begin to change. Parliaments are sidelined in favour of executive decision-making. Regulators prioritise order over transparency. Media is encouraged to amplify reassurance rather than scrutiny. Courts are burdened with resolving political questions that once belonged to public debate. None of this happens dramatically. It happens administratively. The system continues to function. Elections are held. Laws are passed. But the space for disagreement shrinks—not by decree, but by design. Over time, citizens internalise this logic. They trade participation for predictability, rights for reassurance.

Temporary Phase or New Normal?

Supporters of stability-first governance argue that freedom can return once order is secured. History suggests otherwise. Powers accumulated in the name of stability are rarely surrendered voluntarily. Emergency measures harden into norms. Temporary restrictions acquire permanent justifications.

The more a political system relies on stability for legitimacy, the less tolerant it becomes of uncertainty—and democracy, by its nature, is uncertain. This creates a paradox: the more stability is promised, the more fragile democratic trust becomes.

What Is at Stake

The danger is not that freedom will disappear overnight. It is that it will be redefined downwards—from a foundational principle to an optional feature. A society that accepts stability as a replacement for freedom may remain orderly, efficient, and governable. But it risks becoming politically shallow—capable of administration, but not self-correction.

Democracy does not collapse when citizens lose rights. It collapses when citizens lose the habit of questioning power.

A Choice Still Exists

This shift is not inevitable. Stability and freedom are not natural opposites. The real choice lies in whether states treat freedom as a constraint or as a condition of legitimacy. Strong institutions can provide

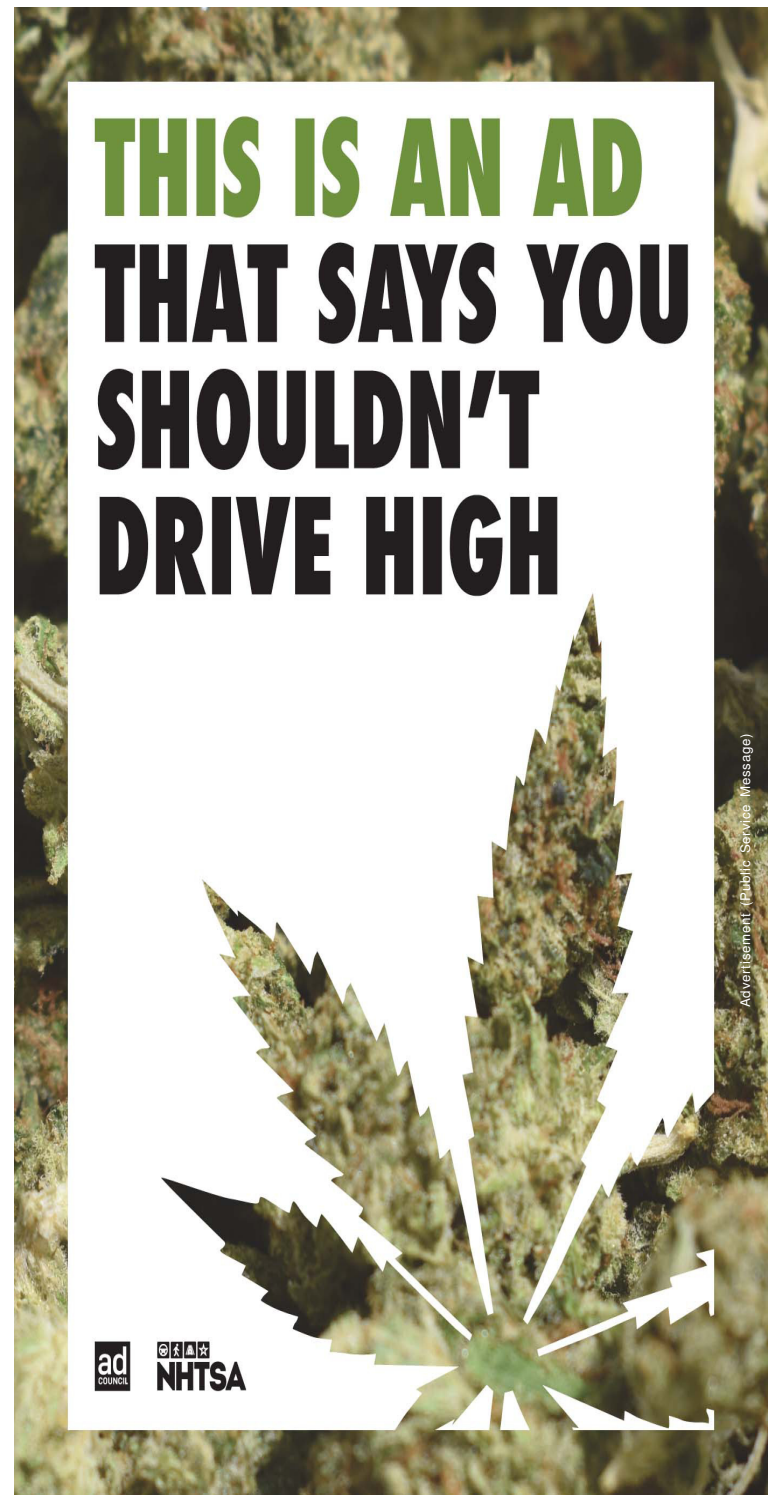
stability without silencing dissent. Capable governance does not require weakened accountability.

But this balance demands confidence—confidence in institutions, in citizens, and in the democratic process itself. Without that confidence, stability becomes an excuse rather than a goal.

Conclusion

The political promise of the future is being rewritten. The question is whether societies will accept a model that offers order at the cost of voice or insist on one that treats freedom as essential—even when it is inconvenient. Stability can sustain a state. Only freedom can sustain a democracy. What replaces freedom as the central political promise will ultimately determine not how efficiently societies are governed but how meaningfully they remain free.

By :Himanshu Shekhar



Bondi Beach terror attack is a reminder that jihadist threat cannot be ignored

There have been reports of Islamophobic attacks in Australia since the massacre, including one at a Muslim cemetery, where pig heads have been found. This indicates that Australia and the rest of the world must unite to fight terror and hate.

Sunday's terror attack on Jews celebrating Hanukkah on Australia's popular Bondi Beach has rightly been condemned across the world as an antisemitic atrocity. But the indiscriminate firing by the father-son duo, which killed 15 people and wounded dozens more, also reminded the world that the threat of terrorism is global and is unlikely to go away unless the international community speaks in one voice and targets its origins.

It was the deadliest single attack against Jewish civilians since Hamas fighters crossed the Gaza border and entered Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200, and taking 251 people hostage. And it came just over two months after the Manchester synagogue attack in England, where three were killed on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar.

There has been an increase in the number of antisemitic incidents in the West after Israel's military campaign in Gaza. In Australia itself, synagogues in Sydney and Melbourne have been targeted in the past year with attempted arson and graffiti. So Jews living outside Israel have a genuine fear of coming under attack for no fault of their own, as they have no control over the policies of the Israeli government.

TERROR ATTACKS ARE INCREASING

The Bondi Beach attack has exposed the recent lowering of guard against radical Islam by the West, despite an increase in terror attacks, because of the Ukraine-Russia conflict taking most of the attention. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace's latest Global Terrorism Index report, terror attacks jumped by 63 per cent in the West between 2023 and 2024, and seven Western countries now rank among the top 50 nations, worst affected by terrorism. India ranks 14th in the index.

There have been several terror incidents in the past few years in Europe involving Islamists, including at a Christmas market in the German city of Magdeburg in 2024, which killed six people and injured more than 300. Just before the Bondi killings, German police said they foiled another similar attack being planned for this Christmas.

Last year, American singer Taylor Swift was forced to cancel her concert in Vienna after police discovered a plot hatched by two teenagers, aged 15 and 17 years, to drive a car laden with explosives into the entrance of the



concert venue. Analysts were not surprised as extremist groups now increasingly target youngsters with digital tools and AI. In 2024, nearly two-thirds of ISIS-linked arrests in Europe involved teenagers, according to the report.

Last week, three Americans were killed in an ISIS attack in Syria, a country now led by a West-supported former Al-Qaeda militant, Ahmed al-Sharaa. On the eve of Thanksgiving, Afghan immigrant Rahmatullah Lakanwal allegedly gunned down two National Guard troops near the White House, prompting Trump to launch a crackdown against Afghan migrants.

AUSTRALIA IGNORED WARNINGS

If we look at the Bondi Beach terror attack, there were ample warnings to Australian authorities to prevent the atrocity. Sajid Akram was given license to acquire six firearms for recreational hunting by the authorities, including semi-automatic assault rifles, which he used in the attack.

His licence was not revoked despite his son, Naveed, having been on the radar of counter-terrorism police since 2019. Australia's counter-terrorism agency ASIO examined his alleged link to an ISIS cell but didn't find any

evidence to charge him at that time. Jews are not the only victims of racial attacks and abuse in Australia and

Recently, the two visited the Philippine island of Mindanao, which has become a hotspot for militants with links to ISIS. But the police didn't bother to question them about their motive for the trip.

THE WEST'S DOUBLE STANDARDS

Western nations' hypocrisy on terrorism is well-documented. For example, the Western media didn't first mention the Bondi attackers' names. Only after their identities were revealed in Australia did the Western press publish them.

Another example is that this attack was condemned without any ifs and buts. In contrast, when the Pahalgam attack happened, soon after the first condemnations, Western reporters and pundits started discussing Kashmir's political problems and Pakistan's claim over it. So rather than being a terror attack, Pahalgam became a debating issue to talk about the India-Pakistan dispute.

JEWIS ARE NOT THE ONLY VICTIMS

The attack on innocent Jews in Bondi Beach was an abhorrent and evil act that must be condemned — not just for its scale and horror. But

Western countries.

In the summer this year, Indians reported many such incidents during anti-immigration protests in Australia without any satisfactory response by the authorities. There have been similar incidents of racial abuse in Europe. In the United States, supporters of President Trump haven't even spared Indian-origin members of his administration, including FBI chief Kash Patel. In recent months, the rapes of two Indian-origin women in racially charged attacks in England sparked anger in the community. But unlike antisemitic attacks, such incidents rarely cause outrage among political leaders. On the fateful day in Australia, the actions of Ahmed al Ahmed, a Muslim fruit shop owner, in stopping one of the attackers, showed that there are heroes in each society one can be proud of. But sadly, there have been reports of Islamophobic attacks in Australia since the massacre, including one at a Muslim cemetery, where pig heads have been found. This indicates that Australia and the rest of the world must unite to fight terror and hate.

By Naresh Kaushik

Redefining Aravali, The Oldest Hills Chain: Why A Matter Of Concern?



JAG MOHAN THAKEN

recommendations made by a committee spearheaded by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). The Court ruling has narrowed the new definition of the Aravalli hills to the extent of 100 metre elevation threshold, resulting in the outage of hills parts below 100 meters height from the definition of mountains category, which will exclude over 90% of the range from protection, allowing large-scale mining.

The former Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot warns that this decision is not about environmental protection; it is a 'red carpet' for mining mafias. History will never forgive the injustice the government is inflicting upon future generations by inviting the Thar Desert right up to Delhi's doorstep.

This recent controversial redefinition will have severe negative effects on the environment and public health in North-West India, particularly the Delhi-NCR region.

Ashok Gehlot tweeted on December 16, 2025, "The Aravalli range is not just a mountain for Rajasthan; it is our 'protective shield.' Limiting it to a '100-meter' scope based on the Union Government's recommendation is tantamount to signing a 'death certificate' for 90% of the state's Aravallis. The most alarming fact is that 90% of the Aravalli hills in Rajasthan are lower than 100 meters in height. If these are excluded from the definition, it is not merely a change of name, but the removal of a legal shield. This directly implies that the Forest Conservation Act will no longer apply in these areas, allowing for unfettered mining."

Supporting his point, Gehlot states that a mountain is defined not by its height, but by its Geological Structure. A small rock is part of the same tectonic plate and mountain range as a towering peak. Separating the two is scientifically irrational.

How will the vanishing Aravali chain affect the environment and ecological balance? Mr. Gehlot explains that the Aravalli is a wall that prevents the Thar Desert from expanding. Experts warn that even smaller hills (ridges) of 10 to



30 meters are equally effective in blocking dust storms. Opening these small hills to mining is akin to personally inviting the desert to expand into Delhi and Eastern Rajasthan. The rocky structure of the Aravallis intercepts rainwater and channels it underground. These hills act as groundwater recharge zones for the entire region. Removing them is an invitation to drought in North-West India, a region already grappling with water scarcity.

The Aravalli is the barrier that stops the deadly heat waves from the west and prevents the Thar Desert from encroaching upon the fertile plains of Eastern Rajasthan, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh.

Kumari Selja, a former Union Minister, and Sirsa MP, in a press statement on 3rd December, criticizing the decision to remove hills below 100 metres in height from mining restrictions in the Aravalli mountain range, calling it a reckless assault on India's environment and the future of generations to come, said the decision is anti-environment, destructive, and a result of the government's misguided policies that are pushing natural resources towards a crisis.

Kumari Selja said the Aravalli is not merely a mountain range-it is the ecological lifeline of North India. It protects the Rajasthan-Haryana-Delhi region from desertification, plays a critical role in water conservation, and safeguards the livelihood and lives of millions of people. In such a situation, giving mining mafias a free hand is utterly irresponsible. She added that the government's move is a dangerous step towards legalising illegal mining and destroying the environment. The

destruction of Aravalli hills will directly and severely impact water sources, greenery, groundwater levels, and public health. Kumari Selja warned that Haryana and Delhi-NCR are already facing severe pollution and water scarcity. Weakening the Aravalli range could trigger an environmental disaster for the entire region.

It is a well-established fact that the Aravalli hills chain is the oldest mountain on Earth. It spans over 800km from Gujarat to Delhi (through Rajasthan and Haryana). The highest peak in the Aravalli Range is Guru Peak on Mount Abu.

The Forest cover in Aravali chains not only preserves humidity in the atmosphere, but it also modulates wind direction and its flow, regulating rainfall patterns and checks drought across some northern states. It also serves as pollution barricades to the Delhi-NCR areas, which are even presently facing higher AQI despite this Hills chain's role in trapping pollutants. What shall be the position of Delhi-NCR pollution, when there will be no Aravali to give protection?

Concludingly we can say that the Aravallis act as a crucial natural barrier, blocking dust and sand storms from the Thar Desert from spreading into the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains. Their disappearance would allow the desert to expand eastward, impacting agriculture and quality of life for millions. The hills serve as natural wind regulators and "lungs" that filter the air. Losing this natural shield would significantly worsen air quality in the Delhi-NCR region, leading to increased respiratory illnesses like asthma and bronchitis, and other health problems.

The highly fractured and weathered rocks of the Aravallis function as a critical natural water recharge zone, allowing rainwater to percolate and replenish aquifers. Their degradation disrupts this process, leading to further drops in already dangerously low groundwater levels and water scarcity in the region.

The range is a biodiversity hotspot, home to hundreds of bird species and endangered mammals like leopards, hyenas, and jackals. The destruction of their habitat forces wildlife into human settlements, increasing human-wildlife conflict.

The loss of vegetation cover and changes in topography impact local rainfall patterns, moderate wind velocity, and contribute to increased heat stress and extreme weather events throughout North-West India.

Many rivers and seasonal streams originate in the Aravallis, including the Banas, Luni, Sahibi, and Sakhi rivers. Many of these rivers have already disappeared due to environmental degradation and over-exploitation, and further loss of the hills will exacerbate water insecurity. What disasters our next generations will have to face, we can imagine and when even imagination seems to be so dreadful, then what shall be the real danger? Will we inherit such a destructive situation for our coming generations? Shouldn't we have a re-thought over redefining the Aravalis? Before it's too late, shouldn't we take into account the warning given by Ashok Gehlot, "History will never forgive the injustice the government is inflicting upon future generations by inviting the Thar Desert right up to Delhi's doorstep".

Masked Brown University suspected shooter reces campus day before attack



(News Agency) The US authorities have released a new video showing the suspect in the Brown University shooting that

receiving the Ivy League university and also provides a slightly clearer image of the man. Investigators are currently on a manhunt, putting together clues to identify the shooter and arrest him, with the process gaining renewed pace after a 'person of interest' was released by the authorities.

The surveillance video showed the man, dressed in black clothing with his face masked, walking around multiple pavements for nearly an hour starting shortly after 2 pm on Saturday – the day before the shooting. The roads he could be seen receding are all within a

few blocks of the Brown University engineering building where the attacker unleashed 40 rounds of fire from a 9mm handgun when final examinations were underway. "The FBI, in coordination with the Providence and Rhode Island State Police, is releasing a video timeline showing the movements of a person of interest in the 12/13 shooting at Brown University," Patel tweeted. So far, all the videos that the US authorities made public showed the suspect's face either masked or turned away, with him being described

as stocky and about 5 feet 8 inches tall. Police have received about 200 tips since the attack, and have now turned to the public for help as lack of a clear shot of the suspect's face continues to frustrate them and the authorities. While Brown President Christina Paxson said on Tuesday that the campus has 1,200 cameras, law enforcement said there was no clear video of the attacker from inside the engineering building. The FBI has announced a reward of USD 50,000 for information leading to the identification and arrest of the shooter.

Trump imposes total blockade of sanctioned oil tankers entering, leaving Venezuela

(News Agency) Amid heightened pressure on Venezuela, United States President Donald Trump has ordered "a total and complete" blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Caracas. In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump accused President Nicolas Maduro's government of using stolen oil wealth to bankroll crime, terrorism and human trafficking. "Venezuela is completely surrounded by the largest Armada ever assembled in the history of South America," Trump wrote, warning that the buildup would only grow unless

Caracas returned US oil, land and other assets. US DECLARES

VENEZUELAN REGIME A FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANISATION

The US President said the Maduro government has been designated a "foreign terrorist organisation," citing allegations of drug trafficking, kidnapping, human smuggling and violence. He claimed oil from Venezuelan fields had been stolen and was being used to finance what he called drug terrorism, adding that the United States

would no longer tolerate what he described as systematic theft and criminal activity. Under the order announced by

enforced or whether allied nations would participate.

Trump also linked the move to immigration, saying Venezuelans who entered the United States illegally during the Biden administration were being returned at a rapid pace.

MILITARY PRESENCE IN CARIBBEAN

The announcement



Trump, US forces would block sanctioned oil tankers travelling to or from Venezuela. He did not specify how the blockade would be

comes amid a broader US military buildup in the Caribbean and near Venezuelan waters, including naval deployments, air patrols and seizures of

vessels accused of illicit activity. Earlier this week, the US seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela, President Donald Trump said. However, Maduro alleged that Trump's real aim is to force him from office. He also accused the United Nations of staying silent over what he called an act of piracy against a private ship carrying Venezuelan oil. Trump's Republican administration has not sought congressional authorisation for action against Venezuela. So far, the US drug campaign has killed at least 95 people in 25 known attacks on vessels in international waters in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific, according to US officials.

Trump, Hegseth attend dignified transfer of US personnel killed in Syria



(News Agency) President Donald Trump attended a ceremony on Wednesday for three US personnel killed in Syria by a suspected Islamic State attacker as they were returned to American soil in flag-draped caskets. Trump, accompanied by US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, traveled to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware for the "dignified transfer" of the bodies in the presence of their families. Standing at the foot of an Air Force transport plane on a cold and blustery day, Trump, Hegseth

and others saluted as one by one the caskets were carried off by white-gloved soldiers and loaded onto a waiting vehicle. The two US Army soldiers and a civilian interpreter were killed on Saturday in the central Syrian town of Palmyra by an attacker who targeted a convoy of American and Syrian forces before being shot dead, according to the US military. The two Iowa National Guard soldiers killed in Syria were Sergeant William Nathaniel Howard, 29, and Sergeant Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, 25, the Guard said in

a statement on Monday. The interpreter was named as Ayad Mansoor Sakat, from Michigan. Trump on Saturday called the incident terrible, vowed retaliation and referred to the three that were slain as "great patriots." Three US

soldiers were also wounded in the attack. A US-led coalition has carried out air strikes and ground operations in Syria targeting Islamic State suspects in recent months, often with the involvement of Syria's security forces. US

presidents, vice presidents and dignitaries regularly attend the solemn transfer ceremonies at Dover - home of the largest US military mortuary - during times of war or conflict that result in the deaths of US troops.

US imposes complete travel ban on 7 more countries, limits entry from 15 others

(News Agency) US President Donald Trump on Tuesday signed a proclamation imposing a complete travel ban on seven more countries and Palestinians, and entry restrictions on 15 others citing national security, public safety, weak vetting systems and high visa overstay rates. With this, 20 additional countries have been added to the list where America has imposed a travel ban or entry restrictions, thereby expanding the same to a total of 39 nations. According to a White House fact-sheet, the new proclamation imposed a travel ban on five countries – Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, South Sudan, and Syria. Those holding Palestinian Authority-issued travel documents (Palestinians to be precise) have also been

included in the list. Besides, the proclamation imposed a complete travel ban on Laos and Sierra Leone, which were previously subject to partial entry restrictions. The expanded ban and restrictions are set to take effect on January 1. The announcement came two weeks after Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said that the Trump administration is planning to widen its current travel ban from 19 to over 30 countries. She, at the time, had not confirmed the exact number or mentioned the names of the countries. The US has already banned travel from 12 countries – Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen.

Kash Patel under fire for podcast with girlfriend amid Brown shooting probe

(News Agency) FBI Director Kash Patel is facing mounting criticism after appearing on a podcast with his girlfriend, Alexis Wilkins, to discuss their relationship while a nationwide manhunt for the Brown University shooter is still on. Patel's decision to sit for an interview with conservative podcaster Katie Miller -- as federal agents and local police continue searching for the gunman who killed two students and wounded nine others -- has drawn sharp reactions from lawmakers, former agents and political opponents. Critics say Patel's podcast appearance has reinforced concerns that he is prioritising personal matters over the bureau's most urgent responsibilities. Former federal agents have alleged that Patel has repeatedly used FBI resources for Wilkins, despite the two not being married. Those claims include using an FBI aircraft to attend Wilkins' singing performances, assigning her

agency protection, and directing agents to transport one of her friends home while intoxicated. Patel has previously denied misusing government assets, but the allegations have resurfaced amid renewed scrutiny of his leadership during the Brown shooting investigation.

PODCAST APPEARANCE GOES VIRAL

A teaser clip released by Miller -- the wife of Trump adviser Stephen Miller -- shows Patel and Wilkins laughing and openly discussing their relationship. At one point, Miller jokes about why Patel has not yet proposed, prompting laughter from the couple. The clip quickly went viral, drawing outrage over its timing as the FBI continues to search for the suspect in Saturday's shooting during an economics exam review session at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. During the interview, Wilkins addressed online

FBI Director Kash Patel faced heavy criticism after appearing on a podcast with his girlfriend during the Brown University shooter manhunt. The timing sparked outrage amid allegations of misuse of FBI resources and questions over his



allegations that she is a "Mossad honeypot," claims she has denied and described as dangerous. She said she is neither Jewish nor Israeli. Wilkins has filed lawsuits against critics making those claims, using the same law

firm that represents Patel, arguing the accusations put her safety at risk. California Governor Gavin Newsom's press office also reposted the clip, writing that a mass shooter remained at large while the FBI director appeared to have time

to hop on a taxpayer-funded private jet to record a podcast with his girlfriend. Former FBI agent and whistleblower Kyle Seraphin also weighed in. "WTF timeline are we living in? Who in the f**k are these people?," he asked.

MIT professor Nuno Loureiro shot at his Brookline home, dies of injuries

(News Agency) A professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was shot dead at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts, according to the Associated Press. The victim was identified as Nuno F. G. Loureiro, 47, the director of MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Centre and a current MIT faculty member from Portugal. According to the Norfolk District Attorney's Office, Brookline Police received a report late Monday night of a man suffering from apparent gunshot wounds at a private residence. Loureiro was taken to a local hospital, where he later died. The district attorney's office confirmed on Tuesday that Loureiro was pronounced dead earlier in the day. Massachusetts State Police have launched a homicide investigation into the killing, as per Fox News. Authorities have not released details of any suspect or motive. CBS News reported that a neighbour heard three loud sounds on Monday evening and thought somebody in the building was kicking a door.

MIT CONFIRMS FACULTY MEMBER'S DEATH

MIT's office confirmed Loureiro's identity and said he held senior academic and leadership roles at the institute. He was a professor in the departments of Nuclear Science & Engineering and Physics, and also served as Director

of MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Center. "Sadly, I can confirm that Professor Nuno Loureiro, who died early this morning, was a current MIT faculty member," MIT spokesperson Sarah McDonnell said in a statement posted on MIT's website. "Our deepest sympathies are with his family, students, colleagues, and all those who are grieving. Focused outreach and conversations are taking place within our community to offer care and support for those who knew Prof. Loureiro, and a message will be shared with our wider community," she added. MIT said it would not release further information at this stage, citing respect for the integrity of the ongoing investigation.

WHO WAS NUNO LOUREIRO?

According to MIT, Loureiro had an extensive academic background and international career in physics. He completed his postgraduate studies at the Instituto Superior Tecnico in Lisbon and later earned a PhD in Physics from Imperial College London. In 2015, he received the Thomas H. Stix Award for Outstanding Early Career Contributions to Plasma Physics Research from the American Physical Society. He joined MIT as a faculty member in 2016 and was appointed the Herman Feshbach (1942) Professor of Physics, along with a professorship in Nuclear Science and Engineering.

Smelly Indians remark gets US techie the boot, sparks fresh anti-India trolling



(News Agency) Nik Pash, the AI head at Cline, an open-source autonomous LLM (large language model) coding tool, could never have imagined that a three-word comment on a photo of techies would spark a firestorm on social media and even cost him his job. "Imagine the smell", Pash wrote under an X post about a San Francisco hackathon where most participants were from Indian and South Asian communities. Pash likely assumed the remark was "casual" and "harmless", but the backlash over the racist comment snowballed into a major controversy, and Pash is now reportedly booted out of Cline AI. Cline AI CEO, Saoud Rizwan, tried to defend Pash, saying his comment had been gravely misunderstood, and that packed events like Hackathons always "smelled bad", but his efforts were in vain, and Pash was reportedly sacked. But the decision to sack Pash only intensified the

debate and triggered a chain reaction of another round of anti-India trolling, with social media users alleging mob justice and an overreaction to "an innocent joke".

"Imagine the smell" is an all-too-common dog whistle used by racists across the world, and particularly in the US to dehumanise Indians, people of Indian origin, or South Asian origin. The remark stems from colonial propaganda and stereotypical depictions of Indians in Western media as being "poor", "dirty" and "unhygienic" and eating "strong-smelling food". The phrase found a new lease of life in the 2010s on platforms like Reddit, where it became an easy way to insult entire communities while keeping plausible deniability. It is a hidden jab designed to trigger disgust and reinforce prejudice against Indians and South Asians without saying anything outright.

Trump claims Venezuela illegally took oil from US, demands its return

(NewsAgency) US President Donald Trump said that Washington wants to reclaim oil and energy rights in Venezuela that were "illegally taken," insisting the US wants its assets returned. Speaking to reporters at Joint Base Andrews, Trump said, "You remember, they took all of our energy rights. They took all of our oil from not that long ago, and we want it back, but they took it. They illegally took it." .@POTUS on the Naval blockade on Venezuela: "We're not gonna let anybody going through that shouldn't be going through. They took all of our energy rights—they took all of our oil from not that long ago... they illegally took it."

pic.twitter.com/vzHLBEyctP— Rapid Response 47 (@RapidResponse47) December 17, 2025 Earlier, he wrote on his Truth Social platform that Venezuela was surrounded by the "largest armada in South American history," which he said would continue expanding until Caracas hands back "stolen" oil and related assets. Trump has also declared a blockade on Venezuelan seaborne oil shipments. Caracas has denounced the move and

appealed to the UN, as oil flows, particularly to Cuba, have already slowed dramatically.



Democrats argue the campaign is no longer about drugs, but about oil and regime change. "Trump is provoking a new war right in our backyard," said Rep.

Gregory Meeks, warning of wider regional instability. Trump's assertions come as US pressure on the Maduro government intensifies. Washington has accused Venezuela of failing to curb narcotics trafficking, and US media reports—including The New York Times—say Trump has authorised CIA covert operations in the country and may permit future military strikes on drug cartels. Since August, the US has deployed additional military

assets to the Caribbean and launched airstrikes on vessels it claims were smuggling drugs, culminating in an aircraft-carrier strike group entering the region in November. Trump's advisers have also framed a historical claim over Venezuelan oil. Stephen Miller argued that American innovation built the nation's petroleum industry, an industry nationalised in 1976. Later rule changes under Hugo Chavez pushed out firms like ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips, which subsequently won arbitration awards for seized assets. A US court has now ordered the sale of PdV-owned Citgo to help satisfy a USD 12 billion ConocoPhillips claim.

Explained: Row over Trump aide's description of President's 'alcoholic personality'



over many on-the-record conversations, Wiles answered almost every question I put to her." As the writer noted, "Most senior White House officials parse their words and speak only on background. But over many on-the-record conversations, Wiles answered almost every question I put to her." However, Wiles' frank observations about Trump and his deputy JD Vance have sparked a fire the White House is now trying to contain.

What exactly did Wiles say in the profile?

According to Vanity Fair, Wiles offered a blunt, insider's look at Trump's leadership and his senior team. Several quotes stood out: She described Trump as having "an alcoholic's personality". She was

not referring to drinking, but to his relentless drive and compulsive energy. She meant that Trump channels an unstoppable, addictive focus into politics and winning. Wiles reportedly called Vice President JD Vance a "conspiracy theorist," reflecting tensions over his populist messaging and online presence. Vanity Fair quoted her saying that Vance's shift from "Never Trumper" to "MAGA acolyte" was "sort of political". She criticised Attorney General Pam Bondi's handling of the Epstein files, suggesting poor judgment and inconsistent communication. She discussed internal policy disagreements over tariffs, immigration, and prosecutions, acknowledging Trump's fixation with "retribution" against perceived

enemies. These remarks painted a vivid picture of power struggles, discipline, and internal rifts inside Trump's second-term White House.

Did Wiles mean these remarks critically?

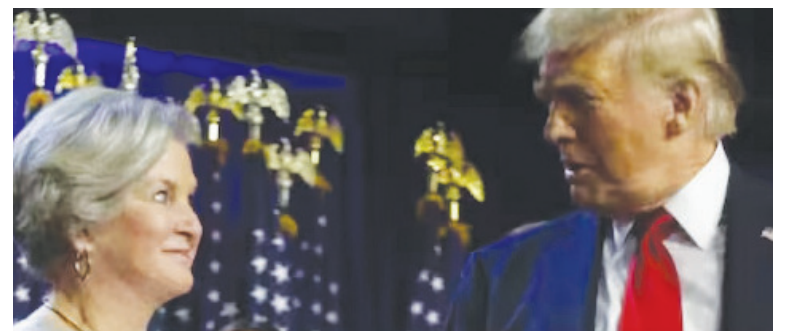
People close to Wiles, and her own later comments, said her tone was analytical, not disloyal. Her description of Trump's "alcoholic personality" was meant to emphasise his drive, risk tolerance, and appetite for challenge. Calling Vance a "conspiracy theorist," they said, reflected frustration with messaging discipline rather than hostility. Likewise, her criticism of Bondi's Epstein-related decisions focused on strategy, not morality.

Alcoholic Trump, conspiracy theorist Vance: Inside Susie Wiles' wild confessions

Susie Wiles, President Donald Trump's influential but famously low-profile Chief of Staff, has offered one of the most blunt insider assessments yet, touching on everything from the Jeffrey Epstein scandal to the "alcoholic's personality" of the US President. In a two-part Vanity Fair article published on

Tuesday, Wiles criticised Attorney General Pam Bondi's handling of the Jeffrey Epstein case and delivered unusually frank character sketches of Trump and key aides, including Vice President JD Vance and Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., according to the report. She told Vanity Fair she

underestimated the intensity of public anger surrounding Epstein and said Bondi misread both the issue and Trump's base. •She sharply criticised Bondi for distributing binders of Epstein material earlier this year to conservative social media influencers that contained no new information -- a move that



fuelled demands for the full release of records. "I think she completely whiffed on appreciating that that was the very targeted group that cared about this," Wiles said, according

to the magazine. "First she gave them binders full of nothingness. And then she said the witness list, or the client list, was on her desk. There is no client list, and it sure as hell wasn't on her desk."

US Senate passes \$901bn defence bill with provisions defying Trump's rhetoric

(News Agency) The US Senate voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday to advance a \$901 billion bill setting policy for the Pentagon, sending the massive piece of legislation to the White House, which has said President Donald Trump will sign it into law. The fiscal 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, is a compromise between separate measures passed earlier this year in the House of Representatives and Senate. It authorizes a record \$901 billion in annual military spending, with a 4% pay raise for the troops. It also authorizes reforms to the system for acquiring military equipment and includes efforts to boost competitiveness with US archrivals China and Russia. The Senate backed the bill by 77 to 20, with strong support from both parties. Two of the "no" votes were from Republican senators Mike Lee and Rand Paul. "This will be the 65th year in a row,



the 65th consecutive year, that Congress has come together across the aisle and across two chambers to send the president a bill designed to sustain and strengthen the national defense," said Senator Roger Wicker of Mississippi, the Republican Senate Armed Services Committee chairman. The House passed the bill last week, by 312

to 112, also with broad bipartisan support. In a break with Trump, whose fellow Republicans hold majorities in both the House and Senate, this year's NDAA includes several provisions to boost security in Europe, despite Trump's release earlier this month of a National Security Strategy seen as friendly to Russia and a

reassessment of the US relationship with Europe. The fiscal 2026 NDAA provides \$800 million for Ukraine - \$400 million in each of the next two years - as part of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which pays US companies for weapons for Ukraine's military. It also authorizes the Baltic Security Initiative and provides \$175 million

to support Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia's defense. And it limits the Department of Defense's ability to drop the number of US forces in Europe to fewer than 76,000 and bars the US European Commander from giving up the title of NATO Supreme Commander.

WINS FOR BOTH PARTIES

Members of Congress take great pride in having passed the NDAA every year for more than six decades. The measure's record price tag is \$8 billion more than Trump had requested. This month a handful of Republicans and Democrats called for the addition of a provision to strengthen military helicopter safety rules, following a fatal crash between an Army Black Hawk and an American Airlines AAL.O passenger jet that killed 67 people. Anger over that issue was not strong enough to derail the NDAA. Senate leaders have promised to address it in upcoming legislation.

FBI deputy director to quit next month as Trump hints at his return to podcasts



(News Agency) FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino will step down from his position next month, ending a brief and controversial tenure as the bureau's second-highest-ranking official. Bongino announced his decision on Wednesday, hours after President Donald Trump said the former podcaster wanted to return to broadcasting. "Dan did a great job. I think he wants to go back to his show," Trump told reporters, referring to

Bongino's high-profile career as a right-wing media personality before joining the FBI. President Trump on Dan Bongino: "Dan did a great job. I think he wants to go back to his show." pic.twitter.com/TUfdsjuctE — Benny Johnson (@bennyjohnson) December 17, 2025 Bongino, a former New York City police officer and US Secret Service agent, was an unconventional choice for the FBI's No. 2 role. The deputy director position has

traditionally been filled by career agents who rose through the bureau's ranks, bringing decades of internal experience to the job. His appointment went ahead despite objections from the FBI Agents Association, which represents about 14,000 mostly current agents. The group had opposed installing a political appointee in a role long viewed as operational rather than ideological. The decision also followed earlier assurances from FBI Director Kash Patel that a career agent would be selected for the post. According to Reuters, Bongino's office belongings had already been boxed up, suggesting preparations for his departure were under way.

CONSPIRACY CLAIMS SHADOW FBI TENURE

Bongino's time at the FBI was repeatedly overshadowed by statements he had made before entering government. As a podcaster, he promoted a range of conspiracy theories that later became a liability once he assumed a senior leadership role.

Amid H-1B visa curbs, an India-born techie joins billionaires list in US

(News Agency) Amid H-1B visa curbs, an India-born techie joins billionaires list in US Bansal has been a critic of Trump's immigration policies, which he says starves American companies of the right talent. From a small town in Rajasthan to the heights of success in the world's tech capital, Jyoti Bansal's odyssey stands out as another example of immigrants of humble origins hitting the jackpot in the United States purely by grit and perseverance. Here is his story.

JYOTI BANSAL'S JOURNEY FROM RAJASTHAN TO IIT-DELHI TO SILICON VALLEY

Jyoti Bansal's journey to the top of the global tech industry began far from California. He grew up in a small town in Rajasthan, helping his father run a farming machinery business. A strong academic bent led him to IIT-Delhi, where he studied computer engineering. At the age of 21, he took the jump and moved to the United States with limited savings but big

ambitions. For almost a decade, he worked as an engineer at three enterprise technology firms that sponsored his H 1B visa, an experience that later shaped his views on the need for allowing the immigration of skilled individuals to keep the US competitive on the global stage. He became an American citizen in 2016, but has consistently criticised visa rules that prevent skilled workers from starting companies while on temporary work visas, calling such restrictions short-sighted, according to the Forbes report. Bansal has said that such restrictions prevented talented professionals from building companies at the very stage when their ideas are strongest, and their energy at its peak. Bansal's first major entrepreneurial leap came in 2008 with the founding of AppDynamics.

The company built software that helped large organisations monitor complex applications and fix technical issues before they escalated.

Trump's social media venture strikes \$6B merger deal with fusion power company

(News Agency) President Donald Trump's social media startup plans to merge with fusion company TAE Technologies in a deal valued at more than \$6 billion. The all-stock transaction marks the latest twist surrounding Trump Media & Technology Group, the publicly traded parent company of Truth Social that has become a new pillar in Trump's business empire over the last two years. Trump, who is the largest owner with more than 114 million shares, saw the value of his stake jump by about \$400 million to about \$1.6 billion with the 35 percent rally in the stock by midday. The deal represents a significant bet on a growing clean energy source that has not yet reached commercial viability — just as electricity demand skyrockets in part fueled by growing demand from artificial intelligence and data centers that the administration has promoted. Shareholders in Trump Media and

TAE Technologies will own about 50 percent of the combined company on a fully diluted equity basis, the companies said Thursday. Trump Media's stock, which trades under the ticker "DJT", popped on the news — rising more than 20 percent shortly after. In merging with TAE Technologies, Trump Media is venturing into new territory once again. The company's business has to date primarily revolved around advertising revenues generated through Truth Social, its prized asset. But Trump Media has recently branched out into other areas like the cryptocurrency markets and streaming. Still, the company has recorded several straight quarters of net losses, the latest of which came in at \$54.8 million for the three months ended Sept. 30. Trump Media and TAE Technologies said in a statement that their merger will create "one of the world's first publicly traded

fusion companies." They plan to begin work on building "the world's first utility-scale fusion power plant" in 2026, according to the statement. "Trump Media & Technology Group built uncancellable infrastructure to secure free expression online for Americans, and now we're taking a big step forward toward a revolutionary technology that will cement America's global energy dominance for generations," Trump Media CEO Devin Nunes said. "Fusion power will be the most dramatic energy breakthrough since the onset of commercial nuclear energy in the 1950s — an innovation that will lower energy prices, boost supply, ensure America's A.I.-supremacy, revive our manufacturing base and bolster national defense." The Trump administration has frequently emphasized the role of nuclear power to help reach its goal of winning the global AI race. The

Trump Energy Department recently reorganized its structure to create an Office of Fusion, and it has been meeting with industry officials who are seeking more federal support. Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives called the deal a "major play on creating the first public nuclear fusion company in the U.S." in an industry note Thursday, noting that fusion power could have a relatively shorter permitting pathway than other types of nuclear power with no meltdown risk. TAE will "clearly have major political support from President Trump in our view and this importantly will create a major nuclear fusion US energy domestic bet over the coming years," the note said. The deal raised the eyebrows of some on Capitol Hill, however. Democratic Rep. Don Beyer of Virginia, co-chair of the Congressional Fusion Caucus, said the merger "raises significant concerns" about conflicts of interest and potential corruption. "The

President has consistently used both government powers and taxpayer money to benefit his own financial interests and those of his family and political allies," Beyer said in a statement. "This merger will necessitate congressional oversight to ensure that the U.S. government and public funds are properly directed towards fusion research and development in ways that benefit the American people, as opposed to the Trump family and their corporate holdings." Trump recently signed an executive order to launch DOE's Genesis Mission, which seeks to accelerate fusion development with help from AI, advanced computing and the department's sprawling national labs. Fusion, once a far-off ambition, has gained growing interest after it reached significant milestones earlier this decade. But substantial hurdles remain, including making significant technological advances and cost reductions.

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Kolhapuri controversy: Prada to launch 'Made in India' sandals worth Rs 84k

Prada is set to launch a collection of Kolhapuri-inspired sandals made in collaboration with Indian artisans.

After the Kolhapuri chappal row earlier this year, Prada is set to launch a limited-edition collection of traditional footwear in collaboration with Indian artisans, selling each pair at around Rs 83,000 (USD 930), Prada senior executive Lorenzo Bertelli told Reuters, turning a backlash over cultural appropriation into a collaboration with Indian artisans. The Italian luxury group plans to make 2,000 pairs of the sandals in the regions of Maharashtra (Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara, Solapur) and Karnataka (Belagavi, Bagalkot, Dharwad, Bijapur) under a deal with two state-backed bodies, blending local Indian craftsmanship with Italian technology and know-how. "We'll mix the original manufacturer's standard capabilities with our manufacturing techniques", Babu Jagjivan Ram Leather Industries Development Corporation (LIDKAR), which promote India's leather heritage. "We want to be a multiplier of awareness for these chappals," said Bertelli, who is the eldest son of Prada founders Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli. A three-year partnership, whose details are still being finalised, will be set up to train local artisans. The initiative will include training programmes in India and opportunities to spend short periods at Prada's Academy in Italy. Kolhapuris originated in Maharashtra and Karnataka and are handcrafted by people from marginalised communities. Artisans hope the collaboration will raise incomes, attract younger generations to the trade and preserve heritage threatened by cheap imitations and declining demand. "Once Prada endorses this craft as a luxury product, definitely the domino effect will work and result in increasing demand for the craft," said Prerna Deshbhratar, LIDCOM managing director. Bertelli said the project and training programme would cost "several million euros", adding that artisans would be fairly remunerated. Prada won't expand in India in the short term Bertelli said Prada, which opened its first beauty store in Delhi this year, has no plans for new retail clothing shops next year or factories in India. "We have not planned yet any store openings in India, but it's something that we are strongly taking into consideration," he said, adding that this could come in three to five years. The luxury goods market in India was valued at around \$7 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach about \$30 billion by 2030, according to Deloitte, as economic growth accelerates to 7 per cent this year and disposable income among the middle and upper classes rises. The market, however, is dwarfed by China, which generated about 350 billion yuan (\$49.56 billion) in value in 2024, according to Bain. Most global brands have entered India through partnerships with large conglomerates like Mukesh Ambani's Reliance group and Kumar Mangalam Birla's Aditya Birla Group. Bertelli said that Prada would prefer to enter the country on its own, even if it took longer, describing India as "the real potential new market".

President Trump Issues Executive Order Aimed at Marijuana Reclassification

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Thursday that could reclassify marijuana as a less dangerous drug and open new avenues for medical research, a major shift in federal drug policy that inches closer to what many states have done. The switch would move marijuana away from its current classification as a Schedule I drug, alongside heroin and LSD. Cannabis would instead be a Schedule III substance, like ketamine and some anabolic steroids. Reclassification by the Drug Enforcement Administration would not make it legal for recreational use by adults nationwide, but it could change how the drug is regulated and reduce a hefty tax burden on the cannabis industry. The Republican president said he had received a deluge of phone calls supporting the move and its potential to help patients. "We have people begging for me to do this. People that are in great pain," he said. Medical marijuana is now allowed by 40 states and Washington, D.C., and many states have also legalized it for recreational use. But U.S. laws have remained stricter, potentially leaving people subject to federal prosecution. The Justice Department under Trump's Democratic predecessor, Joe Biden, previously proposed reclassifying marijuana to a Schedule III substance. Unlike Biden, Trump did not have open encouragement from across his party for the move. Some Republicans have spoken out in opposition to any changes and urged Trump to maintain current standards. Such a switch typically requires an arduous process, including a public comment period that has drawn tens of thousands of reactions from across the U.S. The DEA was still in the review process when Trump took office in January. Trump ordered that process to move along as quickly as legally possible, though an exact timeline remained unclear. Polling from Gallup shows Americans largely back a less restrictive approach: Support for marijuana legalization has grown from just 36% in 2005 to 64% this year. Yet that's down slightly from a couple of years ago, primarily because of declining support among Republicans, Gallup said. Trump's order also calls for expanded research and access to CBD, a legal and increasingly popular hemp-derived product whose benefits to treat things like pain, anxiety and sleep issues are debated by experts. A new Medicare pilot program would allow older adults to access legal hemp-derived CBD at no cost, if recommended by a doctor, said Dr. Mehmet Oz, who heads the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Still, the marijuana changes are not universally welcomed. More than 20 Republican senators, several of them staunch Trump allies, signed a letter this year urging the president to keep marijuana a Schedule I drug. Led by North Carolina Sen. Ted Budd, the group argued that marijuana continues to be dangerous and that a shift would "undermine your strong efforts to Make America Great Again." They argued, too, that marijuana negatively affects users' physical and mental health, as well as road and workplace safety. "The only winners from rescheduling will be bad actors such as Communist China, while Americans will be left paying the bill," the letter said, referring to China's place in the cannabis market. In the early days of the second Trump administration, the Justice Department showed little interest in discussing marijuana rescheduling, which had encountered strong resistance from inside the DEA under Biden, according to a former U.S. official who spoke on the condition of anonymity in an effort to avoid retaliation. Trump has made his crusade against other drugs, especially fentanyl, a feature of his second term, ordering U.S. military attacks on Venezuelan and other boats the administration insists are ferrying drugs. He signed another executive order declaring fentanyl a weapon of mass destruction. Jack Riley, a former deputy administrator of the DEA, backed the focus on the drug war as a national security priority, but said marijuana rescheduling sends a conflicting message. "He's blowing up boats in Latin America that he says are full of fentanyl and cocaine but on the other hand loosening the restrictions that will allow wider exposure to a first-level drug," said Riley, who was in the running to lead the DEA upon Trump's return to the White House. "That is clearly a contradiction." Opponents like the group Smart Approaches to Marijuana vowed to sue if the reclassification goes through. On the other end of the spectrum, some pro-marijuana advocates want to see the government go further and treat cannabis more like alcohol. Trump hasn't committed to bigger steps like decriminalizing marijuana, and said Thursday that he encouraged his own children not to use drugs. Still, he said "the facts compel" the government to recognize that marijuana can have legitimate medical applications. And it has become a part of the health care environment in many states. Currently, 30,000 licensed health care practitioners are authorized to recommend its use for more than 6 million patients for at least 15 medical conditions, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found.

U.S. Visa Backlog: H-1B Interview Slots in India Now Pushed to October 2026

Hundreds of Indian applicants waiting to appear for their US H-1B and H-4 visa interviews are now facing uncertainty after their appointments were reportedly postponed to October 2026, following an earlier rescheduling to February and March 2026. Some applicants have said their interview dates were moved as late as October next year, according to Deccan Chronicle. Meanwhile, the US-based outlet, The American Bazaar, reported that immigration lawyers have also encountered cases where appointments originally

scheduled for mid-January 2026 have been postponed to October 2026. Many Indians who had their slots rescheduled are now reportedly urging applicants with interviews in January and February 2026 to cancel their bookings, hoping this will allow rescheduled cases to be moved back to earlier timelines. In recent weeks, US consulates notified numerous applicants that interviews originally set for December and January have been deferred to February, or even March. According to US authorities, the delays stem from

the need for additional processing time linked to expanded social media screening of visa applicants. Scores of professionals, many of whom are separated from their families, are finding themselves stranded amid repeated cancellations with their jobs hanging on by a thread. Immigration attorneys told The American Bazaar that mass cancellations and abrupt rescheduling of visa appointments have accelerated since mid-December, catching applicants off guard with appointments initially scheduled

for early 2026. They are now being pushed to the final quarter of the year. "The Department of State regularly shifts appointments as needed to match resource availability. We will communicate any changes directly to affected visa applicants," said a spokesperson of the US Consulate General in Hyderabad, according to Deccan Chronicle. "Despite limited legal action immediately available, the better option for affected applicants would be to plead with employers for remote work

or leave, if that's possible," Sangeetha Mugunthan, an associate attorney at Somireddy Law Group PLLC told The American Bazaar. Mugunthan added, "...a direct legal action against the cancellation itself is tough. I would advise applicants to document everything to avoid potential job loss or visa issues that can arise later." Several individuals had already booked international travel, arranged leave, or flown to India for visa stamping, only to learn that their appointments no longer exist.

Biggest challenge since 1971: House panel flags China, Pak role in Bangladesh crisis

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, chaired by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, has warned that the unfolding situation in Bangladesh is turning out to be India's biggest strategic nightmare in the neighbouring country since the 1971 Liberation War, citing concerns over political shifts, generational disconnect and growing influence from China and Pakistan. The committee presented its report on India-Bangladesh relations in

Parliament, citing testimony by a non-official witness before the panel on June 26. "The 1971 challenge was existential - a humanitarian crisis and the birth of a new nation. Today's threat is more subtle, but potentially more serious and profound - generational disconnect, shifts in the political system, and potential strategic realignment away from India. In the report, the committee also flagged the return of Islamist forces following the ouster of former Bangladesh Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina and the collapse of her Awami League party, along with the growing influence of China and Pakistan, as key turning points. "The collapse of Awami League dominance, the rise of youth-led nationalism, the return of Islamist forces, and the increasing influence of China and Pakistan - all these together mark a decisive turning point," the witness told the committee. In response to questions about the status of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the

Foreign Secretary said she was making her statements through personal communication devices to which she has access, while clarifying that the government does not facilitate political activities for Hasina or any other Bangladeshi political figure from Indian territory. On India's approach to recent shifts, the Ministry of External Affairs informed the committee that every possible effort is being made to insulate bilateral relations from internal developments in Bangladesh.

The ministry emphasised that India's engagement with Bangladesh is structured to withstand internal political changes. The ministry also stressed that India has maintained dialogue with the interim government and continues to support the aspirations of the Bangladeshi people. The committee also questioned the government on India's failure to anticipate the crisis. In a written response, the ministry stated that the Government of India regularly monitors developments in Bangladesh on a priority basis.

Over 2 lakh Indians giving up citizenship each year. What's behind the exodus?

For anyone leaving home for greener pastures, it is never an easy decision. Imagine leaving one's country, that too, for good. But that is exactly what close to a million Indians have done in the last five years. Since 2020, over nine lakh Indians have renounced their citizenship. A pattern has emerged since 2022, with over two lakh individuals giving up their Indian passport every year. This data was presented to Parliament during the ongoing Winter Session. It showed that 2.06 million (over 20 lakh) Indians gave up their citizenship between 2011 and 2024. Nearly half of this happened in the last five years, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. For almost a decade within these 14 years, annual figures stayed within a

narrow bracket of 1.2 lakh to 1.45 lakh Indians renouncing their citizenship each year, before the trend shifted to over 2 lakh annually from 2022 onwards. Responding to questions in the Lok Sabha, the Ministry of External Affairs stated in written replies that "the reasons are personal and known only to the individual" and that "many of them have chosen to take up foreign citizenship for reasons of personal convenience". The ministry also acknowledged that India "recognises the potential of the global workplace in an era of knowledge economy". This comes even as brain drain has been affecting India since the 1970s, and has only increased with each passing decade, peaking in the 2020s. Unlike in the past, when

Indians left either as indentured labourers under British rule, or as skilled professionals such as doctors and engineers migrating since the 1970s, it is now the wealthy who are fleeing the country, wrote former media advisor and spokesperson of the PMO, Sanjaya Baru, in his book 'Secession of the Successful: The Flight Out of New India'. Baru listed four phases of Indians emigrating, saying this is the fourth phase. It is still in its incipient stage but has already acquired a high profile, he says. It is the migration of the children of the wealthy as well as of high net worth individuals (HNIs) and the politically and socially powerful and influential elite the fourth wave, in many ways, amounts to a 'secession of the

successful', wrote Baru. Baru quoted data from Morgan Stanley, stating that around 23,000 Indian millionaires had left the country since 2014.

NO PROVISION OF DUAL CITIZENSHIP IS A MAJOR REASON FOR GIVING UP INDIAN PASSPORT

One reason Indians give up their passports for a more attractive US, UK, or Canadian passport is that India does not allow dual citizenship. Social media platforms, from LinkedIn to Reddit, are full of posts by members of the Indian diaspora, where people have shared how difficult it was for them to give up their identity, the document that makes them an Indian citizen, the Indian passport.

Under Indian law, an Indian passport holder automatically loses citizenship upon voluntarily acquiring the citizenship of another country. For Indians who have lived and worked abroad for years, taking up foreign citizenship is often required to access full civic and professional rights. Section 9 of the Citizenship Act, 1955, governs this provision. "Any citizen of India who by naturalisation, registration or otherwise voluntarily acquires, or has at any time between 26th January, 1950 and the commencement of this Act voluntarily acquired, the citizenship of another country shall, upon such acquisition cease to be a citizen of India."

Why Black Pepper Is A Winter Must-Have?



Boosts Immunity: Black pepper contains piperine, a compound with powerful antioxidant properties that help strengthen the immune system. Regular consumption can aid the body in fighting infections, colds, and flu, making it especially valuable during winter when immunity tends to dip. Its antibacterial properties also help protect against seasonal illnesses.

Improves Digestion: The warming nature of black pepper stimulates digestive enzymes,

promoting better digestion and reducing issues like bloating, gas, and constipation. It helps break down food more efficiently, ensuring nutrients are absorbed effectively. This is particularly beneficial during winter when heavy, rich foods are commonly consumed.

Relieves Cold And Congestion: Black pepper has natural decongestant properties that help clear nasal passages and ease respiratory discomfort. Adding it to warm drinks or meals can provide

relief from coughs, colds, and sinus congestion, making it a simple remedy for common winter ailments.

Enhances Nutrient Absorption: Piperine in black pepper boosts the bioavailability of key nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. This means your body can absorb more from the foods you eat, improving overall nutrition—a vital advantage during winter when maintaining energy and immunity is crucial.

Promotes Weight

Management: Black pepper can help stimulate metabolism and aid in fat breakdown. Its thermogenic properties generate heat in the body, which can support calorie burning and weight management, especially helpful during winter months when physical activity may decrease.

Supports Respiratory Health: In addition to relieving congestion, black pepper acts as an expectorant, helping to loosen mucus in the

respiratory tract. This can improve breathing and reduce discomfort caused by seasonal allergies or winter respiratory issues.

Enhances Mental Health: Black pepper's bioactive compounds improve blood circulation and stimulate the brain, enhancing focus and alertness. Its warming effect also provides comfort and a soothing sensation, contributing to better mental well-being during the cold, gloomy winter months.

Christmas 2025: Make Roast Chicken With Just 5 Ingredients



Looking for a simple yet show-stopping dish this Christmas? This Roast Chicken recipe uses just five ingredients to create a juicy, flavourful centerpiece for your festive table. Easy to prepare and packed with aromatic goodness, it's perfect for holiday

celebrations without the fuss. Ingredients: 1 onion, 1.5 kg whole chicken, 1 tbsp olive or sunflower oil, 1 tsp paprika, 1 tsp flaked sea salt, black pepper. Step 1: Scatter the onion over the base of a slow cooker. Remove any trussing string from the chicken and place,

breast-side up, on top. Step 2: Pour the oil into a small bowl. Stir in the paprika, salt and pepper. Brush the oil over the chicken. Step 3: Now, cover the slow cooker with the lid and cook on high for 4-4½ hours or until the chicken is tender and

thoroughly cooked. The meat should be almost falling off the bones. Step 4: Remove the lid and pierce the thickest part of the chicken with a skewer and make sure the juices run clear. If you wiggle one of the legs, it should move very easily. Step 5: Transfer

the chicken carefully to a board to rest. Step 6: Strain the cooking liquor through a sieve and use as a thin gravy. You can also thicken it by simmering in a saucepan or adding a couple of teaspoons of gravy granules. Carve into slices and serve.



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

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7 Family-Friendly Short-Haul Destinations To Visit This Holiday Season

The year-end holidays are the perfect excuse to step away from routines and create meaningful family memories. With school breaks, festive celebrations, and pleasant winter weather across much of Asia, December is an ideal time to plan a short-haul getaway that feels both exciting and restorative. Whether your family enjoys cultural exploration, festive city vibes, scenic beaches, or theme-park adventures, there's no shortage of destinations that cater to all age groups.

With Scoot's extensive network across Asia, these family-friendly escapes offer the right balance of celebration, comfort, and discovery making them ideal for a memorable holiday before the year comes to a close.

1. Bangkok, Thailand – Lights, Street Food, and Holiday Cheer for Everyone

Bangkok offers a vibrant blend of tradition, culture, and contemporary fun that keeps every family member entertained. Spend mornings exploring the magnificent Grand Palace and Wat Pho, followed by a leisurely cruise along the Chao Phraya River. Children will love the floating markets and SEA LIFE Bangkok Ocean World, one of Southeast Asia's largest aquariums.

As evening sets in, the city transforms into a glittering wonderland, with Christmas lights along the Ratchaprasong district, festive markets, and riverside celebrations. On New Year's Eve, fireworks light up the skyline, marking a magical end to the year. Bangkok's mix of cultural depth and modern charm makes it a festive-season favourite for families.

2. Da Nang, Vietnam – A Hidden Gem Waiting to Be Explored

For families seeking an off-the-beaten-path adventure, Da Nang is a wonderful choice. Stroll along My Khe Beach with its soft sands and gentle waves, or take a family-friendly hike up the Marble Mountains, where caves, pagodas, and panoramic views await.

Nearby Hoi An enchants visitors with its lantern-lit streets, riverside cafés, and traditional tailor shops, while Hue offers insight into Vietnam's royal past through its imperial citadel and historic tombs. Da Nang blends relaxation with cultural discovery, making it ideal for families who

want to explore without overwhelming crowds.

3. Taipei, Taiwan – A City of Lights, Lanterns, and Family Delights

Taipei combines cosmopolitan energy with a warm sense of community, making it ideal for family travel. Visit Taipei 101 for sweeping city views, explore the lively streets of Ximending, and sample bubble tea, bao, and night market treats.

A day trip to Shifen allows families to release sky lanterns with handwritten wishes, a charming year-end tradition. In December, Christmasland in New Taipei City transforms the area with illuminated tunnels, animated projections, concerts, and food pop-ups. With crisp weather and welcoming locals, Taipei brings the holiday spirit alive.

4. Chiang Mai, Thailand – Cool Weather, Warm Celebrations

Set against northern Thailand's mountains, Chiang Mai offers a serene family retreat with pleasant winter weather. Explore ancient temples such as Wat Phra Singh and Wat Chedi Luang, browse local markets for handmade crafts, or visit the ethical Elephant Nature Park.

December brings festive cheer with the Chiang Mai Winter Fair, featuring rides, music, and traditional street food. As the year ends, the Tha Phae Gate countdown fills the Old City with lanterns,

performances, and fireworks, perfect for family bonding at a relaxed pace.

5. Okinawa, Japan – A Treat for Anime Lovers

Okinawa is a delight for families with young anime enthusiasts. Explore themed cafés, character stores, and pop-culture experiences that immerse children in Japan's vibrant fandom.

For added adventure, families can take a short side trip to Tokyo or Osaka to visit Pokémon Centers or Studio Ghibli attractions. Those seeking downtime can unwind at traditional onsens, offering a calming contrast to the buzz of sightseeing.

6. Hong Kong SAR, China – Theme Parks, Harbour Views, and Festive Sparkle

Hong Kong transforms into a dazzling winter destination during the festive season. Hong Kong Disneyland and Ocean Park host special Christmas-themed events, parades, and decorations for all ages.

The city's famous Symphony of Lights illuminates Victoria Harbour nightly, while New Year's Eve brings one of the world's most spectacular fireworks displays. A ride on the historic Peak Tram offers breathtaking views of the illuminated skyline, blending excitement with holiday

charm.

7. Seoul, South Korea – Snow, Shopping, and Sparkle

For families dreaming of a winter wonderland, Seoul delivers snow-dusted streets and festive magic. Visit Gyeongbokgung Palace and Bukchon Hanok Village, then explore Myeongdong's street food and shopping scene.

Kids will enjoy ice skating at Olympic Park or visiting Lotte World, transformed with winter décor. The Seoul Christmas Festival along Cheonggyecheon Stream, often coinciding with the Lantern Festival, fills the city with glittering displays. As the year ends, the Bosingak Bell-Ringing Ceremony brings locals together for a heartfelt countdown.

As the year draws to a close, these destinations offer the perfect mix of discovery, connection, and festive joy, the kind of moments families cherish long after the holiday lights fade. Whether it's watching fireworks by the river, releasing lanterns into the sky, or sharing a meal in a new city, each journey becomes a chapter in your family's story. So pack your bags, choose your destination, and end the year on a high note with memories that will carry beautifully into the next one.



Dakota Johnson To Sydney Sweeney: Celebrities Who Joined The Naked Dress Trend In 2025

The world of fashion often welcomes past trends. This year, the focus was on naked dresses. Coded in risque with a touch of boldness, they are equally empowering. From dramatically designed see-through numbers to barely-there sheer wonders, several Hollywood celebrities embraced the style aesthetic like true experts, redefining red carpet glamour with pure confidence. So, without further ado, let's take a look at six actresses who nailed the naked dress wave. Sydney Sweeney's fashion prowess often makes the headlines. At Variety's Power of Women event, the Euphoria star sashayed down the red carpet in a silver chainmail gown by English fashion designer Christian Cowman. The outfit featuring lace-up details near the waist and an alluring boat-neckline hugged her curves in all the right places. Millie Bobby Brown made sure that all eyes were on her at the Stranger Things 5 FYC Event at Netflix Tudum Theatre. She slipped into a black naked dress by Bronx and Banco, which left little to the imagination. The semi-transparent fabric plunged into a deep-scooped neckline, ending at her midriff, secured with a bow at the centre of the waist. Margot Robbie arrived at the London premiere of A Big Bold Beautiful Journey in a bejewelled, beige naked dress from Armani Prive Spring/Summer 2025 Couture. The body-hugging fit came with crystal beads, sparkly gemstones and embellishments creating geometric patterns. The spaghetti straps, tied to a studded flower at the back, contributed oomph and panache. Jenna Ortega turned heads at the 77th Emmy Awards in a broken chandelier top that gave fashion enthusiasts a run for their money. Crystals and pearls, in an array of shades, were arranged in a



random interlinking pattern, covering her assets. The credit of the unconventional ensemble goes to Sarah Burton's debut collection for Givenchy. A low-waisted thigh-high slit Louboutin skirt sealed the Wednesday star's fearless avatar.

Kristen Stewart

Kristen Stewart made a bold appearance at the 2025 SCAD

Film Festival. She resorted to a lacy white Rodarte outfit, replete with frilly cuffs, long sleeves and a dramatic neckline. The Twilight actress paired the fit with a matching bralette and black lace underwear for a much-needed contrast.

Dakota Johnson

Dakota Johnson remains

unafraid to experiment with her wardrobe. So it was not a surprise that the actress graced the Los Angeles premiere of Madame Web in a dazzling Gucci fishnet dress. The floor-grazing number had a built-in bodysuit with chainmail details and a deep plunging neckline, making Dakota stand out effortlessly.

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Blake Lively is Ready for Christmas Party

Blake Lively might be in the middle of a massive court battle, one of the biggest Hollywood has seen, against co-star Justin Baldoni, but that doesn't mean she is cowering in the corner. The actor is a consummate professional and recently stepped out for two events in New York City, looking ready for the festive season. She has always made some great fashion choices in her real life, and this week, as well, she proved once again why she is a true-blue fashionista. Blake Lively was papped in two stunning back-to-back looks. The actor wore a pristine white tweed blazer-skirt outfit from Tamara Ralph's Fall 2025 Couture line. The blazer doubled up as a warm coat that was perfect for New York City's freezing temperatures, and was a mini gold-and-white check dress. It was richly embroidered with crystals and sequins. The blazer dress was cinched at the waist with a broad white belt with shiny gold hardware. As this was an off-the-runway look, she paired it with a white chiffon ostrich-feather skirt, which took the look from dressy to couture. She accessorised the look with Christian Louboutin Folies

Strass – sheer pumps that were embellished with tiny crystals and had a hefty price tag of around \$1,195 or Rs 108,248. Blake carried a white Chanel chain bag, which added a final note of polish. Blake Lively is jolly and red For the next event, a holiday party for her Blake Brown Beauty and Stoney Clover Lane collaboration, Blake Lively wore a red midi dress – the Alice Dress – by Annina, which is priced at \$1,453 (approximately Rs 131,619). The sleeveless tea-length dress is made of crimson-coloured silk taffeta and is made to order. It features a corseted basque bodice, a pleated fit-and-flare skirt, and ruffle trim along the straps and square neckline.



Fashion Faceoff: Who Wore It Better?

The theme of this season is glittery glamour. And recently, actors Tamannaah Bhatia, Disha Patani and Nora Fatehi were spotted at an event in Mumbai looking their shimmery best. Several celebrities flocked to the launch of designer husband-wife duo Falguni Shane Peacock's latest flagship store in Mumbai. Spotted at the event were actors Nora Fatehi, Tamannaah Bhatia, and Disha Patani. They are some of the best-dressed actors in the industry, and the three women effortlessly turned the

event into a runway, each interpreting the brand's signature glamour through her own aesthetic. With sculpted silhouettes, statement embellishments, and that unmistakable Falguni Shane Peacock sparkle, it quickly evolved from a launch into a masterclass in modern red-carpet dressing. Nora Fatehi, a global fashion magnet, rising pop star and accomplished dancer, commanded the room in a brilliant blue, hyper-structured, fully embellished gown that shimmered with every move.

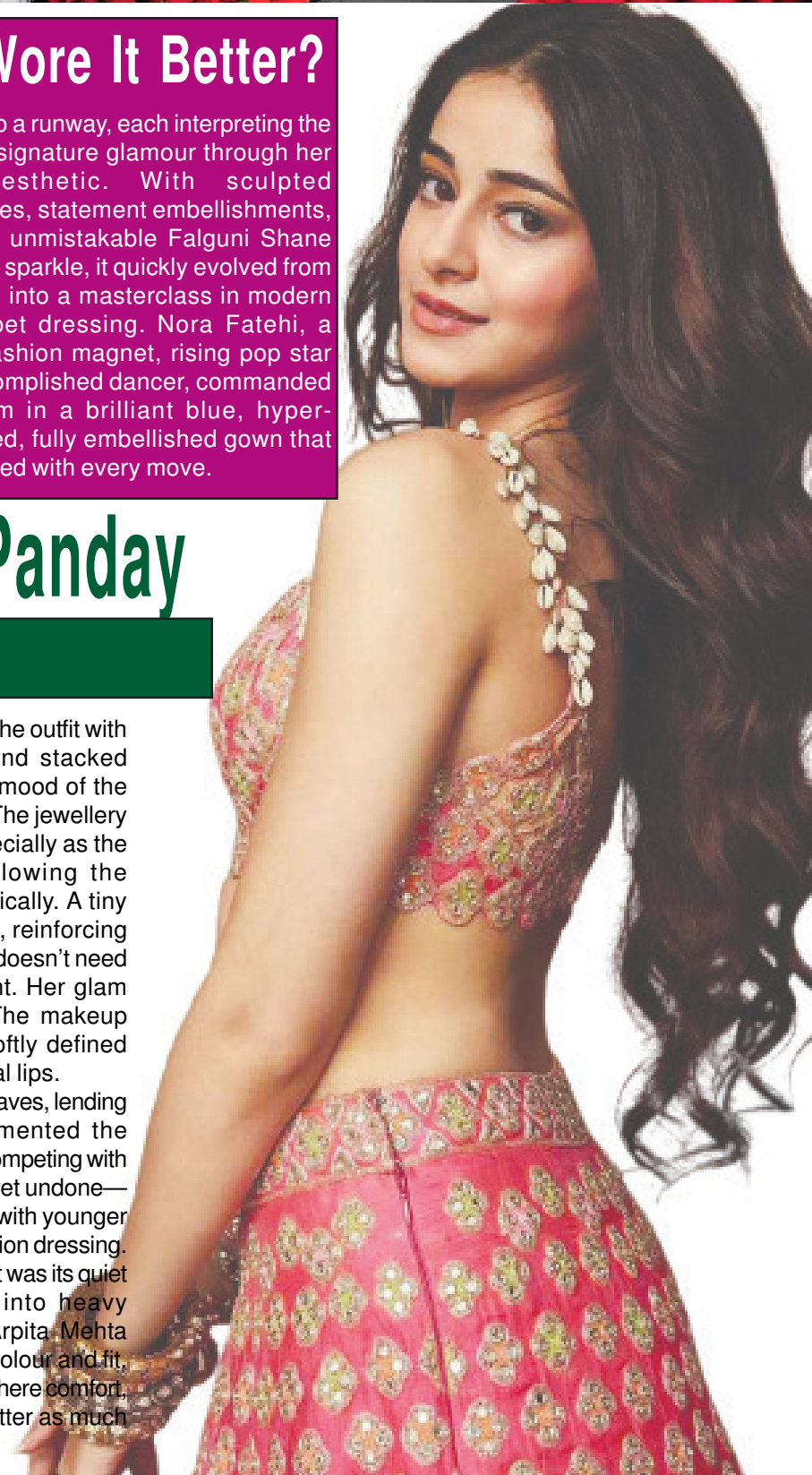
Bandhani Lehenga & Ananya Panday

Modern Festive Ease

Promotion wardrobes have increasingly moved away from heavy glamour toward looks that feel relaxed yet intentional, and Ananya Panday's recent appearance followed that evolving playbook. For the promotions of Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, the actor leaned into modern Indian dressing with an ensemble by Arpita Mehta that balanced youthful ease with handcrafted detail. The look felt refreshingly unfussy, designed to shine in daylight rather than demand attention under spotlights. Ananya Panday wore a vibrant yellow bandhani-inspired lehenga set that played with colour, texture and proportion. The strappy blouse, cut with clean lines and a fitted silhouette, brought a contemporary sharpness to the traditional craft technique. Its structured shape allowed the print to take centre stage, while the cropped length added a breezy, summer-ready sensibility. The lehenga skirt complemented the blouse with fluid movement and subtle detailing along the waistband, creating a look that felt festive without tipping into excess. The choice of yellow, bright yet softened by natural light, gave the outfit a joyful warmth that translated beautifully on camera and outdoors. Accessories were kept

intentionally refined. Ananya paired the outfit with statement gold-toned jhumkas and stacked bangles that echoed the artisanal mood of the ensemble without overpowering it. The jewellery added rhythm and movement, especially as the actor posed amid greenery, allowing the metalwork to catch the light organically. A tiny bindi grounded the look in tradition, reinforcing the idea that modern Indian fashion doesn't need to abandon its roots to feel current. Her glam aligned with the relaxed mood. The makeup remained fresh and glowy, with softly defined eyes, warm-toned blush and natural lips.

Hair was worn loose in soft waves, lending an effortless finish that complemented the ensemble's easy charm rather than competing with it. The overall styling felt intentional yet undone—an aesthetic that resonates strongly with younger audiences and contemporary promotion dressing. What made this appearance stand out was its quiet confidence. Instead of leaning into heavy embroidery or overt drama, the Arpita Mehta ensemble relied on craftsmanship, colour and fit. It reflected a shift in celebrity fashion where comfort, versatility and cultural relevance matter as much as visual impact.



Tu Meri Main Tera trailer: Kartik Aaryan, Ananya Panday's holiday romance goes awry

The trailer for 'Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri', starring Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday, has been unveiled. The film, directed by Sameer Vidwans and produced by Dharma Productions and Namah Pictures, explores romance and emotional complexity.

Toronto's transit system entered another period of scrutiny this week as the long delayed Finch West LRT finally met its first rush hour test. After years of stalled construction, rising costs, and rising frustration from residents in northwest Toronto, the new Line 6 service officially opened to riders on Sunday. On Monday morning, CBC News reported that the first full east to west trip along the 10.3 kilometre route took approximately fifty five minutes. For context, hundreds of runners completed a ten kilometre distance at this year's Toronto Marathon in less time. The comparison quickly became a talking point for transit watchers and commuters trying to determine whether the new line represents progress or another reminder of the city's slow pace of transit improvement. The Finch West LRT links Humber College to Finch West Station and the broader TTC subway network, with eighteen stops along an above ground



route on Finch Avenue West. Although large crowds came out Sunday to celebrate the opening, Monday's commute revealed persistent issues. Riders told CBC Radio's Metro Morning that the previous bus service along Finch was often faster and offered better access because of shorter stop spac-

ing. CBC journalists observed that westbound travel hovered around fifty five minutes and the return trip was only slightly better at forty seven minutes. These early travel times raise concerns because they exceed the TTC's own projected running time of forty six minutes. According to TTC spokesperson

Stuart Green, the line is currently operating with schedules based on its testing phase. He told CBC News that travel speeds should improve once operators become more familiar with the route and as the city adjusts traffic operations along Finch Avenue. Transit consultants interviewed by CBC noted that trains were moving cautiously, stopping for red lights, and often holding short of intersections. They said the most immediate improvement would come from applying transit signal priority, a system that gives trains the right of way and helps them maintain speed across surface routes. Experts emphasized that this adjustment is primarily a software change that requires political approval rather than major construction. The opening of Line 6 also highlights the broader challenges facing Toronto's transit expansion. The Finch West LRT was first proposed in 2007 and then delayed for more than a decade due to political changes,

funding debates, and construction setbacks. The final price tag is now estimated at three point seven billion dollars, well above its original estimate. It is not the only project facing difficulty. Metrolinx reports show that the Eglinton Crosstown LRT has exceeded thirteen billion dollars in total costs and remains unfinished. Premier Doug Ford said recently that the Crosstown is expected to open in 2026 or soon after, although previous opening dates have repeatedly been pushed back. It has been nearly a quarter century since Toronto last opened a major new transit line, leaving residents with little confidence that these investments will deliver the speed or reliability the city urgently needs. Beyond travel times, the Finch West LRT is already shaping conversation about community change along the corridor. Local organizations told CBC News that gentrification became a concern long before the line opened. Staff at the Jane Finch Centre reported hearing ab

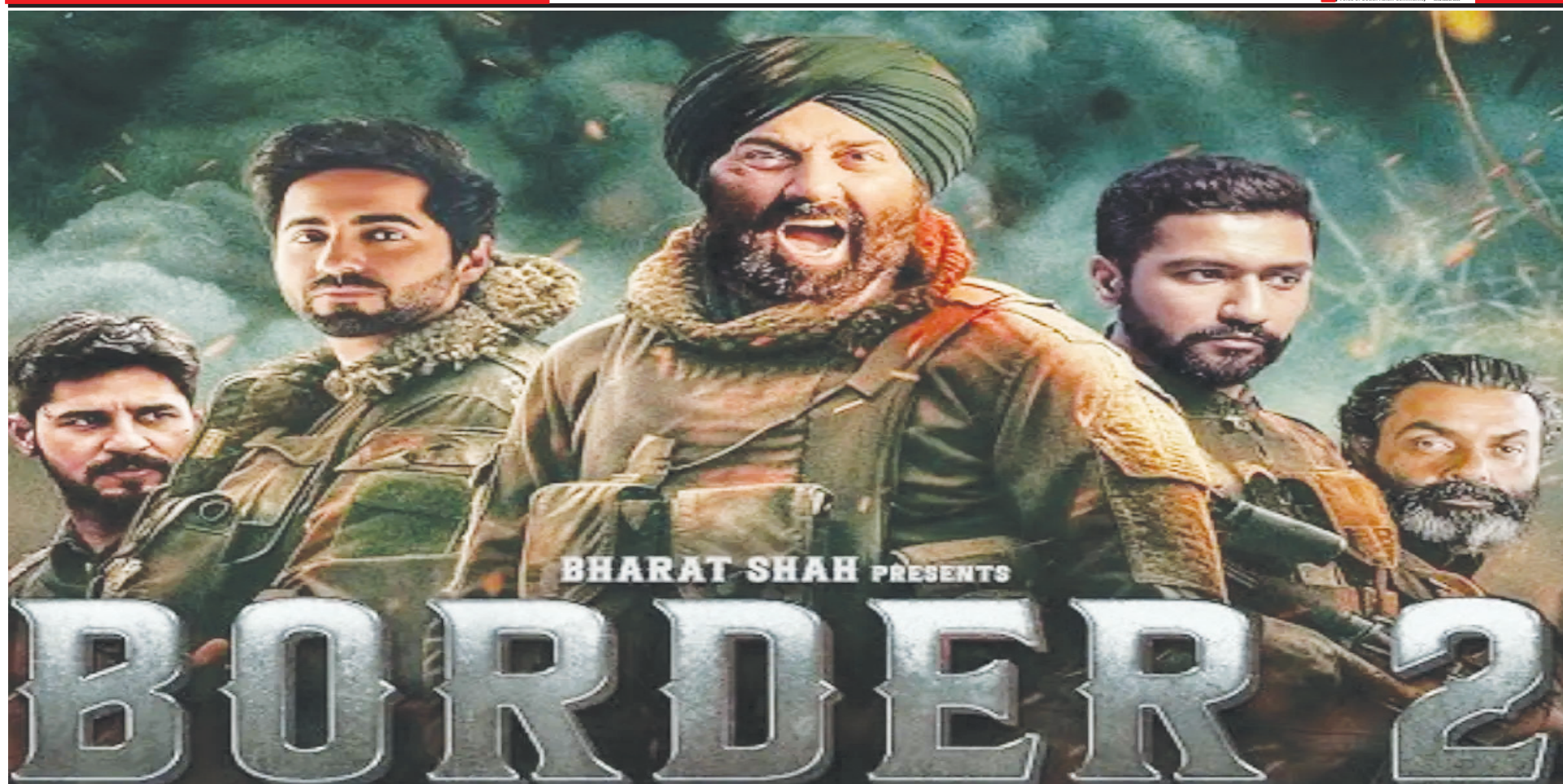
Neha Kakkar's Candy Shop does disservice to Indian music by mindlessly aping K-pop

At a time when the global music industry is finally paying attention to India, Neha Kakkar's new song, Candy Shop, chooses to imitate K-pop over imagination.



Neha Kakkar's newly-released song, Candy Shop, isn't just a forgettable pop experience, it's a squandered moment for Indian pop music. The video, blatantly borrowing K-pop aesthetics, swagger and visual grammar, attempts to marry K-pop into I-pop but fails by a thousand miles. For an artist of Kakkar's reach and recall, this isn't a creative play — it's the narrowing of possibility. At a time when the global music industry is finally paying attention to India, Candy Shop chooses imitation over imagination. The problem isn't influence. Music has always moved across borders. The problem is intent. Candy Shop feels assembled to resemble a global trend rather than express an artist's originality. Its hyper-polished styling, aggressive posturing and loosely stitched lyrics and rap breaks immediately recall K-pop girl-group imagery but without context, continuity, or character. It doesn't say anything about Neha Kakkar, her journey or her place in the Indian pop landscape. It exists to be scrolled past, debated and mocked, not understood. That, in itself, becomes its intent. •That's a puzzling choice for someone who isn't chasing relevance or doesn't need to chase one.

Neha Kakkar doesn't need to borrow an identity; she has the visibility to build one. This is the voice behind songs like Second Hand Jawaani, Sunny Sunny, London Thumakda and Kala Chashma — tracks that worked not because they chased global trends, but because they tapped into local energy, humour and cultural recall. Even her early independent hits and romantic numbers carried a sense of warmth and familiarity. There was personality there. Candy Shop, by contrast, feels like a safe bet on virality rather than a serious investment in I-pop as a global proposition. That's where the timing becomes crucial. The global music ecosystem is actively looking beyond the West. Korean pop, Latin pop and Afrobeats have already proved that language is no longer a barrier, identity is the selling point. India, with its rich musical vocabulary and growing independent scene, is finally entering that conversation. But when a leading mainstream Indian artist responds to the moment by mimicking K-pop's surface without understanding its substance, it risks doing damage on two fronts: flattening I-pop's potential and misrepresenting what K-pop actually is. Because K-pop works not as a costume, but as a system. Nothing is ornamental. Beats, visuals and choreography are always tethered to narrative. Even at its glossiest, there is intention. BTS, for instance, often dress introspection in spectacle. In Black Swan, they confess, "If this can no longer resonate, no longer make my heart vibrate," turning performance anxiety into poetry.



Border 2 teaser earns Varun Dhawan praise from Colonel Hoshiar Singh Dahiya's family

Varun Dhawan is all set to step into the shoes of Colonel Hoshiar Singh Dahiya (Param Vir Chakra awardee) in his upcoming war film, *Border 2*. On November 16, 2025, the teaser of the film was unveiled. Now, Colonel Dahiya's family has come forward, expressing their positive feedback for Varun after seeing the film's teaser. The gallantry award recipient's son, Colonel Sushil Kumar Dahiya, along with his family, expressed their appreciation, saying, "We just watched the Bor-

der 2 teaser and definitely Varun Dhawan has done justice. The teaser looks very promising, and it's truly special for me and my family to see our legacy being told with such spirit and sincerity. Super excited to see the film. Wishing you and the entire team all the very best for the film." The late war hero's granddaughter Anushka Dahiya also praised Varun and shared his picture on her Instagram story. She captioned, "We're all very proud & excited for the film. The hard-work, sincerity and

josh is truly mirrored in the teaser itself (sic)!" *Border 2* is set in the timeline of 1971, inspired by true events during the India-Pakistan war, according to the teaser. Apart from Varun, Sunny Deol, Ahan Shetty, Diljit Dosanjh, Mona Singh, Sonam Bajwa, Medha Rana and Anya Singh play pivotal characters in the movie. Ahan, in his speech at the teaser launch event said, "Just be yourself, don't think too much about what people say, and don't compare it to *Border 1*. That was the most important." "Obviously, physical-

ity wise, I had to change a bit. But again, like Papa said, just be honest, go out there, enjoy yourself," he went on. "My hands were shaking. Having been away from the screen since *Tadap* in 2021, it was a long gap. To be on set with Varun (Dhawan) and Sunny sir (Deol). To learn from them, to have the support of the producers and a director like Anurag sir, it was a blessing in disguise," the actor added. Directed by Anurag Singh, *Border 2* by T-Series and JP Films, is set for a theatrical release on January 23, 2026.

Saumya Tandon shares her 1st Dhurandhar shot with Akshaye Khanna: We barely spoke

Saumya Tandon has offered a glimpse into her experience working on the film *Dhurandhar*, recalling her first day on set and the professional relationship with co-actor Akshaye Khanna.



Saumya Tandon has shared a couple of behind-the-scenes photos from the set of *Dhurandhar*. The images, posted alongside a personal note, document her initial days filming in Amritsar at the set that was shown as Rehman Dakait's haveli. She shared details of her first scene that she shot for the film. The actor recalled that her first scene took place in November of the previous year, marking a mix of anticipation and anxiety as she prepared to step in front of the camera. Tandon wrote, "The very first scene I shot for #Dhurandhar, in

Amritsar-Rehman Dakait's haveli. It was Nov last year- I was a mix of nerves and excitement. My first morning shot was with Akshay lighting his cigarette, silently urging him to take revenge. #AkshayKhanna is pure magic." She noted that although she and her co-actor Akshaye Khanna, who played the role of Rehman Dakait, had limited conversations off-camera, their chemistry was immediately evident once filming began. Tandon wrote, "We barely had a chance to talk, but the moment the camera rolled, there was an instant connection. I

truly feel we share a wonderful chemistry. It's an absolute dream to have a co-actor like him-such a pure artist, with so much to learn from. More than anything, it's a joy to perform with someone of his calibre. I truly hope we're paired together again someday. Praying." The series of images shared by Saumya Tandon also feature Azinkya Mishra, who portrayed her son, Faizal Baloch, in the film. Tandon's post has drawn attention from fans, many of whom praised her performance and her on-screen chemistry with Akshaye Khanna in *Dhurandhar*.

Wedding Crash Diets Trigger Hormonal Shutdown In Young Women, Doctors Warn

In the months leading up to their weddings, many young people resort to extremely restrictive diets in an attempt to look a certain way on their big day often driven by societal pressure and unrealistic beauty standards. While modest weight loss may appear harmless, gastroenterologists and hormone specialists are sounding the alarm. Hospitals are reporting a growing number of emergency admissions involving young women preparing for their weddings who present with severe hormonal imbalances triggered by extreme pre-wedding dieting.

Dr. Sukrit Singh Sethi, Director & Senior Consultant, Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Liver Transplantation, Narayana Hospital, Gurugram and Dr. Mahesh Gupta, Senior Consultant, Gastroenterology, Dharamshila Narayana Superspecialty Hospital, Delhi share all you need to know:

Doctors are observing a cluster of patients in their twenties and early thirties presenting with absent menstrual cycles, extreme fatigue, hair loss, gastrointestinal disturbances, mood swings, and sudden fluctuations in weight. These symptoms typically emerge after weeks or months of crash dieting combined with excessive exercise. This phenomenon reflects the body's survival response to prolonged nutritional deprivation. When caloric intake drops significantly, the body conserves



energy by shutting down non-essential physiological functions, including reproductive processes. This state—often caused by insufficient energy availability disrupts the delicate balance of estrogen, progesterone, thyroid hormones, and cortisol. Over time, this imbalance may lead to irregular or absent periods, fertility issues, and long-term metabolic damage. Gut health plays a crucial role in hormonal regulation. Eliminating essential food groups can impair digestion, compromise nutrient absorption, and disrupt the gut microbiome. An imbalanced gut may

further aggravate hormonal disturbances, leading to symptoms such as bloating, constipation, acid reflux, and food sensitivities—often incorrectly attributed solely to stress. Another growing concern is the widespread promotion of detox teas, laxatives, diet pills, and protein-only regimens on social media. While these methods may produce rapid, short-term weight loss, they place significant strain on the liver and digestive system. Over time, this strain can increase inflammation and reduce insulin sensitivity, making long-term weight

management more difficult even after major life milestones have passed. Mental health is also deeply affected. Rigid dieting and intense exercise routines elevate cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone. Persistently high cortisol levels disrupt sleep, affect mood, and promote fat storage particularly around the abdomen ironically undermining weight-loss efforts.

Healthy weight loss should never feel like self-punishment. Sustainable fat loss requires a balanced diet that includes adequate protein, healthy fats, complex carbohydrates, and essential nutrients such as iron, vitamin B12, and vitamin D. Equally important are sufficient sleep, hydration, and effective stress management.

Individuals are strongly encouraged to start early, prioritize overall well-being over quick fixes, and seek professional guidance rather than following unverified online trends. A wedding may last a day, but hormonal health impacts a lifetime. Aesthetic goals should never take precedence over long-term health. Nourishing the body, maintaining balance, and respecting physiological needs are not only safer approaches but also the only true path to lasting confidence and well-being on the wedding day and beyond. Ignoring these warning signs can lead to serious hormonal emergencies with lifelong consequences.

Forget Juice Cleanses: A Science-Backed Guide To Detoxing After The Holidays

After weeks of festive meals, late nights, and indulgent treats, it's common to feel bloated, sluggish, or out of sync with your routine. This often triggers a rush toward detox teas, juice fasts, or crash diets promising quick fixes. Nutrition experts, however, say the body doesn't need punishment after the holidays; rather, it needs support. A healthy post-holiday reset is less about restriction and more about restoring hydration, digestion, and metabolic balance through realistic, sustainable habits. Sweedal Trinidade, Chief Dietitian, P.D. Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre, Mumbai, notes, "The body already has a highly efficient detox system. Detoxification naturally happens through the liver, kidneys, lungs, and skin, and that supporting these organs – not overwhelming them – is key." Adequate hydration, balanced meals, and reducing ultra-processed foods allow the body to clear excesses on its own without

extreme interventions. Rather than eliminating food groups or fasting, experts agree that the goal should be gentle nourishment that restores routine and digestive rhythm.

Hydration Comes First



One of the simplest yet most overlooked reset tools is water. Sohom Singha Roy, Lead Dietitian at Redcliffe Labs, says, "Fluid intake often drops in winter, even though the body still needs it. Increasing water consumption helps flush out metabolic waste,

improve digestion, and reduce bloating." Warm water, lemon water, or jeera water in the morning can stimulate digestion, while coconut water and buttermilk help replenish electrolytes. Most adults should aim for two and a half to

three litres of fluid daily, adjusting based on activity levels and thirst.

What To Eat After Overeating

Post-holiday meals should feel light but satisfying. Experts recommend shifting away from fried, sugary, and heavy foods

toward simple, home-cooked meals that are easy on digestion. Khichdi, dal-rice, curd rice, vegetable soups, steamed vegetables, and seasonal fruits help stabilise blood sugar and calm the gut. Eating at regular times, keeping dinners earlier, and allowing enough time between meals helps normalise metabolism. Fermented foods such as curd, buttermilk, kanji, and idli or dosa batter are especially beneficial for restoring gut bacteria disrupted by excess eating.

Detox Foods That Actually Support The Body

Certain foods naturally aid digestion and elimination without forcing the detox process. Nutrition experts point to fibre-rich whole grains and leafy greens for gut health and regular bowel movements. Beetroot supports liver function, while cruciferous vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli help activate detox enzymes. Fruits

such as citrus, berries, apples, guava, and pears provide soluble fibre and vitamin C, while traditional Indian spices such as turmeric, ginger, garlic, amla, neem, and lemon grass offer antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits.

Common Detox Mistakes To Avoid

Dietician and Clinical Nutritionist, Dt. Varshini from Apollo Clinic, Electronic City, Bengaluru warns that extreme detox strategies often backfire. She says, "When people skip meals, consume nothing but juice, or fast aggressively for long periods, it actually slows their metabolism and causes weakness, which results in overeating later." Experts caution against detox teas, excessive caffeine, severe calorie restriction, cutting out entire food groups, or jumping into intense workouts immediately after a period of indulgence. These approaches stress the body instead of helping it recover.

Instagram TV app coming to Amazon Fire streaming device

Instagram users will now be able to watch Reels short-form videos on bigger screens.

Meta

said Tuesday that the company will begin testing its Instagram for TV app in the U.S. via Amazon

Fire TV streaming devices, underscoring the photo-sharing app's effort to become a major video platform beyond smartphones, taking on TikTok and YouTube. The Instagram for TV app features the company's TikTok-like Reels videos that are often produced by individual creators to be viewed, shared and algorithmically recommended to users on the platform. Tessa Lyons, Instagram vice president of product, told CNBC in an interview that Meta plans to expand the new TV app to other device makers, though she didn't name them. She said the company is currently prioritizing "a great experience" rather than the immediate expansion of its giant ad business on TV. "We think we probably have a lot more work to do to really make sure that we're bringing people the content they love on mobile in a way that really makes sense for them and feels designed for TV," Lyons



said. "That's where we're going to be focused in 2026 as well as bringing it to more people and more devices, and, down the line, we'll certainly think more about monetization." The Reels displayed on the TV app "will still continue to be vertical videos" instead of being reformatted to accommodate a television's more horizontal design, Lyons said. Lyons said the new Instagram TV app will stick with short form, showing Reels videos "that are

three minutes or less." Meta previously debuted a separate, video-specific variant of Instagram, dubbed IGTV, in 2018 that let people upload long-form videos.

The company shut the mobile app down in 2022, when it began heavily pushing Reels as TikTok's popularity soared. "Down the line, we'll think about if we want to move into slightly longer content," Lyons said. App users will be able to see a selection of Reels that

have been collected into channels that are based on specific interests like sports, music, travel and other topics. Customers can add five individual Instagram accounts to a single, shared TV-specific Instagram account, but the company said it would "apply content standards suitable for a broad audience," which would likely keep teenagers from being recommended Reels containing videos related to drugs, alcohol and sexualized content.

Ford to record \$19.5 billion in special charges as it pulls back on EV plans



expects to record about \$19.5 billion in special items related to a restructuring of its business priorities and a pullback in its all-electric vehicle investments, the company announced Monday. The Detroit automaker said most of those charges will occur during the fourth quarter. That will be followed by \$5.5 billion in cash to be charged through 2027, and the majority of that chunk will be paid next year, Ford said. The charges will impact the automaker's net results but not its adjusted earnings. The automaker said Monday it was

increasing its guidance of adjusted earnings before interest and taxes to about \$7 billion in 2025. That's in line with a target from earlier this year, before the company lowered expectations to between \$6 billion and \$6.5 billion in adjusted EBIT in October. The charges announced Monday, including \$8.5 billion in write-downs of EV assets, are connected to major changes to Ford's business plans. The new plans include refocusing investments on hybrid vehicles, including plug-in models rather than pure EVs; canceling a next

generation of large all-electric trucks in exchange for smaller, more affordable EVs; and a rebalancing of its investments in core products such as trucks and SUVs. The changes are the latest under Ford CEO Jim Farley and his "Ford+" restructuring plan that has taken on many different forms since he initially announced it as an EV growth plan in 2021. "We evaluated the market, and we made the call," Farley told CNBC's "Closing Bell Overtime" on Monday. "We're following customers to where the market is, not where people thought it was going to be, but where it is today." The EV segment has experienced a sales slump domestically after the Trump administration put an early end in September to a \$7,500 federal tax credit previously available for EV buyers in the U.S. Farley said on CNBC that policy "wasn't the only reason why we made this choice," but he acknowledged it did play a role. Ford also said Monday that its all-electric F-150 Lightning pickup will transition to an extended-range EV, or EREV, that includes an electric powertrain as well as a gas-powered generator, and it announced plans to use battery plants

in Kentucky and Michigan for a new stationary energy storage business. "The last couple of months have been really clear to us," Farley told CNBC's Phil LeBeau. "The very high-end EVs — the \$50,000, \$70,000, \$80,000 vehicles — they just weren't selling." Ford said the changes are expected to provide "a path to profitability" for its Model e electric vehicle business by 2029, targeting annual improvements beginning in 2026. The automaker also said it expects the changes to improve profits in its traditional Ford Blue unit and Ford Pro commercial and fleet business "over time with early signs of benefits in 2026." The automaker said it expects approximately 50% of its global volume by 2030 will be hybrids, EREVs and fully electric vehicles, up from 17% in 2025. "These are big decisions that we believe will pay off for years to come for our customers, our employees, American jobs and manufacturing," Andrew Frick, president of the Model e and Blue businesses, said Monday during a media call. "Ford is following the customer. We are looking at the market as it is today, not just as everyone predicted it to be five years ago."

The Burger Boys Of Pakistan From Dhurandhar, Imran Khan, And A Loaded History



When, in Dhurandar, Hamza (Ranveer Singh) casually drops the line about his girlfriend Yalina (played by Sara Arjun) being free to marry a "burger boy", it plays more than just as a throwaway joke. "Burger boy" is more than just slang for certain Pakistani men. The term carries layers of history, class politics, cultural anxiety, and decades of social commentary packed into just two words.

The Real Meaning Of Burger Boy

At its simplest, a "burger boy" in Pakistan refers to an urban, affluent young man who is seen as Westernised, English-speaking, and culturally removed from what is considered "local" or traditional Pakistani life. He likely studied in elite schools and is comfortable in global pop culture, wears international brands, and navigates life with a certain ease that money and privilege provide. Think Imran Khan, but more on that later. But the term is rarely neutral. While some wear it like a badge of honour, more often it is used satirically, even dismissively. A burger boy is perceived as soft, entitled, superficial, and disconnected from the struggles of the majority. Someone more comfortable discussing oat milk than power cuts, more fluent in Netflix references than local politics, and far more likely to Instagram a protest than physically attend one. "Fully dressed with matching accessories even for 8 am classes at university, they always own the latest in fashion,

cars and gadgets. Their 'parties' mimic nightclubs in foreign countries since the poor souls don't have any clubs here and have to recreate the experience on their own," a Pakistani media channel describes burger boy. A Reddit thread from Pakistan explains what being a burger means. "Kids with a sheltered life, who are utterly out of touch with the reality of an average Pakistani, who has this crazy weird accent that's not even a proper accent, is a 'burger' to me. Or someone I need to piss off I'll call em a burger," the user said.

How Burgers Became A Class Marker

Long before "burger boy" became a punchline or a political label, the burger itself was a curiosity. In late 1970s Pakistan, eating out usually meant roadside bun kebabs, chaat, nihari, or samosas grabbed between errands. Western fast food was not just rare, it was unfamiliar. So when Mr Burger opened its doors in Karachi in 1980 by Syed Ashfaq Raza, it did not arrive quietly. Originally from Lucknow in pre-partition India, Musa Raza worked in the Middle East before moving to Karachi, where he dreamed of building a family business despite knowing no one there. His nine sons later studied in the US and UK, but he encouraged them to return and start something together. Inspired by the popularity of McDonald's in Europe during the 1970s, his son Iqbal proposed bringing the franchise to Pakistan. When both McDonald's and Burger

King rejected the idea, calling the country unready for burgers, the brothers took it as a challenge to prove them wrong. The idea of minced meat shaped into a patty, sandwiched between soft buns, and served in a clean, air-conditioned space felt almost foreign. For many, it was intriguing. For others, it was suspicious. Early reactions ranged from fascination to outright mockery. You won't believe it, but at that time, there was only one supplier in the country who made disposable cups, and it was selling them to the national airline only. They refused to sell the cups to us because they didn't think it was worthwhile and they didn't understand what we were trying to do," Musa Raza's son recalls in an interview with Al Jazeera. But soon after the launch, curiosity turned into crowds. Mr Burger became a social event rather than just a place to eat. Families dressed up to visit. Teenagers treated it like a status outing. Going there was not about hunger as much as it was about being seen. The high-priced burgers alone made it inaccessible to most, instantly turning the burger into a symbol of economic distinction. What really cemented its elite status was who started showing up. Politicians, businessmen, foreign-returned Pakistanis, and eventually prime ministers were seen dining there. According to Al Jazeera, in the first 15 years of business, Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's former prime minister, used to come for the chicken

burgers, as did former President Asif Ali Zardari, who at the time was Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's fiancé. Eating a burger meant you belonged to a certain social bracket. Neighbourhoods mattered too. The joint's popularity among residents of Clifton and Defence (Pakistan's posh areas) reinforced the idea that burgers were the food of the well-off. For the rest of the city, the burger became shorthand for a lifestyle that felt distant and slightly unreal. People who could casually say, "Let's go for burgers," were immediately marked as privileged. By the mid-to late 1980s, the reaction had shifted. What was once a novelty invited mockery. Comedy played a crucial role in cementing the term. The late comedian Umer Shareef popularised it through his television comedy Burger Family, where wealthy, Westernised families were caricatured as culturally confused, English-spouting, and hilariously out of touch. The satire stuck. What began as a joke turned into a social label. It was about accent, attitude, schooling, and social exposure, not food. Note here that the label is gendered too. "Burger girl" exists in the same cultural space, used to describe young women who are seen as equally Westernised, privileged, and disconnected.

The Politics Of Being A Burger, Ft Imran Khan

Nowhere did the term gain more political weight than during Imran Khan's early political years. When the former cricketer entered politics with Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf, he was frequently dismissed by established politicians as a "baby boy" or a "burger boy", shorthand for someone too privileged and inexperienced to understand real politics. His supporters, largely young, urban, educated Pakistanis, were labelled "burger bachchas". The implication was clear. These were laptop-carrying, social-media warriors, more comfortable tweeting than organising on the ground. Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed, former Federal Minister for Interior of Pakistan, famously quipped before the 2013 elections that this "burger group" would join the chapati-and-salan folk, joking that they might need to carry laptops on their heads to protect them from the sun. The mockery, however, missed something crucial. When these so-called burgers showed up to vote, they changed the political equation. The 2013 elections saw the highest voter turnout in Pakistan's history. Thirteen million first-time voters participated, most of them young. PTI emerged as the second most powerful party, driven largely by this urban, educated base. What was meant as an insult became an identity. PTI supporters embraced the label, turning it into slogans like "Kaptaan's Burger Army" and wearing it during polls. The long, layered history of burgers in Pakistan is why Dhurandhar's casual "Burger boy" reference works so well. Because, sometimes, a burger is more than just a burger, especially in Pakistan.

Why Arthritis Is Fast Emerging As A Disease Of The Young In India

For decades, arthritis was widely perceived as an inevitable part of ageing, something that crept in with advancing years, bringing along joint pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility. But that perception is rapidly changing in India. Doctors across the country are now seeing a worrying rise in arthritis cases among people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, signalling a significant shift in the nation's disease burden. Dr Ashraf Khan, Consultant Orthopaedic and Joint Replacement Surgeon, Ruby Hall Clinic, Wanowrie, believes this trend is closely tied to how modern lifestyles have evolved. "Arthritis has long been associated with older adults, but today, we are diagnosing it in individuals as young as their 20s and 30s. This is an ominous change," he says.

One of the biggest contributors is a sedentary way of life. Long hours spent sitting at desks, excessive screen time, and minimal physical activity weaken the muscles that are meant to support the joints. When muscles fail to absorb everyday stress, the burden shifts directly onto the joints. Over time, even routine activities such as walking, climbing stairs, or standing for long periods



accelerate joint wear and inflammation, paving the way for early-onset arthritis. Dr Vijay Shetty, Director, Orthopaedic and Joint Replacement, Dr L H Hiranandani Hospital, Powai, echoes this concern, noting that he has seen a marked rise in young patients aged 25–45 presenting with early arthritis, particularly in the knees and hips. "Prolonged sitting, reduced activity, and poor muscle conditioning overload the cartilage and hasten degeneration," he explains. Compounding the problem is India's growing obesity epidemic among young adults. Excess body weight places

disproportionate stress on weight-bearing joints such as the knees and hips. Dr Khan points out that even modest weight gain can significantly accelerate cartilage damage. Diets rich in processed foods, refined sugars, and unhealthy fats further worsen the issue by increasing low-grade inflammation throughout the body, which in turn aggravates joint degeneration. Dr Shetty adds that obesity often overlaps with metabolic syndrome, intensifying chronic inflammation and speeding up cartilage breakdown. At the same time, he highlights another modern paradox: while many young people are

inactive, others are engaging in high-intensity fitness routines without proper conditioning or technique. "Untreated ligament injuries, meniscal tears, and cartilage damage from sports or workouts can accelerate post-traumatic arthritis in young adults," he says. Nutritional deficiencies are another silent driver. Both specialists underline the widespread lack of vitamin D, calcium, and protein among young Indians, largely due to indoor lifestyles and limited sun exposure. These nutrients are vital for bone strength, muscle function, and cartilage repair. Deficiencies weaken the musculoskeletal system, making joints more vulnerable to early degeneration and pain. Beyond lifestyle and nutrition, other factors are also at play. Dr Shetty notes that genetic predisposition, autoimmune conditions like early-onset rheumatoid arthritis, smoking, and even post-COVID complications are contributing to the rise. "Post-COVID, we are seeing a sharp increase in avascular necrosis of the hip, which often progresses to hip arthritis at a young age," he explains. The consequences of arthritis in younger adults extend far beyond physical discomfort. Dr

Khan warns that early arthritis can lead to reduced mobility, chronic pain, emotional stress, and long-term dependence on medication significantly affecting productivity and quality of life during the most active years. In severe cases, it may even result in joint replacement surgeries much earlier than previously seen. Despite the growing concern, both experts stress that arthritis in the young is largely preventable. Early identification, timely medical consultation for persistent joint pain, and proactive lifestyle changes are critical. Strength training to support joints, maintaining a healthy weight, balanced nutrition, ergonomic workspaces, and proper rehabilitation after injuries can all delay or even prevent the progression of the disease. "Arthritis in the young is no longer rare," Dr Shetty concludes, "but with awareness, early diagnosis, and lifestyle modification, it is a trend we can still reverse." As India grapples with changing lifestyles and health habits, arthritis has clearly ceased to be just a disease of old age. Preventive care today may be the key to protecting joint health for decades to come.

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

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